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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**Murdoch University and TAFE International, Western Australia
research study on international students studying at Technical
and Further Education (TAFE) Colleges in Western Australia**

Past students' reflections on their TAFE experience

&

attitudes towards educational exchange between their country and Australia

**Results of a collaborative project between
Murdoch University and the International Division of TAFE WA**

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November 1994

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Copies of the instruments are available from Dr. Simone Volet.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the results of an ARC funded collaborative research project between Murdoch University and the International Division of TAFE, on international students in TAFE, Western Australia. It provides a unique insight into international students' reflective accounts of their experience of studying at TAFE and living in Western Australia. Students' responses were used as the basis for a set of recommendations. As this survey was conducted in 1993, it is possible that some of the issues raised in the recommendations have subsequently been addressed by some of the colleges.
- The Introduction and Aims (Section 1.0) set out the background to the research and the theoretical framework on which it is based.
- The Methodology (Section 2.0) outlines in detail the development of the questionnaire and the data collection method.

The questionnaire was mailed to the **1992 cohort** in their home country eight months after they completed their TAFE studies (response rate 38%; n = 15) and given to the **1993 cohort** at the end of their study at TAFE (response rate 86%; n = 56).

Respondents were asked to provide answers to a broad range of questions from their initial source of information about TAFE to their experiences of studying at TAFE and living in Western Australia. They were asked to provide suggestions which they felt could ameliorate the studying and living conditions for future international students at TAFE. In addition, their attitudes towards future international exchange between their country and Australia were elicited. Finally respondents were asked about their current and planned future activities and about their re-adaptation process upon return to their home country.

- The major results (Section 3.0) are summarised below:

There was a total of 71 respondents from 16 different countries. The majority of them were from Indonesia (18, 25%), followed by Hong Kong (13, 18%), Malaysia (11, 15%) and Thailand (6, 8%).

- When asked to indicate their initial source of information about TAFE, **most respondents described friends or relatives (47%) as their first source of information**, followed by Education agents (37%). These findings appeared stable over time. There were some indications of differences across countries as well as changes over time within countries.
- When asked to rate the **importance of factors influencing their decision to study at TAFE**, the highest rating of importance overall was given to "To improve my English", followed by "To get a good job at home" and "Overseas qualifications are liked in my country".

The breakdown by country revealed important differences across countries. The patterns of responses showed that:

The eighteen Indonesian respondents displayed a predominantly **vocational** orientation;

The thirteen Hong Kong respondents appeared particularly interested in studying at TAFE to **get into an Australian university later**; their ratings of the reputation of TAFE in their country tended to be lower than the other groups;

The eleven Malaysian respondents appeared to have come to TAFE because they could not get into university and TAFE was considered as an **alternative overseas qualification** perceived as valued in their home country;

The six Thai respondents seemed to have chosen TAFE in order to **get into university** later but not necessarily in Australia. They also thought that **TAFE had a good reputation** in their country.

- Overall, **the 71 respondents were satisfied with their TAFE experience**. Respondents from the 1992 cohort tended to be more satisfied than the respondents from the 1993 cohort. The 1992 cohort represented only 38% of the target population, therefore, caution should be exercised when interpreting these results.

No significant differences were found with regard to program of study, country of residence, college or gender with regard to overall satisfaction.

- When asked to provide statements to justify their overall satisfaction ratings and in line with their ratings, it was found that **75% of the 1992 respondents justified their ratings in terms of positive statements compared to only 47% of the 1993 respondents.**

Respondents' statements of justification were structured into 4 categories: Organisation, Study/Courses, Staff/Teaching and Social/Cultural.

Organisation: Most comments in this category came from the 1993 cohort and the large majority of these comments were **negative** in nature. These dealt with dissatisfaction with organisational issues, time-tabling, dissemination of information and general facilities (library, computers).

Study/Courses: Both 1992 and 1993 respondents made more **positive** than negative comments regarding their satisfaction with the overall standard of TAFE courses and their evaluation of the relevance of TAFE courses to their intended career paths.

Staff/Teaching: Comments in this category were evenly **spread across positive and negative** categories for both the 1992 and 1993 cohorts. Positive comments acknowledged the willingness of staff to help students. The negative comments related to perceptions of poor teaching methods used by some lecturers, insufficient support for international students, differences in treatment of students across campuses, lack of tolerance and cultural bias towards international students.

Social/Cultural: Only a few comments were recorded in this category.

- In order to find out about possible problems of **adjustments to study at TAFE** respondents were asked to rate a number of specific problems structured into one of three categories: English language, Teaching/learning and Social/cultural factors.

English language: **Writing in English was the most difficult** adjustment overall, followed by understanding the teacher and speaking in English. Reading in English was the least difficult. The Thai, Hong Kong

and the Indonesian respondents reported greater difficulties with English than the Malaysian respondents.

Teaching/Learning: Respondents' ratings indicate that the greatest difficulty overall was to ascertain the required **standards for good assignments**. The breakdown by country of residence revealed that the Thai and Hong Kong respondents generally experienced greater problems related to learning than the Indonesian and the Malaysian students.

Social/Cultural: The most important problems to emerge in this context were 'worried to give the wrong answer in front of the class' and 'feeling shy to ask when something is not understood'. The six Thai respondents appeared to experience the greatest difficulties in this regard.

- In response to the question regarding avenues for help with study problems, the **majority of respondents (61%) stated that they had sought help from friends and other students**.
- Respondents were asked for their thoughts, ideas and **suggestions regarding what TAFE could do to facilitate studying and study-related daily living conditions** for its international student population. Sixty seven suggestions were received (seven from the 1992 cohort and sixty from the 1993 cohort).

The greatest number of suggestions were related to **TAFE organisation (28%)**, such as improvement of general facilities (libraries, computing, canteen), work related information, better time-tabling, networking with universities and choice of campus.

Another large number of suggestions involved **daily living factors directly related to study (25%)**, such as accommodation, study expenses (course fees and compulsory textbooks), transport (in particular when courses have to be taken on different campuses), part-time employment and work experience.

A significant number of suggestions were related to **Staff/Teaching factors (19%)**, in particular teaching methods. A number of respondents suggested improvements in the area of teaching methods, cultural understanding, tolerance and interpersonal skills.

In the category **Social/cultural** (15%), respondents saw the need for TAFE to offer more varied recreational activities in order to promote friendship and cultural understanding between themselves and their Australian counterparts, with the ultimate aim being to promote the ideal of multiculturalism.

Finally, respondents suggested a few areas of improvement with regard to **Study/courses** (12%), for example: the provision of more English language classes, special classes for difficult topics and possibly the establishment of summer courses. In addition, the question of consistency of subject matter taught by different lecturers was perceived to be in need of attention, as well as the internationalisation of course content to make courses and programs of study more relevant to students' work environments in their respective home countries.

- In response to the question on the nature of problems encountered in adjusting to living in Western Australia, **homesickness** was the most frequently mentioned problem (30%), followed by difficulty to make friends (23%). Problems related to transport (14%) and financial difficulties (11%) were reported less frequently. Similar to the situation with study problems, respondents indicated that they would first approach their **friends** (57%) **for help**, and occasionally their relatives in Perth (14%) or at home (14%).

The breakdown by country of residence revealed that the respondents from Hong Kong and Thailand tended to report more problems than the respondents from Malaysia, with the Indonesian group somewhere in the middle. There were no gender differences for the whole group.

- In response to the question on **interactions with local Australian students**, a majority of respondents (60%) indicated that there were some opportunities for social interaction on their campus. There was, however, a perceived feeling of **mutual discomfort** regarding interactions between international and local Australian students.
- In response to the question on how TAFE could provide better assistance to international students to help them adjust to living in Western Australia and to interact with local Australian students, fifty five suggestions were received.

Suggestions included the organising of more **activities for international students to get together and to meet with local students**. Respondents also suggested that lecturers and local students should develop a better **understanding** of the needs and aspirations of international students. More **information** about TAFE and study after TAFE and the establishment of student **exchange programs** for local students were also mentioned.

- In response to the question asking the 1993 cohort about their plans after graduation, **the majority (79%) stated that they hoped to undertake further studies**, mostly in an Australian university.
- Ninety-six percent of respondents thought that their TAFE course would help them achieve what they wanted in the future. Practical skills, computing skills and the improvement of their English language skills were perceived as the most useful of the skills acquired at TAFE.
- In response to the question asking the 1992 cohort to comment on the process of re-adjustment in their home countries, the majority indicated that no major problems had been encountered and that they had been able to **transfer the academic and life skills acquired during their study at TAFE to their home country**. Some respondents had experienced short-term re-adjustment problems related to finding employment. A few respondents mentioned some long-term re-adjustment problems such as lack of family support and conflicting cultural norms.
- In response to the question asking the 1992 cohort to document their **activities since graduation**, about half indicated that they were continuing their studies, and the others were in the paid work force.
- The majority of the 1992 respondents had **not maintained any contact with TAFE staff**. Only a few respondents reported regular contact with friends in Australia.
- In response to the final section asking the 1992 cohort to comment on the **type of information that they would relay to fellow country-people** about studying at TAFE, respondents said they would emphasise the high quality of

education and the opportunity for cultural exchange. In addition, they would also mention the high costs involved with education.

With regard to living in Western Australia, respondents indicated that they would mention the good climate and the relaxed atmosphere and would draw prospective students' attention to issues related to public transport, ownership of cars, accommodation, food available, custom's duty on food, Medicare and the difficulty of finding part-time jobs. They would also let prospective students know that they would have to adapt to cultural differences.

- Overall, after their TAFE experience, the respondents tended to be **relatively in favour of more educational or business exchange between their country and Australia.**

While they were generally in favour of Asian students continuing to undertake study in Australia, they **agreed even more strongly that Australian students should be encouraged to consider studying in Asian countries.**

The breakdown by country of residence showed that the respondents most in favour of increased international exchange between their country and Australia were the eleven respondents from Malaysia, followed by the eighteen respondents from Indonesia.

- **As expected, respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience was significantly related to their current attitudes towards international exchange between their country and Australia.**

Respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience was significantly related to the magnitude of academic problems encountered as well as to the number of problems with regard to adjustments to living. Their overall satisfaction was not related to any specific problem with studying at TAFE or with living in Western Australia.

The breakdown by country of residence revealed some important differences in the relationship between respondents' overall satisfaction and their attitudes towards international exchange.

The relationship between satisfaction with TAFE experience and attitudes towards future educational and business associations with their country and Australia was strong for the eleven Malaysian respondents and moderate for the eighteen Indonesian respondents. No relationship at all was found for the respondents from Hong Kong and Thailand.

NOTE: Some preliminary results from the 1994 cohort of TAFE international students are presented in Appendix A1 to A4

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Each year over 5000 students from Asia come to study in TAFE institutions in Australia. Although a number of studies have investigated the experience of international students in Australian universities, little is known about the educational experience of international students in the TAFE sector. Yet, students' evaluations of their educational experience at TAFE once they have returned home and joined the workforce or started further studies is of crucial importance for Australia's future international educational ventures. Many TAFE students will be in important negotiating positions in the future and the quality of their specific experiences at TAFE will affect their attitude towards their country's involvement in further educational associations with Australia.

While the promotion of education by the Federal Government as an 'export' industry has injected millions of dollars into the Australian economy, the reputation of Australia as an education destination has also attracted a number of criticisms. Crucial to the success of future educational and business endeavours between Australia and South East Asian countries may be whether international students returning to their home country report positive personal and educational experiences, and perceive that the knowledge gained and skills that they have developed in Australian educational institutions are directly relevant to the needs of their country.

This project has been structured from the outset as a joint venture between Murdoch University and the International Division of TAFE in Western Australia. The general aim of this research was to develop a better understanding of international students' TAFE experience from their own perspective and to relate it to their current attitude towards future educational and business associations between their country and Australia. The outcome of the project should provide useful information in the design of teaching-learning environments which accommodate the aspirations, vocational intentions, abilities and needs of students from a diverse array of educational backgrounds.

THE TAFE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

TAFE is a diverse and widespread system which aims to meet many different needs: from community or second chance education, to entry level training, through to advanced vocational and technical education (NBEET, 1992). TAFE is the largest of the tertiary education sectors and caters to the needs of approximately 70% of the school leavers. There are 232 major TAFE institutions in Australia and 18 in Western

Australia. With a different educational purpose from other tertiary sectors, TAFE focuses on vocational education and training, and is the major provider of the skills required by the Australian work force. This is achieved through a system of close collaboration between industry and community to ensure the development of task-appropriate skills. For many in the young and adult population therefore, TAFE is the only source of systematic and structured further education (Employment and Skills Formation Council 1991). Tuition at TAFE is mainly by supervised practical work and classroom teaching. However some courses have adopted the university model of lectures, tutorials and supervised practical classes.

In WA, TAFE had its first intake of international students in 1987, and more than 500 international students a year are currently spread across TAFE's 18 colleges. Apart from providing the state with important economic, social and cultural benefits (State Development Western Australia, 1992), these students are also instrumental in providing the means for developing associations with other countries. In 1994, WA TAFE targeted Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Korea, India and Sri Lanka for recruitment of students. The long-term marketing strategy employed is to consolidate existing markets and develop new markets outside of South East and North Asia (TAFE International Division, personal communication, 1994).

To achieve this end, it becomes imperative to examine how current educational provisions at TAFE are perceived and evaluated by past TAFE international students. Promoting a more interactive two-way process of educational collaboration and exchange with our Asian partners has been suggested as more appropriate for the future (Smart, 1992). TAFE involvement in such research is evidence of its concern for meeting the career needs and learning requirements of its international students, and of its commitment towards the development of strategies that promote mutual cultural understanding.

LITERATURE ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Apart from official reports on enrolment figures, background characteristics of students and fee income brought by international students, a significant proportion of the literature on international students in Australia consists of survey studies conducted by support service staff of the institutions hosting these students (eg. Gassin 1982; Bradley & Bradley 1984; Burke 1986; Ballard 1987; Samuelowicz 1987; Burns 1991). This literature concentrates mainly on international students enrolled at university in Australia.

On the whole, little is known about the educational experience of international students in the TAFE sector. The recent national survey of international students in TAFE (International Student Survey, 1994) provides some nationwide descriptive data

on the experience of TAFE international students. Like most surveys, however, it does not make any attempt to analyse and interpret the various sections of the results in relation to one another. It does not examine the implications of students' personal evaluation of their TAFE experience in relation to the broader political and economic context of students' home countries or to the future of international education. The guide for TAFE teachers of International students published in 1992 by the National TAFE Overseas Network provides extremely valuable information for TAFE teachers. However, it is difficult to include students' accounts of their first hand experiences of being an international student at TAFE in manuals of this type, and yet that insight is essential for teachers and support staff, as well as decision-makers. In any case, such manuals are not suitable for examining the relationship between the quality of past students' TAFE experiences and the future of Australia's involvement in international education.

One of the major problems with the general literature on international students relates to the deficit framework within which the findings are described [ie. "international students lack.. " or "do not display.." etc.]. The findings are rarely interpreted in terms of cultural differences and expectations. This issue is addressed by Ballard & Clanchy 1991, in their manual for lecturers and supervisors of international students. Most of the research conducted in the international student arena has also been descriptive and atheoretical. Furthermore, while it is recognised that different systems of education leave indelible longer-term effects on students, there has been little attempt to assess the longer-term effects of an international education programme on the individual international student in Australia. This is especially important when considering the relevance of a particular system of education to the needs-requirements of international students from different countries. From a pragmatic perspective, such considerations would form the premise (from an international student's viewpoint) for deciding where to invest his/her educational future. The economic and cultural implications resulting from these decisions (outlined in the Introduction section) are very significant, both in the short and long term.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study reported here is part of a broader research project on the learning profile and study adjustments of international students studying in TAFE Colleges in Western Australia. The overall research project is grounded in psychological theories of self-regulation of learning and management of academic study (Brown et al, 1983; Paris & Byrnes, 1989). The conceptual approach adopted in this research requires that the learner is not studied in isolation, but is located within the larger social and cultural

context of academic study (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch et al, 1984). The significance of learners' subjective appraisals of their study, their motives, goals and perceptions is emphasised. Such an approach is viewed as particularly appropriate to develop a better understanding of international students' educational experience from their own point of view. It has already been used successfully to examine international students adjustments to study in a university context (Renshaw & Volet, 1994; Volet & Renshaw, 1994; Volet & Kee, 1993).

An interactive and dynamic model of the full cycle of TAFE international students' experience in Australia, inspired by Boekaerts' (1992) theory of adaptive learning was developed for this research project. It is presented in Figure 1.1.

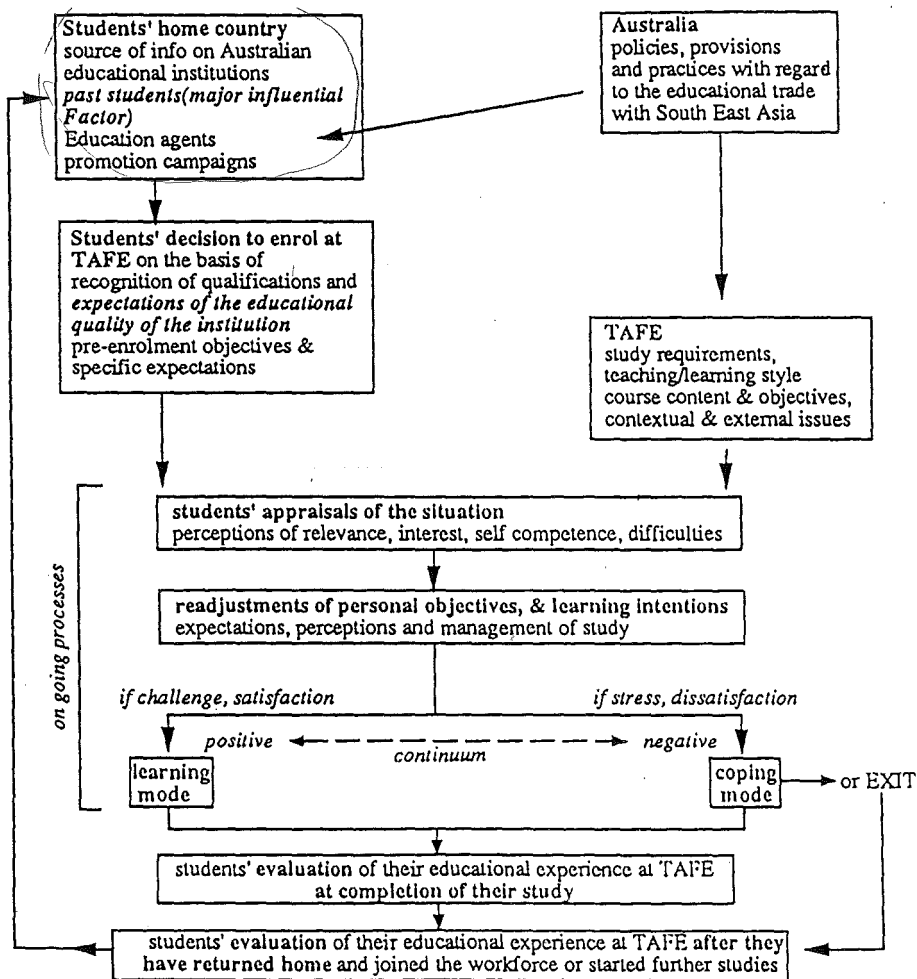


Figure 1.1 An interactive and dynamic model of the full cycle of International Students' experience in Australia.

The model represents the full cycle of the experience of TAFE international students, starting from students' first source of information about Australian educational institutions in their home country (top left hand corner of the model) and their decision to enrol at TAFE including their initial study objectives; down to students' educational experience while at TAFE (on going processes in the middle of the model); then leading to students' evaluation of their TAFE educational experience on completion of their study or after they have returned home (bottom part of the model); and finally feeding back into the source of information about TAFE for new prospective TAFE international students (arrow going from the bottom to the top of the model on the left hand side). Embedded in the model is the assumption that crucial to the success of future educational endeavours between Australia and South-east Asian countries is whether international students returning to their home country report positive personal, educational and social experiences, and perceive that the knowledge and skills that they have developed in Australian educational institutions are directly relevant to their personal needs and those of their country.

The study reported here concentrates on past international students' retrospective perceptions of their TAFE experience, and their current attitude towards the future of educational and business associations between their country and Australia. Students' on going processes, perceptions and adjustments during their study at TAFE, from initial appraisals to learning or coping mode (middle part of the model) are not reported in this document.

Specifically, the present study aimed at achieving the following:

- (i) develop a better understanding of the educational and social experience of international students studying in TAFE colleges, through the examination of their reasons for choosing to study at TAFE WA and of their adjustments to studying and to living in Western Australia;
- (ii) gain insight into international students' reflections and evaluation of their TAFE experience at the end of their study and after they have returned to their home country and joined the work force or started further studies;
- (iii) explore the relationship between past international students' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their current attitude towards future educational and business associations between their home country (or Asian countries in general) and Australia;
- (iv) obtain suggestions for improving the study conditions and pastoral care of TAFE international students, from international students themselves.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Under the general heading of methodology are three main topics: the development of the questionnaire, the questionnaire and the collection of data.

2.1 Questionnaire development

The development of the questionnaire was conducted in several stages and regular discussions took place between the researchers from Murdoch University, senior members of staff from the International Division of TAFE, in particular Ms Diana Salvaris, Academic Adviser and Mr Peter Ward, Manager.

The nature and scope of the information to be sought and the format of the questionnaires to be developed were discussed and gradually refined. These discussions ensured that the questions considered as most important by the International Division of TAFE for later adjustments of services to international students, as well the questions considered as most important by the Murdoch researchers for developing a better understanding of international students' perceptions of their experience would be included in the questionnaire.

In addition to the discussions with the International Division of TAFE, input from international students themselves was also sought during the development of the questionnaire. Accordingly, arrangements were made with the International Students Co-ordinators for two interviewers from Murdoch to meet informally with five small groups of international students from Bentley, South Fremantle (2 groups), Balga College and the Perth campus of the Central Metropolitan College. Table 2.1 shows the breakdown of the group of students interviewed by campus and country of residence.

These students were either about to complete their study at TAFE in November 1993 or early in 1994 and were thus in a position to provide extremely useful suggestions for questions that should be asked as well as feedback on the draft questionnaire. Some of these students completed the final questionnaire.

The interviews took place in a very informal setting. Students were fully informed of the aim and significance of the research to be conducted and their collaboration as consultants was solicited. The significance of students' input into the project in order to balance viewpoints and to enhance the quality of the outcomes was emphasised. Students were initially asked a set of open-ended questions to elicit their spontaneous responses to some of the issues addressed in the questionnaire. These included their personal reasons for coming to study at TAFE in Western Australia, their perceptions of study and reflections on their TAFE experience.

Table 2.1 Breakdown of students interviewed by country of residence and TAFE campus

Country of Residence	Campus			South Fremantle	Total
	Bentley	Balga	Perth		
Indonesia	2		3	1 (1)*	7
South Korea	1				1
Sri Lanka		2		(1)*	3
Hong Kong		1	1	1 (1)*	4
Thailand		1			1
Malaysia		1			1
Bangkok				1	1
Papua New Guinea				(1)*	1
Japan			1		1
TOTAL	3	5	5	3 (4)*	20

*Group B

The students were then asked to complete Parts A, B and C of the draft questionnaire and to provide feedback on its content (nature, relevance, suitability of the questions) and its format (clarity, wording, presentation). They were also asked if they had any suggestions regarding questions that they considered should be included to obtain a more comprehensive picture of international students' experience at TAFE. A number of modifications were made based on students' suggestions and feedback.

The development and piloting of Part D of the questionnaire, comprising the scale on International Education, were conducted separately. A list of statements was prepared by the Murdoch researchers, based on the literature on international students in Australia, on the internationalisation of education, on pamphlets advertising the educational and social benefits of study exchange programmes, as well as numerous articles published in Australian and South-east Asian newspapers. A number of academics actively involved in promoting the concept of internationalisation of education in Australia were consulted. Associate Professor Don Smart and Ms Grace Ang, authors of several reports on international education and Dr David Hill, Project Director for the Australian Consortium for "in-country" Indonesian studies (ACICIS), provided feedback on the initial list of statements and made suggestions for additional items.

The final draft of this instrument was piloted in August 1993 on 113 second year Commerce students at Murdoch University. Based on the psychometric results

obtained from the analyses, the instrument was refined. The major refinements were the inclusion of some "extreme" statements and the exclusion of a few "moderate" statements. This was carried out in order to make the instrument more discriminating.

The last section of the questionnaire was framed after consultation with the staff from TAFE International. It comprised questions which elicited the 1993 students' future plans, or questions regarding the current activities of the 1992 graduates and their re-adjustments to life in their home country.

2.2 The questionnaire

The 1992 and 1993 questionnaires were similar in content and format. The 1993 questionnaire had 4 sections (A to D) and the 1992 questionnaire had 5 sections (A to E). Each section is detailed below. The questionnaires were a blend of (a) forced choice questions to obtain exact information, for eg. from whom respondents sought help for problems experienced and (b) ratings to give respondents an opportunity to best express the degree of their perceptions of usefulness or importance or satisfaction. In addition, in each section space was provided for respondents to add other comments and to make suggestions for any improvements that could be made by TAFE. They were told to use the back pages of the questionnaire which were left blank if they needed more space.

The combination of these various types of questions on each major issue was considered particularly well suited to obtaining (a) some basic information from all respondents on all issues and (b) a deeper insight into some of these issues from those respondents who were willing to comment, explain and elaborate in more detail.

SECTION A - YOUR REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO STUDY AT TAFE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA (1992 and 1993)

There were three parts to Section A. In the first part, respondents were asked about their initial source of information of TAFE WA. They were presented with five alternatives: Education Agents, Friends/Relatives, Brochures, Newspapers and Education exhibitions and required to indicate which had been their first source of information about TAFE in their home country. An additional alternative "Other - Please specify" was also provided.

The second part elicited respondents' reasons for choosing to study at TAFE in Western Australia. They were presented with 16 possible reasons and were asked to indicate how important they personally considered each when they decided to study at TAFE WA. (It should be noted here that the small groups of students informally interviewed provided valuable feedback in this respect.) The scale ranged from 1 (Not

at all Important) to 4 (Very Important). An "anything else" option was also provided and respondents were asked to give details if they chose this.

In the third part of Section A respondents were required to rate how satisfied they were with their overall experience at TAFE in Western Australia. The scale ranged from 1 (Extremely Dissatisfied) to 6 (Extremely Satisfied). They were also required to explain their choice in the space provided.

SECTION B - REFLECTION ON YOUR TAFE EXPERIENCE (1992 and 1993)

There were three parts to this section which was devoted to asking respondents to reflect on their experience at TAFE. The first part was concerned with how they 'Adjusted to living in Australia', the second on 'Interactions with Australian students' and the third on 'Adjusting to studying at TAFE'.

In part one 'Adjusting to living in Australia', respondents were asked if they had experienced any problems with regard to organising accommodation and transport, dealing with health and financial issues, making friends or feelings of homesickness, or any other problems they had in this regard. They were asked to specify what the problem had been where applicable.

Respondents were then asked if they had sought help for any of the problems that they had experienced. Those who did not seek help were asked to give their reasons for not doing so. Those who indicated that they had sought help, were asked to indicate from whom they had sought help for their problems out of a list of eight possibilities. These included Friends/Other students, relatives in Perth, relatives at home, TAFE International, Lecturers, TAFE Counsellors and International Student Co-ordinators, and an "Other - Please specify" option. Thus respondents could report several sources from whom help was sought. They were also asked if they had received any help from any TAFE staff, whether or not that help had been useful and in the case of a negative answer why they felt this way. The conclusion to this part comprised an open ended question inviting respondents to make suggestions on how TAFE could provide better assistance to international students regarding adjusting to living in Australia.

The second part of this Section concentrated on 'Interacting with Australian students' and comprised three open ended questions. Respondents were asked whether there were opportunities to mix with local Australian students on their campus, what types of activities were organised and how successful these were. They were also asked for any suggestions which would facilitate and increase the quality and amount of interactions between international and local students.

The third part of this Section dealt with 'Adjusting to study at TAFE'. Respondents were presented with 13 possible problems that they may have experienced with regard to studying at TAFE. The initial informal interviews with students had provided the basis for this part of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate each of the 13 'possible problems' on a scale from 1 (Not a problem) to 4 (A major problem). Once again they were provided with an "Anything else - Please specify" option. The next set of questions for this part of the questionnaire followed exactly the format in the previously described 'Adjusting to living in WA' question with regard to seeking help for these problems. It also included an open ended question giving respondents the opportunity to make suggestions as to how TAFE could provide better assistance to international students with regard to 'Adjusting to studying in Australia'.

SECTION C - RETURNING BACK HOME (1992 only)

In this section respondents were asked about their re-adjustment on their return to their home country and whether they experienced any difficulties with regard to living, working and/or studying when they returned home and were given the opportunity to explain how they adjusted. In addition they were asked if they had maintained any contact with staff members or students from TAFE. Finally, they were asked what they would tell someone from their country about studying and living in Western Australia, following their own experiences.

SECTION D - INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN ASIAN COUNTRIES AND AUSTRALIA (1992 and 1993 respondents. Section C was omitted for the 1993 leaving students, hence this Section is labelled C in their questionnaire.)

This section presented the attitude scale developed to elicit international students' attitudes to a number of issues related to the nature of future educational associations between Asia and Australia. The scale comprised 20 attitude statements and 6 behavioural intention statements. The statements related to study exchange, economic issues or business ventures between respondents' home country (or Asia in general) and Australia.

The attitude statements were presented for ratings on a Likert scale from 1 Strongly Disagree to 4 Strongly Agree. The 6 behavioural intention statements required respondents to rate from 1 (No, definitely Not) to 4 (Yes, Definitely) whether or not they would be prepared to be involved (in their home country) in furthering and encouraging educational and business links with Australia. Two statements related to promoting education links, two statements related to considering business ventures and two statements related to maintaining social links in Australia.

SECTION E - YOUR THOUGHTS FOR IMPROVING STUDY CONDITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT TAFE

(Some questions were different for the 1992 and 1993 questionnaires.)

Note: This section is labelled Section D in the 1993 questionnaire.

This final section comprised two parts. The first part was the same for both cohorts and comprised an open ended question asking respondents for their suggestions on any improvements that TAFE could make with regard to helping international students adjust more easily to studying and living in Western Australia. This section provided an opportunity for respondents to add anything that had not been covered in the questionnaire as well as an opportunity to elaborate on any issues raised earlier.

In the second part of this final section, the 1992 respondents were asked some questions regarding their current activities, ie. if they had undertaken further studies (and if so, what type of study and where); if they were in the paid work force (and if so, what kind of work they were doing) or if they were involved in any alternative activities such as helping out at home, on holiday or seeking employment.

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their TAFE course had helped them to achieve what they initially set out to achieve. Finally, an open ended question elicited their personal views on the skills, knowledge and/or experience gained at TAFE that had been most useful to them.

The 1993 leaving students were presented with a different set of questions in this section. They were asked about their plans for the year following the completion of their TAFE studies and to provide details if they intended to continue with their studies or enter the paid work force. The two questions regarding whether their TAFE course had helped them to achieve what they initially set out to achieve and about the usefulness of the skills and knowledge gained at TAFE were exactly the same as for the 1992 respondents.

2.3 Data collection

It was initially intended to send all questionnaires to the students a few months after they had returned home. After discussions with staff from TAFE International and in view of extremely low response rates obtained by other researchers in a previous survey on international students, it was decided to mail the questionnaires to the group of international students who had left TAFE at the end of 1992 and to give the questionnaire to the cohort of 1993 students BEFORE they finished their exams and left Western Australia.

2.3.1 Questionnaire mailed to 1992 cohort

The questionnaire was sent to the 1992 graduates in October 1993, ie. approximately eight months after completion of their TAFE studies. The graduates were informed in a covering letter of the overall aim of the project and the importance of their contribution to it.

Since it was a fairly long questionnaire, it was considered appropriate to offer respondents a gift from Western Australia in appreciation of their time and effort. A list of gifts which included a high quality TAFE complimentary fountain pen encased in jarrah and various calendars and/or diaries depicting Australian themes was enclosed for respondents to choose from. An international pre-paid postage voucher was also enclosed.

In total there were 43 graduates of mainstream TAFE colleges. International addresses were available for 41 of them. The large majority of these graduates had completed an Associate Diploma.

Table 2.2 Patterns of responses of the 1992 cohort by country of residence

Country	Number of Questionnaires		
	Sent	Returned	% Returned
Japan	10	3	30%
Indonesia	7	4	57%
Malaysia	7	2	29%
Hong Kong	5	1	20%
Singapore	3	1	33%
Korea	3	1	33%
China	2	1	50%
Ghana	1	1	100%
India	1	1	100%
Maldives	1	0	0%
Thailand	1	0	0%
<i>Sub total</i>	41		
<i>Less returned unopened</i>	2		
TOTAL	39	15	38%

By mid-December 1993, 11 completed questionnaires were received and two letters were returned unopened. In January 1994, 28 reminder letters enclosing another copy of the questionnaire were sent out. Another 4 completed questionnaires were received, bringing the total responses to 15 and hence a response rate of 38% (15 of the 39 questionnaires that reached destination). Table 2.2 shows the patterns of responses of the cohort of 1992 TAFE graduates by country of residence.

2.3.2 Questionnaire given to 1993 cohort

In total there were approximately 65 international students planning to graduate in 1993. The TAFE International data base indicated that a large proportion of international students were studying at either one of 5 different TAFE campuses, namely, Balga, Bentley, South Fremantle (part of the South Metropolitan College), Perth and Mount Lawley (part of the Central Metropolitan College) and in either one of 4 main study areas, namely, Hospitality, Business, Engineering and Computing.

The questionnaires were administered on each campus during November 1993. Staff from TAFE International liaised with staff of the colleges and international students co-ordinators organised meetings between international students and Murdoch staff. This data collection was made particularly difficult not only because of the spread of students across campuses and study areas, but also given the climate of the time when numerous other surveys had been carried out with international students (both National and State). There was a general reluctance from both students and teachers to get involved in yet another research project. International students' co-ordinators and Murdoch staff took great care to explain the exact purpose and anticipated outcomes of this particular project. It was made clear to students that since this study was a collaborative project between Murdoch University and TAFE International, the results would directly lead to improvements of the services for international students at the college level. The co-operation and help provided by all the international students' co-ordinators was invaluable and is gratefully acknowledged here.

A total of 56 international students completed the questionnaire which represents a response rate of 86% of the total target population.

3.0 RESULTS

The first part of the results is a description of the overall sample and sub-samples (1992 and 1993). Given the small numbers for the 1992 sub-sample, all analyses were conducted for the whole group (71 respondents). Results by cohorts (1992 cohort: 15 and 1993 cohort: 56), are reported only when there were significant differences between the two sub-samples, or when qualitative comments were more typical of respondents who had returned home (1992) or of respondents who were still in Australia (1993). It should be noted that percentages in tables are rounded to the first decimal place, so the percentages in a table of single responses do not always total 100 per cent exactly.

3.1 Sample description

Table 3.1 gives the breakdown of the 1992 and 1993 respondents by country of residence, program of study and gender.

Table 3.1 Profile of 1993 (1992) cohorts who completed the questionnaire

	Country of Residence					
	Total n = 56 (15)	Indonesia n = 14 (4)	Hong Kong n = 12 (1)	Malaysia n = 9 (2)	Thailand n = 6 (0)	Other* n = 15 (8)
Program of Study						
Hospitality	8 (4)	3 (2)	3 (0)	1 (1)	1 (0)	0 (2)
Business	33 (2)	9 (1)	7 (0)	7 (1)	4 (0)	6 (0)
Engineering	6 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	5 (1)
Computing	6 (1)	2 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)
Other ⁺	3 (6)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5)
Gender						
Males	28 (8)	5 (3)	6 (1)	7 (1)	4 (0)	6 (2)
Females	28 (7)	9 (1)	6 (0)	2 (0)	2 (0)	9 (6)

* The 15 Other respondents in the 1993 sample were made up as follows:
Singapore (3), Sri Lanka (3), China (2), Botswana (2), Brunei (2), Taiwan, Tanzania, Maldives (1 each).
The 8 Other respondents in the 1992 sample were made up as follows:
Japan (3), China, Singapore, Ghana, Korea, India (1 each).

+ The Other courses comprised:
Laboratory practice, Art and Design, Fashion, Library Information.

Table 3.1 shows that the majority of respondents were from Indonesia (18; 25%), followed by Hong Kong (13; 18%), Malaysia (11; 15%) and Thailand (6; 8%). The 'Other' countries in the sample were grouped together to facilitate analyses, as there were no more than 3 respondents from any other country. The 23 'Other' respondents came from twelve different countries, including Singapore, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, Botswana, Brunei, Taiwan, Tanzania, Ghana, Korea, India and Maldives.

There were exactly the same numbers of males and females in the 1993 cohort and one more male in the 1992 cohort. The breakdown by country did not reveal any gender differences related to country of origin, except for Malaysia, where the total number of males ($n = 9$) was much higher than the number of females ($n = 2$). This difference should be kept in mind when interpreting responses, in particular those related to adjustments to living in Western Australia.

(See Appendix A1 for the 1994 sample of TAFE international respondents).

3.2 First source of information about TAFE

Respondents were asked to indicate their first source of information about TAFE. Five possible sources of information were proposed: friends/relatives, education agents, government agency, education exhibitions and brochures. Table 3.2 shows responses by country of residence.

Table 3.2 First source of information about TAFE - 1992/93 respondents.

First Source of Information	Country of Residence					
	Total n = 71	Indonesia n = 18	Hong Kong n = 13	Malaysia n = 11	Thailand n = 6	Other n = 23
Friends/Relatives	33 (47%)	7	4	6	2	14
Education Agents	26 (37%)	10	6	3	3	4
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	5 (7%)	0	0	0	1	4
Education Exhibitions	4 (6%)	0	3	1	0	0
Brochures	3 (4%)	1	0	1	0	1

Overall, most respondents first heard about TAFE from friends or relatives (47%) or through education agents (37%). Six of the Malaysian respondents (55%) and fourteen respondents (61%) from the 'Other' countries cited friends or relatives as their first source of information. The Indonesian and Hong Kong respondents however were more likely to cite education agents as their first source of information (10; 56% and 6; 46% respectively). Only a few respondents cited government agencies, education exhibitions or brochures as their first source of information about TAFE.

One important question is whether TAFE students' first source of information about TAFE has been changing over time. As the sample of 1992 respondents was too small to investigate this issue it was decided as a matter of interest, to compare the combined 1992-1993 data set with similar data obtained from 1993 and 1994 students enrolled in TAFE ELICOS courses (report in progress). Table 3.3 compares these four sets of data.

As can be seen in Table 3.3, generally over the three years, the first source of information about TAFE has remained friends or relatives (46% for the 1992-1993 respondents, 49% for the 1993 ELICOS group and 58% for the 1994 (February to April) ELICOS group, followed by education agents (36%, 35% and 26% respectively). For the 1994 (July to September) ELICOS group, the first source of information was education agents (47%) followed by friends or relatives (41%).

The breakdown by country reveals some differences across countries as well as changes over time within countries, however, due to the small numbers involved, caution in interpreting the data is suggested. It should also be noted that the patterns of enrolment by country differed between the 1992-1993 award courses and the 1993 and 1994 ELICOS courses. For example, there were only a few Malaysian students enrolled in ELICOS classes in 1993 (2) or 1994 (February to April) (2), compared to 11 students in the 1992-1993 award courses. In contrast, there was an increasing number of students from Japan and Taiwan/China enrolled in ELICOS classes (10 in 1993 and 13 in both groups of 1994 classes from Japan; 7 in 1993 and 11 and 9 in 1994 from Taiwan/China) compared to the 1992-1993 award courses (3 from Japan and 4 from Taiwan/China).

The patterns of responses from the Indonesian, Hong Kong and Thai groups were similar. Education agents were cited as the first source of information by most of the respondents from these countries (58% Indonesia, 43% Hong Kong and 46% Thailand), followed by friends and relatives (34% Indonesia, 40% Hong Kong and 39% Thailand). The small samples from Thailand (6, 9, 6 and 7) do not allow any comparisons to be made over time. Friends or relatives were cited as the first source of information about TAFE by a majority of the 1994 (February to April) ELICOS

Table 3.3 First source of information about TAFE - 1992/93 respondents, 1993 and 1994 TAFE ELICOS students.

First Source of Information	Frequency and (percentage)				
	Total	92/93 Respondents	1993 ELICOS	1994 ELICOS Feb - April	1994 ELICOS July - Sept
Overall	n = 274	n = 71	n = 79	n = 50	n = 74
Friends/Relatives	131 (48%)	33 (46%)	39 (49%)	29 (58%)	30 (41%)
Education Agents	101 (37%)	26 (37%)	27 (35%)	13 (26%)	35 (47%)
Education Exhibitions	18 (7%)	4 (6%)	9 (11%)	2 (4%)	3 (4%)
Brochures/Newspapers	14 (5%)	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	3 (6%)	5 (7%)
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	10 (4%)	5 (7%)	1 (1%)	3 (6%)	1 (1%)
Indonesia	n = 74	n = 18	n = 29	n = 8	n = 19
Education Agents	43 (58%)	10 (55%)	17 (59%)	3 (38%)	13 (68%)
Friends/Relatives	25 (34%)	7 (39%)	10 (34%)	5 (62%)	3 (16%)
Education Exhibitions	4 (5%)	0	2 (7%)	0	2 (11%)
Brochures/Newspapers	2 (3%)	1 (6%)	0	0	1 (5%)
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	0	0	0	0	0
Hong Kong	n = 47	n = 13	n = 13	n = 8	n = 13
Education Agents	20 (43%)	6 (46%)	4 (32%)	2 (25%)	8 (62%)
Friends/Relatives	19 (40%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	6 (75%)	4 (31%)
Education Exhibitions	5 (11%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	0	0
Brochures/Newspapers	2 (4%)	0	2 (15%)	0	0
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	1 (2%)	0	0	0	1 (8%)
Malaysia	n = 22	n = 11	n = 2	n = 2	n = 7
Friends/Relatives	14 (64%)	6 (54%)	2 (100%)	2 (100%)	4 (57%)
Education Agents	6 (27%)	3 (27%)	0	0	3 (43%)
Education Exhibitions	1 (5%)	1 (9%)	0	0	0
Brochures/Newspapers	1 (5%)	1 (9%)	0	0	0
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.3 First source of information about TAFE - 1992/93 respondents, 1993 and 1994 TAFE ELICOS students.

First Source of Information	Frequency and (percentage)				
	Total	92/93 Respondents	1993 ELICOS	1994 ELICOS Feb - April	1994 ELICOS July - Sept
Thailand	n = 28	n = 6	n = 9	n = 6	n = 7
Education Agents	13 (46%)	3 (50%)	4 (44%)	4 (66%)	2 (29%)
Friends/Relatives	11 (39%)	2 (33%)	3 (33%)	1 (17%)	5 (71%)
Education Exhibitions	3 (11%)	0	2 (23%)	1 (17%)	0
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	1 (4%)	1 (17%)	0	0	0
Brochures/Newspapers	0	0	0	0	0
Japan	n = 39	n = 3	n = 10	n = 13	n = 13
Friends/Relatives	25 (64%)	2 (67%)	7 (70%)	9 (69%)	7 (54%)
Education Agents	7 (18%)	0	1 (10%)	2 (15%)	4 (31%)
Brochures/Newspapers	5 (13%)	1 (33%)	1 (10%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	1 (3%)	0	0	1 (8%)	0
Education Exhibitions	1 (3%)	0	1 (10%)	0	0
Taiwan-China	n = 31	n = 4	n = 7	n = 11	n = 9
Friends/Relatives	14 (45%)	3 (75%)	4 (58%)	4 (37%)	3 (33%)
Education Agents	9 (29%)	1 (25%)	1 (14%)	2 (18%)	5 (56%)
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	3 (10%)	0	1 (14%)	2 (18%)	0
Brochures/Newspapers	3 (10%)	0	0	2 (18%)	1 (11%)
Education Exhibitions	2 (6%)	0	1 (14%)	1 (9%)	0

Table 3.3 First source of information about TAFE - 1992/93 respondents, 1993 and 1994 TAFE ELICOS students.

First Source of Information	Frequency and (percentage)				
	Total	92/93 Respondents	1993 ELICOS	1994 ELICOS Feb - April	1994 ELICOS July - Sept
Other*	n = 33	n = 16	n = 9	n = 2	n = 6
Friends/Relatives	23 (70%)	9 (56%)	8 (89%)	2 (100%)	4 (67%)
Education Agents	4 (12%)	3 (19%)	1 (11%)	0	0
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	4 (12%)	4 (25%)	0	0	0
Education Exhibitions	1 (3%)	0	0	0	1 (17%)
Brochures/Newspapers	1 (3%)	0	0	0	1 (17%)

* Other as follows:

1. 92/93 respondents: Singapore (4), Sri Lanka (3), Botswana (2), Brunei (2), Tanzania, Maldives, Ghana, Korea and India (1 each).
2. 93 ELICOS: Korea (2), Macau, Vietnam, Nepal, Singapore, Myanmar, Poland and Switzerland (1 each).
3. 94 ELICOS (February - April): Switzerland, Korea (1 each).
4. 94 ELICOS (July - September): Poland, Korea (2 each), Sri Lanka, Vietnam (1 each).

students from Indonesia and Hong Kong (62% and 75% respectively), but only second by the 1994 (July to September) ELICOS students from both countries (16% Indonesia and 31% Hong Kong).

The majority of respondents from Malaysia, Japan and Taiwan/China cited friends or relatives as the first source of information (64%, 64% and 45% respectively). The small samples from Malaysia (11, 2, 2 and 7) do not allow any comparisons to be made over time. With regard to Japan, there is a clear indication that friends or relatives were the major first source of information for students enrolled in the 1993 and 1994 ELICOS classes. Finally, the combined Taiwan/China data indicates a more diverse first source of information about TAFE, especially for the 1994 ELICOS groups.

(See Appendix A2 for the patterns of responses of the 1994 graduands).

3.3 Important factors in choosing to study at TAFE Western Australia

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 16 factors which they may have taken into consideration when deciding to study at TAFE Western Australia. Table 3.4 shows the mean ratings of importance of these factors by country of residence. The statements are arranged in decreasing order of importance for the whole group of 71 respondents.

Overall, the highest rating of importance was given to 'To improve my English', followed by 'To get a good job at home' and 'Overseas qualifications are liked in my country'.

The breakdown by country revealed that while Indonesian, Hong Kong and Thai respondents gave the highest ratings to 'To improve my English' and 'To get a good job at home', Malaysian respondents rated 'Overseas qualifications are liked in my country' even higher.

(See Appendix A3 for the patterns of responses of the 1994 respondents overall and by country of residence).

Indonesia

For the eighteen Indonesian respondents, the major reason for coming to study at TAFE, apart from improving their English, was vocational, 'To get a good job at home' and the recognition of TAFE qualifications in their country. The low rating given to 'To get into university' (2.50; 14th in order of importance) and to 'Easier to get into university in Australia' (2.06; 15th) suggests that the 1992-1993 groups of Indonesians were more interested in coming to TAFE for updating their vocational qualifications than in using TAFE as an initial step or side entry into university. (See Appendix A3).

Hong Kong

In contrast, the thirteen Hong Kong respondents appeared essentially interested in studying at TAFE to get into university later. Their ratings for 'To get into university' were quite high (3.38; 3rd in order of importance), and 'Easier to get into university in Australia' relatively high (2.46; 8th) compared to the other groups. The 1992-1993 cohorts of Hong Kong respondents did not consider the reputation of TAFE (a mean rating of 2.62 which was the lowest rating of all the groups) in their country as highly as the other groups. In addition they did not consider that overseas qualifications were as well regarded in their country (a mean rating of 2.92, only slightly higher than the lowest rating of 2.83 by the group of 23 'other' respondents from diverse countries). (See Appendix A3).

Table 3.4 Importance of factors in choosing to study at TAFE, WA - 1992/93 respondents.

Factors	Mean Rating of Importance ¹ (Standard Deviations)					
	Total (n = 71)	Indonesia (n = 18)	Hong Kong (n = 13)	Malaysia (n = 11)	Thailand (n = 6)	Other (n = 23)
To improve my English	3.28 (1.09)	3.83 (0.38)	3.62 (0.65)	3.00 (1.26)	4.00 (0.00)	2.54 (1.30)
To get a good job at home	3.23 (0.97)	3.65 (0.61)	3.62 (0.65)	3.27 (0.90)	3.50 (0.55)	2.61 (1.56)
Overseas qualifications are liked in my country	3.18 (0.90)	3.61 (0.61)	2.92 (1.11)	3.36 (0.81)	3.50 (0.55)	2.83 (0.94)
To update my qualification	2.95 (1.07)	3.28 (0.89)	3.23 (0.83)	2.73 (1.10)	3.17 (0.75)	2.57 (1.27)
TAFE has a good reputation	2.94 (0.90)	3.22 (0.73)	2.62 (0.87)	2.82 (0.75)	3.33 (0.52)	2.87 (1.10)
Australia provides quality education	2.92 (0.77)	3.11 (0.76)	2.85 (0.80)	3.27 (0.65)	3.17 (0.41)	2.57 (0.79)
To get into university	2.83 (1.22)	2.50 (1.29)	3.38 (0.87)	2.91 (1.38)	3.33 (1.21)	2.61 (1.20)
Easier to study in a small city	2.74 (1.01)	2.83 (1.04)	2.77 (0.83)	2.91 (0.94)	2.67 (0.52)	2.59 (1.26)
Cost of living in Australia is cheaper	2.59 (1.04)	2.78 (1.26)	2.38 (0.96)	2.82 (0.75)	2.83 (0.75)	2.36 (1.09)
To travel abroad	2.54 (1.00)	2.72 (0.96)	1.85 (0.69)	2.27 (0.79)	2.83 (1.17)	2.83 (1.07)
Perth has a good climate	2.50 (0.88)	2.82 (0.81)	2.46 (1.05)	2.36 (0.81)	2.67 (1.03)	2.30 (0.82)
To study with people from different countries	2.49 (1.04)	2.82 (0.95)	2.31 (1.18)	2.27 (0.86)	2.67 (0.82)	2.41 (1.10)
Education in Australia is cheaper	2.42 (1.12)	2.56 (1.29)	2.31 (1.11)	2.73 (0.79)	2.67 (1.03)	2.14 (1.15)
Perth is close to my home country	2.27 (1.20)	3.05 (1.11)	1.69 (0.85)	2.64 (1.21)	2.67 (0.82)	1.68 (1.13)
Had relatives living in Perth	2.11 (1.07)	1.94 (1.16)	1.92 (1.19)	2.18 (1.18)	2.33 (1.21)	2.27 (0.94)
Easier to get into university in Australia	2.07 (0.91)	2.06 (0.94)	2.46 (0.78)	2.18 (0.75)	1.67 (0.82)	1.91 (1.02)

¹ Ratings of factors ranged from:

1 = Not at all important
3 = Quite Important

2 = Slightly Important
4 = Very Important

Malaysia

The eleven Malaysian respondents (nine were males) gave the highest rating to 'Overseas qualifications are liked in my country' (3.36, 1st in order of importance) and rated highly 'Australia provides quality education' (a mean rating of 3.27, the highest rating of all groups). Interestingly however, they did not rate 'TAFE has a good reputation' (2.82 which was the second lowest rating just above the Hong Kong respondents) and 'To update my qualification' as highly as most of the other groups (2.73, which was again the second lowest rating above the respondents from 'other countries'). These results suggest that this group of Malaysian respondents may have come to study at TAFE because they could not get into university in their country or in Australia. TAFE appealed to them essentially because it was an alternative overseas qualification perceived as valued in their home country, and because the cost of living in Australia was considered to be cheaper than in other countries taking into account the exchange rate, etc.

Thailand

The six Thai respondents displayed a pattern of responses quite distinct from the other groups. Like the Hong Kong group and unlike the Indonesian group, the Thai respondents considered getting into university as an important factor in choosing to study at TAFE (a mean rating of 3.33, the second highest rating after the Hong Kong respondents). Alternatively, like the Indonesian respondents and unlike the Hong Kong respondents, the Thai group thought that TAFE had a good reputation in their country (3.33, the highest rating of all groups). Their low rating of 'Easier to get into university in Australia' (1.67, the lowest of all groups) suggests that the 1992/93 Thai respondents may have considered TAFE an initial step into university but that entry to university in their country may not be as difficult as it is for the Hong Kong and Malaysian respondents.

Overall, no gender differences were found with regard to respondents' ratings of the importance of the 16 factors.

3.4 Reflections on studying at TAFE Western Australia

This section focuses on respondents' reflections on their study at TAFE in Western Australia. It contains three sections: i) Overall satisfaction with TAFE experience; ii) Adjusting to study at TAFE; and iii) Suggestions for improving study conditions for international students at TAFE WA.

3.4.1 Overall satisfaction with TAFE experience

Respondents were firstly asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their experience at TAFE in Western Australia on a scale from 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied to 6 = Extremely Satisfied. Table 3.5 indicates that overall respondents were satisfied with their experience (mean = 4.03).

Table 3.5 Overall satisfaction with experience at TAFE by country of residence, program of study and college - 1992/93 respondents

		Mean Rating of Satisfaction ¹	
		Mean	Std. Dev.
Overall	Total (n = 68)	4.03	1.09
Program of Study			
Hospitality	n = 12	4.08	1.38
Business	n = 34	4.09	0.90
Engineering	n = 7	3.57	1.27
Computing	n = 7	3.57	1.13
Other	n = 8	4.50	1.20
Country of Residence			
Indonesia	n = 17	3.88	0.99
Hong Kong	n = 13	4.23	0.83
Malaysia	n = 10	4.40	0.97
Thailand	n = 6	3.67	1.03
Other	n = 22	3.95	1.36
College			
Bentley	n = 11	4.18	1.54
Fremantle	n = 8	4.13	1.25
CMC	n = 33	3.97	1.05
Balga	n = 16	4.00	0.82
Cohort			
1992	n = 15	4.47	1.36
1993	n = 53	3.91	0.99

¹ Ratings of Satisfaction ranged from: 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied to 6 = Extremely Satisfied.

The breakdown by program of study showed that the most satisfied were the group of 8 respondents enrolled in 'Other' programs which were Laboratory practice, Art and Design, Fashion and Library Information and the least satisfied were the groups from Engineering and Computing. The breakdown by country of residence revealed that respondents from Malaysia had the highest mean satisfaction ratings (4.40) followed by the respondents from Hong Kong (4.23). The least satisfied were the respondents from Thailand with a mean rating of 3.67.

Statistical tests showed no significant differences with regard to program of study, country of residence, college or gender in the ratings of overall satisfaction. A marginally significant difference emerged with regard to cohorts, with the 1992 cohort having a higher satisfaction rating (4.47 (1992); 3.91 (1993)). [$t(66) = -1.78$ $p = .08$].

(NOTE: The 1994 respondents' ($n = 53$) overall level of satisfaction with their experience at TAFE (mean 4.10 sd 1.03) was not significantly different from that of the 1993 respondents).

RESPONDENTS' EXPLANATIONS FOR SATISFACTION RATINGS

In addition to rating their overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience, respondents were asked to explain their satisfaction ratings. These two to three line statements were structured into 4 broad categories: Organisation, Study/Courses, Staff/Teaching and Social/Cultural.

For the 1992 sample, the majority of respondents' statements regarding their satisfaction with their TAFE experience related to staff/teaching methods (5; 42%), followed by course/units of study (4; 33%), organisation and social/cultural variables (1 each; 8% respectively). For the 1993 sample, the order was different, in that the majority of the statements related to general TAFE organisation/facilities (15; 35%), followed by course/units of study (14; 33%), staff/teaching methods (12; 28%), and social/cultural variables (2; 5%).

Statements in each of the 4 categories were classified as being either positive or negative in direction. Table 3.6 illustrates the breakdown of positive and negative statements accompanying the ratings of overall satisfaction by cohort (ie. 1992/93) and categories.

The figures illustrate the marginal statistical difference with regard to ratings of satisfaction of the two cohorts. The large majority of the 1992 respondents (9/12, 75%) justified their ratings in terms of positive statements compared to less than half (20/43, 47%) of the 1993 respondents.

The largest number of positive statements of the 1992 cohort related to the overall standard and relevance of TAFE units/courses (4/9, 44%). This was also true for the 1993 cohort (12/20, 60%). In the case of negative statements, the 1992 cohort provided only 3, and all were related to the staff/teaching category. In contrast, the 1993 cohort provided a total of 23, with the majority related to the general organisation category (13/23, 57%). Negative statements significantly outnumbered positive statements in this category by approximately 74%. This was followed by statements related to the staff/teaching category (6/23, 26%).

Table 3.6 Classification of statements accompanying ratings of overall satisfaction by cohort - 1992/93 respondents

Statement Category	Cohort and direction of statements (frequency)			
	1992		1993	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Organisation				
Time-tabling	-	-	-	6
Internal administration/Liaison with students	1	-	-	4
General Facilities	-	-	2	3
Study/Courses				
Overall standard/quality	2	-	7	1
Relevance	2	-	5	1
Staff/Teaching				
Interpersonal qualities (eg. friendliness, helpfulness)	3	2	6	3
Cultural bias	-	1	-	3
Social/Cultural				
Recreational activities/facilities	-	-	-	2
Cultural understanding	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	9 (75%)	3 (27%)	20 (47%)	23 (53%)

It should be pointed out however that a degree of caution should be exercised when interpreting the results of the 1992 cohort, due to the relatively small number of respondents comprising that cohort (38% of target population compared with 86% of target population for the 1993 cohort). Hence the views expressed by 1992 respondents may not be representative of the views of the entire target population (ie. 1992 graduates) of that year.

The following section provides an overview of both positive and negative statements by respondents within each category. The information contained in parenthesis following the quote relate to the gender and program of study of the respondent.

Organisation

Respondents from the 1992 cohort provided little input to this category (only 1 respondent made a positive comment relating to general efficiency). In contrast, 15 comments were made by the 1993 respondents, out of which 13 were negative. Most related to time-tabling issues, with respondents commenting on the difficulty in planning their overall course structure because of the uncertain availability of semester-based courses:

Because I was not told that certain subjects are not offered in second semester.
(Female, Hospitality)

I don't think TAFE is very well organised, and we [overseas students] find it difficult to plan ahead. (Female, Computing)

Respondents also appeared to have problems with the time-tabling of examinations and the lack of opportunity to sit for supplementary examinations:

The exam timetable comes out so late that we haven't got enough time for preparation. There is very poor planning of exam timetable eg. a few subjects in 3 consecutive days. (Male, Business)

No supplementary exams especially being an overseas student .. means staying for another 6 months to do [a unit] again .. Mind you, money has to be paid. (Female, Engineering)

Another issue addressed in this category is that of internal administration and liaison with students. Perceived differences in the standard of general facilities provided at different campuses and problems transferring between campuses were mentioned:

Discrepancies in facilities and activities at various campuses tend to favour some students and disadvantage others. (Male, Computing)

Because my campus is in Balga and I can't transfer to Perth TAFE.
(Female, Business)

Respondents also commented on an apparent breakdown of communication between administrative/teaching staff and the general student body. This was seen to affect students on both individual (eg. course exemption) and group (eg. examination) levels:

The senior lecturer should explain to overseas students who want to get exemption or transfer units what they have to do. For me, I had a bad experience about this. Although I had a letter from the director of Eng. I still couldn't get an exemption. (Male, Engineering)

The students cannot know their final exam result. (Male, Business)

The last issue addressed in this category is that of facilities. Positive comments made were of a general nature with regard to satisfactory facilities in particular campuses. Negative comments in this area related to either a discrepancy between initial expectation and subsequent reality, or to facilities specific to particular courses of study:

I am disappointed with some facilities provided. It is not what I expected. (Female, Hospitality)

There is not much computer facilities for the students who study in the Administration course. (Female, Business)

Study/Courses

Both 1992 and 1993 respondents made significantly more positive comments regarding their satisfaction with this aspect of their TAFE experience. The perceived overall standard of TAFE courses and perceived relevance of TAFE courses to respondents' intended career paths were two issues respondents commented on. With regard to the former, respondents appreciated the balance of theoretical and practical components in the courses:

TAFE provides training of practical and theoretical components in the course. (Female, Hospitality)

Because I can learn so much, including practical and theory and good training. (Female, Hospitality)

Many positive comments were also made when respondents equated the relevance of their course content to the vocational requirements in their home countries:

TAFE gives the knowledge I need to get a good job in my country. (Male, Computing)

I'll be able to find a job easily in my home country. (Male, Computing)

I'll get all the practical skills needed to be a highly qualified library staff member. (Female, Library and Information)

The syllabus of the course is appropriate to my job. (Female, Library and Information)

I learned a great deal which has helped to make me a better teacher in clothing back home. (Female, Fashion)

The few negative comments made in this category related to perceived differences in TAFE standards across Australia, and perceived inflexibility in course structures resulting in the need to undertake study in courses not directly relevant to main programme areas:

I have travelled around Australia and I found out that TAFE college standards are very different. (Male, Hospitality)

We have to study unimportant subjects eg. commercial law etc. (Male, Computing)

Staff/Teaching

Comments in this category for 1992 respondents were evenly spread across positive and negative categories, the same was true of the 1993 responses. Main areas of concern were related to aspects of interpersonal qualities displayed by TAFE staff and incidents where particular forms of cultural bias were perceived to have been present. The willingness of staff to help students comprised the bulk of positive comments:

So far all the staff are quite friendly and helpful. (Male, Hospitality)

The lecturers are all very helpful. (Male, Laboratory Practices)

The staff are very helpful. (Female, Business)

Little interference and very helpful when help is needed. (Male, Engineering)

Negative comments in this area related to a perceived lack of understanding of the learning needs of international students.

There is one lecturer who does not teach us properly as [s/he] does not know how to approach overseas students. (Female, Engineering)

Some teachers are very good in teaching, and some are bad. They are bad because they aren't concerned whether Asian students understand or not. (Male, Business)

Other comments highlighted the difficulties in student/staff relations.

The teacher didn't give enough support to help our development. (Female, Business)

Some officers are not very helpful. eg. counsellors. (Female, Business)

I didn't meet any teachers who suit me and I couldn't find out anything interesting (unfortunately). (Female, Art/Design)

Cultural bias was articulated by some respondents in the following manner:

Some lecturers are very biased towards Asian students. (Male, Engineering)

*Partiality with home and overseas student by overseas teaching staff.
(Male, Computing)*

*I find that some teachers are not really friendly to overseas' students.
(Female, Business)*

Finally, a few respondents perceived some teaching methods as being below standard.

*I find that some lecturers aren't qualified to teach at a level we are here to study.
It's not that they don't have the knowledge, their teaching skills are very poor.
(Female, Computing)*

*Certain lecturers / tutors aren't conversant enough to teach certain subjects.
(Male, Computing)*

Social/Cultural

There were only 3 responses falling into this broad category. The negative comments related to recreational facilities provided at TAFE for student use, while positive comments related to the value of cultural exchange as an educational priority:

Very few school activities and there isn't any sporting facility that you can go to relax and keep fit. (Male, Business)

The entertainment is not as good as in my country. (Female, Business)

Because I got many experiences from TAFE WA as well as understanding .. means that we experienced lots of different customs/cultures between Australia with Indonesia. (Male, Hospitality)

3.4.2 Adjusting to study at TAFE Western Australia

In this section, respondents were presented with 13 different problems regarding study at TAFE and asked to rate them from 1 = Not a problem for me to 4 = A major problem for me. They were also given the opportunity to indicate if they had any other problems which were not on the list. Table 3.7 shows the mean ratings of problems by country of residence and Table 3.8 shows the breakdown by program of study. Problems were organised into 3 major categories relating to English language difficulties, Teaching/Learning and Social/Cultural factors.

Table 3.7 Problems when studying at TAFE by country of residence - 1992/93 respondents.

	Mean Ratings of Problems ¹ (Standard Deviations)					
	Total (n = 71)	Indonesia (n = 18)	Hong Kong (n = 13)	Malaysia (n = 11)	Thailand (n = 6)	Other (n = 23)
English Language						
Writing in English	2.23 (0.97)	2.50 (0.92)	2.85 (0.90)	1.64 (0.50)	2.83 (0.75)	1.78 (0.95)
Understanding teacher	2.18 (0.95)	2.33 (0.91)	2.62 (0.87)	1.73 (0.90)	2.67 (0.82)	1.91 (0.95)
Speaking in English	2.14 (0.90)	2.39 (0.85)	2.23 (0.83)	1.64 (0.67)	2.83 (0.75)	1.95 (1.00)
Reading in English	1.85 (0.82)	1.94 (0.64)	2.38 (0.87)	1.45 (0.52)	2.33 (0.82)	1.52 (0.85)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.1	2.3	2.5	1.6	2.7	1.8
Teaching/Learning						
Not sure about standards of good assignments	2.53 (0.94)	2.44 (1.10)	2.85 (1.14)	2.36 (0.67)	2.83 (0.41)	2.41 (0.91)
Difficulty in writing notes while lecturer is talking	2.47 (0.96)	2.39 (0.98)	3.31 (0.75)	2.09 (0.94)	2.50 (0.55)	2.23 (0.92)
Not getting enough handouts	2.33 (0.96)	2.44 (0.92)	2.46 (0.78)	2.18 (1.25)	2.68 (0.82)	2.14 (0.99)
Teacher used local Australian knowledge and examples	2.31 (0.90)	2.44 (0.86)	2.54 (1.05)	1.91 (0.83)	2.50 (0.55)	2.22 (0.95)
Not sure exactly what required (assignments)	2.10 (0.89)	2.22 (0.81)	2.46 (1.05)	2.09 (0.94)	2.33 (0.82)	1.73 (0.77)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.1	2.6	2.1
Social/Cultural						
Worried about giving wrong answers in class	2.51 (1.02)	2.67 (0.91)	2.62 (0.87)	2.45 (0.93)	3.17 (1.17)	2.18 (1.14)
Feeling shy to ask when something is not understood	2.31 (0.94)	2.39 (0.98)	2.38 (0.87)	2.18 (0.87)	3.17 (1.17)	2.05 (0.95)
People had difficulty understanding me	2.14 (0.86)	2.39 (0.92)	2.38 (0.87)	2.00 (0.63)	2.33 (0.52)	1.82 (0.91)
Uncomfortable about calling lecturers by their first name	1.72 (0.87)	1.72 (0.83)	1.54 (0.66)	1.64 (0.67)	2.00 (0.89)	1.81 (1.12)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.7	2.0

¹ Ratings of problems ranged from: 1 = Not a problem to 4 = A Major problem.

Table 3.7 indicates that overall the biggest problems were related to Teaching/Learning and some Social/Cultural factors. Problems with 'uncertainty of the standards of good assignments' (2.53), 'worries about giving the wrong answer in class' (2.51) and 'difficulty in writing notes while the lecturer is talking' (2.49) were given the highest ratings overall.

The breakdown by categories of problems stressed the significance of some specific study adjustments. With regard to English language factors, the highest rating was given to 'writing in English' and the lowest to 'reading in English'. In the Teaching/Learning section, 'not sure about the standards for a good assignment'; was perceived as the biggest problem by all respondents, except the Hong Kong group. Finally, in the Social/Cultural section, 'worried about giving the wrong answer in front of the class' was rated as the biggest problem by all groups.

The breakdown by country of residence revealed important differences in the nature and magnitude of study problems experienced by each group of respondents.

(See Appendix A4 for the patterns of responses of the 1994 respondents overall and by country).

Indonesia

Overall, the eighteen Indonesian respondents gave relatively similar ratings to all types of problems. Most of their ratings were in the average range compared to the other groups.

Hong Kong

In contrast the respondents from Hong Kong appeared to experience important academic problems, in particular with English and with Teaching/Learning. 'Writing notes while the lecturer is talking' stood out as their major study problem, which was in line with their self-reports of difficulty in 'writing in English' and 'understanding the teacher'. The Hong Kong respondents' problems with understanding their teachers and taking good notes in class can be related to their language learning experience in high school in their home country. Interviews with ELICOS students (report in progress) indicated that they had had little experience of interacting in English prior to coming to Australia as they were taught in Cantonese even in their English classes. Additionally, although they were used to a lot of expository methods of teaching (Biggs, 1992), they were usually given handouts by their teachers or would simply copy down notes from the blackboard, which would explain their concern about not getting enough handouts in class at TAFE. This coincides with these respondents' strong academic orientation in comparison to other groups reflected in their major reason for coming to study at TAFE in Australia which was to get into university later (see Section 3.3).

Table 3.8 Problems when studying at TAFE by program of study -
1992/93 respondents

	Mean Ratings of Problems ¹ (Standard Deviations)					
	Total (n = 71)	Hospitality (n = 13)	Business (n = 35)	Engineering (n = 7)	Computing (n = 7)	Other (n = 9)
English Language						
Writing in English	2.23 (0.97)	2.31 (1.11)	2.23 (0.91)	1.71 (0.95)	1.86 (0.90)	2.78 (0.97)
Understanding teacher	2.18 (0.95)	2.38 (1.04)	2.06 (0.87)	2.14 (1.07)	2.14 (0.90)	2.44 (1.13)
Speaking in English	2.14 (0.91)	2.15 (0.99)	2.06 (0.84)	2.00 (0.89)	1.86 (0.69)	2.78 (1.09)
Reading in English	1.85 (0.82)	1.85 (0.90)	1.80 (0.68)	1.43 (0.79)	1.71 (0.76)	2.44 (1.13)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.6
Teaching/Learning						
Not sure about standards of good assignments	2.53 (0.94)	2.54 (0.97)	2.69 (0.87)	2.14 (1.07)	1.83 (1.17)	2.67 (0.87)
Difficulty in writing notes while lecturer is talking	2.47 (0.96)	2.62 (1.04)	2.46 (0.92)	2.14 (0.90)	2.17 (0.75)	2.78 (1.20)
Not getting enough handouts	2.33 (0.96)	2.08 (0.86)	2.57 (0.98)	2.29 (0.76)	2.17 (0.75)	1.89 (1.17)
Teacher used local Australian knowledge and examples	2.31 (0.90)	2.38 (0.96)	2.46 (0.85)	2.43 (0.97)	2.14 (0.90)	1.67 (0.87)
Not sure exactly what required (assignments)	2.10 (0.89)	2.38 (0.96)	2.06 (0.84)	1.71 (0.95)	2.17 (0.98)	2.11 (0.93)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.1	2.2
Social/Cultural						
Worried about giving wrong answers in class	2.51 (1.02)	2.38 (0.96)	2.63 (0.91)	2.57 (1.51)	2.17 (0.75)	2.44 (1.33)
Feeling shy to ask when something is not understood	2.31 (0.97)	1.92 (0.76)	2.43 (0.98)	2.57 (1.27)	2.17 (0.75)	2.33 (1.12)
People had difficulty understanding me	2.14 (0.86)	2.31 (0.63)	2.00 (0.80)	2.14 (1.07)	2.50 (1.05)	2.22 (1.09)
Uncomfortable about calling lecturers by their first name	1.72 (0.87)	1.54 (0.78)	1.74 (0.78)	2.57 (1.51)	1.50 (0.55)	1.37 (0.52)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.1	2.1

¹ Ratings of problems ranged from: 1 = Not a problem to 4 = A Major problem.

Malaysia

The group of eleven Malaysian respondents appeared very different from all the other groups, in the sense that they did not appear to have any major problems related to English or to the Teaching/Learning problems (lowest mean ratings for all problems). 'Writing in English', for example, did not appear to present much difficulty for these respondents at all, while this activity was rated as the most difficult by all other groups. These respondents' ratings of Social/Cultural problems also tended to be lower compared to the other groups. (See Appendix A4).

Thailand

Overall, the six Thai respondents appeared to experience major difficulties in all aspects of their study. Like the Hong Kong respondents and in line with both groups' strong academic orientation, they reported the greatest difficulties with English, especially with writing and speaking in English. They appeared to be even more concerned than the Hong Kong group, about the lack of handouts, but not as worried about taking notes in class. With regard to the Social/Cultural issues, they appeared to experience major difficulties, more than any of the other groups, in particular with regard to communication in class, such as 'feeling shy to ask when something is not understood' or 'worried about giving the wrong answer in front of the class'. However, the small number of respondents from Thailand should be noted before making any generalisations. (See Appendix A4).

As can be seen in Table 3.8 the breakdown of study problems by program of study did not reveal any major program related differences.

Some significant gender differences overall emerged with regard to the ratings of study problems. In general, females appeared to experience more problems than males with 'speaking in English' (Females - 2.38; Males - 1.94). [$t(68) = -2.07$ $p < .05$]; 'feeling too shy to ask when something is not understood' (Females - 2.62; Males - 2.06). [$t(68) = -2.50$ $p < .05$]; and 'worried about giving the wrong answer in class' (Females - 2.79; Males - 2.29). [$t(68) = -2.15$ $p < .05$].

SEEKING HELP FOR STUDY PROBLEMS

Forty nine respondents (70%) reported seeking help for these problems. Thirty three of them indicated from whom help had been sought. The majority indicated that they had sought help from friends and/or other students (61%). This was followed by seeking help from TAFE lecturers (21%), TAFE counsellors and relatives in Perth (6% respectively), relatives at home and International Student Co-ordinators (3% respectively).

To the probe question "Why didn't you seek help" (for those who didn't), only three responses were received. These particular respondents claimed not to have

sought help for their problems because they perceived lecturers and local students to be generally unsympathetic to the problems encountered by international students. It should be emphasised however, that survey numbers indicate this to be a distinctly minority view.

To the question 'Was help received from TAFE staff useful', thirty four respondents replied in the positive. There was, however, a small number of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction in particular areas of help received. These ranged from staff experience and knowledge in dealing with international students to the attitude communicated to students seeking help (eg. interest and creativity in problem-solving):

When sometimes I ask a question, I can tell that they are not interested. Also, some lecturers have not got enough experience and knowledge.
(Male, Computing)

Usually they haven't got any ideas how to solve the problems. They'll suggest to me to ask other people or staff. (Female, Business)

I don't think the problem was taken too seriously, although almost all the students in my class had it. (Male, Business)

3.4.3 Suggestions for improving study conditions of international students at TAFE Western Australia

In this section, respondents were asked for their thoughts, ideas and suggestions regarding what TAFE could do to facilitate studying and study-related daily living conditions for its international student population. A total of 67 suggestions were received from both groups: 7 from the 1992 cohort and 60 from the 1993 cohort. Five respondents offered no suggestions for improving conditions - 3 of whom explained that they were satisfied with present study/living conditions.

As for overall satisfaction (see Section 3.4.1) responses were organised into 4 broad categories with several sub-categories as follows: Organisation, Study/Courses, Staff/Teaching and Social/Cultural issues. Due to the close association between study and daily living issues, it was found that respondents raised suggestions relating to the improvement of the latter where they perceived it to be within the jurisdiction of TAFE administration. A separate category containing these suggestions was therefore included. It deals with the following issues: Overall study expenses, accommodation, transport (between campuses) and gaining part-time employment.

Table 3.9 illustrates the various categories and the quantity of suggestions in each category by cohort (ie. 1992/93). There were 53 responses in total. However, some responses contained suggestions to more than one area, and were therefore coded accordingly.

Table 3.9 Classification of suggestions for improving study and daily living conditions for international students by cohort - 1992/93 respondents

Statement Category	Cohort (Frequencies)		TOTAL
	1992	1993	
Organisation			
General Facilities	1	8	
Information	-	3	
Time-tabling	-	3	
Networking	-	2	
Campus Choice	-	2	19 (28%)
Study/Courses			
Quantity/Adequacy	-	5	
Relevance/Quality	-	3	8 (12%)
Staff/Teaching			
Teaching methods/ability	-	10	
Interpersonal qualities (eg. friendliness, helpfulness)	-	3	13 (19%)
Social/Cultural			
Recreational activities/Groups	2	5	
Cultural exchange	-	3	10 (15%)
Daily Living			
Study Expenses	2	4	
Accommodation	1	3	
Transport	-	3	
Part-time employment	1	3	17 (25%)
TOTAL	7	60	67

These figures are in line with the respondents' justifications for their overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience. (See Section 3.4.1.) The greatest number of suggestions for improvement were related to organisational issues (19, 28%). This was followed by Daily Living (17, 25%), Staff/Teaching (13, 19%), Social/Cultural (10, 15%) and Study/Courses (8, 12%).

With regard to cohort distinction, the 1992 respondents made the most suggestions relating to daily living concerns, (4, 57%). By comparison and in line with their lack of satisfaction in this area, the 1993 respondents offered most suggestions for improvements to organisational issues (18, 30%).

The following section details the various suggestions for improving study and/or living conditions at TAFE put forward by respondents in both 1992 and 1993 cohorts.

Organisation

All suggestions in this category, except one, came from the 1993 cohort. Of the various sub-categories that make up this section, respondents appeared most concerned that improvements be made in the area of general facilities. Suggestions centred around three in-house facilities: the library, canteen and computer availability. In the case of library facilities, respondents referred to the possibility of extended hours and a more comprehensive range of resource/reference material:

More facilities, especially more reference books and extended library hours from 8 - 8 on weekdays and 8 - 10 pm at night. (Female, Hospitality)

Have better equipped library. (Male, Business)

More reference books in library. (Female, Business)

Provide more resources in library that is related to the assignment given by the lecturer (especially in --- College) where there is not enough books to refer, we therefore have to go to other colleges to find the resources. (Female, Hospitality)

In the area of canteen services, respondents suggested improvements to the range of food provided, and facilities open to student use (eg. microwave ovens):

Provide use of the microwave oven in the canteen as many students take their lunch to school. (Female, Business)

Provide more international food in the canteen, and reasonable prices so that we don't have to go out to other places. (Female, Hospitality)

A few respondents made suggestions with regard to improving the standard of computer facilities currently provided at TAFE. These suggestions related mainly to accessibility and quantity:

Easy access to computer rooms. (Female, Hospitality)

Provide more computers for students, so that they can type and print their assignments or reports as most of us don't have computers at home. (Female, Business)

The next area of concern raised by respondents was the provision of study and work-related information. They were eager to have access to information relating to further study or hands-on work experience in their chosen fields:

Information needed on further study opportunities or working opportunities. (Female, Library Information)

Should provide or offer working experience. (Male, Hospitality)

To provide some chance to train in some company and get some experience. (Female, Business)

Another area respondents offered suggestions for improvement was general time-tabling. Aspects of this area that affected students included release of results for enrolment, subject/class timing, length of lectures and the TAFE calendar year. The quotes have been listed accordingly:

Because results don't come out until the beginning of the following semester (usually), it is hard to assume how many units or which units to enrol [in] .. And also the class timetable is not ready by the beginning of semester, and the subjects that would be offered the semester ahead is never sure. (Female, Computing)

Adopt uni style of time table - 1 hour of lecture and 1 hour of tutorial. 2 hours a lesson is very long. (Male, Business)

The calendar year should correspond with the university's calendar year because TAFE overseas students get a shorter break during summer, [and] exams are during the start of summer. (Female, Business)

Respondents also saw the value in establishing closer networks between TAFE campuses and other institutions of education (eg. universities) to explore different methods of study:

Give us more chance to finish our course as soon as possible, such as a chance to study an Open Learning course, [a chance to study at] Joondalup campus or with Correspondence / External studies. (Male, Business)

I hope TAFE can establish a network with universities such as Murdoch Uni with Edward College, Edith Cowan with ABC College, Curtin Uni with Joondalup College (AIUS). (Female, Business)

In the final sub-category respondents offered suggestions for improvements related to the issue of students' rights to negotiate their preferred campus for study. This was

seen to affect them because of the need to travel (if they did not live reasonably close to their study-campus), and also the importance of establishing some degree of continuity in their study environment:

In my opinion, overseas students should have the right to choose campus. I have seen some overseas students who live in the city but TAFE arranged for them to study in Fremantle. Therefore they spend a lot of time everyday travelling around. Every time they get home they feel very tired and have no more energy to study. I would like to ask why TAFE does not allow overseas students to transfer to another campus according to their convenience.
(Male, Business)

Giving an opportunity for a student to continue in the same campus throughout their 2 years - even though there may be difficulties, continuing students should be given priority. (Female, Business)

Study/Courses

Suggestions relating to the quantity/adequacy of tutorials organised at TAFE identified areas in which more academic help was needed (eg. English language classes and classes for difficult topics of study). Respondents suggested that more tutorials be held to address these needs and the possibility of summer courses was also raised.

To have extra classes to help overseas students who are not [from] English-speaking backgrounds. (Female, Business)

Extra class time is necessary .. Lecturers should help to improve overseas students' English. (Male, Hospitality)

Extra ELICOS classes. (Female, Library Information)

Provide tutors for hard subjects. (Male, Engineering)

Summer courses during the holidays in December. (Female, Business)

Respondents also commented on the overall quality of courses offered. Suggestions for improvement in this area related mainly to the consistency of subject matter taught in courses by different tutors, and the relevance of course content to students' work environments in their respective home countries. To this end, one respondent proposed the 'internationalisation' of course content to increase the long-term relevance of what was taught.

A subject may not be taught to conform to the guidelines of the syllabus, ie. different teachers from different campuses tend to give internal assessment so diverse from the guidelines in the subjects' syllabus. (Male, Computing)

I think TAFE should [let] overseas students elect [their] subjects, because (business studies) as I am studying now is irrelevant with the condition in my country [eg. with Taxation Law] unless I work in Australia. It is better if TAFE

allows us to choose subjects that may be helpful for us like management, marketing, or more elective subjects. (Female, Business)

I'm still confused about why overseas [students] should take lessons about Australian law .. as I know the law in my country is different [from] Australia, and what I have [learnt] about Australian law .. is not used in my country. (Male, Business).

Introduce more teaching technique .. be more international .. (Male, Hospitality)

Staff/Teaching

Many suggestions under this category related to teaching methods. Some focussed on the needs of international students, while others addressed general teaching methods. In the former case, respondents suggested that staff should pay greater attention to international students and their unique learning difficulties (eg. with language and technical terminology).

Lecturers should pay more attention or keep closer tracking of overseas students .. because English is one of the problems they always have. (Male, Computing)

Please ask the teachers not to talk so fast as it is difficult to follow. Give more attention when teaching overseas students. (Female, Business)

Suggestions relating to general teaching methods involved more extensive use of audio-visual aids and/or handouts to increase learning efficiency.

TAFE [lecturers] should give handouts in every lesson. (Male, Business)

Suggest to lecturers to use the overhead projector to provide notes and if possible, hand out notes. (Male, Business)

The need for TAFE to hire lecturers with a high degree of professionalism was emphasised.

I think TAFE should do thorough screenings before hiring lecturers and also do constant checks on their methods of teaching. (Male, Business)

[TAFE] should attempt to find experienced and understanding lecturers. (Male, Business)

Respondents also addressed the need for both academic and non-academic staff to display more cultural understanding and tolerance.

Some teachers are quite "gossipy" about things that an overseas student does or may have done. (Male, Computing)

Please employ staff/counsellors for the international office who do understand the background of overseas students and are more helpful in assisting with

their problems. And they should have enough qualification and knowledge, working in such conditions. (Female, Business)

Better overseas student counsellors. (Male, Computing)

Lecturers should point out students' weaknesses in person, not in front of the class. (Female, Library Information)

Social/Cultural

With regard to social/cultural matters, respondents saw the need to engage in more varied recreational activities in order to promote friendship and cultural understanding between themselves and their Australian counterparts. They appeared keen to engage in mutual cultural exchange, stating that this would help to unify the student body whilst promoting the ideal of multiculturalism:

Provide more activities with Australian students, outside or inside the college. (Female, Business)

Organise more activities for overseas students - it helps them make friends. (Male, Hospitality)

Overseas student associations should be encouraged to be set up. (Female, Library Information)

More subsidised social activities. Female, Art/Design)

What overseas [students] need is help: help that makes them fit in to the Australian circle, not special treatment or separation dividing them as overseas students and Australian students. (Male, Business)

Provide some activities for overseas students and Australian [students] together and get to know the culture. (Male, Hospitality)

Improve multicultural mix. (Male, Hospitality)

More social events with Australian students and other Asian countries students to promote each other's countries. (Male, Business)

Daily Living

This category was created to encompass those issues that respondents perceived to be related to their overall TAFE study experience. They also saw these as being within TAFE's administrative/welfare jurisdiction to improve the quality of services to students.

Respondents offered most suggestions with regard to study expenses. This included expenses incurred by students on course fees and compulsory textbooks. In the case of fees, respondents suggested that the high cost of studying at TAFE be alleviated by loans, a fee-installment system or a reduction of fees. It was also suggested that the requirement for international students to pay for general electives be abolished. Course textbooks were identified to be more expensive in Australia, and reduction in their costs and/or the absorption of those costs into the full-fee system was suggested:

Cheaper tuition fee. Easy payment for the tuition fee. Organise student loan for overseas students. Give the textbooks free for overseas students.
(Male, Hospitality)

Reduce tuition fees (then more students will come to study) .
(Male, Computing)

*Reduce the tuition fees which is very high compared to home students..
Reduce fees for brilliant students from second semester.*
(Male, Engineering)

*Overseas students can choose other subjects without paying any fees eg.
other languages. (Female, Business)*

*Cost of textbooks is very expensive in Australia. Books should be made as
affordable as possible for students. (Male, Engineering)*

Another important issue to respondents in the course of their study at TAFE was that of accommodation. Respondents suggested that local home-stay arrangements should be organised with closer attention being paid to students' interests (eg. host-family dynamics) as a priority:

*Try to provide really good accommodation for overseas students. (Male,
Computing)*

*Scan the accommodation for us. Choose a family who really likes to live with
overseas students and will give them help to learn the culture of Australia.
There is a lot of information I hear from my friend about Australians that just
want to have the income, and who don't really like to live with overseas
students .. This greatly affects the image of Australians.*
(Female, Library Information).

*A friend of mine .. was in trouble [with] her accommodation (she wasn't happy
with her host family) and it seemed difficult to find out a good place to live if the
person doesn't have any friends there. (Female, Business)*

Respondents also made suggestions with regard to transport, observing that time and distance constraints sometimes made it difficult for students to undertake courses at different campuses:

Providing transportation for students who are staying far away from campuses.
(Male, Business).

*Transport is a problem sometimes if we have to go to different colleges for
different classes because not all subjects are offered in the same college.*
(Female, Computing)

The final area in which respondents offered suggestions for improvement concerned part-time employment. Respondents suggested the establishment of work experience schemes for students in relevant areas of trade or course of study:

*Finding part-time employment (casual) employment relating to course study.
(Male, Computing)*

If possible, provide part time jobs to technicians like me (eg. diesel mechanic, fitters, refrigeration technicians, welders etc) Set up employment bureau for overseas students' part time work. (Male, Engineering)

3.5 Reflections on living in Western Australia

3.5.1 Adjusting to living in Western Australia

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced any problems with regard to homesickness and making friends, organising accommodation and transport, and dealing with financial and health issues. They were also asked to specify if they had any other problems which was not included on the list. Table 3.10 indicates that overall 42 of the 71 respondents (59%) reported having experienced at least one of these problems. More respondents reported problems associated with homesickness (30%), followed by making friends (23%), transport (14%), finance (13%), accommodation (9%), health (6%) and other (5%).

The breakdown by country of residence revealed that the large majority of Hong Kong (77%) and Thai (67%) respondents reported at least one problem, compared to half of the Indonesians (56%) and only a quarter of the Malaysian respondents (27%). These patterns of results were very similar to the responses obtained regarding study problems (see Section 3.4.2). In both cases, Hong Kong and Thai respondents reported major problems, and Malaysian respondents only minor problems, with the Indonesian group somewhere in the middle. There were no gender differences overall with regard to problems reported. Given the nature of this investigation, the results of this section as well as the quotes are reported by country of residence rather than programmes of study.

Interestingly, the nature of the adjustments to living in Western Australia did not appear to be the same across groups. For examples, 7 of the 18 Indonesian respondents (39%) and 10 of the 23 Other respondents (43%) reported feeling homesick, compared to only 2 of the 13 Hong Kong respondents (15%), 2 of the 11 Malaysian respondents (18%) and 1 of the 6 Thai respondents (17%). A greater proportion of Hong Kong (4 out of 13; 31%), Thai (2 out of 6; 33%), Indonesian (4 out of 18; 22%) and Other respondents (5 of the 23; 22%) reported problems with making friends in Australia, compared to only 1 of the 11 Malaysian respondents (9%). However, this particular finding could reflect a gender difference, since 9 of

Table 3.10 Problems with regard to adjusting to living in Western Australia - 1992/93 respondents.

	Frequencies					
	Total n = 71	Indonesia n = 18	Hong Kong n = 13	Malaysia n = 11	Thailand n = 6	Other n = 23
Problems with						
Homesickness	22 (31%)	7	2	2	1	10
Making friends	16 (23%)	4	4	1	2	5
Transport	10 (14%)	4	4	0	1	1
Finance	9 (13%)	3	1	2	1	2
Accommodation	6 (9%)	1	0	0	0	5
Health	4 (6%)	0	1	0	1	2
Other	9 (13%)	0	1	1	2	5
Total (problems reported)	76	19	13	6	8	30
Total (respondents reporting at least 1 problem)	42 (59%)	10 (56%)	10 (77%)	3 (27%)	4 (67%)	15 (65%)
Sought help (of the respondents who reported at least one type of problem)	29 (69%)	9 (90%)	6 (60%)	0	2 (50%)	12 (80%)
Help sought from						
Friends/Other students	12 (57%)	2	3	0	1	6
Relatives in Perth	3 (14%)	1	0	0	0	2
Relatives at home	3 (14%)	2	0	0	1	0
TAFE counsellors	2 (10%)	1	1	0	0	0
Lecturers	1 (5%)	0	0	0	0	1
TAFE International	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (respondents who indicated who they sought help from)	21 (72%)	6	4	0	2	9

the 11 Malaysian respondents were males. The issue of transport also differed across groups. It was reported as a problem by 4 of the 13 Hong Kong respondents (31%) and 4 of the 18 Indonesian respondents (22%), but by none of the 11 Malaysian respondents. In this case, the difference could not be explained in relation to gender. Respondents were also asked to explain the type of problems they had with regard to:

a) Homesickness - Most experienced initial loneliness, missing family and friends, and home cooking. A particularly poignant statement from a female respondent from Botswana encapsulates this feeling.

Nobody seems to care about you or everything to do with you. It's so depressing. (Female, Botswana).

Generally, however, homesickness is something respondents tended to expect and they were quite philosophical about it. The following statements reflect this.

Since I was living by myself while I was in Australia, I guess homesickness is something that is unavoidable. (Male, Hong Kong)

At the very beginning, but I got over it within a couple of months. (Female, Singapore)

All three comments from the Indonesian respondents who reported having the most problems with homesickness related to missing their family.

b) Making friends - Sixteen comments were received with regard to the difficulties experienced with making friends. Four of the respondents stated that they felt Australians were generally biased against international students, unapproachable, unfriendly or just did not like Asians very much. Respondents who expressed these feelings were from Hong Kong, Indonesia and Thailand, hence it would appear that these feelings were common across countries. The remaining two thirds of the comments related mainly to language and cultural barriers that made it difficult to make friends.

Difficult to find common topics. With English language barriers, I found it hard to make friends. (Female, Hong Kong)

You are a foreigner with different background, culture and customs. So it is not easy, you never get any invitations. (Female, Botswana)

c) Transport - Generally complaints against an inadequate transport system, particularly after evening classes, week ends and public holidays.

d) Finance - Nine comments were received with regard to dealing with financial problems. Generally the comments related to the high cost of living and tuition fees.

e) Accommodation - There were six problems reported with regard to accommodation, however, only two of the respondents explained the problems encountered. The comments were related to dissatisfaction with having to move every time they came back to Australia after holidays and difficulty in finding accommodation that suited their needs.

f) Health - Four comments were made with regard to dealing with health problems and were related to the high cost of medications, a problem with Medibank not paying for a particular treatment and not knowing how to get a doctor.

There were a range of 'Other' problems mentioned in addition to the above. These included personal problems, complaints about lack of help from police, lack of knowledge by staff of requirements of international students, culture shock, weather, problems with learning to live independently and needing more time to do the course enrolled for.

SEEKING HELP

Table 3.10 indicates that overall a large majority of respondents (69%) who experienced problems were likely to seek help for their problems. Only twenty one respondents who reported seeking help indicated from whom they had sought help. Of these, twelve (57%) sought help from friends and/or other students. Only three respondents reported seeking help from TAFE personnel, all indicated that the help they received was useful.

When respondents were asked if they had received any help from TAFE personnel, and if they felt that the help received was not useful to please explain why, seven responses were received. The statements were quite varied, ranging from problems with bureaucracy to problems of bias. One of the respondents summed up the lack of help in this way:

When I needed help, I wanted a concrete plan, but they just had an ideal way of thinking. (Male, Korea)

If respondents had not sought help, they were asked to explain why not. Only one respondent said that she did not know who to seek help from. The others generally felt that no help could be provided or that they would sort things out themselves.

3.5.2 Interacting with local Australian students

Firstly, respondents were asked if there were opportunities to mix socially with local Australian students on TAFE campuses and how successful they felt these activities were. Fifty per cent of respondents said there were opportunities to mix and referred to a number of organised social activities or functions, for example, barbecues, sporting events, site visits, excursions, a ball and an easter egg hunt. Respondents were evenly divided as to whether or not these activities were successful.

What was striking about many of the comments were the respondents' general discomfort in attending these activities. Statements like the following were quite common.

I am not confident to talk to them. (Female, Business)

Participate once, but feel uncomfortable. All the local students mixed together and I just sat and listened. Personally felt shy, so did not attend again.
(Female, Library studies)

There were opportunities to mix, but sometimes I was scared to talk to them because my English is not good enough. (Female, Business)

The following statement from a female respondent in Business studies probably best sums up this section.

I think although there were opportunities to mix, it still depends on each individual whether to participate or not. (Female, Business).

In reply to the next question "If nothing was organised, would you have liked TAFE to provide such opportunities? If yes, what type of opportunities?", there were 31 responses (44%) in total, nine from the 1992 respondents. Suggestions ranged from organising camping and picnic outings, barbecues, parties, study groups, sporting functions and multi-cultural fairs to the establishment of a private club or organisation that all international students could belong to. It is not known whether respondents who suggested the above social activities were in fact unaware that such activities had been organised or whether such activities were not available in their particular college.

Respondents were also asked if they had any suggestions to assist local Australian and international students to mix in the future. As the suggestions received were very similar in content to suggestions received in the following section (3.5.3), both sets of suggestions are reported together.

3.5.3 Suggestions for helping international students adjust to living in Western Australia

At the end of this section, respondents were asked if they had any suggestions with regard to how TAFE could provide better assistance to international students to help them adjust to living in Western Australia. As indicated above (Section 3.5.2) suggestions related to assisting the interaction between Australian and international students will also be reported here. Overall 55 suggestions (31 with regard to student interaction and 24 with regard to helping international students adjust to living in Western Australia) were received. Four main themes emerged from their various suggestions:

- a) Organising more activities to facilitate the interactions between international students and between international and local students.

Organise activities for overseas students who study the same subjects to meet together to share study experiences and difficulties.
(Female, Library and Information)

Get to know the students by organising functions, activities for them. Upgrade the services and facilities already provided for them. Not to concentrate ONLY on the majority of students enrolled in TAFE (student percentages like Indonesia, Singapore, etc.) but also the one or two students coming from other countries like Brunei for example. (Female, Library and Information)

Have programmes that involve both overseas and local students like sports, parties, etc. (Female, Business)

- b) More understanding of the needs of international students and empathy for their initial feelings of isolation.

People who come from another country are scared of local Australians when they meet them for the first time. Your country people need to be more kind.
(Male, ELICOS)

I have been at TAFE college for 3 years and I never found a real Australian friend. Perhaps Australian students should learn how to respect foreigners.
(Female, Business)

Be open and friendly. (Male, Business)

Do not treat overseas students as foreigners. (Male, Laboratory Practice)

- c) More information regarding courses of TAFE studies and alternatives after TAFE courses, etc:

Organise all the necessary information for overseas students who come here for the first time. Provide as many types of accommodation as they can afford or like. Give more choices. (Male, Business)

Provide ideas of choosing subjects, which subjects are suitable to study in first semester through to last semester. Give more information about any further studies after studying at TAFE. (Female, Business)

TAFE should have some representatives offices at some countries which sends a majority number of students studying at TAFE. By the way, more information and counselling services can be started right before they leave their country to start their course in Australia. (Male, Business)

d) There were also suggestions for more student exchange programs so that local students would begin to understand the culture shock that international students initially feel.

If they study overseas they will understand our difficulty. (Female, Business)

Help the overseas students be more aware of the cultural differences. Overseas students should have a good understanding of the Australian culture and the same for the local students understanding other cultures. (Female, Hospitality)

3.6 Future Plans (1993 cohort)

At the end of the questionnaire, the 1993 respondents were asked about their plans after they finished studying at TAFE with regard to further study and paid work. Of the 56 respondents, 44 (79%) indicated that they hoped to undertake further studies after they had completed their TAFE courses, 7 indicated that they hoped to be working full time and 5 respondents were unsure of their future activities.

They were also asked whether they thought their TAFE course would help them to achieve their goals as well as about the usefulness of the skills and experience gained at TAFE. The next section provides details of the future plans of the 1993 cohort.

(**Note:** Thirty four (64%) of the 1994 respondents indicated that they hoped to undertake further studies in 1995, 16 (30%) indicated that they hoped to be working full time and 3 respondents were unsure of their future activities).

Further study

Of the 44 respondents who indicated that they hoped to continue their studies, 23 of them intended to concentrate solely on studying, while 21 intended to work and study. The majority of these respondents indicated that they hoped to study in Australia (44% at university, 15% at TAFE and 7% in other institutions). Twenty per cent were planning to further their education in their own countries and the remaining 14% were planning to study in a university elsewhere.

When looked at by country of residence, the high percentage of respondents who wanted to continue their studies was spread evenly across. (12 of 14 from Indonesia; (86%), 5 of the 6 respondents from Thailand (83%); 12 of the 15 from the 'other' countries; (80%), 9 of the 12 from Hong Kong (75%) and 6 of the 9 Malaysian respondents (67%).

Paid work

Of the 12 remaining respondents who indicated that they would not be continuing with their studies, only 7 indicated that they intended to concentrate solely on working while the other five were unsure. The work that the 28 respondents (21 who intended to work and study and 7 who intended to work full time) hoped to get was directly related to their TAFE studies and included hotel management (22%) banking, secretarial and computing (15% respectively), part time work doing anything or unsure (14%), engineering (11%), business and accounting (4% respectively).

When looked at by country of residence, it was found that approximately half of the respondents from Indonesia and Hong Kong were hoping to get into the paid work force compared to other countries, where percentages ranged from 17% (Thailand) to 33% (Malaysia).

Will TAFE course help achievement?

Respondents were asked to specify whether they thought that their TAFE course would help them achieve what they wanted. The vast majority (96%) answered in the affirmative. Only two respondents indicated that it probably would not help and the other five did not answer this question.

Usefulness of skills, knowledge and experience gained at TAFE

Respondents indicated that generally it would be the practical skills, computing skills and the improvement of their English language skills that would be most helpful to them. A few also indicated that the interpersonal and communication skills they had acquired when interacting with Australians, as well as the skills learned by living independently would be useful in the future.

3.7 Reflections on re-adjustments back in home country (1992 cohort)

The 15 respondents who completed the questionnaire approximately eight months after completion of their TAFE studies were asked four questions. These related to:

- Re-adjustment to life on return to home country
- Contact with TAFE staff and friends
- Advice to prospective students in home country
- Current activities

RE-ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE ON RETURN TO HOME COUNTRY

Respondents were asked if it was difficult for them to re-adjust to living, working and studying in their home country after completion of their TAFE course. Three of the 13 respondents (23%) who answered this question said they had difficulties adjusting, five specified that they occasionally had difficulties adjusting and five indicated that they had no difficulties at all in the re-adjustment process. Some respondents in this last category also highlighted the positive transfer of skills from their Australian study/living experience to that back home. Responses indicating difficulties in the re-adjustment process will be reported first, followed by responses indicative of a problem-free re-adjustment.

- i) Short term re-adjustments included difficulties in finding employment immediately on return.

At first it was difficult for me to find a job, but I was lucky to find a job with my father's recommendation, in my father's company. Adjusting to Japan was not a problem, but my money was a little scarce. (Female, ELICOS)

Longer-term adjustment issues confronted some respondents, and took the form of lack of family support, conflicting cultural norms (eg. gender/power issues) and differences in the pace of life. The following quotes illustrate these points respectively:

In my case, I don't have family here. They are living in America, so when I was first back in Korea, it was really difficult to settle down .. (Male, ELICOS)

In Japanese society, men's power is pretty strong, even if they are incompetent. Therefore it is difficult for them to understand me when I give them direct opinions, so I try to do it gradually. I also have to take a wider view of things to help me understand and adjust myself. (Female, Art/Design)

I experienced difficulty adapting to the hectic life back here in Singapore. In other words, I experienced reverse culture-shock due to the fact that I had adapted to living in Perth. (Female, Hospitality)

ii) Respondents who had re-adjusted satisfactorily to life in their home countries claimed to have done so generally through transferring the living and academic skills they had acquired in their time in Australia to their lifestyles back home:

The Australian education system is better than in my country, so I just use the experience I gained during my stay in Australia to adjust to life here. I used the knowledge for my future career. (Male, Hospitality)

After I went back home, I used my English ability and my skills .. which helped to adjust to living in my Home town. (Female, Hospitality)

CONTACT WITH STAFF AND FRIENDS AT TAFE

With regard to maintaining contact with TAFE staff, nine of the fifteen respondents had no contact at all since returning, while six reported having occasional contact. Four respondents reported having regular contact with friends they had made at TAFE, six reported having occasional contact and five reported no contact at all.

ADVICE TO PEOPLE IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY

In this final part, respondents were asked what they would tell someone from their country, firstly about studying at TAFE, and then about living in Western Australia. A total of 14 responses were received.

Studying at TAFE in Australia

As indicated previously (see Section 3.4.1) the 1992 respondents were reasonably satisfied with their TAFE study experience. This is reflected in the information that they were prepared to pass on to future TAFE students, which has been divided into the following categories: quality of education, education costs, cultural exchange and future education planning.

i) Quality of Education

Comments made under this category testified to respondents' satisfaction regarding the quality of education provided by TAFE. Respondents were keen to assure future TAFE students of the practical applicability of TAFE programmes (through their own employment experience), the stability of TAFE as an educational institution and the helpfulness of TAFE lecturers:

TAFE has a good quality of education. (Female, Business)

*I want to thank TAFE college .. which gave me much experience ..
I've already opened my own restaurant and transportation business ..
I am satisfied. (Male, Hospitality)*

TAFE is more stable compared to other colleges. (Male, Hospitality)

*Studying at TAFE is a good experience. Lecturers are very helpful when you
have difficulties. (Male, Hospitality)*

ii) Education Costs

Respondents were eager to share with potential students the importance of being aware of the monetary costs associated with studying at TAFE Western Australia. Some of the costs mentioned were directly associated with particular programmes of study (eg. fees), while others with daily living (eg. medical insurance, visas, etc.):

*Be aware of the cost of living, health insurance, and visa renewal costs, apart
from the tuition fees. (Male, Laboratory Practice)*

*Very expensive because the college fees for overseas students is very very
high, and the period of education is lengthy. (Male, Engineering)*

iii) Cultural Exchange

One respondent elected to highlight the benefits for international students at TAFE of interacting on a social and academic level with Australian counterparts:

*They should try and make friends. Australians are friendly and helpful so they
should not shy away from them. They should discuss their study problems with
their lecturers and counsellors. Their classmates too can be of great help.
(Female, Fashion)*

iv) Future Education Plans

The importance of planning for future education is illustrated by this piece of advice to potential TAFE international students:

*I would recommend [TAFE] to a person if he / she wanted to acquire the
practical skills. But I would advise to continue further studies at university in
order to obtain a much higher qualification, which is regarded very important for
employment here in Singapore. (Female, Hospitality)*

Living in Western Australia

In this section, respondents were asked to detail the nature of advice they would give to prospective TAFE students from their home countries regarding living in Western Australia. For the purpose of this report, responses have been grouped into the following 5 categories: Climate/environment, Australian lifestyle/culture, security, job availability and living costs.

i) Climate/Environment

Many respondents stated that they would extol the virtues of Western Australian surroundings in terms of its climate and natural beauty. Many saw these qualities as being conducive to studying, due mainly to the lack of distractions that are often associated with big cities:

WA is a wonderful country. The climate is so perfect .. It is a quiet place for studying. (Female, Business)

Living in WA is a very nice experience .. You have privacy studying in WA .. (Male, Hospitality)

I really like Australia. If people ask me about Australia, I would always say that Australia is the greatest land in the world. God set up this beautiful paradise. (Male, ELICOS)

Western Australia is a beautiful place .. If you want to be relaxed, WA is just the place. (Female, ELICOS)

ii) Australian Lifestyle/Culture

Several respondents indicated that they would emphasise the importance to prospective students of obtaining information relating to the day-to-day aspects of living in Western Australia (eg. shopping facilities, transport costs, etc.), in order to minimise the culture shock generally experienced.

[I would advise on] .. the costs of living, kind of foods available or unavailable in Australia, custom allowance on foodstuff, popular food, costs of having a car, shopping hours .. (Male, Laboratory Practice)

They can ask for information on transport [from] Transperth .. Information on accommodation is available on campus .. Medicare information may be obtained from counsellors. (Female, Fashion)

The advice I would give is firstly to get adapted to the difference of culture before being able to live without encountering severe culture-shock. (Female, Hospitality)

iii) Security

Several respondents indicated that they would testify to the relative security of living in Western Australia.

Western Australia has a very relaxed atmosphere .. It is safe .. and friendly. (Female, ELICOS)

.. Not much racism these days, due to good policing. (Male, Business)

iv) Job Availability

One respondent indicated that a drawback of living in Western Australia that he would alert potential students to is the lack of available jobs from which to gain valuable work experience:

Hard to get jobs to gain experience in a particular course. (Male, Computing)

v) Living Costs

One respondent commented on the higher costs of living in Western Australia relative to that of his home country (India). He saw accommodation as the largest cost-factor when considering Western Australia as a destination of study:

Compared to India, it is very expensive. For overseas students, there should be shared accommodation with a family or a private hostel. Government hostels are more expensive than sharing private accommodation. (Male, Engineering)

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Respondents were asked about what they had been doing since leaving TAFE with regard to further study, paid work or other activities and about the usefulness of skills, knowledge and experiences gained at TAFE. These are examined in turn.

Further study

Seven of the 15 respondents (47%) indicated that they were continuing with their studies. Three were studying languages, and the other four Business Administration, Engineering, Social Science and Graphic Design respectively. They were all from different countries (Japan, Malaysia, India, China, Indonesia and Singapore) and two were studying in Australian universities, one at a university elsewhere and four at other institutions (languages, tourism and graphic design) in their own countries.

Paid work

Eight of the 15 respondents (53%) indicated that they were in the paid work force, one of them was involved at the same time in further studies. They were from Japan (3), Indonesia (2) and one each from Hong Kong, Korea and Ghana. The type of work that these respondents were involved in included computing, owning their own business, quality control, lab technician, teaching and retailing. Table 3.11 shows the courses that respondents completed at TAFE and their current activities.

Table 3.11 Courses completed at TAFE and current activities - 1992 respondents

Course	Country	Current Activities
Hospitality	Indonesia	Seeking employment/ further study
Hospitality	Indonesia	Own business/further study
Hospitality	China	Quality control
Hospitality	Singapore	Holiday/further study
Hospitality	Malaysia	Further study/Freelance graphic designer
Elicos	Korea	Teaching
Elicos	Japan	Shop Assistant
Elicos	Japan	Shop Assistant
Business	Indonesia	Helping parents
Business	Malaysia	Further study
Art/Design	Japan	Quality control
Computing	Indonesia	Computing
Laboratory Practice	Hong Kong	Lab technician
Engineering	India	Further study
Fashion	Ghana	Teaching

TAFE course helped achievement

Respondents were also asked if they felt that their TAFE course had helped them to achieve what they wanted to. Twelve responses in total were received, ten of these (83%) were in the affirmative while two indicated that their courses had not helped.

Usefulness of skills, knowledge and experience gained at TAFE

Like the 1993 cohort, respondents indicated that generally it was the practical skills (eg. writing business letters and the skills related to the hospitality industry), computing skills and the improvement of their English language skills that were the most useful to them.

3.8 Attitudes towards future of educational and business associations between Australia and respondents' home country

One specific aim of this study was to explore the relationship between past international students' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their current attitude towards future educational and business associations between their home country (or Asian countries in general) and Australia. An original attitude scale was developed for that purpose. Respondents were presented with a number of attitude items which elicited their views on business and educational exchange between Australia and their home country (or Asian countries in general) and a number of behavioural intention items. (See Section 2.0.)

Nine attitude statements plus the six behavioural intention statements were used for the analyses reported below (see list beneath Figure 3.1). The data was analysed according to the Extended Logistic Model (Rasch), a latent trait model for analysing polychotomous responses, using Andrich, Sheridan and Lyne (1991) ASCORE computer program. The overall test of fit was good ($\chi^2(14) = 13.76, p = .48$), indicating that the data fitted the unidimensional cumulative model. The separation index of .83 (similar to Cronbach's reliability coefficient) revealed a high internal consistency for the set of 15 items. Figure 3.1 shows the location of the 9 attitude statements and the 6 behavioural intention statements together with the distribution of the group of 71 respondents on the unidimensional scale.

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the attitude and behavioural intention statements are located relatively close together on the scale, with the majority of respondents skewed on the higher side of the scale. This pattern indicates that overall, respondents tended to be relatively in favour of more educational or business exchange between their country and Australia.

Looking at the location of the 9 attitude statements, it can be seen that respondents found it relatively easy overall to endorse (or agree with) the idea that more Australian students should study in Asia (statement 1 at the lower end of the scale). In contrast, they found it more difficult to endorse (ie. were more reluctant to agree with) the idea that more students from their home country (or Asian countries in general) should go to study in Australia (statement 9 at the higher end of the scale).

With regard to the distribution of the 6 behavioural intention statements, the pattern of responses revealed that while respondents would be quite happy to visit Australia again (Behavioural intention statement A on the lower end of the scale), they tended not be as keen on recommending study in Australia to anybody in their home country (Behavioural intention statement F on the higher end of the scale).

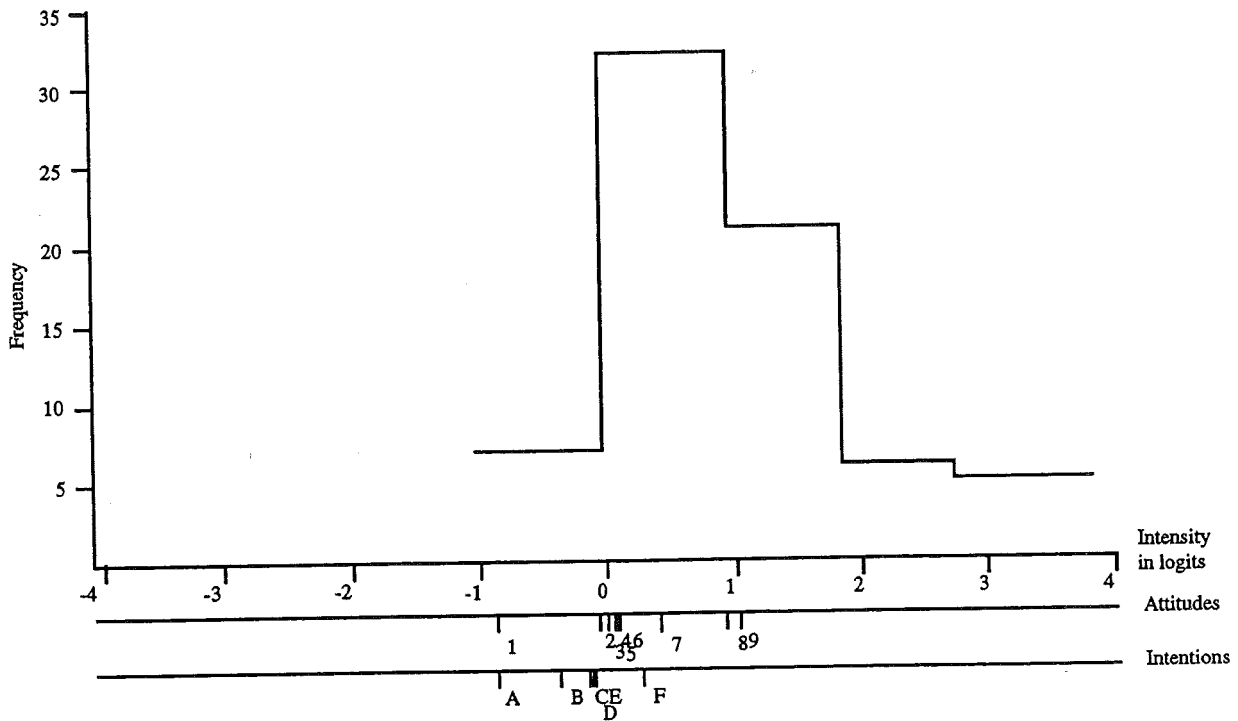


Figure 3.1 Location of attitude and behavioural intention statements on the International Scale and frequency distribution of the 1992/93 respondents.

Attitudes

1. More Australian students should be offered the possibility to study in Asian countries.
2. All tertiary students in Australia should spend some time studying in an Asian country.
3. Business investments from my home country to Australia should be encouraged.
4. Australia can contribute positively to the economy of my country.
5. Australian business investments in my country should be encouraged.
6. My country can contribute positively to the economy of Australia.
7. All Australian tertiary students should spend at least a few months studying abroad.
8. All tertiary students in my country should spend some time studying in a western country like Australia.
9. More students from my country should go to Australia for their tertiary study.

Behavioural intentions

- A If I have the opportunity, I would like to visit Australia again.
- B If approached, I would be willing to take part in pre-orientation activities held in my country for students going to Australia.
- C If I have the opportunity, I would consider setting up a business with Australian partners.
- D I will encourage anybody in my country to develop business links with Australia.
- E I will become a member of the association of past TAFE students when such an association is set up.
- F I will recommend study in Australia to anybody in my country.

Overall, these results indicate that after having completed a few years of study at TAFE in Western Australia, these 71 respondents felt that the one directional flow of students from Asia to Australia ought to be balanced by reciprocal exchange programs between Asian countries and Australia. While the 71 respondents as a group appeared relatively in favour of Asian students continuing to study in Australia, they agreed even more strongly that Australian students should be encouraged to make a move in the direction of Asia and seriously consider studying in Asian countries.

The breakdown by country of residence indicates that the respondents most in favour of increased international exchange between Asian countries and Australia were the eleven respondents from Malaysia (score of 1.34), followed by the eighteen respondents from Indonesia (1.08). The six respondents from Thailand (.60) and the thirteen respondents from Hong Kong (.50) appeared to be relatively less in favour of increased international exchange. The score of the group of twenty three respondents from the 'Other' countries was the highest of all. The first row of Table 3.12 shows the mean scores and standard deviations overall and by country of residence.

Table 3.12 Scores on International Scale, satisfaction rating and correlations between the two measures - 1992/93 respondents.

	Means (Standard Deviations)					
	Total n = 71	Indonesia n = 18	Hong Kong n = 13	Malaysia n = 11	Thailand n = 6	Other n = 23
Score on International Scale	1.08 (1.00)	1.04 (.70)	.50 (.74)	1.34 (1.20)	.60 (.88)	1.44 (1.12)
Satisfaction Rating	4.03 (1.09)	3.88 (.99)	4.23 (.83)	4.40 (.97)	3.67 (1.03)	3.95 (1.36)
Correlation between Satisfaction and International Score	.27*	.39	-.03	.85**	.05	.22

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Significant differences in respondents' attitude towards future educational and business associations between Asian countries and Australia were found between the 1992 and the 1993 groups. The mean score for the 1993 cohort was .86 (sd. .86) significantly lower than the mean score for the 1992 cohort which was 1.90 (sd. 1.09). [$t(69) = 3.89, p < .001$]. These results are in line with the finding reported in section 3.4.1 that the 1992 respondents were more satisfied overall with their TAFE

experience. It should be remembered that while the 1993 group comprised the almost total population (86%) of international students completing their study at TAFE that year, the 1992 respondents comprised only 38% of the overall group.

3.9 Relationships between respondents' satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their attitudes towards future of educational and business associations between Australia and their home country

A major assumption behind this study was that international students who are satisfied with their TAFE experience are more likely to be in favour of continuing educational and business associations between their home country (or Asian countries in general) and Australia. This assumption was examined initially by correlating the 71 respondents' scores on the International Scale with their overall satisfaction ratings (second row of Table 3.12). The correlation coefficients between the two measures, overall and by country of residence are shown in the third row of Table 3.12.

As can be seen from Table 3.12, there was a significant low positive correlation ($r = .27, p < .05$) between the whole group's satisfaction ratings and their scores on the International Scale. This indicates that overall, the more satisfied respondents were with their TAFE experience, the more they were in favour of increased international exchange between Australia and their home country (or Asian countries in general). Although the relationship was significant, it was however not very strong.

Further investigation of relationships between respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their attitude towards international exchange between their country and Australia was conducted by comparing the two groups of respondents who scored the highest (13, 18%) and the lowest (13, 18%) on the International Scale. These analyses (regardless of country of residence) revealed significant differences with regard to the two groups' overall ratings of satisfaction with their TAFE experience. The mean satisfaction rating for the group having the lowest scores was 3.69 (sd .95) and for the highest group it was 4.54 (sd. 1.05), $t(24) = 2.16, p < .05$. These results provided support for the assumption that TAFE international students who perceive their TAFE experience as positive are likely to develop favourable attitudes towards future international exchange between Asian countries and Australia.

The significant relationship overall between satisfaction and attitude towards international exchange indicated the need to examine whether specific factors were related to respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience. Relationships between respondents' overall satisfaction and (a) their reports of adjustments to study at TAFE and (b) their reports of adjustments to living in Western Australia were examined separately.

a) Relationships between overall satisfaction with TAFE experience and specific academic problems encountered at TAFE.

No relationship was found between respondents' ratings of each of the 13 specific academic problems (4 English language, 5 Teaching/learning and 4 social/cultural) and their overall satisfaction ratings. Further investigation of possible relationships was conducted by collapsing students' responses into 'a problem' (combined ratings of 3 or 4), and 'not a problem' (combined ratings of 1 or 2), and then computing for each student the number of academic problems reported (out of 13). Table 3.13 presents the 71 respondents' satisfaction ratings, average number of academic problems reported and the correlation between the two measures overall and by country of residence.

Table 3.13 Relationship between overall satisfaction and number of academic problems reported - 1992/93 respondents.

Means and Standard Deviations						
	Total n = 71	Indonesia n = 18	Hong Kong n = 13	Malaysia n = 11	Thailand n = 6	Other n = 23
Satisfaction Rating	4.03 (1.09)	3.88 (0.99)	4.23 (0.83)	4.40 (0.97)	3.67 (1.03)	3.95 (1.36)
Average number of problems reported (out of 13)	4.8 (3.4)	5.4 (3.3)	5.8 (3.7)	3.2 (2.5)	7.5 (3.3)	3.7 (3.1)
Correlation between number of academic problems and overall satisfaction	-.22	.03	-.68**	.07	-.36	-.10

** p < .01

As can be seen in Table 3.13, the overall satisfaction rating of the Hong Kong respondents was significantly correlated to the average number of academic problems reported by that group ($r = -.68$, $p < .01$). This finding indicates that the overall satisfaction rating for the thirteen Hong Kong respondents, (4.23, second highest), was directly related (inversely) to the number of problems that they experienced. The more problems, the lower their overall satisfaction rating, and vice versa.

A direct relationship between the number of academic problems experienced and overall satisfaction was not found for any of the other groups, although the

correlation coefficient was in the expected direction for the Thai group ($r = -.36$). The fact that the relationship between overall satisfaction and number of academic problems encountered was significant only for the Hong Kong group, can be related to the fact that the Hong Kong respondents came to study at TAFE essentially for academic reasons, ie. because they were hoping to get into university later and intended to use TAFE as a side entry to higher education (see Section 3.3). Thus it can be expected that the more obstacles in the way to achieving their ultimate aim, the lower their overall satisfaction with TAFE.

The total lack of relationship between average number of academic problems reported and overall satisfaction for the Indonesian and Malaysian groups (respectively $r = .03$ and $r = .07$), can be related to the fact these respondents had come to TAFE essentially for vocational purposes (see Section 3.3). Thus for them, getting high academic results may not have been as important as for the Hong Kong group who intended to use their academic results at TAFE as a means to get access into university.

b) Relationships between overall satisfaction and problems related to adjustments to living.

Further attempts to understand respondents' high or low overall satisfaction ratings led to the investigation of possible relationships between overall satisfaction and difficulties in adjusting to living in Western Australia. Respondents' reports of feeling homesick, finding it difficult to make friends, or having experienced problems with transport, finance, accommodation or health were examined in turn with regard to their overall satisfaction. The analyses revealed no significant relationship between any of these problems and overall satisfaction. The total number of problems related to living reported by each respondent was also computed to examine whether the number of problems that they reported were related to their overall level of satisfaction. The group of respondents (regardless of country of residence) who were the most satisfied overall with their TAFE experience (27 respondents with ratings of 5 = very or 6 = extremely satisfied) were compared to the group of respondents who were the least satisfied (21 respondents with ratings of 1 = extremely, 2 = very or 3 = A little dissatisfied). The average number of problems related to living reported by the most satisfied students (.63) was significantly lower than that of the least satisfied group (1.19). [$t(46) = 2.08$ $p < .05$]. These results reveal that the problems of adjustments to living in Western Australia that students encountered left traces, and affected their overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE AND OVERALL SATISFACTION BY COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

In this final section, the relationship between respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their current attitude towards international exchange is examined by country of residence. The results are interpreted in relation to other findings in this study. A degree of caution should be exercised when interpreting these results due to the relatively small number of respondents from each country.

The breakdown by respondents' country of residence provides some suggestions as to why the overall relationship between satisfaction and attitude towards international exchange was not stronger for the whole group. As shown in Table 3.12, there were large differences across countries.

Malaysia

For the eleven Malaysian respondents, the relationship (satisfaction - attitude) was extremely high ($r = .85$), indicating that respondents who were satisfied with their TAFE experience were also those in favour of increased international exchange, and vice versa. Since both the mean satisfaction score and mean International Scale score of the Malaysian respondents were the highest of all, it can be said that their satisfaction with their TAFE experience was directly related to their attitude towards international exchange between their country and Australia. Overall, the eleven Malaysian respondents appeared very satisfied with their TAFE experience and were then in favour of more educational and business associations between the two countries. These results are in line with the findings reported earlier that these respondents did not appear to experience any major study problems (see Section 3.4.2) or problems related to homesickness or any difficulties in making friends (see Section 3.5.1).

Hong Kong and Thailand

In contrast, for the thirteen Hong Kong and six Thai respondents, there was no relationship at all (respectively $-.03$ and $.05$) between their satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their attitude towards international exchange between their country (or Asia in general) and Australia. In addition, both the Hong Kong and Thai respondents had very low scores on the International Scale compared to the other groups, indicating that these respondents were less in favour of increased international exchange between their countries and Australia, in comparison to the Malaysian or the Indonesian respondents.

With regard to the two groups' respective overall satisfaction scores and relationship between their satisfaction and attitude towards international exchange, the patterns were different across groups. For the six Thai respondents, who had the lowest satisfaction rating of all groups, the lack of relationship between satisfaction

and attitude towards international exchange indicates that their relatively low level of satisfaction was not related to the fact that they were not much in favour of increased international exchange between their country and Australia. This could be related to the fact that these respondents had come to study at TAFE in Australia with the intention of getting into university in their country later (see Section 3.3). The major problems that they experienced in Australia with regard to adjustments to study and adjustments to living thus were not related to their lack of interest for more international exchange. However, the small group of respondents from Thailand precludes the making of any generalisations from these findings.

The thirteen Hong Kong respondents displayed a different profile, since their overall satisfaction rating with their TAFE experience was much higher, in fact the second highest of all countries surveyed in this study. Like the Thai respondents however, the Hong Kong respondents' reports of satisfaction were unrelated to their attitude towards increased international exchange between their country and Australia. The case of Hong Kong respondents appeared quite distinct from all the other groups. These respondents came to study at TAFE with the intention of getting access into university in Australia later, as they considered it to be easier than getting into university in Hong Kong. They reported major problems with regard to adjusting to study at TAFE and yet overall, they were among the most satisfied with regard to their TAFE experience. Provided that they managed to overcome their study problems and achieved the grades that they needed in order to get access to university, then their overall high satisfaction can be interpreted in light of the fact that their goals were achieved. The Hong Kong respondents' relative lack of interest for future educational and business associations between their country and Australia cannot be interpreted in relation to their TAFE experience. In their assessment of the medium term market opportunities for recruitment of students from Hong Kong, Smart and Ang (1993) report a recent declining interest in international study, which they interpret in relation to a number of political and economic factors both in Hong Kong and Australia. Such factors may also explain why the Hong Kong respondents' high satisfaction with their TAFE experience was not related to a view that there should be an increase in educational associations between Hong Kong and Australia.

Another potential explanation of these findings is that Hong Kong and Thailand (especially Bangkok) are already very cosmopolitan countries and have large numbers of Australian and other international visitors, educators, businessmen, etc., and thus international saturation may be occurring. (Smart, personal communication)

Indonesia

The eighteen Indonesian respondents appeared to be moderately satisfied overall with their TAFE experience and relatively in favour of increased international exchange between their country and Australia with a moderate (though not significant)

relationship between the two. These respondents had come to study at TAFE essentially with vocational goals in mind (see Section 3.3) and apart from missing their family and friends, they did not report major problems regarding study at TAFE.

In contrast to Hong Kong and Thailand, Indonesia like Malaysia appear rather more insular countries and less saturated with foreign visitors and educators and therefore are more attracted to international exchange.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study was based on an interactive and dynamic model of the full cycle of TAFE international students' experience in Australia (Figure 1.1 page 4). Embedded in the model was the assumption that crucial to future educational associations between students' home country and Australia is whether students return home satisfied with their TAFE experience. Based on previous surveys, the model also assumed that past students represent the first source of information about TAFE for prospective students. The main aim of this study was to examine the assumptions embedded in the model. The focus on students' accounts of their adjustments to study at TAFE and to living in Western Australia was perceived as essential to gain insight into students' experience from their own point of view.

The study also aimed at obtaining suggestions from past students for improving the provisions and study conditions for TAFE international students. This was considered as crucial to ensure that the issues that students themselves perceive as important are identified by TAFE.

The results of the study strongly supported the assumption that information about studying at TAFE Western Australia is relayed consistently through informal (eg. word of mouth), as well as more formal (eg. education agents and exhibitions) communication channels. TAFE's reputation as an educational institution to potential international candidates depends to a large extent on the retrospective information passed onto them by TAFE graduands from the same home country. This finding highlights the importance for TAFE of ensuring that the expectations, goals and perceived needs of international students are sought through a process of consultation, and considered seriously as is the case with this study.

The results of this study also supported the assumption of a relationship between respondents' overall satisfaction with their TAFE experience and their current attitudes towards future educational and business between their home country (or Asian countries in general) and Australia. Respondents' overall satisfaction was significantly related both to the nature of their study experience at TAFE and to their living experience in Western Australia. The differences across countries in respondents' overall level of satisfaction and attitudes towards increased international exchange could generally be interpreted in the light of their reasons for coming to study at TAFE and in relation to the nature and magnitude of the problems that they experienced in their study at TAFE and in their daily life in Western Australia. A unique pattern of results emerged for each country, although within group differences were also noted and should serve as a reminder to interpret these results with caution. These findings are important for ensuring that

the unique needs of students from specific countries are met, in terms of provisions and services related to study at TAFE and daily life in Western Australia.

One of the important findings of the investigation of past students' attitudes towards increased associations between their country and Australia was the whole group's **general agreement that more Australian students should study in Asia compared to more Asian students studying in Australia.**

The strong relationship, and alternatively lack of relationship, between satisfaction and attitudes for respondents from different countries needs further investigation. In cases where respondents' satisfaction with their TAFE experience was strongly related to their attitudes towards future educational and business associations between respondents' country and Australia (eg. the Malaysian respondents and to a lesser extent the Indonesian respondents), it can be expected that any improvement of provisions and services for international students will directly lead to more positive attitudes towards international exchange, both educational and business. In contrast, in cases where no relationship was found between these two aspects (eg. respondents from Thailand and Hong Kong), the explanation for this findings has to be sought in the broader political, educational and economic contexts of the respondents' home country.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

A large number of suggestions were made by the 71 respondents in this study to improve international students' adjustments to study at TAFE and to living in Western Australia. Although these suggestions were made from the vantage point of the international student population, it is anticipated that local students would be equal beneficiaries of any resulting changes based on some of these suggestions. The findings of the study and suggestions made by the 71 respondents were used as the basis for the following set of recommendations.

As this survey was conducted in 1993, it is possible that some of the issues raised in these recommendations have subsequently been addressed by some of the colleges.

ADJUSTING TO STUDY AT TAFE

Detailed information on courses of study

A number of respondents suggested that international students should be given more detailed information on various aspects of their course of study before departure.

RECOMMENDATION 1

More detailed information should be available in students' home country about various aspects of their chosen course of study at TAFE. The information should cover the following:

- * the minimum level of English necessary for successful study in the TAFE award course.
- * the structure and content of the course
- * the length of the course (minimum and maximum time frames with realistic estimates of course completion)
- * the list of compulsory and elective units
- * description of the content of all units
- * information regarding Recognition of Prior Learning (eg. credit transfer, prior work experience)
- * information on modes of delivery (eg. lectures, workshops, laboratories, fieldwork, open learning)
- * the qualifications which can be obtained within that time
- * the level of recognition of the TAFE qualification in Australia and in the students' home country, further study available in the same

discipline (eg. Diploma, university degree) and where applicable the professional membership available.

*** visa regulations regarding studying and working in Australia**

This information, which should be up to date, would help international students make informed decisions regarding their study at TAFE and help them map out, in advance with their families, the practical aspects of their expected stay in Australia (eg. finances and study leave). Any possible variations in completion dates, for example in the event of course failure or unscheduled changes, should also be outlined to students at this point.

In addition to the written information, in countries where the number of departing students is large enough, TAFE may also consider organising pre-departure seminars. Such seminars would provide an opportunity for students to meet each other and TAFE representatives, so that any queries could be clarified. It would be an opportunity for TAFE to provide additional, up to date information on various issues of interest. These seminars would illustrate to students and their families, in a concrete way, TAFE's commitment to the quality of its services to international students.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Where the number of departing students is large enough, TAFE may consider organising pre-departure seminars.

Allocation of students to colleges/campuses

The lack of choice with regard to campus of study has been raised by respondents. Being with their friends, inner city preference and perceived differences in campus facilities are some of the reasons given by students to attend a particular campus as well as subsequent requests for transfer to other campuses. On the other hand, it is extremely important that international students attend different campuses to facilitate interaction with local students. International students themselves consider this to be important to their experience of studying abroad. The difficulties involved with regard to allocation of students to colleges could be alleviated in part by:

RECOMMENDATIONS 3.1 AND 3.2

3.1 The issue regarding initial campus assignment and/or subsequent transfer to another campus should be discussed with

the colleges and with an international student association (see Recommendation 18) in an attempt to satisfy all interested parties.

- 3.2 Once a campus has been assigned (either initially or as a result of subsequent transfer), international students should be required to complete all their units of study at that particular campus, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

General organisation

General organisational problems within the TAFE system and the lack of effective channels of communication between various levels of TAFE administration and students, were perceived by respondents to be at the root of numerous problems, for example, time-tabling issues, uncertain availability of semester-based units, insufficient time to prepare for departure from Australia due to the late release of examination timetables and non-availability of supplementary examinations. Respondents were unsure of the course of action they should take to address such issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS 4.1 TO 4.5

- 4.1 In each college with international students, one staff member from within *each study area*, should be designated to advise international students on study-related matters and grievances. This person should have some cross-cultural experience, knowledge about international students' conditions of study, and an interest to act in this role.
- 4.2 Any changes to subject availability should be avoided during the semester. If this is not possible, students should be notified immediately of any changes affecting their study and advice given regarding alternative choice of subjects.
- 4.3 Examination timetables should be released sufficiently early to enable students to plan their departure.
- 4.4 The possibility of providing supplementary examinations for international students should be explored with the W.A.

Department of Training, since students may have difficulty prolonging their stay in Australia to complete their course of study (eg. financial constraints).

- 4.5 In exceptional circumstances and only when supported by the senior lecturer and approved by TAFE International, international students should be allowed to enrol in open learning units, for example after failure in a unit or in conjunction with their other units of study.**

Courses and units of study

Some respondents felt that the content of some compulsory units had little relevance to their future academic or vocational needs, as they were exclusively relevant to the Australian context. It is also desirable that the prior knowledge and experience of international students in some courses should be acknowledged as is the case with local students.

A gradual internationalisation of some course curricula and the strengthening of links with employment agencies and educational institutions in students' home countries would be perceived as extremely valuable. It is believed that the internationalisation of course curricula would also have a beneficial impact on local Australian students.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1

Where relevant, courses and units offered to international students should have an international flavour. In some units, international examples could be introduced to capitalise on all students' prior experience and to address the issue of relevance for future study or employment.

The analyses of students' adjustment to study at TAFE (see Section 3.4.2) revealed that the large majority of student had problems with 'writing in English' and 'understanding the teacher'. A number of colleges have introduced English support tutorials for international students, however, these classes are not always well attended. Both overseas students' co-ordinators and international students themselves have indicated the need for English support tutorials that are specific to students' study area. Some colleges have already introduced these on a trial basis.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2

Subject-specific support tutorials should be made available and compulsory for all international students from a non English speaking background. Staff members in charge of these tutorials could negotiate with students the content and format of these support classes to ensure that international students' specific needs in their study units are met, for example, familiarisation with technical terminology. These tutorials should be regularly monitored for on-going adjustments throughout students' first semester or year at TAFE.

Respondents revealed that they placed a great value on the multicultural nature of the TAFE educational environment. However, not all respondents' experiences of cultural mix on campus were positive and they appeared divided on how to address this issue. Some respondents suggested that international students should be treated as a distinct group, and that special tutorial classes should be organised for them. In contrast, others wanted to maximise their opportunities for interacting with local Australian students and suggested combined classes for all activities.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3

International students should be given as many opportunities as possible to interact in class with local students during their study at TAFE, (eg. group work, projects, etc.).

On campus facilities

Discrepancies between "advertised" and "actual" realities in standards of facilities provided at different campuses were criticised by many respondents, and in some cases was related to students' requests for transfer to another campus. Smart & Ang (1993b) made the same comment in their analysis of print materials for overseas student recruitment. Apart from providing more realistic information about the facilities in TAFE colleges, it is recommended that the following basic facilities at all campuses be available and upgraded where necessary to facilitate all students' learning at TAFE:

RECOMMENDATIONS 6.1 AND 6.2

- 6.1 Library facilities in *all* colleges should be up-graded through the provision of a greater variety of reference books for all courses of study, extended opening hours (eg. evening, weekends, non-teaching breaks) and the consistent *updating* of resource materials. Information on inter-institution library networking and borrowing privileges should be made available to all students.
- 6.2 Computing facilities in *all* colleges should be up-graded through the provision of word processing facilities for students to type up their assignments. Ready access to such facilities could, in the long run, improve international as well as local students' attitudes to their standard of work by encouraging high levels of project presentation.

Staff - student relations

A number of respondents reported that some staff members (teaching and/or general) were seemingly insensitive to cultural issues and appeared to be lacking in an understanding of international students. Recommendations to minimise situations of conflict in this area include the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS 7.1 AND 7.2

- 7.1 Cross-cultural training should be introduced for all staff members who are frequently in contact with international students including lecturers, counsellors, technicians, administrative staff and library staff. Repeat seminars may need to be organised to give all staff the opportunity to attend. Issues discussed could include differences in language, social/religious conventions, learning styles, conflict resolution and lifestyle priorities. The importance of confidentiality in staff-student interactions should also be emphasised.
- 7.2 In some cases, TAFE may want to consider giving the responsibility of classes with large numbers of international

students to staff who have expressed an interest in teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Teaching style

In order to facilitate international students' adjustments to a new educational environment and teaching/learning requirements, the following recommendations are made:

RECOMMENDATIONS 8.1 TO 8.3

- 8.1 The content of courses offered to international students should be free from unexplained Australian jargon and colloquialisms and similarly, the method of delivery suitable for an international audience.**
- 8.2 Examination papers should also be free of unexplained Australian jargon. There should be a set time (prior to the actual commencement of the exam) for reading of the questions while a lecturer from the study area is present to clarify any general language-related problems which may disadvantage international students.**
- 8.3 Teaching staff at TAFE should provide detailed information pertaining to acceptable standards of work in their courses (for example, essay-writing guidelines, marking schemes, model answers). Information on standards of work would benefit all new students, ie. local school leavers and mature age students, as well as international students.**

University networking facilities

Many respondents saw advantages in establishing closer links with universities as a large majority of them aspired to continue their study at university in Australia after TAFE.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Written up-dated documentation relevant to study at university should be made available to *all* TAFE students. This information could be placed in college libraries and with overseas students' co-ordinators. It should include: programmes available, conditions of admission, accredited cross-institution courses, credit transfers, and contacts for more information.

Miscellaneous on-campus facilities (Canteen)

Respondents suggested that canteen facilities should be upgraded and that there should be more choice in food available.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The sale of a greater variety of foodstuff (eg. Asian foods and more health foods generally) to cater for the diverse student population should be encouraged in all TAFE canteens. Where this is difficult in the short-term, the provision of a micro-wave oven is recommended for students who choose to bring their own food.

ADJUSTING TO LIVING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**Arrival in Western Australia/ Orientation programmes**

Many new international students arrive in Western Australia just in time for the beginning of the first term, and then have to spend time organising practical daily living arrangements during the first week of term. While pre-departure seminars may cover some issues related to living in Western Australia, students should be strongly encouraged to attend the orientation programmes held by TAFE International and/or colleges hosting international students. It should be emphasised to students that these sessions give them an opportunity to meet with other international students and TAFE personnel, as well as provide them with more detailed information on a number of important issues regarding living in Western Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 11

New international students could be requested to arrive in Western Australia one week prior to the commencement of the first semester to attend the compulsory orientation session organised by TAFE International. TAFE International could take responsibility for air port pick-up, not only to keep the cost to students to a minimum, but also to give the new students an opportunity to meet a TAFE representative on arrival.

The orientation could take the form of a week long 'live-in' session and arrangements could be made with organisations like Rotary for suitable subsidised venues. An information package or booklet (in concise simple English) should be handed out to students. The orientation programme and the information booklet should serve the following functions:

provide information and strategies for dealing with general living issues deemed important by international students such as accommodation (see Recommendation 12.1 to 12.3), transport (see Recommendation 13), finance, work experience, medical facilities, etc. Information regarding ethnic food stores and restaurants could also be provided.

advise students of support personnel and support structures in each college, eg. overseas student co-ordinators or counsellors. Arrangements could be made during orientation for new students to meet informally with support staff to encourage further interaction.

set up a peer support system where international students who have been in TAFE for a semester or more can provide valuable support for the newly arrived international students. These 'senior' students could be paid a nominal fee to 'live in' with the new students for the week of orientation activities and in some cases pick them up from the airport.

advise new international students of local (Australian) social conventions and colloquialisms to boost their confidence levels

when interacting with their Australian counterparts and with local people in general.

provide information related to off-campus ethnic religious (eg. mosques, temples), social organisations (eg. Chinese Society, Japanese Society) and sporting activities (eg. soccer, martial arts clubs, etc.).

recent/past international TAFE students should be consulted as to the type of information that would have facilitated their adjustment to living in Western Australia. This information could be used by TAFE International to further improve the quality of their services to international students.

Accommodation

A number of respondents reported problems related to accommodation. Most problems concerned the difficulty in finding suitable host families. A number of respondents were under the impression that some of the host families were more interested in the remuneration than in the welfare of international students. The issue of accommodation is an extremely important one for international students and has the potential to cause major problems.

By its very nature, finding suitable accommodation for international students is a very demanding and time consuming activity for TAFE personnel especially during orientation. For this reason as well as for social and geographical reasons, it would seem reasonable that this activity be located within colleges. A few colleges have already started registers of people who have accommodation available in their area suitable for international students.

RECOMMENDATIONS 12.1 TO 12.3

- 12.1 Accommodation registers which build up a data base of information on families who have experience in hosting international students should be set up in all colleges.
- 12.2 Extra resources should be made available for international students' co-ordinators during orientation, to facilitate the search for suitable accommodation for international students.

- 12.3 An informal 'bill of rights' outlining the expectations of host families and international students could be drawn up for distribution to both parties.**

Transport

Some courses of study require students to attend classes at different campuses. This issue can present major problems for international student who are dependent on public transport.

RECOMMENDATIONS 13

When compulsory units for a course of study require students to travel between campuses, the issue of transportation should be examined by the college offering that course. It may be possible for college personnel to facilitate students' organisation of car pooling. Such arrangements may be in the interest of some local students as well.

Finance

In the course of their stay in Australia, many international students experience financial difficulties. A number of respondents were unaware of some hidden costs involved in study and living expenditure, for example, textbooks, rent, food and transport.

RECOMMENDATION 14.1 AND 14.2

- 14.1 An approximation of hidden living costs should be tabled for new students as a weekly/monthly budget guideline. This information should be provided before departure and at orientation.**
- 14.2 In exceptional circumstances, TAFE may consider setting up a fee-instalment system for international students having genuine difficulty making payments due to unforeseen circumstances.**

Casual Employment

Many international students hope to obtain part time casual employment while studying at TAFE for financial reasons as well as to gain some work experience in their discipline of study. Some colleges already have a job placement co-ordinator and this could be extended to all colleges.

RECOMMENDATION 15

Information should be made available to all students (local and international) regarding part-time or casual work related to various fields of study taught at TAFE. TAFE may consider setting up an employment register with the co-operation of industries and specific study area personnel. This information could be placed in the library, study areas or with overseas students' co-ordinators.

Medical Facilities

New international students are often unaware of the differences between the health-benefit system in Australia and that of their respective home countries. Students also need to know the options available if they need medical attention (eg. public or hospital emergency centres or general practitioners).

RECOMMENDATION 16

Information regarding the local health system and how to access medical staff and/or facilities should be made readily available to international students. In the information booklet (see Recommendation 11) students should be fully informed as to what expenses Medibank covers. For example, they should be advised to take care of any existing dental problems before leaving home due to the high costs involved in Australia.

On-Going Social Functions

Most international students who have chosen to study in Australia are keenly aware of the advantages of socialising within a multi-cultural environment, and perceive friendships with their Australian counterparts as being potential long-term associations (eg. in commerce, business). In order for such positive effects of

cultural diversity to eventuate, it is recommended that social interaction be encouraged among local and international students.

When available, sporting facilities and student common rooms are used on a regular basis and thus should be gradually introduced on all campuses.

RECOMMENDATION 17

More recreational facilities and in particular sporting facilities should be provided on *all* campuses to give local and international students more opportunities to socialise during their time at TAFE. Student common rooms would also serve this purpose.

International Student Association

The nature and magnitude of adjustments experienced by international students place considerable demands on TAFE International and the TAFE colleges hosting these students. At the same time, it was found that students who experience problems were more likely to approach friends and other students than TAFE staff. Informal support networks tend to develop spontaneously among students from the same country. The establishment of an Association of TAFE international students would provide the organisational structure for facilitating students' interactions and exchange of information between students, TAFE colleges and TAFE International.

RECOMMENDATION 18

TAFE International should initiate the establishment of a student association in Western Australia with representatives in each college hosting international students. The purpose of the association would be for members to develop a sense of belonging to a community, to facilitate the identification of social/welfare needs of international students at TAFE, to better address these needs and to disseminate information in each college. The association could also be the vehicle for introducing international students to local social activities and sporting clubs.

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APPENDIX A1 - A4

Preliminary results of the 1994 cohort

Appendix A1 Profile of 1994 cohort who completed the questionnaire.

	Country of Residence					
	Total n=53	Indonesia n = 20	Hong Kong n = 15	Malaysia n = 4	Thailand n = 5	Other* n = 9
Program of Study						
Hospitality	7	0	1	0	2	4
Business	34	16	11	4	2	1
Engineering	3	2	0	0	0	1
Computing	4	1	1	0	0	2
Other ⁺	5	1	2	0	1	1
Gender						
Males	24	11	4	3	3	3
Females	29	9	11	1	2	6

* The 9 Other respondents in the 1994 sample were made up as follows:
Singapore (3), China, Brunei, Taiwan, Korea, Maccau and Papua New Guinea (1 each).

+ The Other courses comprised:
Electronic Studies, Art and Design, Fashion, Library Information and Social Science

Appendix A2 First source of information about TAFE - 1994 respondents

First Source of Information	Country of Residence					
	Total n = 53	Indonesia n = 20	Hong Kong n = 15	Malaysia n = 4	Thailand n = 5	Other n = 9
Education Agents	23 (43%)	10	7	0	3	3
Friends/Relatives	18 (34%)	6	4	3	2	3
Education Exhibitions	8 (15%)	2	4	1	0	1
<i>School in home country</i>	3 (6%)	2	0	0	0	1
Brochures	1 (2%)	0	0	0	0	1
Govt Agency eg. Consulates (Home country or Australian)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Comments

Education agents were more often cited as the first source of information about TAFE by the 1994 respondents (43%) compared to the 1992/93 respondents (37%). Friends/relatives were next, 34% for the 1994 cohort compared to 46% for the 1992/93 cohort. The relative importance of education agents as the first source of information in comparison to friends/relatives in the 1994 data was however confounded with changes in the composition of the two cohorts. Sixty six per cent of the 1994 respondents compared to only 44% of the 1992/93 respondents were from Indonesia or Hong Kong, two countries displaying different response patterns from the other countries.

The percentage of respondents from Indonesia and Hong Kong indicating education agents as their first source of information about TAFE was consistently higher (average for the two countries: 1992/93 52%; 1993/94 ELICOS 52%, 1994 49%) in comparison to all other countries taken together (average: 1992/93 25%; 1993/94 ELICOS 26%, 1994 33%). In contrast, for the same two countries, the percentage of respondents indicating friends/relative as their first source of information about TAFE was consistently lower (1992/93 35%; 1993/94 ELICOS 37%; 1994 29%) in comparison to all other countries taken together (average: 1992/93 55%; 1993/94 ELICOS 58%; 1994 44%).

It should be noted that 'first' source of information should not be equated with 'main' or 'only' source of information. Friends and relatives remain a crucial, sought after and often determinant source of information about TAFE in all countries, even for individuals who first hear about the existence of TAFE through education agents.

School in home country was a new first source of information for a small percentage of the 1994 cohort.

Appendix A3 Importance of factors in choosing to study at TAFE, WA -
1994 respondents.

Factors	Mean Rating of Importance ¹ (Standard deviations)					
	Total (n = 53)	Indonesia (n = 20)	Hong Kong (n = 15)	Malaysia (n = 4)*	Thailand (n = 5)*	Other (n = 9)
To get a good job at home	3.57 (0.77)	3.50 (0.95)	3.60 (0.74)	4.00 (0.00)	3.80 (0.45)	3.33 (0.71)
To improve my English	3.32 (0.96)	3.40 (0.82)	3.33 (0.90)	3.75 (0.50)	4.00 (0.00)	2.56 (1.33)
To get into university	3.26 (1.02)	3.45 (0.94)	3.13 (1.13)	2.25 (0.96)	3.60 (0.55)	3.33 (1.12)
To update my qualification	3.25 (1.00)	3.15 (1.04)	3.47 (0.83)	3.50 (1.00)	3.60 (0.89)	2.78 (1.20)
Australia provides quality education	3.13 (0.73)	3.20 (0.70)	2.73 (0.80)	3.50 (1.00)	3.60 (0.55)	3.22 (0.44)
Overseas qualifications are liked in my country	3.06 (1.13)	2.85 (1.31)	3.20 (1.08)	3.25 (0.96)	3.80 (0.45)	2.78 (1.09)
TAFE has a good reputation	2.98 (0.82)	3.10 (0.91)	2.87 (0.74)	3.25 (0.50)	3.00 (0.71)	2.78 (0.97)
To travel abroad	2.94 (0.86)	2.90 (0.85)	2.87 (0.92)	3.00 (0.00)	3.40 (0.89)	2.89 (1.05)
Cost of living in Australia is cheaper	2.87 (0.96)	2.90 (1.02)	3.07 (0.88)	2.50 (1.00)	3.00 (1.22)	2.56 (0.88)
Easier to study in a small city	2.85 (1.05)	3.00 (1.12)	2.60 (1.12)	2.75 (0.96)	3.40 (0.55)	2.67 (1.00)
Education in Australia is cheaper	2.60 (1.06)	2.35 (1.14)	3.33 (0.72)	2.00 (1.41)	2.80 (1.10)	2.11 (0.60)
To study with people from different countries	2.55 (0.93)	2.55 (1.10)	2.60 (0.99)	2.50 (0.58)	2.40 (0.55)	2.56 (0.88)
Perth has a good climate	2.55 (0.95)	2.55 (0.89)	2.60 (1.06)	2.00 (0.82)	2.80 (0.84)	2.56 (1.13)
Perth is close to my home country	2.38 (0.97)	2.50 (1.05)	2.07 (0.88)	2.25 (0.96)	2.80 (0.45)	2.44 (1.13)
Had relatives living in Perth	2.09 (1.08)	1.95 (1.00)	2.13 (1.19)	1.75 (1.50)	2.00 (0.71)	2.56 (1.13)
Easier to get into university in Australia	2.09 (1.01)	1.70 (1.03)	2.40 (0.99)	2.00 (0.82)	2.40 (1.14)	2.33 (0.87)

* Caution small numbers

¹Ratings of factors ranged from:

1 = Not at all important
3 = Quite Important

2 = Slightly Important
4 = Very Important

See Notes next page

Appendix A3 (continued)

Brief comparisons of 1992/93 and 1994 respondents' patterns of responses regarding the importance of factors in choosing to study at TAFE W.A

Overall group

The two factors given the highest ratings of importance by the 92/93 respondents were still the same in 1994, with more importance given to 'Getting a good job at home'. 'Getting into University' was also given more importance by the 1994 respondents (mean rating of 3.26, 3rd in order of importance) compared to the 1992/93 respondents (2.83, 6th).

Indonesia

There were two major changes over time in Indonesian respondents' main reasons for choosing to study at TAFE, WA. 'To get into university' was perceived as more important by the 1994 cohort of 20 respondents (3.45, 2nd in order of importance) in comparison to the 1992/93 cohort of 18 respondents' (mean rating 2.50, 14th in order of importance). In contrast, 'Overseas qualifications are liked in my country' was not rated as highly in 1994 as in 1992/93 (1994 mean rating 2.85, 9th in order of importance; 1992/93 mean rating 3.61, 3rd in order of importance).

Hong Kong

There were no major changes over time in Hong Kong respondents' main reasons for choosing to study at TAFE, W.A. 'To get a good job at home' was still rated as the most important factor followed by 'To update my qualifications'. 'Education in Australia is cheaper' however, appeared more important to the 15 respondents from the 1994 cohort (mean rating of 3.33, 3rd in order of importance) than to the 13 respondents from the 1992/93 cohort (2.31, 12th). Travelling abroad also appeared to be given more importance by the 1994 respondents (mean rating of 2.87, 8th in order of importance) in comparison to the 1992/93 respondents (1.85, 15th).

Malaysia and Thailand

The small numbers of 1994 respondents from Malaysia (n = 4) and Thailand (n = 5) precluded any comparisons of changes over time.

Appendix A4 Problems when studying at TAFE by country of residence - 1994 respondents.

	Mean Ratings of Problems ¹ (Standard Deviations)					
	Total (n = 53)	Indonesia (n = 20)	Hong Kong (n = 15)	Malaysia (n = 4)*	Thailand (n = 5)*	Other (n = 9)
English Language						
Writing in English	2.33 (0.94)	2.25 (0.85)	2.50 (0.94)	2.75 (0.96)	3.20 (0.84)	1.56 (0.73)
Understanding teacher	2.08 (0.86)	2.05 (0.76)	2.07 (0.83)	2.25 (1.50)	2.40 (0.55)	1.89 (1.05)
Speaking in English	2.15 (0.96)	1.90 (0.91)	2.71 (0.83)	2.50 (1.29)	2.20 (0.45)	1.67 (1.00)
Reading in English	1.96 (0.74)	2.00 (0.79)	2.07 (0.73)	1.75 (0.96)	2.40 (0.55)	1.56 (0.53)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.6	1.7
Teaching/Learning						
Not sure about standards of good assignments	2.48 (0.92)	2.15 (0.75)	2.50 (0.85)	3.25 (0.96)	2.20 (1.10)	3.00 (1.00)
Difficulty in writing notes while lecturer is talking	2.54 (0.90)	2.45 (0.89)	2.43 (1.02)	2.75 (0.50)	3.00 (0.00)	2.56 (1.13)
Not getting enough handouts	2.13 (0.99)	2.10 (1.12)	2.29 (0.91)	2.25 (0.96)	1.60 (0.89)	2.22 (0.97)
Teacher used local Australian knowledge and examples	2.33 (1.00)	2.10 (0.97)	2.36 (1.15)	2.25 (1.00)	2.40 (0.55)	2.67 (1.12)
Not sure exactly what required (assignments)	2.17 (0.92)	1.90 (0.85)	2.29 (0.83)	2.75 (1.50)	2.20 (0.84)	2.33 (1.00)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.6
Social/Cultural						
Worried about giving wrong answers in class.	2.58 (0.98)	2.40 (0.82)	2.86 (0.95)	2.50 (1.29)	2.60 (0.89)	2.56 (1.33)
Feeling shy to ask when something is not understood	2.35 (1.08)	2.20 (1.01)	2.36 (1.08)	2.75 (1.50)	2.40 (0.55)	2.44 (1.42)
People had difficulty understanding me	2.12 (0.81)	2.00 (0.79)	2.29 (0.99)	2.75 (0.96)	2.00 (0.00)	1.89 (0.60)
Uncomfortable about calling lecturers by their first name	1.46 (0.67)	1.40 (0.60)	1.29 (0.47)	1.50 (0.58)	1.80 (0.84)	1.67 (1.10)
<i>Mean Ratings</i>	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.2	2.1

* Caution small numbers

¹ Ratings of problems ranged from: 1 = Not a problem to 4 = A Major problem.

Appendix A4 (continued)

Brief comparisons of 1992/93 and 1994 respondents' patterns of responses regarding problems when studying at TAFE.

¹⁵ *Overall group*

There were no major changes over time in the overall group's perceptions of study problems, with regard to English Language, Teaching/Learning or Social/Cultural issues.

Indonesia

No major changes over time.

Hong Kong

No major changes over time.

Malaysia

The small number of 1994 respondents from Malaysia (n = 4) precluded any comparisons of changes over time. The few respondents' reports of their study problems, however, were noticeably different from the 1992/93 group of Malaysian respondents, and were generally more similar to those of the Indonesian, Hong Kong and Thai groups. While the 11 Malaysian respondents from the 1992/93 cohort were quite different from the other groups in terms of reporting minimal problems on almost all aspects of study, the 4 Malaysian respondents from the 1994 cohort appeared to experience as many problems with the English Language, with Teaching/Learning and in relation to Social/Cultural issues as any of the other groups.

Thailand

The number of respondents from Thailand was very small in both 1992/93 (n = 6) and 1994 (n = 5) and their patterns of responses regarding problems when studying at TAFE were similar. Respondents from both cohorts appeared to experience major difficulties with English, in particular writing.