

Streamline Visa Processing extended to some Vocational Colleges

The changes to student visas announced on 29 October 2013 are aimed at simplifying student visas through:

- a refined assessment level framework.
- the extension of streamlined visa processing to certain non-university degree providers.

These changes are designed to make Australia's education system even more attractive.

Focused on vocational education and training sector the changes will simplify the assessment level of a country which will benefit students from China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Assessment levels will reduce from five levels to three, while financial evidence for assessment level 3 students will reduce from 18 to 12 months—provided funds are from a close relative of the student visa applicant. Both these changes are proposed to come into effect from March 2014.

However, according to an article recently publish in the campus review, the extension of streamlined visa processing (SVP) may "be a case of careful what you wish for".

Public universities in Australian had access to SVP over 2 years ago, but along with fast tracked student visas and less rigorous vetting of applications by the Department of Immigration came the right for government representatives to audit policies and procedures associated with International recruitment and academic progress. Unfortunately this led to a number of Universities put on notice and given probationary status until they could demonstrate compliance with the Commonwealths requirements. With the potential of this becoming a public relations disaster, Universities were required to spend large sums of money to enhance their systems and processes along with capabilities of staff to comply. Many pathway arrangements were abandoned when partners didn't meet the new strict criteria.

Who is on the list of invited VET providers and how this will impact on an already highly regulated system remains to be seen. Let hope these changes do succeed in making the Australia's education system more attractive and that the invitation to participate is open and transparent.