Synopsis

The ISSP is a highly successful innovative program that provides academic support and pastoral care to international students in the Faculty of Law at UTAS. It aims to support international students in their academic journey so that they can improve their results and maximise the benefits from their Australian law degree.

The ISSP is a formal fully funded program of support. Through a team of coordinators and tutors, a supplementary weekly tutorial program is offered for the academic assistance of international students at all levels. The program takes a proactive approach that aims to avoid year-end crises by encouraging students, during the course of the year, to achieve their full academic potential. Through an orientation program and ongoing mentoring and support, the program extends a unique and premium level of personal and pastoral care. Ongoing review and development ensures the program remains relevant and is responsive to international student need.

The ISSP makes an outstanding contribution to the quality of student learning and student experience for international students. Since the inception of the program international student results are on par with non-international student results, and over the past decade international students are proudly achieving at the Honours and First Class Honours level. These results are attributable to not only a focus on academic content, but also a focus on practical skill development and the implementation of strategies for preparing for differing forms of assessment. Even more importantly the program engenders self-assurance that the higher level can be achieved and a confidence to participate in all academic and social settings in the law school.

The impact of the ISSP is pervasive. It not only enhances academic achievement, but it fosters relationships and networks between students and staff, it enhances cross-cultural exchange and encourages students to enjoy the new culture in which they are living and studying. The program provides opportunities for talented undergraduates and postgraduates to gain experience tutoring at a tertiary level. More subtiley the program also raises the profile of international students and their particular needs amongst Faculty staff and creates a positive culture of assistance. In creating an atmosphere and culture where international students have an equal opportunity to achieve, and by raising cultural awareness and inclusion, the ISSP inherently pursues with the twin goals of diversity and equality.

Overview, Background and Context

1. History of the ISSP and the Need for a Support Program

Support for international students in the Faculty of Law evolved from the informal beginnings of the appointment of a contact officer to the development of the current institutionalised formal program.

The history of international students dates back to the 1950s, when the first cohort of international students entered and graduated from the Faculty. The following 40 years witnessed a steady, albeit small, stream of international students primarily from the South Pacific. This period of time also witnessed high failure rates, high attrition rates and a struggle for those who soldiered on. At this stage informal assistance was offered by staff members, but usually over the summer period when international students were preparing for supplementary exams (after failing end of year exams).

Although in the early 1990s the Law School nominated a staff member as a liaison officer to assist international students, the need for greater support remained. This was magnified by the fact that many South Pacific students were funded by AIDAB (subsequently AusAid),

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meaning that when students failed to graduate in the normal period of time, financial and academic pressure mounted for the students, for AIDAB and for the Faculty. In light of these concerns, in 1992 a project was formulated in conjunction with AIDAB to provide pastoral care and support during the year, rather than focusing on end of year “crisis management”.

In the final report to AIDAB in 1993 the program was described as follows:

**FRONT END LOADING**

The focus of the pilot program is on prevention rather than cure. The concept of providing assistance from the outset and thereby reducing the number of poor performances is cost effective, and more importantly, preferable educationally because it creates a culture of success for the students concerned. Front end loading gives the students greater confidence and independence than an approach that focuses on remedying problems once they have materialised.

In the ensuing years the pilot project was transformed into a fully-fledged program accessible to all international students. 1995 was the first year of what is now the ISSP.

2. **ISSP – the Current Program**

**Operation of the Program**

In its current form the ISSP has been operating for 12 years. The four main features of the program are follows:

- **Orientation Program for New Students:**
  The Orientation Program runs for approximately two weeks. During this time a tutor greets students, gives a general orientation of the law school, law library and important university services, assists with enrolment, student identification cards and e-mail accounts, conducts preliminary seminars on referencing, and is generally available for support and queries.

- **Tutorial Program:**
  The main component of the program is the ISSP tutorial program. For each compulsory subject in the law degree, additional tutorial assistance is provided to the international students enrolled in that subject. A tutor is appointed for each subject (generally academically strong undergraduates), who each week:
  
  i. conducts a tutorial; and
  
  ii. is available for consultation for a one hour period.

  International students are expected to attend both mainstream tutorials and ISSP tutorials. Generally, the tutor will cover the law and tutorial topics being conducted in the mainstream classes as well as preparation for assessment. Due to an increase in cross-listed units, where non-law students can enrol in elective law units, the tutorial program has been extended to:
  
  i. assist non-law international students in units including Labour Law, International Trade, and Foundations of Media and IT Law; and
  
  ii. provide general skills seminars in research, legal referencing and mootling.

- **Mentoring and Supervision:**
  Through a process of mentoring and supervising students, the ISSP’s aim is to support and provide pastoral care to all international students. In addition to informal interaction with the international students and being generally available for student queries, the Coordinator liaises with international students for the purpose of:
  
  i. checking on general well-being;
  
  ii. reviewing attendance at mainstream and ISSP tutorials;
iii reviewing assessment; and
iv seeking feedback on the progress of the program.

- Social Events:
  Each semester at least one social event is organised for the international students, tutors, and general staff. Also, each year the Hon. Mr Don Wing MLC, President of the Legislative Council, has generously hosted a reception for all international students at Parliament House.

The International Student Body
The number of international students involved annually in the ISSP has ranged from 45 to 150. Presently the program provides assistance to over 150 students.

Over the last decade the composition of the international student body has experienced marked change. In the 1990s the typical law international student was one who studied almost entirely in Tasmania on the Hobart campus. The ISSP now supports a more varied group of students who enter the program at different points of time. Students may enter the program as:

- **Introduction to Law students** (either in Hobart or Launceston) – these students typically complete their entire degree (be it a straight LLB or combined degree) at UTAS;
- **Graduate entry students** – these students typically complete their entire degree at UTAS but have not completed the units “Introduction to Law” or “Legal Process”;
- **KDU students** – these students have completed the first two years of their UTAS degree at our twinning institution, KDU College (in Malaysia), before completing their final year at UTAS;
- **Non-law Students** – the ISSP has been extended to provide support for students from other Faculties studying cross-listed law elective units.

These different groups of students face different challenges, including that their skill bases are at varying levels.

I. Distinctiveness, Coherence and Clarity of Purpose

1. A Unique and Innovative Program with a Distinctive Philosophy
The ISSP is a unique and innovative program. There is no comparative program at UTAS or at any other Australian law school. The program is institutionalised as part of the ethos of the Law Faculty. Following a visit to the Faculty, KDU Law Lecturer Ms Savita Kaur Vegil said:

> UTAS goes beyond the call of duty. It is about caring for students and ensuring ours return to Malaysia with a law degree. Students are not left to fend for themselves. This is the human spirit felt in UTAS that makes it a special place to study in.¹

¹ The KDU Winning-Twinning Formula:
The philosophy underlying ISSP responds to a clearly identified and distinctive need to provide proactive academic support and pastoral care to international students, rather than responding to ‘crises’ at year end. Its stated objectives are:

- To take a pro-active approach that aims at preventing some of the common challenges faced by international students at the start of their legal studies;
- To assist each student to achieve the best results possible rather than just aiming at a pass level;
- To provide pastoral care and support for students; and
- To provide opportunities for students from several countries to work together in a co-operative environment.

The constituent features of the program (identified above) relate directly to these principles. The orientation program, and student counselling and mentoring, extend pastoral care and support to students on arrival in the law school and throughout their course of study. The pastoral care aspect is not limited to academic support. Students are encouraged to seek advice and support from tutors and the coordinator about any issue or concern, for instance, difficulties with accommodation or service providers, coping with homesickness, or advice about career options. Also, the Dean regularly meets with groups of international students to enquire as to their wellbeing and to show his support.

The weekly tutorial program assists and encourages students to achieve their academic potential. Significant care is taken to ensure that the purpose of program is not perceived as being to help international students “scrape across the line”. The tutors chosen to conduct the tutorials are senior students or postgraduates who are high achievers academically and who are viewed as possessing effective communication and interpersonal skills. In turn, the tutors not only discuss the relevant legal concepts, but provide guidance and complete in-class activities to refine their students’ study processes and implement strategies for achieving at the next grade level.

Together the tutorial program and organised social events provide opportunities for international students to form study networks and to build confidence in communicating with staff in the law school.

The following comment from a current ISSP tutor encapsulates these ideals and is representative of the commitment and supportive attitude of all ISSP tutors.

*The ISSP program provides a unique opportunity to teach international students in a small group setting. I have been an ISSP tutor in constitutional law for the last 2 years and have enjoyed every minute of it.*

*My role is totally flexible and focused on expressed student need. This usually involves a mixture of lecturing, interactive problem solving and support with exam/essay preparation. Most of my work is done in group sessions, supplemented by one-to-one help where needed.*

*The international students are hardworking and eager to learn. My aim in the ISSP tutorials is to build their confidence in legal problem solving and in oral and written communication. It has been rewarding to see my students achieve strong results in constitutional law, including Distinctions (70+).*

*Ms Anja Hilkemeijer*

*ISSP Tutor 2006-2008*
2. A Systematic Approach to Coordination, Implementation and Evaluation

Coordination and Implementation

The ISSP has the status of an institutionalised formal program of support. Significant Faculty funds are allocated annually to the program. To this end, the ISSP Coordinator is a tenured senior academic staff member whose ISSP functions are recognised in the Faculty workload model, and all tutoring positions (up to 20 per year) and official ISSP social events are fully funded. Administrative support and dedicated teaching space is also provided. The sustained level of this funding for over a decade evidences not only the importance of the ISSP’s objectives to the Faculty but also its continued success and viability.

The coordination and implementation of the ISSP is systematic, effective and efficient. Over time the various Coordinators have developed procedures to ensure the timely delivery of a fully integrated program. The following briefly outlines the general processes for a semester:

- Preceding each semester, tutors (with input from Unit Coordinators) are selected and are required to attend CALT training, and the Tutor Assistance Handbook is updated and distributed.
- In conjunction with the International Student Office, the Orientation Program is organised to commence in the week prior to start of semester.
- In weeks 1 and 2 of each semester, the timetable for the tutorial program is organised, room bookings are made, international student enrolment and attendance lists are created, and students are advised of the commencement of the tutorial and consultation program (usually in week 3).
- During each semester, the Coordinator liaises and provides support to both tutors and international students, monitors the progress of the program, liaises with Unit Coordinators concerning the progress of international students, and organises at least one social event.
- At the conclusion of each semester, tutors submit a reflective report, attendance sheets and teaching diaries, international student results are collated for review and a report is made to the Head of School.

Evaluative Processes

Informal and Formal Evaluations

The ISSP has been continuously evaluated through formal and informal means.

At an informal level the program has been evaluated through surveys of the international students, discussions with international students, ISSP tutors and the TULS\(^2\) international student representative, through feedback received from staff, and reflective review by the Coordinator.

On a more formal level:

- An annual report on the progress of the program is made to the Dean.
- The ISSP program is a standing agenda item for Faculty staff meetings.
- The program was evaluated as part of 2003 external review of the Faculty, with the review report concluding:\(^3\)

  The School is to be commended for its commitment and success with international students. The student representatives who were interviewed indicated that they were

\(^2\) Tasmanian University Law Society

having a positive experience at the School. The International Student Support Program was regarded as extremely beneficial.

- The program was submitted for consideration to the Legislative Council Select Committee on “International Students”, where it reported that:⁴

  The Law Faculty at UTAS has instituted a somewhat unique International Student Support Program (ISSP) which has been of great benefit to international students and which many other institutions in Australia might do well to study and emulate. This program is based on assisting each student to achieve the best possible academic results rather than merely aiming at a pass and emphasises the provision of pastoral care and support for students.

  Commendably, the Faculty aims to provide “a unique and premium level of personal and pastoral care”... Not only has this system greatly assisted students whilst in Tasmania but it has done much enhance the reputation of the UTAS and obviously has relevance and importance in marketing terms.

- In 2006/2007 Dr Lisa Butler, in her role as a UTAS “Teaching Fellow – Assessment” (and also as the current Coordinator of the ISSP), completed a formal review of the program (referred to as the “Teaching Fellowship Review”). The purpose of the review was to assess whether, especially given the varied nature of the international student cohort, “the current form the ISSP supports the students so that there their performance in assessment is enhanced”. Conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis, surveys and focus groups conducted are discussed below.⁵

Examples of Reform Initiatives

The ongoing evaluative processes have identified the changing nature and needs of the international student body, and have informed a continual development of the program. Examples of reform initiatives implemented over time include:

- The introduction of library skills workshops (during orientation), research and referencing workshops (to assist students completing research for elective subjects), and mooting workshops (to assist with oral presentation and mootling skills).

- Extending support (principally through the tutorial program) to students (who are not strictly international students) for whom English is not a first language (for example, Sudanese students), to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to students who may be struggling generally (but only in limited circumstances on the request of the Unit Coordinator).

- Extending support (through inclusion in the tutorial series) to international students from other Faculties who are non-law students studying cross-listed law subjects (such as Foundations of Media and IT Law, International Trade, and Labour Law).

- Extending support (through inclusion in the tutorial series) to international students enrolled in law units in Launceston (Introduction to Law, Foundations of Media and IT Law).

⁵ The program of research received UTAS ethics approval (H9221). In addition to statistical analysis, a voluntary survey was distributed to all international students (referred to as “2007 Survey”) and all responses were anonymous. Two focus groups (referred to as “2007 Focus Groups”) were conducted by an independent facilitator and the transcript of the discussion was de-identified prior to being accessed by the Project Leader.
The development of a Tutor Assistance Handbook and teaching diaries. The handbook includes information on the tutors' responsibilities, the history of the ISSP, articles on the particular difficulties and concerns experienced by international students, information on students' services offered by the University (e.g., English language, counselling, study skill services). For the purpose of encouraging a reflective teaching practice and as a quality assurance mechanism, ISSP tutors must update a teaching diary on a weekly basis, including information on the topic and the structure of their tutorial, the teaching method adopted, attendance, and information on students experiencing difficulties.

- ISSP Tutors are required to attend training offered by CALT (either general University workshops or specific in-house workshops for law tutors).
- The development of an informal mentoring scheme in 2006 where each member of the TULS (Tasmanian University Law Society) committee volunteered to act as an informal mentor for 2 or 3 international students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this initiative proved successful in a facilitating greater level of social interaction between students.

**II. Influence on Student Learning and Student Engagement**

In targeting the needs of international students the ISSP has had great success in enhancing student learning, student engagement and the overall student experience at UTAS.

1. **Enhancing Academic Potential**

The ISSP has enhanced the ability of international students to achieve their academic potential. International student results have improved markedly since the introduction of the program in 1995. The initial improvement in results is evident in the following comment:

*In 1992, the University of Tasmania had a number of AusAID students from the Pacific region studying law. Many of these students were shy and reluctant to seek help and this resulted in poor pass rates. In order to address this problem the International Student Advisers proposed an innovative and practical approach to provide support for these students.*

*The University of Tasmania/AusAID Law Program, which was originally co-funded by AusAID and the University of Tasmania, is now fully sustainable without AusAID funding. It has been an enormous success, with pass rates rising from less than 70 percent in 1993 to more than 90 percent in 1996. This has been a cost-effective exercise for AusAID as the cost of funding the support program is lower than funding additional years of study for unsuccessful students. For the students, it has helped to improve confidence and self-esteem. The program has also raised the profile of the University of Tasmania which is now regarded by AusAID as offering one of the best support programs for international students in Australia.*

*This project is an excellent example of how universities can be pro-active in providing support programs for international students.*

Brian Agland, Humanitarian Relief Section, AusAID

Also, the statistical analysis undertaken by the Teaching Assessment Review demonstrated that, after the first year of full law study, international student results are on par with non-international student results. Moreover, although pass rates are important, over the course

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6 The statistical analysis also highlighted a trend for international students to be more at risk of being awarded an NS result in first full year of law study. The Teaching Fellowship Review
of the last decade, the program has also proudly witnessed international students passing with Honours and First Class Honours. Finally, international student comments in surveys and focus groups indicate that the students perceive that the program assists with their assessment.

I found it extremely essential and beneficial. I would not have been able to pass without ISSP. Thank you so much!

Anonymous comment from 2007 Survey

The International Student Support Program is excellent. It played a very important part in my achievement of this degree. In the tutorials I can ask a question and was encouraged to speak. I felt much more comfortable than in normal tutes. Such tutorials helped me understand the material much better. Thank you very much. Please keep this wonderful program for future International Students.

Ms Van Thi Thank Binh (Vietnam)
Graduate Survey of International Students, 1997

2. Enhancing Specific “Types” of Learning and Student Engagement

Types of Learning

Although a major aim of the ISSP is to enhance the performance of international students in their assessment tasks, the focus of ISSP tutorials is also on supporting students in their learning of the subject. To this end, tutors not only review lecture material and difficult cases, but also focus on developing legal problem-solving skills and strategies for preparing for assessment (particularly exams). The evidence collected as part of the Teaching Fellowship Review (survey and focus groups) indicated that the students identified many benefits of participation in the ISSP.

The quantitative aspect of the 2007 Survey (distributed to international students) indicated that a total of 91% of respondents agreed (35%) and strongly agreed (55%) that the ISSP improved their understanding of the content of the ISSP subjects and the increased their confidence to study the ISSP subject effectively. Moreover, 100% of respondents agreed (36%) and strongly agreed (64%) that the ISSP provided feedback on their understanding of the ISSP subject and 81% agreed (45%) and strongly agreed (36%) that participation in the program improved their problem-solving and analytical skills.

The qualitative aspects of the Survey and the comments from the 2007 Focus Groups confirmed the evidence presented by these statistics. The direct benefits identified by the Focus Group Report included:

- Improved understanding of lectures and tutorials.
- Assists with exam preparation and making law summaries.
- Tutorials provided an opportunity to ask questions and address uncertainties.
- Assistance with ensuring that they “are on the right track”.

recommends that further analysis be conducted to determine the extent to which these first year law students attend the ISSP tutorials, whether those students remain studying law, and the implementation of further skill based workshops for that year of study. Interestingly, this statistic mirrors the NS rate for graduate entry students undertaking a first full year study of law.

As to the first international law student to graduate with First Class Honours in Law, Ms Lee Lai Jing, see the extract from the “New Sunday Times” in the supporting documentation.

As to the Focus Groups see note 5. The Focus Group Facilitator also prepared a report summarising student focus group responses.
• Assistance with understanding "what is expected of them".
• Assistance in terms of study strategies – how to be selective and focus on key areas in assessment and examination preparation.

The quantitative aspect of the 2007 Survey similarly confirmed that students valued not only the focus on content but also on study skills and strategies. For example, students commented that:

The tutorials help in my learning by strengthening my understanding of topics of the subjects. It is a good opportunity to raise questions which I wouldn’t really raise in normal tutorials due to the high number of students in the normal tutorials. ISSP helped by covering all the topics and some past year question which I might not finish in time. These provide the structure on which I build my exam techniques.

[The tutorials] taught me structure, ways to approach problem questions and also gave me a good understanding of the material that I didn’t really understand before.

The ISSP assisted by giving more time and assistance in a smaller group to discuss the questions.

[The tutorials] improved my problem solving and analytical skills such as case studies.

It [the ISSP] helped me to grasp and understand the subject topic … it helped me to figure out how to answer the quest in the required manner (law style).

Anonymous responses to the 2007 Survey

Relationship Building and Student Engagement

A key aspect to the success of the ISSP is the opportunity it allows for international students to build relationships and networks with fellow students, the ISSP tutors, and the ISSP Coordinator.

ISSP tutors are deliberately chosen from undergraduate and postgraduate ranks with the intention that the international students will view them as mentors. This allows opportunities to ask questions and seek advice from someone who is not involved in judging their assessment tasks. The evidence indicates that international students have fully embraced this aspect of the program. Typical responses to 2007 Survey question “What did you like most about the ISSP” included:

The ability to interact with the tutors and build better relationships with fellow students in the class. The ability to confidently speak up and ask questions knowing that we are all from the same background and understand each other’s difficulties in a foreign country.

I like it that the mentors were and are excellent students and are very professional in teaching the students. I also like it that they focus on what the students need and want to do. There are mentors who are able to pace things accordingly so that no topics are missed. Another thing would be that the mentors dedicated extra time outside their consultation to help students which makes this program outstanding.

The smaller groups allow more interaction between tutors and students.

Anonymous responses to the 2007 Survey

In addition, comments in the Focus Groups indicated that the advantages of having a current student as an ISSP tutor were that "they are more approachable", "easier to approach than a lecturer" and because of their recent experience in the subject "they understand what you’re going through". This is crucial to the success of the ISSP because further comments from the Focus Groups indicate that international students feel a certain level of intimidation in mainstream tutorials and lectures. The following comments are particularly telling:

And I think we come from a society where you only say what you think is the right answer and when you're put in a place like this where you can say whatever you want we just step backward
Because you don’t know what they’re going to say, yeah, [it] is really going to be judged.

...we want to speak a lot. But being in the school here you don’t really ... people don’t know what you’re saying... no, you’d better keep quiet.

Anonymous 2007 Focus Group responses

The empathetic and supportive environment of ISSP tutorials encourages international students to raise questions and to discuss differing points of view. Significantly, 91% of students in the 2007 Survey agreed and strongly agreed that the ISSP tutorials encouraged them to ask questions. In turn this engenders greater confidence to participate and engage in mainstream lectures and tutorials. As one student commented, "...for me it gives me confidence to speak up and not [only in ISSP] tutes but also in the tutes with the lecturers" (2007 Focus Groups).

3. Enhancing Overall Student Experience

The inclusion of social events in the ISSP aims to build relationships, enhance cross-cultural exchange, and encourage students to experience the new culture in which they are living and studying.

Official ISSP lunches and morning teas are designed to facilitate relaxed and informal interaction between international students and their lecturers and tutors. Added to this, an active interest by TULS and their international student representative has enhanced interaction within the general student body. For example, in addition to participation in the informal mentoring scheme (described above), TULS have organised an orientation tour of Hobart, welcome barbeques, tours of the Cadbury’s chocolate factory and a quiz night.

Finally, a special link has been forged between the ISSP and the Legislative Council of Tasmania. The President of Legislative Council, the Hon. Mr Don Wing, hosts an annual function for international students in his rooms at Parliament House. The function serves to give international students an insight into the workings of Parliament, and to enhance their extra-circular activities.

III – Breadth of Impact

The ISSP has a pervasive impact. As detailed above, the ISSP supports international students, enhances their learning, supports and encourages engagement, and enhances their general University experience. Moreover, the active participation of TULS in the ISSP enhances cross-cultural exchange within the general student body, international and non-international students alike.

At the Faculty level, the program provides support to lecturing staff and an organised focal point for the discussion of issues and concerns related to international students. Added to this is the opportunity that the program provides for talented undergraduate and postgraduate students to gain insight and practical experience in teaching at a tertiary level. Ultimately this also generates reciprocity of learning where the insights and experiences of the international students themselves inform and expand a tutor’s experience.

As someone who wants to be an academic in future, the ISSP has given me invaluable experience in teaching and in communicating with students. I have consolidated my knowledge of substantive law, as well as strengthened my ability to communicate complex ideas in a variety of ways so that they are fully understood.

One of the most important aspects of the ISSP is its collegial nature. Tutors and students get to know each other well through tutoring and social events. There is a strong pastoral care element to teaching these students. I have got to know most of my students very well, and many of my past students have become good friends. Recently, I watched several of my former students participate in their faculty Moot, which was a very special experience. The ISSP
supports international students in a variety of ways, and the friendships that eventuate are fantastic both for students and tutors.

Ms Sophie Rigney
ISSP Tutor 2003-2008

In addition to the immense value that international students receive from their engagement in the Australian learning environment, there is a great deal to be gained by Australian students from their participation in that same process. In the three years that I was involved in the ISSP program, I was regularly confronted with the fact that my learning style, which fit neatly into the teaching style at the University, was not by any means the only or necessarily the 'correct' method of learning. It challenged my assumptions about learning and teaching, and encouraged me to approach my own study in a very different way. I am grateful for the chance to have seen and experienced the enthusiasm with which many of the international students at UTAS approached their classes and study in general. I experienced both the difficulties in pursuing, and the immense satisfaction of achieving, class discussion with people to whom such engagement does not come naturally and was reminded, time and time again, of the importance of creating an environment in which each student is able to bring their unique perspective on what is being taught.

Ms Phillipa McCormack
ISSP Tutor 2005-2007, University Medallist

At the University level, the program pursues the University’s internationalisation objectives. It is consistent with, and expands, the support offered by the International Student Office. At an inter-Faculty level the ISSP provides fodder for investigating and developing models of support for both international students and the general student body.

The ISSP, with its emphasis on academic support and pastoral care, has been promoted as a marketing advantage for attracting international students.

That the program builds enduring relationships between students and the Faculty (and consequently the University) serves an important alumni function. Following graduation contact is maintained with many students via e-mails, visits by staff to home countries and return visits by graduates. As a consequence of these enduring relationships and the students' experiences in Tasmania, it is the Faculty’s experience, that graduates willingly and voluntarily adopt UTAS “ambassadorial” like roles in their home country. As such students are recruited through word of mouth upon the recommendation of our graduates. This is particularly important when it is considered that many of our graduates have and are obtaining senior leadership roles in their home country. Similarly, parents of graduates who are impressed with the level of pastoral care and education received by their children in a safe environment likewise will send other children to complete their education in Tasmania as well as make recommendations to family and friends.

**IV – Concern for Equity and Diversity**

The very rationale for the ISSP inherently pursues the goals of equity and diversity. The ISSP supports students, who as a group have specific needs. More specifically it ensures equality of opportunity by creating an atmosphere and environment where international students can achieve and participate at the same level as non-international students. Central to this is that the program engenders self-belief and confidence in the international student cohort.

The program also creates a higher level of awareness of international student issues at the Faculty, postgraduate and undergraduate level. At the Faculty level the program draws attention to international student related issues that may arise and creates a positive institutional culture of support and assistance.
At the student level, particularly through the ISSP’s association with TULS and the participation of postgraduates and undergraduates as ISSP tutors, there is an inclusive awareness of international students and an interest in their culture and background. An interest in cross-cultural exchange is evident in events hosted by TULS, like a quiz night in 1997 where students from the different countries traded “colloquialisms”. The ISSP has also specifically encouraged cross-cultural exchange through the recent implementation of an informal mentoring system (described above). Ultimately the goals of equity and diversity are engrained in the development and delivery of the ISSP; it aims to ensure equality of opportunity and creates an environment that respects and supports cultural diversity.

The Final Word ...

“Confessions of a ‘lost’ International Student”

Being in a forbear place, surviving the bitter cold and trying to adjust has been difficult. My name is Noh Bin Abdul Hamid and I am from Singapore. Doing law has always been my dream. I picked UTAS because it is one of the few law schools in Australia that is recognised by the Bar Council Of Singapore. Furthermore, it’s relatively cheaper school fees appears to be a major attraction in motivating people to study Law at UTAS. Upon arrival at UTAS, I also discovered that UTAS law school is also one of the best law schools in Australia with a long tradition to boast for it. That certainly meant that I was getting quality education for the fees I am paying. My parents were definitely pleased to hear that.

Adjusting to the standards and quality of work that the law school expected of us was difficult. International students like me come from different educational backgrounds. Expectations of assignments and exams were obviously different from the Singapore education system. This is why I felt “lost” and confused as my first law report did not reflect the amount of effort and hard work that I put into it. This was where the ISSP was very useful. During the ISSP lessons, Natasha, the tutor, was very warm, patient and understanding to our needs. We shared ideas and exchanged knowledge of different law systems that existed here in Australia and Singapore. Natasha was also helpful with the court reports. She diligently read through my essay and helped me to improve my critical analysis. Fortunately, my court report improved. We also did revision during our ISSP lesson and we discussed possible questions for the exams. ISSP has been of such tremendous help and I would like to applaud the law school for having such initiative and foresight in helping international students like us. I applaud the law school and I would love to thank Natasha for being so patient and helpful in saving us “lost” students.

Warm Regards, Noh

Student testimonial

ISSP Function at Parliament House, 2005