



International Newsletter – Issue 2, 2024

From the Pro Vice-Chancellor, International, Mike Ferguson



Welcome to our second Charles Sturt International newsletter.

The last few months have seen substantial Government policy change and public debate relating to international education in Australia. The impacts of changes such as Ministerial Direction 107 (introduced in December last year)

have been significant, with the number of visas granted to international students across all institutions falling 35 per cent compared to last year and visa grant rates being the lowest on record. These changes have been felt unevenly across the sector with a small subset of universities benefitting, while others have been disadvantaged. The Government is now pushing forward with further changes aimed at reducing net overseas migration and creating a sustainable international education sector, most notably through the capping of international enrolments which, subject to the passing of legislation, is expected to come into effect from 1 January 2025.

As you may be aware, Charles Sturt has been allocated a cap of 1,000 new overseas student commencements (NOSC) for 2025. This allocation represents growth from 2024 and is sufficiently aligned with our intended trajectory for next year, it is however below our pre-pandemic NOSC. As such, we will be actively engaging with Government to seek agreement for the establishment of an appropriate pathway for the University to return to its pre-pandemic volume over coming years. This is important, not only for our international strategy, but for the essential contribution this makes to our core missions of regional education and research.

In addition to 'caps', a big strategic focus over the last couple of months has been our Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships. This has included celebrating the 25th anniversary of our partnership with Jilin University of Finance and Economics in China during May – a partnership which has brought many benefits to the University and the thousands of graduates that have obtained a Charles Sturt degree in China.

In many ways, Charles Sturt was one of the pioneers of TNE in Australia and this is something that we're hoping to tap back into over the coming year as we explore the possibility and potential for new TNE ventures. Such partnerships support the enhancement of Charles Sturt's brand, enhanced research and industry connections in-country and the development of

new revenue flows that directly benefit our regional campuses and communities.

Maximising the potential of our international partnerships is a key strategic theme for us and something that we will place renewed focus on next year. We have recently signed several new agreements – including cohort partnership agreements with Parul University, Varendra University, Jaypee Institute of Information Technology and Lovely Professional University – and several MoUs in China, Indonesia, Kenya, Bangladesh among others. We're keen to develop deep and multi-faceted relationships and I look forward to working across the University to support the success of our international partnerships.

Lastly, our international success is very much a whole-of-university endeavour – I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone across Charles Sturt for their contributions to the success of our international strategy, our international partnerships and the positive impact made on the lives of our international students – through which we very much create a world worth living in.

International enrolments

Despite challenges associated with government policy, Charles Sturt had 99 new international students commence across its regional campuses in Session 60, 2024. This represents an increase of 34% compared to 2023 and is the result of extensive work with our faculties on course offerings, targeted international marketing and recruitment efforts, and outstanding processing of applications by our international admissions team.

Bathurst and Port Macquarie have the largest numbers of international students and our most popular courses are the Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Information Technology and research doctorates. India, Nepal, Bangladesh, China and Philippines are our top 5 source countries.

We have also seen a 5% increase in international online enrolments compared to last year. Our most population online programs for international students are the Master of Education, Graduate Certificate in Customs Administration and Graduate Diploma of Paramedicine (Critical Care).

UPCOMING INFORMATION SESSIONS

Port Macquarie International Strategy Q&A Session, Tuesday 15 October, 1:00 – 2:00pm AEDT.

Online International Strategy Q&A Session, Wednesday 13 November, 1:00 – 2:00pm AEDT.

Further details on What's New in the coming weeks.

New international partnerships

Charles Sturt University has established education agreements in India and Bangladesh as it continues to diversify and grow its student pathways into Australia.

During a recent delegation to India led by Mike Ferguson, Charles Sturt representatives visited partner institutions to formally sign dual-degree agreements and promote the University to prospective students.

The dual-degree agreements allow students to divide their studies between their home country university and Charles Sturt. Upon completion of both the in-country and Australian phases of the course, students receive a degree from both universities.

We now have dual-degree agreements in place capturing our Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management, Bachelor of Information Technology and Bachelor of Business Studies, and additional articulation agreements which include our Bachelor of Communication.

The dual-degree arrangements – which are proposed to be exempt from international student caps – demonstrate the value of international education opportunities to students, universities and nations, and are an important focus of the Australian Government's draft International Education and Skills Strategic Framework.

The agreements offer students an efficient way to earn two degrees while providing them with an international study experience. Their structure allows international students to complete an Australian and home country degree in the same time they would have spent completing one degree in their home country. This will equip them with a truly global experience and boost their appeal to future employers.



Professor Zahid Islam (left), Mr Mike Ferguson (second from left) and Mr Trent Pohlmann (right) with representatives of Nitte University in India.

The University now has dual-degree agreements with India's Jaypee Institute of Information Technology and Yenepoya University; as well as articulation agreements with Parul University, Lovely Professional University, and Varendra University in Bangladesh.

During the recent delegation to India, Charles Sturt and partner university representatives also discussed opportunities for meaningful collaboration in other areas, including research and overseas study opportunities for Australian students.



Professor Zahid Islam delivering a guest lecture to students and staff of Yenepoya University in India.

Visit to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

In April the Pro Vice-Chancellor, International travelled to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as part of a delegation led by the former Lithuanian Minister of Education, Gintaras Stepanovicus. Through the delegation the PVCI met with over 30 local universities as well as important stakeholders like the Kazakh Minister of Science and Higher Education, Sayasat Nurbek and both the Uzbek and Kazakh scholarship organisations.

Significant opportunity for future partnership development were identified – including for dual degrees, transnational education and research – particularly in Kazakhstan.

Collaboration relating to agriculture, the environment, water management, food security and engineering were of primary interest in Kazakhstan, while in Uzbekistan – in addition to these areas, there was also interest in policing related partnership.

Aside from what was a very work intensive week, there was some time to also explore the culture of both countries and enjoy some fabulous food and scenery – including experiencing one of our collaboration forums being held in a traditional yurt.



Pro Vice-Chancellor, International Mike Ferguson embracing local culture and attending meetings during the Central Asia trip.

New Colombo Plan

The 2025 round of the Federal Government's [New Colombo Plan Mobility Program](#) closed on 1 October and colleagues are encouraged to consider supporting their students in applying for future rounds.

Funding is available to universities in the form of student grants to allow Australian undergraduates to undertake international experiences that count towards course requirements in any of 40 Indo-Pacific locations.

Projects must include at least one of the following activities:

- Research
- Study
- In-country face to face language study
- Internships (including clinical placements, practicums or artist residencies).

To support Australia's capability in Asian languages, immersive experiences and enduring partnerships in the region, the most recent round prioritised selection of projects:

- Whose main focus was for the study of a language, other than English (to create a language stream of mobility students)
- Involving long-term immersive experiences in the Indo-Pacific (full semester or longer)
- That had been developed in partnership with Indo-Pacific hosts institutions, particularly those that include collaborative research, Pacific engagement and other Australian Government priority areas.

To date, the majority of Charles Sturt applications have been for faculty-led programs, and accordingly Schools are particularly encouraged to submit applications for students to undertake study, research and WIL experiences on an independent basis.

There were significant changes in the 2025 guidelines. The key change is that minimum project duration was increased from 2 to 4 weeks (28 days). While we do understand the Government's preference for longer-term immersive experiences, we appreciate that many of Charles Sturt's students will likely not be able to be abroad for projects of this duration.

Staff should discuss their future funding proposals with their Head of School to obtain provisional approval before progressing. To discuss the New Colombo Plan funding and any questions, please contact Charles Sturt Global (csuglobal@csu.edu.au) for further information.

Learning Abroad strategy meetings with faculties

Samantha Ambridge (Manager, Charles Sturt Global) and Eleanor Mitchell (Director, Office of Global Engagement) will be scheduling meetings with representatives from each faculty in the next few weeks to discuss our learning abroad strategy and to explore opportunities to collaborate more with overseas universities. If you have anything you would like considered for discussion, please notify the Charles Sturt Global team (csuglobal@csu.edu.au).

Inbound study tour by Canadian partner

The Charles Sturt Global team have recently hosted 10 students and 1 academic from Lakehead University for a 10-day study tour focussed on indigenous culture, diversity and inclusion at our Bathurst campus.



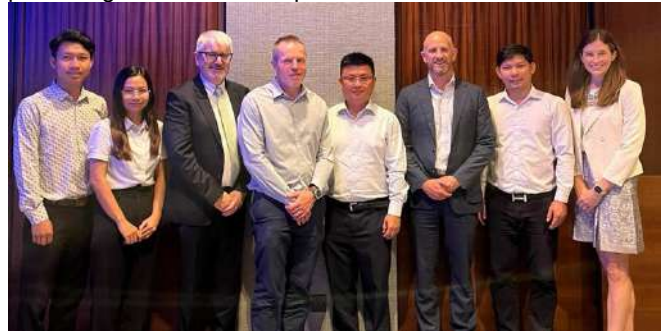
Lakehead University students from Canada on a recent inbound study tour to Charles Sturt and New South Wales.

After a weekend in Sydney the Lakehead group stayed on campus in Bathurst and thoroughly enjoyed their time in Australia, staying on campus and visiting cultural and tourist sites across the Bathurst and Dubbo regions, including Mount Panorama, the Blue Mountains and Taronga Zoo. Special thanks go to the staff involved in this program and to the Pulse Café catering team who made a very good impression on our visitors.

Partnership spotlight – Cambodia Economics and Finance Institute

Charles Sturt University has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with the Economics and Finance Institute (EFI) in Cambodia since 2000. EFI, a higher education institution established and operated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, has facilitated the graduation of over 565 students with a Charles Sturt postgraduate award through our collaborative efforts. After a recent visit to Cambodia, our

delegation – including Lewis Bizo, Executive Dean, Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Science; Tom Burton, Executive Director, Enterprise and Engagement; Eleanor Mitchell, Director, Global Engagement; and Sarah Ansell, Director, Advancement – engaged in various activities aimed at strengthening partnerships, expanding networks, and promoting business development.



Prof Lewis Bizo (third from left), Mr Tom Burton (third from right) and Ms Eleanor Mitchell (far right) during the recent delegation to Cambodia.

Work accomplished in Cambodia

Projects led by the Gulbali Institute:

- FishTech program: funded by Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), this program integrates technical fisheries solutions into river development programs across Southeast Asia, enhancing the sustainability of aquatic systems vital to the region's biodiversity and local livelihood
- Vegetable industry collaboration: we have significantly enhanced Cambodia's vegetable production and post-harvest practices, optimising yields and market access by investigating the adoption of improved output and post-harvest practices. We have also conducted soil science projects to complement this work and support sustainable agricultural practices
- Biosecurity, plant and pest management: by establishing a Remote Microscope Network across Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand, we have bolstered local capacities in agricultural pest identification and management. In addition, we have also taken a connected approach in doing a project focused on enabling improved plant biosecurity practices in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand through our partnership with Hort Innovation
- Water and nutrition management: our Cambodia and Laos project focuses on sustainable irrigation practices and double cropping systems to boost productivity and resilience.

Special education and professional development initiatives:

- Educational outreach: led by Dr Jennifer Bond, our third-year student tours provide hands-on learning experiences highlighting our ongoing projects and their impact on local communities.
- Professional development: through Australia Award Short Course Fellowships, funded by DFAT, we offer targeted training and capacity building in critical sectors such as irrigation management, biosecurity, and agricultural innovation.

Research aligned with Cambodian regional needs:

- Agricultural innovation: our initiatives focus on sustainable farming practices, particularly in the cultivation of rice and other grains, which aligns with Cambodia's agricultural development goals.
- Sustainable aquatic systems: we emphasise the sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic animals, which are vital to the region's food security and economic stability.
- Biosecurity program: protecting livestock and crops from pests and diseases is crucial for maintaining Cambodia's and its neighbours' agricultural productivity and biodiversity.
- New ventures in agriculture: recognising Cambodia's interest in expanding into new agricultural sectors, we could be exploring together the feasibility of wine production and assisting in the foundational steps to establish local winery operations.
- Environmental stewardship and water resource management: our work ensures that agricultural and environmental management practices promote water conservation and effective irrigation strategies, which are essential under Cambodia's varying climate conditions.



Gulbali researchers conducting field work with Cambodian students at a fish ladder in Cambodia.

Ongoing research impact:

- As Charles Sturt's Gulbali Institute expands its presence and enhances its impact in Cambodia, it remains dedicated to providing innovative and practical research solutions in agriculture, water, and the environment. The Institute is focused on fostering sustainability and driving research that supports robust economic growth and regional vitality. Cambodian partners highly value our relationships and are eager to advance our collaborative efforts to build a sustainable and prosperous future for Cambodia and beyond.
- The Gulbali team comprises distinguished experts including Prof Lee Baumgartner, Associate Professor Jason Condon, Dr Jennifer Bond, Dr Elaine Miller, Dr Michael Mitchell, and Dr John Conallin whose interdisciplinary approaches address the complex challenges in the region. Their expertise in fields such as biosecurity, livestock, water resource management, fisheries, social sciences, and sustainable agriculture drive our mission to improve livelihoods and environmental outcomes.

Cambodian alumni supporting brighter future for women

Graduates from Charles Sturt's Master of Business degree are now driving the next generation of women in business in Cambodia.

Through their *Women Bright Program*, they are ensuring that Cambodian women are equipped with the necessary confidence, skills and resources to adequately succeed in their academic pursuits, from a young age.

The program was first established in 2018 by the Charles Sturt University – Alumni Cambodia Association (CSU-ACA), who through a series of workshops and seminars, prepare young Cambodian women for a brighter educational future.

Focussed on shaping skills and careers to empower women as the driving force of the economy, the program helps them to set career goals, overcome obstacles and develop their talent. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences and build on both hard and soft skills to enable them to achieve professional success in the future.

The *Women Bright Program* hopes to inspire women through personal growth and provide them with the tools to succeed so that they too, can contribute to the broader socio-economic growth of Cambodia.

Program Director Leng Somaly says the *Women Bright Program* has collaborated with many local organisations,

including the Chamber of Professionals and Micro-Enterprise and the Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Association to deliver these workshops and seminars to more than 4,300 students since 2018. More than a dozen workshops have been held since its inception, with seminar themes such as '*Strive for the Future*', '*Women's Value – Women Empower Women*', and '*Family is Wealthier When Women Also Have a Job*'.

As a fundamental part of the program, twenty-three university scholarships have been granted to Cambodian and overseas students.

If you have an inspirational international alumni story to share, please let our Advancement team know (alumni@csu.edu.au).



CSU-ACA members with Cambodian students during recent Women Bright Program activities.

New course development

The International Office is working with a number of schools on future new courses to attract international students, or updates to existing courses to make them compliant for international delivery. Some of the programs currently under discussion (and subject to approval) include:

- Master of Business Data Analytics
- Master of Project Management and Leadership
- Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)
- Master of Social Work (Professional Qualifying)
- Graduate Certificate in Human Services
- Master of Nursing (Pre-Registration)

Colleagues who wish to discuss existing or new courses they believe would be attractive to international students are encouraged to contact Eleanor Mitchell (ehmitchell@csu.edu.au) to discuss further.