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Dear Dr Officer

### **Annual Registration Charge (ARC) Collection**

All providers registered on CRICOS are required under Section 23 of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and Section 8 of the *Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Act 1997* to pay an Annual Registration Charge (ARC).

#### ***An important processing change has been implemented for the 2009 ARC collection.***

In previous years, within the ARC payment system providers were given the option of either using PRISMS based enrolment figures or entering a different set of figures for the purposes of determining their ARC payable. Providers entered new figures usually based on their own records.

The 2009 collection process will remain almost identical to that of previous years. However, the major change is that providers will be required to pay the ARC figure based on PRISMS data. It will not be possible to use non-PRISMS data. The only way providers can alter the ARC payable will be through updating PRISMS CoE data.

As you would be aware, Section 19 of the ESOS Act creates an obligation for providers to notify the Secretary of the Department (via PRISMS) of a range of specified events relating to student enrolments, including name, course, start date and expected duration of the course, termination of studies, changes in identity or duration of a course, and any other prescribed matter relating to accepted students.

What this means, in short, is that at any point in time, so long as providers are meeting their data entry and reporting responsibilities under Section 19 of the Act, PRISMS will be a complete and accurate representation of the student profile at their institution. Furthermore there should be no difference between their own records and those kept on PRISMS.

#### ***Why is DEEWR implementing this change?***

Mandating the use of PRISMS enrolment figures offers significant benefits to the ARC calculation and collection process, including

- The delivery of a streamlined ARC collection process that reduces the administrative burden to both the Department and industry
- Application of a standard ARC calculation across all providers that removes the opportunity of using incorrect or fraudulent enrolment data
- Elimination of the need to audit providers that deviate from using the PRISMS based enrolment numbers
- Improved data entry and reporting practices across the industry leading to improved regulatory performance

The processing change also supports the preference shown by the majority of providers for using PRISMS based enrolment figures as the basis for determining their ARC. In 2008, almost 80% of all providers who paid the ARC used enrolment figures derived from data stored in PRISMS.

## What should I do now?

To ensure the success of the new ARC collection process providers **must** ensure that PRISMS data accurately reflects the actual enrolments undertaken by overseas students within their organisation for any given calendar year.

### ***Accurate enrolment information is the only way to ensure an accurate ARC calculation.***

Where providers may have previously utilised the enrolment figures from their 'in-house' system, and amended the PRISMS ARC invoice enrolment figures, for the 2009 collection this will not be possible.

Any discrepancies between in-house and PRISMS enrolment records will need to be reconciled and any amendments to PRISMS records made prior to the 2009 ARC calculation. This will ensure that PRISMS accurately reflects the enrolment history of students over the relevant period, which in turn ensures an accurate ARC calculation.

Where providers choose to accept the figures presented, they should still ensure that the figures accurately reflect what actually happened, in regard to student enrolments for the period concerned.

A brochure providing detailed information about the 2009 ARC collection, including instructions on how and when to reconcile PRISMS and in-house data is enclosed. This checking and verifying exercise should commence as soon as possible as it is a precursor to the 2009 ARC collection, and will ensure that all providers are satisfied that their PRISMS data accurately reflects actual enrolments.

## Further Communication

DEEWR will be sending further information regarding the 2009 ARC collection via a series of emails to the PEO and registered e-Business contacts over the next few months. These emails will contain important information, including key dates and activities required to prepare for the collection.

We appreciate your cooperation on this matter and if you have any queries regarding the 2009 ARC collection process in general - or the changes being introduced - please do not hesitate to contact the ARC Hotline on 1300 793 993.

Yours sincerely



Robert Noakes  
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Consumer Protection and Registrations Unit  
International Quality Branch

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