

# Why professionalise?

Have we done enough to recognise and credentialise expertise in the international education sector?

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# My story

- Working life in international education
- Influences – hundreds of students, a trans-Tasman professional association and interdisciplinary research
- Supported at-risk students for 15 years
- Enthusiasm for interdisciplinary insights informing IE practice
- Assisted the development of an inaugural sector-specific PG course
- Lead a national association that trains practitioners and engages with government agencies



# Making sense of professionalisation

What are the characteristics of a profession?

Dictionary definition:

- a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification



# What's currently on offer?



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Ten Credly credentials promoted in Australia  
Eight eLearning micro credentials in New Zealand



*Find out how digital credentials work with [Credly's Acclaim](#).*



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**Supporting international learners' transitions**

[Read resource](#)





## Three PG courses offered by Deakin

- *Contemporary Issues in International Education*
- *Professional Learning Theory and Practice in International Education*
- *Internationalising the Curriculum*

## One by Victoria University of Wellington

- *International Education: Theory, Policy and Practice*

Only one 15-point course in Australasia has been developed to critique the international education sector/industry



Four postgraduate papers

# Other lead export sectors in contrast

## Tourism

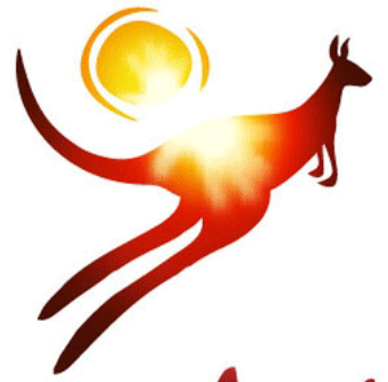
There are several dozen qualifications in tourism in Australia across various levels, from entry-level certificates to doctoral programs.

## Mining

Australia offers a wide range of mining-related qualifications for the mining industry ... including certificates, diplomas, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees.

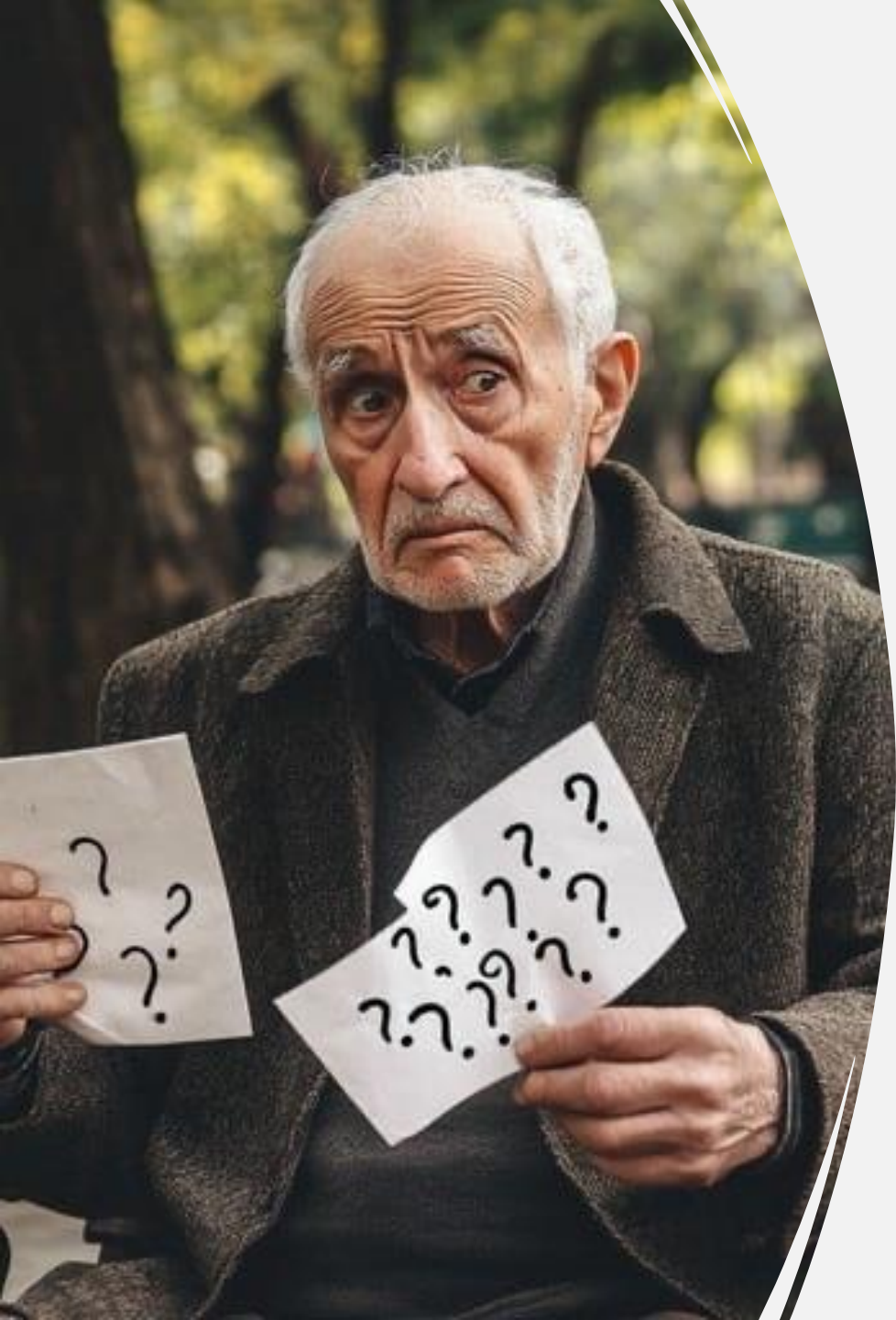
## Agriculture

The number of agriculture qualifications in Australia is extensive ... from entry-level certificates (I-IV) through to degrees and PhDs.



Tourism Australia





# The \$billion question

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As a lead export industry, why does the international education sector not offer qualifications for its practitioners?

# Risks of a non-credentialed sector

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- Specialised knowledge and skills aren't as readily available, which leaves us vulnerable to learner wellbeing and reputational risks.
- Marketing-Management 101: view every aspect of business from the perspective of the consumer (learner). Without specialised attention, this insight will give way to other priorities.



# International education benefits from interdisciplinary insights

- Double engagement – Cultural Psychology
- Power Distance Index – Anthropology
- Religious literacy – Religious Studies
- Text coverage - Applied Linguistics/TESOL
- Zone of Proximal Development – Education
- Ethics & Logical fallacies – Philosophy
- Whanaungatanga – Māori/Indigenous Studies



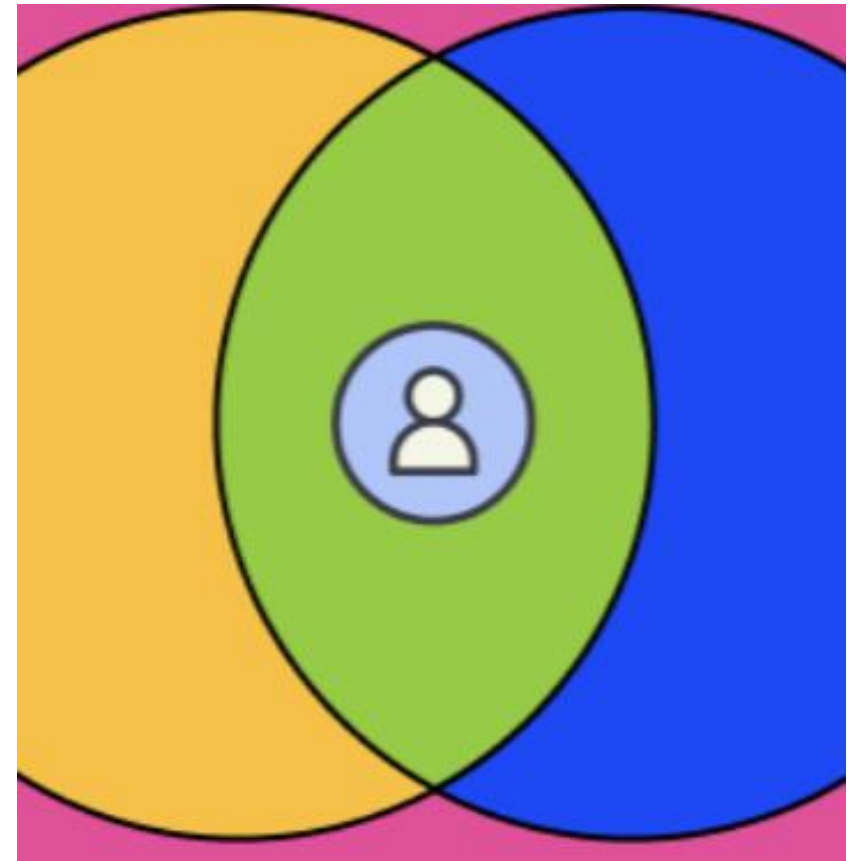
# 1. Supporting integration (Cultural Psychology)

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John Berry, Canadian cultural psychologist, developed the *Integration Hypothesis*, which introduced the concept of ‘double engagement’.

Student sojourners/new settlers who ‘**doubly engage**’ are more likely to socially integrate. This means they’re able to: (i) affirm their heritage culture while at the same time (ii) choose to engage positively with the host culture, and persist in their efforts (with help from the host institution).

Research shows that successful social integration leads to a range of positive outcomes.



# Risks and implications

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- If education providers are unaware of the importance of newcomers' social integration (especially in the first 6-12 months), there is a lost opportunity to support their social connectedness and thereby increase the risk of marginalisation and separation.
- This has ramifications for graduates' **employability**. If they have limited street-level exposure to the host culture, they will be disadvantaged when it comes to demonstrating their use of social English and relatability in an interview situation.



## 2. Understanding cultural differences (Anthropology)

High Power Distance vs  
Low Power Distance

(Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005)

Country	POWER DISTANCE INDEX
Malaysia	104
China	80
Saudi Arabia	80
India	77
South Korea	60
Japan	54
USA	40
Sweden	31
NZ	22

# Risks and implications

If staff are unaware of differences between high power and lower power distance instincts, there is a higher probability that they will offer **services-in-waiting for service-shy students**.

This exacerbates the risk of cross-border learners not accessing timely clinical support when their mental or physical health deteriorates.

Oh East is East and West is West and  
never the twain shall meet.

— *Rudyard Kipling* —



# Risks and implications

Lack of awareness of EAL learners raises the likelihood of 'information dumps,' colloquial expressions and practitioners speaking at what seems like 'gatling gun' speed to an ESL learner.

Daily challenges with English language proficiency impacts learners' wellbeing, self-efficacy, and academic success.



# Tools to support EAL students

- Familiarity with the concept of *text coverage* is invaluable. This refers to the percentage of running words in a text that an ESL reader comprehends with relative ease (Nation 2006: 61). Linguistic tools such as *online vocabulary profilers* (EAP Foundation.com, 2024) assist frontline practitioners in optimising the percentage and use of high frequency words in their texts.



The screenshot shows the website 'FOUNDATION.COM' with a search bar and navigation tabs for 'Listening', 'Vocab', 'Skills', 'Quizzes', 'Infographics', 'Site Map', 'News', and 'About'. The 'Vocab' tab is selected, leading to the 'Vocabulary Profiler' tool. The tool's instructions are: 'How to profile vocabulary. Instructions: (1) Enter text in the box below. (2) Choose the options (default is GSL+AWL). (3) Click **Submit**.' Below the instructions is a large text input area and two buttons: 'Submit' and 'Clear'.

# 4. Supported learning (Education)

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Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) identifies the difference between assisted and unassisted learning; that is, the capacity for new learning to be increased by the assistance of a teacher or more capable peer

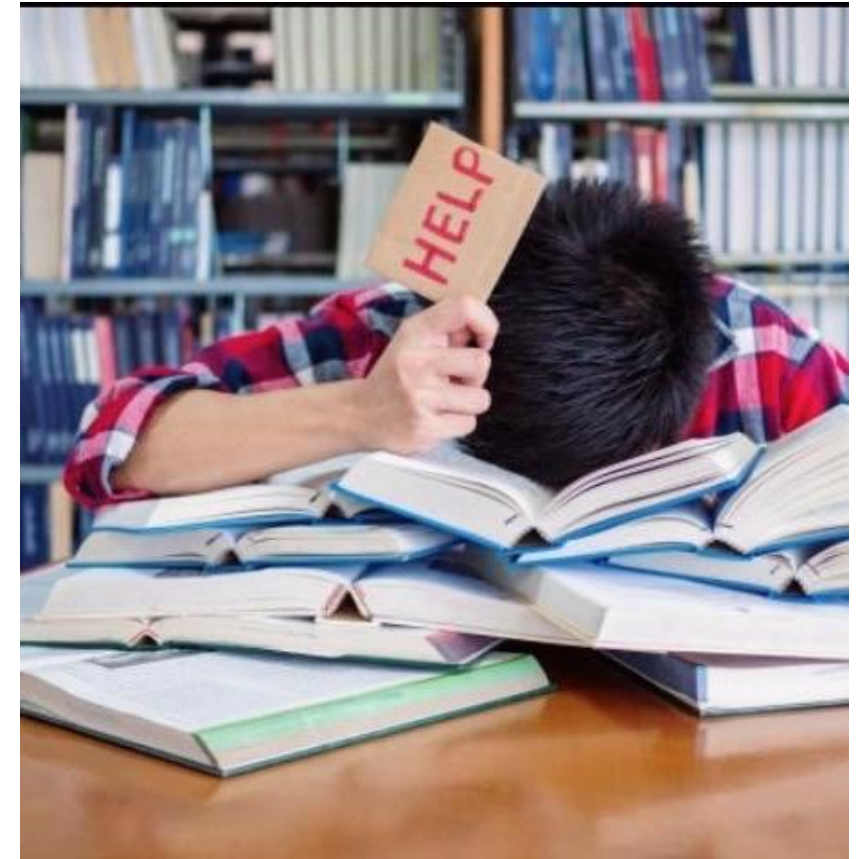
Peer mentoring schemes reflect this insight, which is invaluable for the scaffolded support of international learners



# Risks and implications

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- If a teacher's pedagogy doesn't allow for ZPD and their teaching moves ahead of students' learning, international students may revert to 'peer brokering', that is, learning off their co-ethnic peers (Lee, 2018)
- But if peer brokering fails there is the risk of higher levels of stress, withdrawal and depression.
- International students negotiate unique crossborder stressors that include cultural, L2 and learning style differences. Many also are under parental pressure to achieve high grades while needing to work. It's not surprising if academic misconduct becomes an attractive option to some.



# Importance of sector-specific credentials

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- Captures, synthesises and propagates exemplary practice
- Assists with identifying and mitigating risk
- Trains and retains talent
- Incentivises education providers to invest in professional practice
- Maximises the utility of a Code of Practice – Code clauses are otherwise interpreted and applied in a professional vacuum
- Protects the host nation's reputation
- Offers intercultural competencies that benefit broader social cohesion

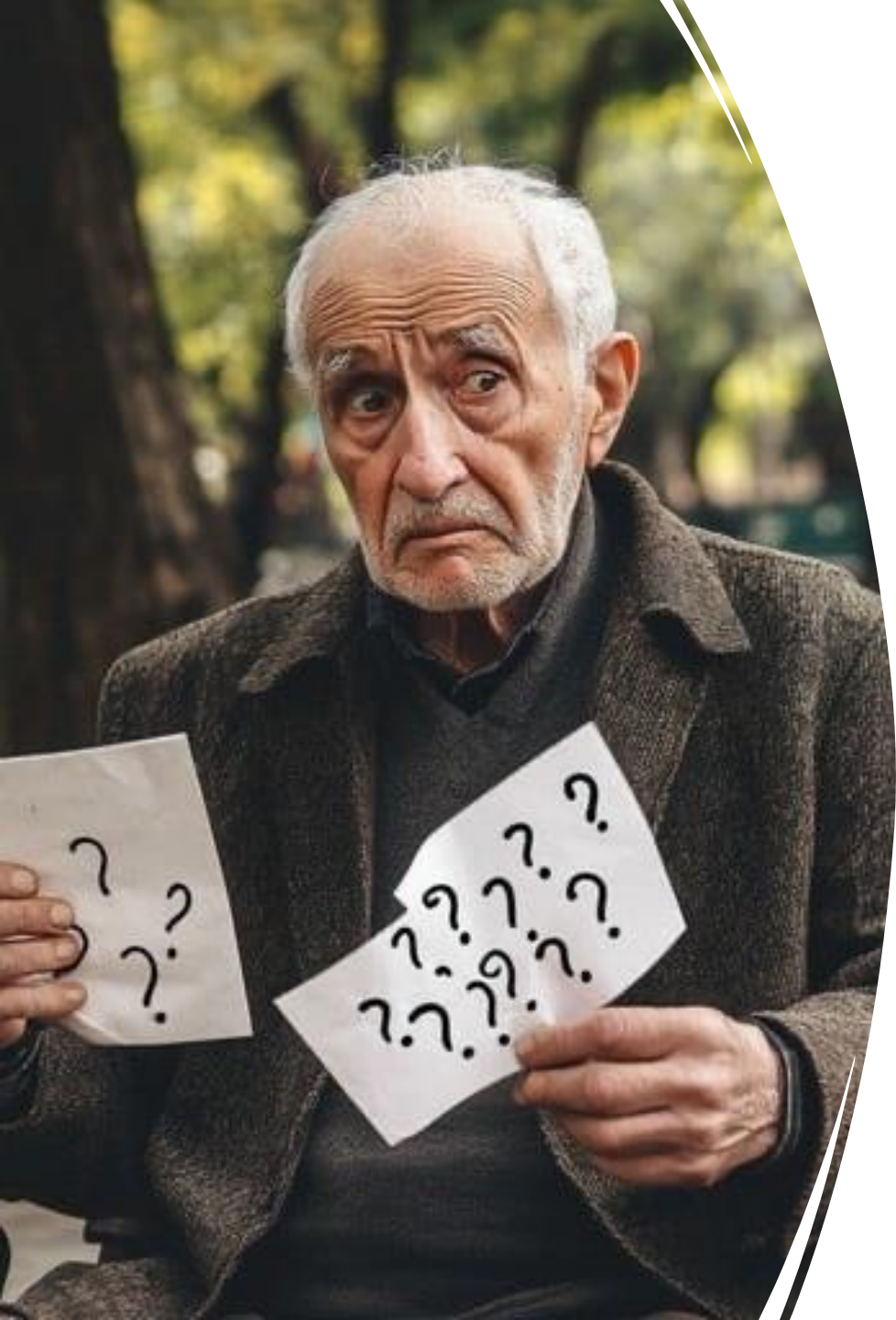


# The promise of a credentials staircase

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- Postgraduate courses  
(upper level)
- University-delivered microcredential  
(missing step in the staircase)
- eLearning micro modules  
(entry-level)





# The \$billion question

As a lead export industry, why does the international education sector not offer qualifications for its practitioners?

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