

(Additional Information Page)

Secondary Student Exchange Programs in Victoria

The Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Program in Victoria is a state specific program enabling students from another country to study as full-time students in a Victorian secondary school for a period ranging from 29 days up to a maximum of one year. Under reciprocal arrangements, Victorian students are able to undertake full-time study programs in secondary schools overseas.

- Only VRQA approved Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisations can provide Secondary Student Exchange Programs in Victoria
- There are 27 VRQA approved Overseas Student Exchange Organisations, including registered government, Catholic and independent schools, community organisations such as Rotary International, and private not-for-profit organisations. A list of all VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisations is available on the VRQA website www.vrqa.vic.gov.au
- Student Exchange Programs are different from the full-fee paying International Student Programs offered at Victorian schools registered on CRICOS to provide courses to international students.
- Students participating in an official Student Exchange Program enter Australia on a subclass 571 Student Visa through documentation generated by VRQA (an AASES form) issued only to approved Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisations.
- Official exchange students do not pay school tuition fees, and host families providing accommodation to exchange students do so on a voluntary basis.
- All VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisations must maintain an equal balance of the number of in-bound and out-bound exchange students on a student/month basis.
- Student Exchange Programs do not include school group study tours, or short term cultural or private visits by students holding Visitor Visas (such as private arrangements initiated by parents hosting relatives or family friends).
- international students on Visitor Visas seeking temporary enrolment in Victorian schools
 - **must** pay tuition fees if enrolling in a **Victorian Government school** (for further details go to the DEECD International Division website at www.study.vic.gov.au)
 - **may** be required to pay tuition fees if enrolling in a **Victorian Catholic or independent school** (for further information contact the school directly).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Information for School Principals and Administrators

- What is an 'Exchange Student'?

Exchange Students are international secondary students who:

- are undertaking an exchange program of between 29 days and 1 year arranged by a registered school or an organisation approved by VRQA as an Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisation,
- hold a subclass 571 (Schools) Student Visa, and
- present an *Advice and Acceptance of a Secondary Exchange Student form* - (AASES form) to the school on arrival.

- Can a parent of a student at my school arrange a private exchange program for a relative overseas, and enrol the child as an 'exchange student' at my school?

No. Parents, and schools, clubs or organisations that are not VRQA approved Overseas Student Exchange Organisations, cannot arrange 'private' student exchange programs into Australia.

Parents and organisations seeking to enrol international students holding Visitor Visas in Victorian schools for short periods of up to 12 weeks of tuition are able to apply for school enrolment, but:

- must pay tuition fees if enrolling in a **Victorian Government school** (for further details go to the DEECD International Division website at www.study.vic.gov.au)
- may be required to pay tuition fees if enrolling in a **Victorian Catholic or independent school** (for further information contact the school directly).

Note: Only international students participating in exchange programs provided by VRQA approved Overseas Student Exchange Organisations are 'Exchange Students'.

- **Does a Principal need to seek approval to enrol an Exchange Student?**

No. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development supports the Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Program and values the cultural education and global learning that exchange programs bring to individual students and their school communities. Schools need to check that the request to enrol an Exchange Student is from a VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation.

- **Is a school obliged to accept an Exchange Student?**

No. The decision to accept or decline the enrolment of an exchange student remains at the Principal's discretion. Principals may take into consideration school based issues such as the availability of student places, appropriate timing of the program, the support required and resources available to ensure that a satisfactory program can be offered before accepting an exchange student.

- **How do I know if the organisation that is proposing the exchange is approved?**

Schools should only accept the enrolment of Exchange Students from a VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation. There are 12 non-school organisations approved by VRQA to provide student exchange programs in Victoria :

- AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS)
- Association of German Teachers of Victoria (AGTV)
- Australian Institute for International Understanding (AIIU)
- IndoAustay Australia Ltd
- Nacel Australia
- Rotary Youth Exchange Victoria
- Scholarships for Australian-German Student Exchange (SAGSE)
- Southern Cross Cultural Exchange
- STS Student Exchange
- Student Exchange Australia New Zealand Ltd
- World Education Program (WEP)
- Youth For Understanding (YFU)

If Principals or school staff have concerns as to whether an organisation seeking to enrol an Exchange Student is approved by VRQA they should contact the VRQA Manager-School Projects on (03) 9032 1539.

- [Who is responsible for the accommodation and welfare of an Exchange Student?](#)

Schools enrolling an Exchange Student have responsibility for the student while they attend school, school activities and excursions, as per their obligations to all enrolled students. The VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation arranging the exchange program is responsible for arranging suitable accommodation, support and general welfare for the Exchange Student throughout the program, including during school vacations.

All VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisations are required to have local coordinators in Victoria to support Exchange Students and to liaise effectively with schools. All schools enrolling an Exchange Student should ensure that they retain a mobile telephone contact number for the student's local coordinator for use in an emergency. Student Exchange Organisations are responsible for recruiting, selecting and screening local host families for Exchange Students, and for monitoring and supporting students and host families during the exchange program.

- [What is an AASES form?](#)

AASES stands for 'Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Student'. The AASES form is the official document generated by VRQA and issued to each Exchange Student through their Overseas Secondary Student Exchange Organisation.

The AASES form is used for the processing of Student Visas and for the enrolment of Exchange Students in Victorian schools. Without an AASES form a student cannot be considered a bona fide Exchange Student, and therefore should not be enrolled under this category.

Immediately following the enrolment of an Exchange Student, the Principal must complete and sign Part D of the AASES form. A copy of the completed AASES form must then be kept with the student's school file and a completed and signed copy returned directly to the exchange organisation. The AASES form is evidence that the student's parents have authorised their child's participation in the exchange program and enrolment at the school, and that the Student Exchange Organisation has accepted responsibility for the welfare of the Exchange Student while they are in Australia.

All AASES forms issued by VRQA bear the VRQA logo and a unique AASES number (eg V14/1234).

- [What is the process for accepting and enrolling an Exchange Student?](#)

The organisation facilitating the exchange program will make direct contact with the school requesting permission from the Principal to enrol an Exchange Student for a specific exchange program (advising of the proposed start and end dates).

Where a school agrees to an enrolment for that period, the organisation will forward the relevant information about the Exchange Student, the student's host family in Victoria and the contact details for the organisation's local coordinator.

On arrival at the school, the Exchange Student (and/or the representative of organisation) will provide a copy of the student's AASES form (Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Student). The school completes Part D of the AASES form, keeps a copy of the AASES form on the student's school file and provides a copy to the exchange organisation.

- [Do Exchange Students pay fees?](#)

No. Official Exchange Students do not pay tuition fees as the Commonwealth Government and state / territory governments accept the enrolment of official Exchange Students as per local students. Approved Student Exchange Organisations are required to balance the number of in-bound and out-bound students on a student/month basis. This means that over the course of the year, the numbers of Victorian secondary students are undertaking exchange programs are balanced with the number of Overseas Secondary Exchange Students studying in Victoria.

Exchange Students should pay any local school levies or charges relating to special subjects, school materials or resources that the student will retain, and any fees associated with school camps or excursions. These fees or charges should be discussed with the Student Exchange Organisation at the time enrolment is discussed.

- [The Exchange Student has a 'Student Visa -Subclass 571' - aren't they regarded as fee paying students?](#)

No. The Department of Immigration issues Subclass 571 (Schools Sector) Student Visas to international students undertaking courses or programs of full time study in a school. The 571 Student Visa is for the entire schools sector, and is issued to **both** full-fee paying international students and official Exchange Students. The proof that a student is an official Exchange Student is the AASES form.

- [Are Exchange Students eligible for Student Travel Concession Cards?](#)

Yes. In Victoria, official Exchange Students can obtain Victorian Student Transport Concession Cards in the same manner as local students. (This entitlement does not apply to full-fee paying international students).

- [Who can I contact if I have an issue with a Student Exchange Organisation?](#)

If a Principal or school staff member has a concern regarding a VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation that cannot be resolved with the organisation they should contact the VRQA Manager - School Projects at the VRQA on (03) 9032 1539.

- [My school has an overseas 'sister-school'. Do I need to become a VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation to host students from our 'sister school'?](#)

No - if the students from your 'sister-school' are undertaking a short term cultural visit to your school, and hold an Australian Visitor Visa, you not need to become a VRQA approved Student Exchange Organisation where:

- a 'sister-school' visit to a **Victorian Government school** is for less than 28 days (for further details contact the DEECD International Division website at www.study.vic.gov.au)
- a 'sister school' visit to a **Victorian Catholic or independent school** is for less than 12 weeks of tuition (for further information contact the school directly).

Schools that have an established 'sister-school' relationship with an overseas school may wish to seek VRQA approval as a Student Exchange Organisation.

VRQA approval enables Victorian schools to expand their school-to-school exchange programs and offer opportunities for students exchanges of up to one year in duration. Information on applying for VRQA approval is available at the VRQA website at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au or from the VRQA Manager - School Projects at the VRQA on (03) 9032 1539.