

# ***Leveling the (playing) field: How can we make inclusive field education a reality for international students?***

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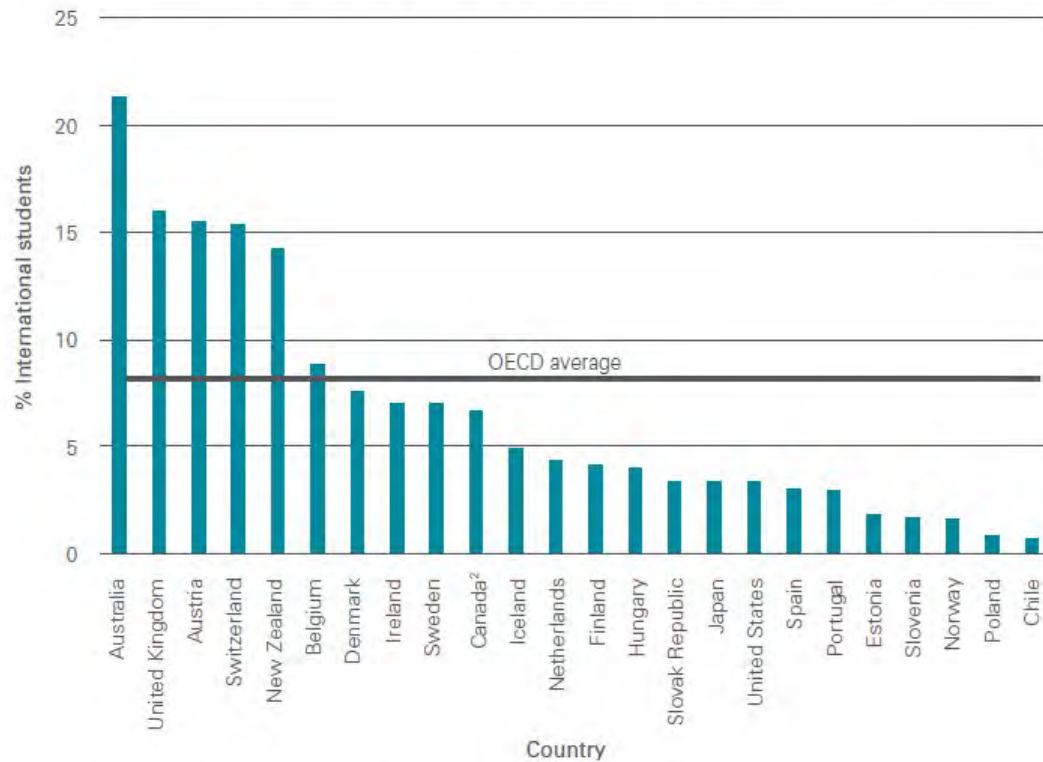


# Background

- Professional degrees in the social & behavioural sciences typically include field practicum/externship/placement
- A focus on internationalisation of the curriculum within the classroom environment but limited attention to learning while on field practicum
- Increasing international student enrolments in Australian degree programs (21% of on-shore enrolments in 2011) (International Education Advisory Council, 2013)

# International students in Australia – the norm rather than the exception

Figure 6: Internationalisation of tertiary education systems (2010) – percentage of international and foreign students in tertiary enrolments



1. Year of reference 2009.

Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2012, Table c4.1. ([www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012)).

# Challenges to learning on field practicum

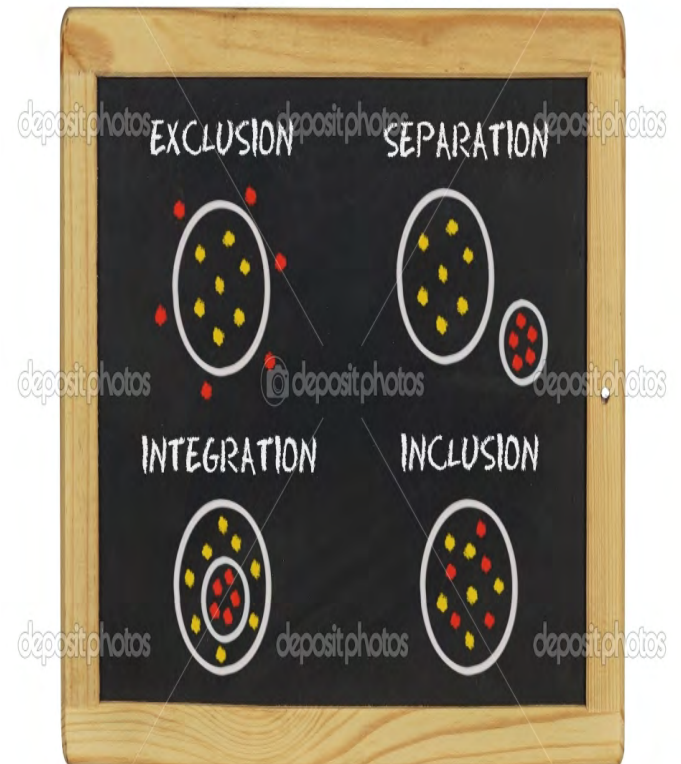
- Sourcing *quality* field practicum experiences
- Managing *workplace culture*, being closely *observed* & having *practical work assessed* by a field supervisor (Harrison & Ip, 2013)
- Challenges intensified by *linguistic & cultural differences*, as well as *temporary resident* status (McCluskey, 2008; Nash, 2011; Patrick et al. 2008; Spooner-Lane et al. 2011)

# Research project aims & overview

- Basis for a larger study to develop strategies & resources to make field education inclusive for international students across the social & behavioural sciences
- Comprised 2 phases:
  - 1) Needs analysis:
    - a literature review
    - perspectives of 14 academic staff responsible for field education & 9 professional field supervisors
  - 2) Application of the needs analysis & literature to develop:
    - principles for inclusive field education

# Inclusive education

*'Inclusion' applies to an arrangement where every student's entitlements have been designed in from the outset, as opposed to 'integration' which applies to the assimilation of students into a pre-existing arrangements* (Simpson, 2011)



# Needs analysis findings

Key needs were to:

- include **all stakeholders**, including professional associations & accreditation bodies
- build **placement capacity** in the field
- adopt a **developmental approach** to practicum preparation
- embed **language competence** in the curriculum in both the classroom & practicum

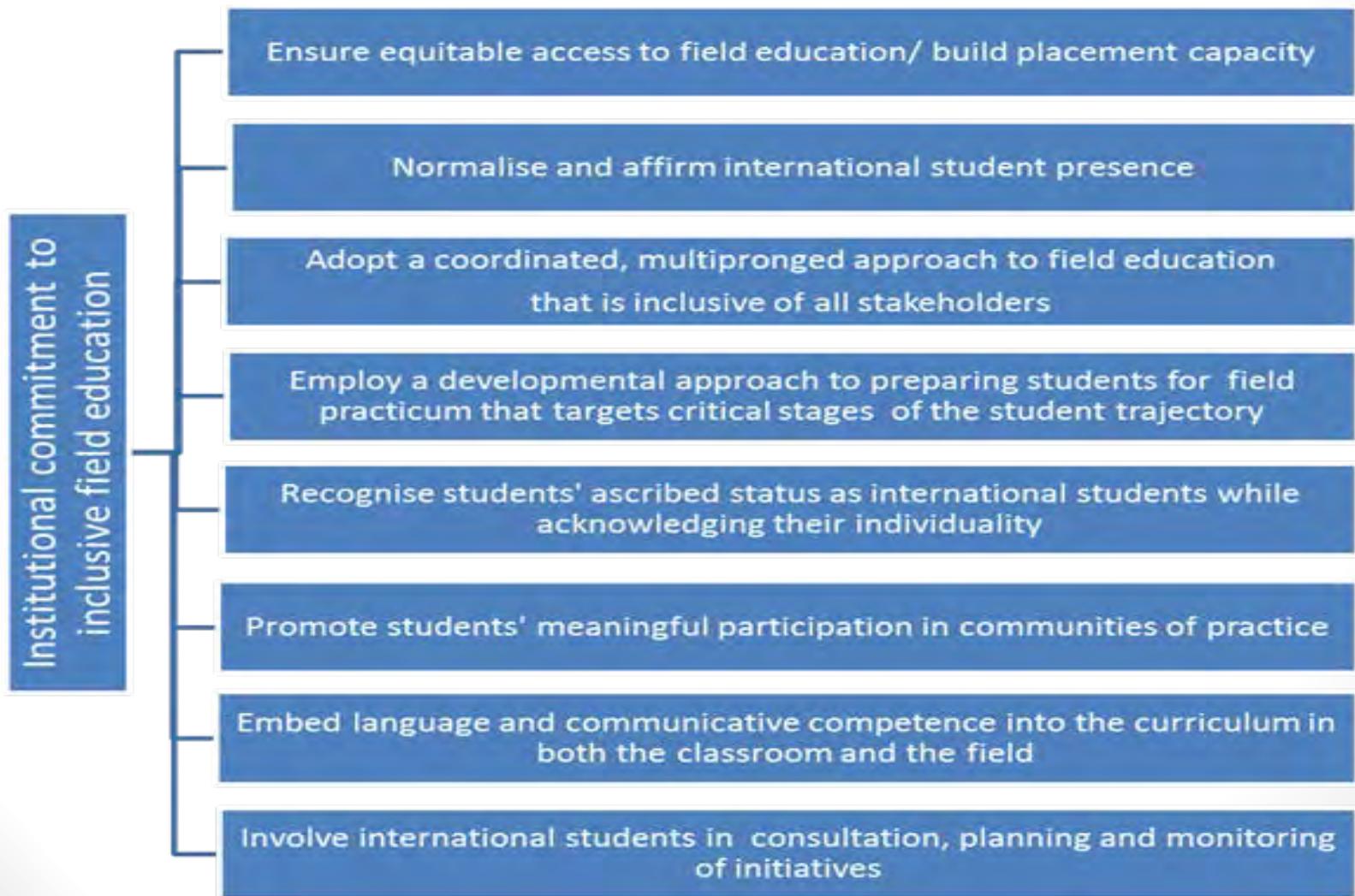
# Needs analysis findings (cont'd)

The need to:

- understand international students as **individuals**
- actively **involve students** in promoting inclusive field education
- apply a **community of practice** framework to understand how students are socialised into the workplace
- **institutional commitment & support** to make inclusive field education a reality



# Overarching & core principles of inclusive field education



# Overarching principle

- **Institutional commitment to inclusive field education:**
  - Structural
  - Sustainable
  - Integrated
  - Active leadership backed by resources & dedicated staff

# 1: Ensure equitable access to field education/build placement capacity

- Actively foster collaborative university-industry partnerships
- HEIs need to take the initiative in addressing barriers
- Address resistance to hosting international students
- Address prejudicial/deficit views & attitudes in the workplace

## **2: Normalise & affirm international student presence**

- Build awareness of student & population demographics
- Normalise internationalisation as continuing trend
- Extend the internationalisation agenda to the field/workplace

### **3: Adopt a coordinated, multi-pronged approach inclusive of all stakeholders**

- Need to engage university based staff, field staff, professional associations, accreditation bodies & students
- Recognise the different agendas of stakeholders
- Prepare & support practicum supervisors, as well as students

## 4: Employ a developmental approach to preparing students for practicum

- Target critical stages of the student trajectory: pre-departure, first semester of study, 1st practicum & program exit
- Start early, though scaffolded exposure
- Preparation should focus on both practicum & transition to the labour market
- International students/graduates could be involved in this preparation

## 5: Recognise students' ascribed status as international students while acknowledging individuality

- International students are heterogeneous
- Complex multiple & intersecting identities
- Important to recognise individuality rather than 'difference'
- **But** important to recognise the implications of holding the status of 'international student' particularly in the area of rights

## 6: Promote students' meaningful participation in communities of practice

- The workplace is a 'community of practice'; newcomers are gradually socialised into becoming full members
- Learning is only meaningful when students are given permission to participate in the community of practice
- May be necessary to assist existing members of the workplace develop a more global outlook
- What can we learn from each other?



## 7: Embed language & communicative competence into the curriculum in classroom & field

- EAL students require tailored assistance to make the transition from the classroom to the field practicum
- Language & communicative learning needs to be contextualised into disciplinary context
- Need to sensitise field supervisors to the issues faced by EAL speakers
- Recognise that there are many 'Englishes'

## 8: Involve students in consultation, planning & monitoring of initiatives

- International students are active agents in their own learning
- International students who have completed field placements are a rich source of knowledge
- International students/ graduates can act as consultants in planning & overseeing local initiatives

# Where to from here?

Phase 2 will explore:

- Are the core principles applicable more widely across regions, types of universities & disciplines in Australia?
- What examples of good practice exist in particular disciplines, sites & stakeholder groups that might be adopted or adapted?
- What are the pros & cons of embedded & co-curricular approaches?
- Undertaken through a survey & interviews with representatives from all stakeholder groups in selected regions across Australia

# References

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- Spooner-Lane, R., Tangen, D., & Campbell, M. A. (2011). The complexities of supporting Asian international pre-service teachers as they undertake practicum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1), 79-94.

# Research project report

Available for download from:

- [file:///C:/Users/Kathleen/Downloads/SD12\\_2205\\_Harrison\\_report\\_2013%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Kathleen/Downloads/SD12_2205_Harrison_report_2013%20(2).pdf)