

Statement on International Students and Employment Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Principles

VicWISE mission statement:

"To help International Students unlock opportunities for Employment"

Principle 1: VicWISE believes that International Students in Australia should be respected as people who [contribute](#) culturally, socially, diplomatically and economically to the wider Australian community.

Principle 2: VicWISE believes that the well-being of international students is absolutely crucial during the Pandemic. International students are largely young people and could often be particularly vulnerable and isolated. To be employable now, and in the future, both their physical and mental health is paramount, and they need clear pathways now to the support on offer from institutions, community organisations and the OSHC. International students must be aware of and contact these organisations to support their well-being.

Principle 3: VicWISE believes that the primary focus of international students should be that of maintaining their status as students, and that they would like to complete their studies to the best of their ability.

Principle 4: VicWISE recognises international students might have vastly different circumstances and that no statement will cover all students. In cases where students are struggling, we would encourage them to talk to their institutions or organisations.

Employability

VicWISE understands that international students have to continue to enhance their employability even during the pandemic. This means that any networking, research or work integrated learning (WIL) needs to be accessible virtually. There are key resources online where students can continue to develop their professional and personal development (see resource links below).

Like all members of the wider community International students will need to grow and adapt to the changing work environment.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

(including internships, research projects, project-based placements)

VicWISE recognises most industries are currently struggling under the pandemic to maintain viability. This is a universally difficult economic situation thereby increasing challenges in all aspects of employment.

With respect to WIL, it is essential for international students to understand the limitations that host organisations are under, and the importance of maintaining good relationships with potential employers post-pandemic. Institutions are working to support all students to ensure the continuation of WIL where feasible. The following are some resources that are good starting points for students, to look beyond internships:

- [Improving Employability during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Volunteering Australia](#)
- [Meetup \(Increasing number of Virtual Meetups\)](#)
- [Managing Expectations: Pros and Cons of Virtual Internships](#)

For employers, offering virtual or remote WIL may be an exciting new opportunity. VicWISE recognises and appreciates that many employers are already doing this. For employers that are starting to explore this opportunity, there are resources available to help set these up:

- [Setting Up Internships](#)
- [Tips for Setting Up Virtual Internships](#)
- [Tips for Universities Thinking about Setting up Virtual Internships](#)

Part-time Work & temporary change in work rights for some student visa holders.

VicWISE advises students to make sure that they have a manageable balance between their full-time study and part-time employment.

VicWISE recognises some employers have been approved to employ international students temporarily for [more than 40 hours/fortnight across different sectors](#).

VicWISE suggests that excessive part-time work can have long term implications for course success and long-term employability. This article on [working part-time during the pandemic](#) lays out the various factors to consider.

Support from Educational Institutions

VicWISE recognises that many larger institutions have various forms of support for international students.

VicWISE recommends that smaller educational institutions that have yet to provide support, need to urgently be more pro-active in practical support for international students (e.g. extensions for fee payment where relevant, payment plan options).

**Virtual
Professional
Development**

VicWISE encourages international students to explore all the professional and personal development opportunities on offer. For example, students could take advantages of resources such as LinkedIn Learning, Khan Academy, Google Code Academy, amongst other resources.

VicWISE will start to run Virtual Professional Development workshops for students. Please check the following platforms for information on VicWISE:

- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/VicWISE/>
- Website: <https://www.VicWISE.org/>
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/VicWISE_inc/?hl=en
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VicWISEInc/>

**Employer
Relief Fund**

VicWISE would recommend that economic modelling be done to research the viability of the Employer Relief Fund being applied to Australian employers who have international students as part of their workforce.

Other Resources that International Students might find useful

Health and Well-being Resources

- [Allianz: COVID-19 and Overseas Student Health Cover \(OSHC\).](#)
- [Bupa Overseas Student Health Cover \(OSHC\).](#)
- [Medibank Overseas Student Health Cover \(OSHC\).](#)
- [How to Find A Doctor?](#)

Employment Resources during the COVID-19 Pandemic

- [JobWatch | Employment Rights Q&A.](#)
- [Insider Guides | Resource Hub.](#)
- [Study Melbourne | FAQs Employment & Finances.](#)

Coronavirus FAQs for International Students

[Australian Government – Department of Education, Skills and Employment.](#)

Understanding the Contribution of International Students to Australia

[International Education Association of Australia.](#)

Universities that Provide Support and Assistance for International Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- [University of Melbourne](#)
- [Monash University](#)
- [Swinburne University](#)
- [RMIT University](#)
- [Deakin University](#)
- [La Trobe University](#)
- [CQUniversity Melbourne](#)
- [Victoria University](#)
- [Federation University](#)

Call the dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) hotline on
1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days a week) for advice.