

Final Statements

The participants at the Voices of the Sector Forum 2020 agreed that:

- COVID-19 and the loss of international students is harming the tertiary education sector and all who work and learn within it.
- The Government must work with the sector to stabilise and provide certainty for 2021 and 2022.
- We must progressively open Aotearoa's borders safely and prioritise students already studying in Aotearoa.

Together we can build back better:

1. Participants agree that the impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the weaknesses of the tertiary education system with regard to funding for domestic students, on-line learning, student accommodation, student learning and pastoral support as well as some issues in pastoral care of international students.
2. Any proposed cuts to delivery and jobs as a result of revenue loss due to border closure are short-sighted. Instead, the tertiary education sector requires an urgent cash injection in order to ensure both a stable recovery and long-term quality tertiary education.
3. Forum participants, alongside additional staff and students in the sector, are committed to working together in order to formulate what the value of international tertiary education is and how it ought to be delivered in Aotearoa.
4. The Forum agrees that the benefits of tertiary education extend beyond economic factors; we must work together to re-imagine how the goals of international education are to be achieved. Te Tiriti, our shared history, te reo Māori, and tikanga are key features of intrinsic importance to education in Aotearoa and are integral to ensure Aotearoa delivers quality education and experiences to both international and domestic students.

5. International students are our manuhiri and we have a duty of care to manaaki and tiaki them as our guests.
6. The Forum agrees that we must construct a collective vision of the sector; a journey which begins by re-thinking and agreeing on what the 'whys' are of international tertiary education.
7. The forum outlined an initial list of 'why' international education is important for Aotearoa and for our manuhiri, our international students:
 - a. Travelling to, and learning in, Aotearoa offers a unique cultural and educational experience;
 - b. International students contribute to the research environment;
 - c. Domestic and international students build life-long relationships, diversity of thought, and connections through the education environment;
 - d. International education leads to global citizenship and reciprocal benefits for all students and their respective countries; and
 - e. Local communities, whānau, hapū and iwi offer socio-cultural and educational benefits that are unique to Aotearoa. Local communities are also enriched through their engagement with international students and their networks abroad.
8. In order to achieve the following objectives, the forum agrees that the tertiary education system must be innovative, collaborative, and future-focussed to:
 - a. Promote improvements to the pre-COVID approach to policy levers and funding;
 - b. Retain current staff numbers, sector knowledge, and expertise in tertiary education institutions;
 - c. Ensure the voices of ākonga/students are heard at the centre of all decision making. The voice of students and their representatives should be authentically included in decision making.
 - d. Building on the Government's International Student Recovery Strategy 2018-2030, create an international tertiary education strategy that is ethical and leads to a financially sustainable sector;
 - e. Provide educational experiences in Aotearoa that are Te Tiriti-led;
 - f. Build a strong sector for international education that raises the achievement of our domestic students;

- g. Recognises the importance of student voice, particularly the collective voices of both domestic and international students.
- h. Allow Aotearoa to continue to operate as a world leader in both quality education and employment opportunities;
- i. Ensure planning involves international students, their whānau/representatives, and staff;
- j. Design new measures of success and methods for tracking our progress;
- k. Provide strong academic support and pastoral care services for all international students in order to ensure educational and personal wellbeing; and
- l. Understand what 'quality' and 'value' mean from students' perspectives and experiences.