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**PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONFERENCE**  
Tuesday 1 September 2020, via Zoom



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## Ready, Set, Go Online: Supporting International students

**Presenter: Michelle Gillard & Amy Shao**

**Chair: Vicky Gravolin**

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### Acknowledgement of Country

*Western Sydney University acknowledges the peoples of the Darug, Tharawal, Eora and Wiradjuri nations.*

*We also acknowledge that the teaching and learning currently delivered across our campuses and online is a continuance of the teaching and learning that has occurred on these lands for tens of thousands of years.*

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## Aims of today's presentation

**Increase awareness of the International Buddy Program**

**International Zoom Sessions - Purpose and Collaboration**

**Invitation to International Zooms**

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## About the Program

- *Support International students during their first year at Western*
- *SSAF Funded*
- *Originally piloted in 2017 no funding in 2018, funded in 2019 and 2020*
- *Staffing: Student Casuals*
  - *1 Program Assistant (3 days per week)*
  - *4 student casuals as International Buddies (4 – 5 hrs per week each). Over 120 applications were received for these roles.*

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### International Buddy Program

Pre Covid	Now
<i>Beach Safety Days</i>	<i>On Hold</i>
<i>International Orientation Stall – On Campus</i>	<i>International Orientation – Online</i>
<i>Welcome Week Activities – On Campus</i>	<i>Welcome Week Activities – Online</i>
<i>Coffee Catch Ups – Both Pre and Start of Semester on campus</i>	<i>Promoting Virtual Coffee Catch Ups</i>
<i>Weekly Email</i>	<i>Weekly Email</i>
<i>Promotion of other programs</i>	<i>Promotion of other Programs – in a non face to face environment</i>
	<i>International Zoom Meetings</i>

*Plans that were underway for Spring (currently on hold):*

- Airport meet & greets, - Get to know your local area (shops, train station), - Getting to know Sydney
- Cross team campus events prior to session start (become familiar with campus prior to session)

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**International  
Buddy  
Program**



**Western  
Success  
Program**

**Original Concern: How could our programs have an impact on a large number of International Students with the resources that we have.**

**Idea: Zoom Sessions to answer International Student's questions.**

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- 3 Zoom sessions
- 6 Western Success Advisors
- International Buddy Program
- Chaplaincy
- WESTERNLife
- 140 International Students in attendance

## Our First Zoom

### AGENDA

#### 01 GUIDELINES FOR SESSION

Make sure you're familiar with Zoom's features so you can participate effectively!

#### 02 MEET THE TEAM

Get to know your presenters.

#### 03 WESTERNLife

Just because you can't meet in person doesn't mean you need to miss out! Discover the online events happening now!

#### 04 MANAGING STRESS WITH CHAPLAINCY

Uncertainty and rapid changes cause stress which impacts on daily life. Here are some tips to slow down.

#### 05 UPDATE & BRAINSTORM

There's been a lot of information around COVID-19, and much of it changes quickly. Here's an update and some alternative activities that you can do.

#### 06 STAYING MOTIVATED TO STUDY FROM HOME

How do you keep yourself on track when work, university and personal life all begins to blur together? Try this tips

#### 07 NEXT WEEK AND Q&A

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## Reflections on the First Week

### What we offered in the first week:

- A focus on studying successfully at home
- Introducing programs student could connect with online

### What we realised students wanted:

- Answers regarding fees
- Answers regarding financial support

So we adapted, we realised the information was useful but not based on the questions that the student were raising in their registration.

## Pre Zoom


- *Email invitation sent to all International students.*
- *RSVPS received*
- *Questions reviewed*

## During Zoom

- *Zoom Chat monitored*
- *Questions answered*
- *Unanswered questions documented*

## Post Zoom

- *Unanswered questions escalated to Western Success for action by the students advisor.*
- *Questions reviewed for future focus / topic*
- *Summary email sent includes links and bullet point summary*

<b>WEEKLY</b>	<b>International Buddy Program</b> <i>Manage the zoom, Covid 19 update, Organise quests, data collection,</i>		<b>Western Success</b> <i>Compile common questions, One on one discussions Manage unanswered questions Student insight Q &amp; A</i>		
	<b>Careers</b> <i>Part-time employment, Internships, resumes, cover letters, STAR method</i>		<b>Chaplaincy</b> <i>Meditation, Soup Kitchen</i>		
<b>GUEST SPEAKERS</b>	<b>Welfare</b> Visa extension, support, dropping units	<b>Assistive Technology Team</b> Assistive technology	<b>English Conversation Groups</b> How to get involved		
	<b>Student Legal Services</b> Tenancy Issues, Legal Restrictions	<b>PASS</b>	<b>SPORTS</b> Upcoming Events		
	<b>WESTERNLife</b> events matched to main focus of the week	<b>Library</b> Accessing Resources, study smart, assessment calculator	<b>CAMPUS Life</b> Welcome Week		
	<b>Virtual Coffee Catch Ups</b>	<b>Western Sydney International Students Association</b> How to get involved			
	<b>Counselling Services</b> How to access, what they assist with	<b>Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Promotions Team</b> RU OK and how to ask			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <b>Other Topics</b>            Proctor U            Services for Academic Success            Accessing Super            Preparing for exams            Taking Care of yourself            Avoiding Scams            Census Date         </div>					

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### Some of the stats

- We have run 54 Zoom Sessions
  - Lowest attendance 8
  - Highest attendance 58
- Average 25 students per session
- Attendance is higher when our blurbs provide more detail.
- Feedback is positive with over 92% of participants who complete the poll identifying the sessions as sharing “Good” or “Great” information
- Approximately 350 of the interactions have been with unique students.

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### What We Have Found

**Patterns** The types of questions vary depending on where we are in session. Further reporting on this will be available in the near future. Week 4 increase in academic and reducing units questions increase.

**Are the Zoom Session the right length?** On average students are staying in the zoom session for approximately 54 minutes which suggests we are on the right track.

#### Immediate Feedback

We ask participants to identify all sections of the zoom that was relevant to them. Guest speaker topics achieve on average 85% relevance.

Careers achieve on average 80% relevance. Western Success Q & A averages 75% relevance.

Meditation is not relevant to all however the students who participate in the meditation actively comment on its importance.

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### EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS

#### **FEES**

Will the 10% reduction in fees be a refund or a credit?  
How will my Scholarship affect the discount?  
Can I defer payment for next session and how?

#### **CAREERS / EMPLOYMENT**

How can I find work part time work?  
Why can't I get a job?  
Where can I find internships?

#### **DEGREE RELATED**

My placement has been cancelled, what do I do?  
Who do I contact for..?

#### **FINANCES / SUPPORT**

How do I apply for the Student Support Fund?  
Can I receive another food hamper?  
Why was my request for assistance declined?

#### **OTHER**

How do I get a student card?  
When is Census date?  
Will I have to pay again if I fail a unit?  
How do I apply for a visa after my studies?  
How do I reduce my study load?  
I need an extension on my assignment?

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## Acknowledgements

- Strategic Insights & Analytics – Danielle & Luke
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- Western Success Advisors – Marissa, Taurai, Shang, Brandon (co hosts)
- Chaplaincy – Daniel

The biggest shout out goes to the International Buddy Program Assistant, **Amy Shao**, who without her focus, determination, diligence and ability to come up with solutions on the run the International Zooms would not run as smoothly as they do.





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**QUESTIONS?**