



The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) announces a new publication:

International Student Support in European Higher Education Needs, Solutions, and Challenges

Maria Kelo, Tim Rogers (with Laura E. Rumbley)

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To a significant degree, Europe has staked its future on a robust level of student mobility as well as the global competitiveness of its higher education systems. One pillar of this effort involves attracting a steady (or even growing) stream of talented international students from beyond the borders of Europe. Yet, admitting more non-European students, and encouraging them to enrol for an extended period of time in full degree programmes, implies a commitment on the part of host countries and institutions in Europe to get serious about support services for this population.

A new publication by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) examines the international student services landscape in six different countries and suggests a 'code of good practice' for international student support within European higher education. ACA finds that appropriate support for full-degree international students make for both good policy and practice.

The Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), a Brussels-based higher education think tank, has just published a study on international student services in European higher education. This publication is an outcome of a Commission-funded project undertaken by ACA in the period 2008-2010, under the name **ENATIS - Enhancing attractiveness through international student services**. The study focused on six European countries—**Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom**—with regard to support services provision to full-degree students coming from outside Europe. The role of national-level organisations and advisory bodies was examined, as were the experiences of 3-5 institutions in each country. International students were also consulted directly, through student focus group sessions as well as via a quantitative survey that garnered 1278 responses from international students studying in the six countries included in the study.

Notable findings include the fact that **some 80 percent of students regard the availability of services as either “very important” or “partly important” when it comes to making a decision** about where to study. Meanwhile, individual institutions and national-level organisations appear to be increasingly responsive to the needs of international students, with the study countries and institutions providing many examples of creative and effective approaches to meeting student needs. The use of **information and communication technologies** to connect with international students, the **involvement of fellow students** (domestic and international) to assist the international student population, and the proactive steps to **ease the burden of administrative red tape and legal complexities** are important examples of positive trends seen in a variety of contexts.

Key challenges remain, however. Among the most prominent, the study finds that **information for students must be paced more appropriately**, or made available in a more à la carte fashion. Careful **attention must also be paid so that certain types of full-degree international students are not ‘lost through the cracks’** (for example, those who matriculate directly into degree programmes and are therefore not overtly identified as ‘international’ with distinct needs). Additionally—and quite notably—**institutions offering English-taught programmes in non-English speaking countries face a special responsibility to** develop communication and support strategies that **meet the needs of students who are not proficient in the host country language**.

Ultimately, if Europe is to position itself as a destination of choice for large numbers of international students from around the world, the investment made by students to come to Europe needs to be matched by a meaningful response on the part of host countries and institutions to provide useful guidance for the ‘whole student’.

More information on the book can be found on the ACA website:

<http://www.aca-secretariat.be/index.php?id=456>

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