AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE of INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING (AIIU)

STUDENT EXCHANGE INFORMATION SHEET

WELCOME

AIIU is a study abroad and student exchange organisation with long established international partner relationships that ensure the highest standards of care and support to participants. We maintain a network of volunteer Local Coordinators who work in support of students and families during the exchange experience.

CHILD SAFETY & QUALITY MANAGEMENT IS OUR PRIORITY

All children participating in any of AIIU's study tours, exchange or homestay programs have a right to feel safe and be safeguarded from harm. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people participating in our programs. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where all children and young people are valued, feel safe and are protected.

If you are concerned about a child or young person and have a reasonable suspicion that the child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm, telephone the police and the Ombudsman, and/or as applicable to the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA and/or, as applicable TAFE International WA. If the incident you are wishing to report is an emergency, then call 000.

Reporting of a child safety matter can also be done online here.

Our Regional Manager, who has been appointed as a Child Safety Officer for AIIU, is the primary point of contact to provide advice and support to children, parents/guardians, employees and volunteers regarding the safety of children in our organisation. If you wish to talk with our Regional Manager regarding child safety, they can be contacted on the details below.

If you wish to talk with our Regional Manager regarding child safety, contact Australian Institute of International Understanding immediately. AIIU is committed to supporting students to express their cultural rights. Whether from Australia or overseas, AIIU supports students to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights while respecting and enjoying their host community's culture. We promote the empowerment, participation and rights of children.

AIIU is committed to helping exchange students learn about Indigenous culture and history. We act on this commitment by ensuring that our staff, volunteers, students and host families participate in inductions or orientations which contain content that is inclusive and sensitive to Indigenous culture and history. We commit to the cultural safety of our Indigenous people and work together with our participants and overseas partners to confront and eliminate racism.

By undertaking the above, we aim to promote cultural rights and safety of Indigenous children so that their unique identities and experience are respected and valued.

Moreover, AIIU works to facilitate that our participants, their families, host families and our staff and volunteers are representative of the diverse nature of the societies in which we operate. We promote equity and respect diversity and strive to ensure that our policies and procedures do not exclude anyone who is otherwise eligible to participate on our programs.

PURPOSE OF STUDENT EXCHANGE

The principal purpose of AIIU's student exchange programs is to provide a broad educational experience for students and to further international/intercultural understanding.

Broad educational experience

AIIU's student exchange participants develop competencies in communication, collaboration and cooperation, strategic and creative thinking, leadership, networking skills, deductive reasoning, problem solving and decision making, and resourcefulness.

Exchange programs foster the development of sophisticated ways of looking at the world, respect for other cultures, sensitivity to different cultural, political and economic systems and mindfulness towards the welfare of the planet and its people. The result being that returned exchange students invest in advancing understanding and harmony across and within communities around the world.

AIIU's programs are first and foremost educational. Students live with host families and assimilate into local host communities. AIIU student exchange programs are not touristic in nature. Independent travel is a breach of program rules. Students must attend school full time, undertake all set assignments/tasks and participate in all assessments.

The promotion of AIIU student exchange programs draws attention to the academic nature of programs and the requirement to be a full-time student.

International/intercultural understanding

AIIU's student exchange programs encourage young people, their families and extended communities to share experiences, worldviews, languages and cultures with others from different backgrounds and traditions, with the expectation that all participants will develop a broad knowledge of and tolerance for other cultures.

Students have the choice of either short-term (less than 90 days) or long term (semester and year-long) student exchange programs with AIIU. Long term programs allow for wide-ranging and deeper integration into host cultures; genuine outcomes for international/intercultural understanding follow.

WHAT IS AN AIIU STUDENT EXCHANGE?

Complement your Australian high school studies with a short term, semester or year living and studying overseas in a country of your choosing. An AIIU student exchange is the opportunity of a lifetime!

Being an exchange student is more rewarding than simply being a tourist, you'll live like a local and make on-the-ground connections. As an AIIU exchange student, you'll join a global network of like-minded young adventurers, and you'll return with memories and skills for life.

At A Glance:

- Live with a local host family
- Attend school fulltime
- Experience your host country's cultures and customs first-hand
- Learn a language (for non-English speaking countries)
- You do not have to host a student in return however





BENEFITS OF STUDENT EXCHANGE

Educational

- International learning and knowledge propel students towards acceptance and understanding of an array of different cultural and community perspectives.
- Language acquisition is achieved through practical immersion.
- Awareness and adoption of alternative, multi-faceted approaches to learning.
- Analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Enhanced interest in global issues as well as a broader general knowledge.

Personal

- Self-development and awareness leading to enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem. This is often the most noticeable change in returned students.
- Maturity and social poise, fueled by the necessity to confront challenges outside a familiar support network and comfort zone.
- Integration into another family as well as the development of life-long friendships, fostering an appreciation of home and family.
- A tremendous sense of accomplishment upon completion encourages students to develop independent opinions, make informed decisions and strive to attain fresh goals.

Long-term

- Students who go on to tertiary studies find themselves more comfortable in 'foreign' environments.
- Prospective employers in almost every field look favourably upon experience gained while living overseas and knowledge obtained of another language and culture.
- Increased pressure to communicate and relate to others develops an awareness of group dynamics and personal sensitivity towards others.
- Successful program completion represents an excellent measure of personal flexibility, encompassing an ability to reach compromise, focus and succeed through challenging times



AIIU STUDENT EXCHANGE: Support, Host Family & Host School

Whether it is for a short term, semester or year program, an AIIU student exchange program will enhance your life and provide a window on the wonders and opportunities in the world.

Support is provided to each student throughout the entirety of their programs. Right from the start, when we first receive your enquiry, all the way to program completion, AIIU will answer your questions, maintain contact with you while you are overseas, and, when necessary, facilitate communication between you, your coordinator, your host family, your host school and our international partner organisation. This ensures you will have the best possible overseas experience.

In all countries, AIIU host families are interviewed and screened to ensure they will provide safe and caring home environments for our exchange students. Your host family will select you, will be welcoming and probably impatient for your arrival, and will be interested in learning about you and your life in Australia.

In the recruitment of host families, AIIU stipulates the duration of the program for each student, on the website and on the student's profile sent to prospective host families.

For yearlong students, AIIU offers the option to prospective host families to host for one semester only. If the host family commits to one semester only, AIIU informs the partner organisation at the time of the placement confirmation.

If a change of host family is required and the circumstances for the change do allow for the student to remain in the same area of placement, i.e. the student's wellbeing and safety are not at risk by remaining in the same area, AIIU seeks a new host family within the local community as a priority, as it will allow the student to remain within the same community and attend the same host school.

If the student's wellbeing and safety are at risk by remaining in the same area, or if no new suitable host family can be sourced in the same area, AIIU seeks a new host family within the same region, if possible, always within the same state or territory. The change of host family implies then the change of host school.

NB: If the program involves the student being placed with more than one host family, student, host family, host school, local coordinator, parents/carers, and/or third-party partner organisation are advised of this prior to the student's first placement.

Before you depart from Australia, you will also be advised about the host school that has accepted you. If you choose a non-English speaking country, you will have the opportunity to learn a new language and speak it daily. While this may seem daunting, it is worth the effort because the long-term, life-long benefits are considerable.

Your host school has been chosen based on the following principles:

- Accreditation and Reputation: a strong track record of successful placements.
- Support Services: ongoing support and guidance for the student.
- Safety Measures: meeting strict safety standards.
- Academic and Cultural Fit: accommodate the student's academic and extra-curricular needs.
- Local Coordination: ensure a good match between the student's interests and the school environment.

A change of host school is only permitted on the following grounds:

- A change of host family is required, and the student must be relocated to a new area for wellbeing and safety reasons.
- A change of host family is required, and the student must be relocated to a new area due to no new suitable host family being sourced in the same area.
- The original host school placement is not satisfactory; such change must be discussed and assessed with the original host school, host family, student, third-party partner organisation, parents/guardians, and pre-approved by all parties prior to the change being actioned.
- Approval must be granted by the relevant state/territory registration authority prior to the student transferring to the new host school.





ELIGIBILITY

You are eligible to apply for an exchange program if you meet the following requirements: still at school when you apply

- in good physical and mental health
- maintaining the equivalent or better than a C grade average for the last two years (Australia).
- language requirements vary for each destination.
- mature and open-minded
- flexible, adaptable, responsible and ready to learn
- between 15 and 17 years old when you start your exchange program (exceptions may be made for 14- and 18-year-olds), subject to program and destination
- an Australian resident
- provide proof of vaccinations, requirements vary per destination.



WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU!

