

Your gateway to first class schools in Australia.

Providing comprehensive testing for international primary and secondary school students.



Welcome

The past year or so has been challenging for international programs in Australian schools with DIAC visa data and DEEWR/Austrade student enrolment and commencement data (Link to austrade.gov.au/International-Student-Data) continuing to show a decline in the number of international students coming to study in Australian schools. Immigration policies and the relatively slow speed at which the Knight review changes are being implemented is continuing to have an impact - as has the high value of the Australian dollar. This challenging environment means that Australian schools must consider their international marketing strategies and budgets carefully to maximise the outcomes they achieve. It is important to remember, however, that maintaining a school's brand and profile in key markets is just as important in a slow market.

We encourage you to actively lobby national and state governments through letters and emails to relevant government department representatives, ministers and local members of parliament. School education is often overlooked by policy makers and this will only change if we alert them to the key issues and concerns that Australian schools hold.

This newsletter introduces Elena Kuecker our new Operations Manager in the Melbourne office, reports on the AEAS Australian School's Exhibitions held in China and Hong Kong in March and provides an overview of the challenges of testing in China. While the number of students that AEAS has tested in China has increased over the past year, the number of students attending unauthorised intensive test preparation courses has also increased, raising questions about the real English level of some of these students.

Best wishes from,

Tracey O'Halloran, Managing Director and the excellent team in the AEAS Melbourne Office (Elena Kuecker, Simone Barker, Joan O'Halloran and Ray Gurry) and in the AEAS Beijing Office (Lan Lan Cao and Yanchao Wang)



Welcome to new AEAS staff

Elena Kuecker commenced as the Operations Manager in the Melbourne office in early March this year. Elena has excellent experience in the international education industry having previously worked in the admissions office at Wesley College, Melbourne and at Deakin University's international office. We are very lucky to have Elena join our team! She has settled in very well and has been tackling the arrangements for the June-July Australian schools exhibitions being held in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Myanmar, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.

AEAS Beijing Office has also welcomed Yanchao Wang to our team. Yanchao provides administrative and project support in China and responds to the many calls from parents and education agents enquiring about testing and the AEAS Studying in Australian Schools Preparation Course. She is a great support to Lan Lan, our talented manager of the Beijing Office. Yanchao can be contacted on infochina@aeas.com.cn and Lan Lan can be contacted on lanlan@aeas.com.cn or +86 10 8454 9147.

Test Administrators in Australia

Don't forget that AEAS testing can be arranged in all capital cities in Australia. Testing onshore at the point of commencement provides schools with an accurate and current understanding of students' English language levels and abilities. Please check www.aeas.com.au or email Elena on admin@aeas.com.au or 03 9645 0077 for further information. We also have independent test administrators available in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth - please contact them directly to arrange testing.

Diane Josey, AEAS Test Administrator in Brisbane
Mobile: 0433 795 328
Email: diane@englishlanguageservices.com.au

Sally Collyns, AEAS Test Administrator in Adelaide
Mobile: 0427 433 336
Email: teaustralia@bigpond.com

Juliana Atkinson, AEAS Test Administrator in Perth
Mobile: 0402 544 405
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Test preparation and AEAS

2012 NAPLAN testing has again sparked debate regarding the value of testing. The Age article titled, 'Test what is studied, don't just study the test' succinctly describes what is becoming an area of focus and concern for test providers.

Extensive practice exam materials, available online or for purchase from test providers, together with test preparation courses, both official and unofficial, are products of the rapidly growing test preparation industry. Rather than undertaking traditional revision, there is a growing culture among students of attending test preparation courses. The English language proficiency testing industry is a particular growth area for test preparation courses and a simple Google search shows the plethora of test preparation courses on offer for one of the most prominent English proficiency test providers, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

The Victorian Ombudsman report, Investigation into how universities deal with international students, October 2011, discusses the effect 'cramming' has on international student enrolment policies and international student learning outcomes in the tertiary sector. The consensus is that while cramming enables students to achieve a high test score in the short term, it does not ensure students can access this knowledge in the long term. The Age article, 'Low English skills hurt students, quotes a former language studies research fellow at Melbourne University as saying, 'I have had students get nines [on the language test] and they come to me and can speak barely a sentence, because they just get so test wise.

AEAS is attuned to these practices and sees China as the international student recruitment market posing the most risk to quality international student enrolments in the schools sector. Cultural pressures to achieve at a high level coupled with an education system focused on test based assessment creates a perfect storm for the burgeoning test preparation industry and cramming culture now seen in China. AEAS continuously monitors all results to ensure the validity of our reporting and actively communicates strategies to schools in this regard. Any student performance concerns are clearly flagged on the AEAS report and we encourage you to call our office to discuss student results whenever necessary.

We also emphasis the following:

- There is no 'pass' score for the AEAS test The AEAS test is an assessment of students' actual abilities. There is no need to study extensively for this test. It is not a 'pass' or 'fail' test.

- Any ELICOS recommended should be completed A short ELICOS program of 8-10 weeks should always be completed. Waving the necessity to complete a recommended program creates a risk for both the student and the school.

- Re-test after completion of ELICOS studies Students learn at different rates. Retesting ensures students are ready at the point of commencement. Testing at this point also rules out the effects of cramming.

Testing has been, and will continue to be an accurate and efficient method by which to manage international student enrolments. However, as with any policy, or process, adjustments must be made in response to developments within the working environment. AEAS is always on hand to advise on how the test can contribute to a comprehensive international student admissions policy. Do not hesitate to contact us to discuss your school needs.

Further Reading

The Victorian Ombudsman report: Investigation into how universities deal with international students, October 2011

The Age, Low English skills hurt students, Sunday 18 December 2011

The Age, Test what is studied, don't just study the test, Tuesday 15 May, 2012



New Test Centres

Keep an eye on the AEAS website for new Test Centres. New Test Centres have been established in Singapore, Indonesia and other countries.

AEAS is also pleased to announce that the long standing Test Centre Agreement between IDP and AEAS was renewed in early 2012.

This Agreement enables AEAS testing to be available through experienced test centres in ten countries.

AEAS testing is also available in many other countries not listed on our website. Testing has been arranged in a wide range of countries such as Russia, Denmark, Spain, Serbia, Iran and Peru. Please contact Elena at admin@aeas.com.au for further information.

AEAS Australian Schools Exhibitions - March 2012

The AEAS Australian Schools Exhibitions were held in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong in March. Twenty six Australian schools participated in Beijing, 25 in Shanghai, 22 in Guangzhou and 30 in Hong Kong. The Beijing and Shanghai events were coorganised with Austar, the Guangzhou exhibition was coorganised with GOES-HKOSC and the Hong Kong event was coorganised with i Education & Training Group, Hong Kong Overseas Studies Centre and AUG Global Network.

The events were successful in attracting parents and students with an interest in an Australian education. 159 families visited the Beijing exhibition (our first in this city), 174 families visited the Shanghai exhibition (178 in 2011) and 142 families visited the Guangzhou exhibition (157 in 2011). Attendance in Hong Kong was reasonable - particularly given the significant slowing of this market over the past few years - with 385 people and 123 student registration forms being completed.

The co-organising education agents are actively following up student enquiries for participating schools and will continue to do this over the next 12 months. While immediate applications and enrolments are welcome after these exhibitions, it should be remembered that many parents will not make decisions for some time - even years - after an event. Parents will talk to many people, including friends and family already in Australia, and in China will check the (unofficial) school rankings when making their decisions. The success of a schools participation in these events should be judged over the following 1-3 years. AEAS liaises with the coorganising agents every three months or so to monitor applications and enrolments to each school.

AEAS would like to thank Eliza Chui, Education Commissioner - North Asia and Education Consul, from Austrade and her team in the various cities for her support of our March exhibitions. Eliza delivered an excellent presentation at the initial exhibition dinner the night before the Beijing event. Her knowledge and keen interest in the school sector was evident and feedback on the presentation from school participants was very positive.

Many school representatives also comment regularly that the informal networking and 'professional development' that occurred during the exhibition tour was valued greatly. Many return to Australia with renewed energy (although exhausted!) and ideas for strengthening their international programs.

If you would like further information on these exhibitions please contact Tracey O'Halloran, Managing Director on tracey@aeas.com.au or 03 9645 0077.

We are now finalising arrangements for our June-July 2012 exhibition program which will travel to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Myanmar and Kuala Lumpur. Ten schools will also participate in an education agent workshop in Jakarta in July.

The 2013 Australian Schools Exhibition Program will be emailed to Australian schools in August 2012.



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We hope you have found this month's newsletter relevant and informative. Any feedback is gratefully accepted and if you would like to suggest content that would be of interest to the industry, please let us know. Email admin@aeas.com.au