



RMIT University Vietnam: Creates a Comprehensive Student Support Programme

Embedding student welfare and wellbeing in educational organisations

RMIT University, Vietnam, the winner of International SOS Foundation's 2018 Duty of Care Award for Education, introduced a multi-faceted approach to ensure the welfare of its many international students.

RMIT University brings world-class education to the heart of Asia-Vietnam. It offers a wide range of education programmes and extra-curricular activities to more than 6,000 students. This includes a rapidly increasing number of international students, representing 45 different countries. As Vietnam is a remote/high risk country, ensuring the welfare of these students is a priority.

With the full support of the University President's Executive Board, the Student Life Department has developed a programme to provide a range of services and pastoral care for international students. The programme has proved highly effective, improving the arrival and integration experience for thousands of students as well as enhancing benefits for faculty and staff.

Melissa Delaney, Senior Manager, Student Life Department, RMIT University explains:

"RMIT University Vietnam is committed to uphold international standards of best practice, both in the academic space and beyond the classroom walls. Our International Student Support Program aims to ensure the security and wellbeing of international students throughout their time at RMIT. It delivers a high level student experience, and the opportunity to forge connections and lifelong friendships within a truly global context."

The programme provides the following:

Advance information and advice

Five introductory electronic newsletters are sent to incoming international students. These weekly posts start at least five weeks prior to students' arrival in Vietnam. The newsletters provide useful advance information about the country, RMIT and the activities available to make students' time in Vietnam enjoyable. The newsletters also address specific risks students should be aware of.

An early newsletter details RMIT's free airport pick-up service, available 24/7. Students are encouraged to make use of this welcoming service to avoid any negative experience on arrival. Other topics include information and advice on accommodation site checks, the availability of pastoral care, forthcoming events, living tips and more.

Pastoral care and emergency support

A volunteer Buddy Team supports international students one-on-one. All buddies receive induction and training from RMIT staff to help them identify and reduce the potential risks students might face. The buddy offers support starting from the student's arrival and continuing throughout the first semester.

International students can contact their volunteer buddies at any time via a variety of channels (hotline, phone, email, Facebook, group chat).

RMIT provides a 24-hour emergency hotline to give immediate support, for example, if a student is lost or injured. If needed, staff will accompany any student requiring hospitalisation.

Engaging students in activities

It is recognised that a lone student may be at greater risk than a group member. The RMIT team therefore organises a wide range of engaging activities such as city tours, a welcome dinner, cooking classes, a weekly language and cultural exchange, birthday celebrations and other trips and tours. In planning these events health and safety advice is sought from internal and external experts.



Above: RMIT Vietnam's State of the Art Academic Building.

Affordable health insurance

RMIT implemented compulsory health insurance for all international students. However, students were concerned about the high cost of the premiums. In response, RMIT negotiated a 40% reduction in premiums as well as additional support from the insurance company and its partnership hospitals. Every international student now has health insurance.

Medical assistance and support

RMIT is committed to providing timely and high quality medical care to students and staff at the university. To achieve this they partnered with a globally recognised supplier of medical and security support services. Those available at RMIT include:

- i) On-campus Clinic and Emergency Response – a team of doctors and nurses provides comprehensive preventative medical advice, pre-hospital care, emergency response, primary care and after hours psychological/emotional support.
- ii) A 24/7 Hotline - International students can immediately access this via a mobile App. It provides the latest medical and security advice for any travel destination, however remote.
- iii) Health Seminars and First Aid Training - given both to students, faculty and staff.

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The International Student Support Program has brought clear benefits to RMIT's international students. This has been demonstrated in different ways:

- Both formal and anecdotal feedback repeatedly confirms the effectiveness of the programme.
- There is increased participation by students in activities and events. This is measured through registrations, social media engagement and feedback systems.
- The support team has successfully managed one high-risk event, and a number of medical incidents.

Melissa Delaney concludes:

“Our combination of support services, pastoral care, communications, and engaging activities for students has significantly increased the experience and wellbeing of our international students. That is one reason why many students return to RMIT for further study.”

KEY ELEMENTS

Information and advice to help students prepare for their arrival

A volunteer buddy program and pastoral care

Student engagement in a range of group activities

Affordable health insurance

On site medical assistance and support

For information on the 2018 Duty of Care Awards winners in all categories, go to www.dutyofcareawards.org.