

Education

CHILE FACT SHEET

The government of Chile has established, as one of its fundamental pillars for future economic, social and cultural growth, education and innovation as a core strategy for its goal of being recognised among the world's knowledge based societies. This ambitious plan, enhanced through the government's bicentennial scholarship programme (Becas Chile) provides excellent opportunities for Australian education providers across all sectors.

Australia's Southern Hemisphere location, identical academic year, strong Chilean family links and good business reputation brings many students to take advantage of the lifestyle and opportunities Australia has to offer.

School Sector

With more than three million students currently attending primary and secondary school within Chile, opportunities do exist for Australian school sector providers. Although numbers are still very small, in recent years Chile is the only Latin American country to increase the number of students coming to Australia. While parents sending school age students all the way to Australia to study and improve their English skills is still relatively uncommon, it still occurs when family members are present in Australia. With Australia having the fifth largest expatriate Chilean population in the world, scope exists for institutions to benefit from an increase in student numbers. Marketing in this sector needs to be directed towards this fact.

English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS)

In terms of student numbers, the ELICOS sector provides the highest percentage (fifty-six percent in 2009) of Chilean's studying with Australian educational institutions. Australian government initiatives to market the country to Latin America as a place to study English and for holidays appear vindicated by the number of Chilean students choosing to learn English and travel here. The Chilean government is strongly focused on teaching its students English. Australian institutions have therefore profited from this government focus with students travelling to Australia for intensive English courses. A Chilean government programme was enacted that hoped to make Chile a bilingual Spanish/ English speaking country, so that their citizens would be better placed to gain employment with the large number of multinational companies located in Chile. Opportunities therefore exist for Australian providers within Chile, in advisory roles regarding the start up of Chilean English language institutions. This can be in the areas of teacher development, curriculum and assessment. These

government policies, combined with the recently ratified Chile – Australia Free Trade Agreement improve the opportunities for Australian providers to set-up facilities in Chile. At this stage it must be noted that this has not yet occurred as basically all courses are offered in Australia. The importance of intensive English language tuition is also recognised by VET and higher education providers who offer courses, in conjunction with other studies.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The VET sector accounts for eighteen percent of Chilean students studying in Australia, but this sector also provides many more opportunities for Australian companies, both in Chile and in Australia. Chile (as is the entire region) is very interested in Australia's VET system and their technical training programmes. This provides opportunities for institutions to not only bring students to Australia, but also to send accredited staff to Chile to train local trade teachers with the necessary skills to set up and run their institutions. It has also created opportunities for providers to work with the Chilean government in the development of VET sector competency standards and qualification frameworks. Regarding exchange programmes, they are very limited, or non-existent within this sector, owing to the low level of Australian students with foreign language skills. This means that if agreements were reached, traffic would be only in one direction. The required reciprocal nature of these arrangements would mean they would quickly lapse. Having said that, many institutions do bring Chilean teachers and students to Australia, usually with some form of scholarship, to study and learn at Australian VET institutions. The Chilean government also now offers scholarships to students to study in the VET sector as part of their bicentennial scholarship programme (Becas Chile), which has been influential in bringing larger numbers of students to Australia.

Higher Education

In 2009, twenty-one percent of Chilean students who come to study in Australia were here to undertake higher education courses, making it the second most popular form of education for Chileans in Australia. The high level of Chileans at this sector of education in Australia is indicative, of the government's quest to become a knowledge based society and the numerous scholarships aimed at higher education. Generally all Chilean students that attend Australian universities are here to undertake postgraduate study (including Masters and PhDs). There are some undergraduate students but the numbers are very limited. Most of these students receive scholarships, either as part of the Bicentennial Scholarship Programme (Becas Chile) or through the National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT). For many universities these programmes have decidedly increased numbers of students coming from Chile.

Most institutions have exchange agreements with universities in Chile that in most cases work well in both directions. Universities do not have the Spanish language issues of the VET sector and therefore there are many Australian students willing and pushing to study in Chile. In this case, it has even been noted that these agreements work better from Australia to Chile, than in the opposite direction as for some, the Chilean market has been very difficult to enter. Universities have also organised research exchanges for their academic staff, where staff undertake research and share knowledge and skills. Usually these are arranged through the Australian university and the scholarship providers. There are also collaborative projects available for PhD students to study part of their time in Australia, such as through the programme MECESUP. This programme not only funds student's research in Australia, but can also allow Australian fellows to visit and teach in Chile.

Opportunities

- School Sector – Large Chilean Expatriate Community in Australia
- English Language Tuition
- Consultancy work – ELICOS sector (in Chile)
- ELICOS operations in Chile
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) Courses
- VET teacher training
- VET sector consultancy work and training programmes
- Participation/ investment in World Bank development projects in education
- Student exchange – Higher Education
- Postgraduate courses (including Masters and PhD level)
- Academic staff placements – Higher Education
- Barriers

Distance and travel time between Australia and Chile.

Compared to other Latin American countries, Chile has a comparatively low population and small number of students, therefore less opportunities exist for Australian providers across all sectors.

The lack of an Australian Government presence in Latin America.

The Australian government marketed the country to Latin America as a place to learn English and as a tourist destination. Therefore many institutions, especially at the higher education level have found it nearly impossible to market themselves as a place to undertake quality advanced education. It is only now, after more than ten years of struggle that they are beginning to see fruition of their initiatives to overcome the perceived idea of what Australia truly has to offer.

Lack of foreign language skills, principally among Australian students, but also staff, cuts out many opportunities for Australian education providers in Chile.

The high value of the Australian dollar means that the advantage Australia used to have, compared to its main competitors in the USA and the UK, in terms of cost and price of living expenses are no longer as striking. (It was noted that in the 1990s students who traveled to Australia from Chile made up the slight difference in airfare within two to three weeks).

The general tendency for students to look north to the USA and to the UK for their education makes it difficult for institutions to compete.

The Chilean government and industry have identified the need for improved education but seem unwilling to invest across all sectors of education. When they do, the process, for Australian companies is believed to be incredibly slow with goal posts that constantly shift, thereby making negotiations at times very difficult and with a high rate of failure.

Many Australian providers, across all sectors have noted the difficulty they have faced in attracting students from Chile. It is apparently a very difficult market to enter (even the USA has difficulty attracting large numbers) and sustain. When compared to other countries in Latin America, dealing with Chile is deemed to be far more difficult.

Marketing

Most institutions, across all sectors agree that the best form of marketing possible is from past students returning to Chile and promoting them to their friends and colleagues. More and more students each year are seeking education in, or from Australia at the direct result of positive 'word of mouth' feedback.

With this in mind they have all noted the requirement of sending delegations to Chile frequently to directly and strategically market your institution, and to acquire a strong relationship with a reliable local agent. Independent

attendance at trade shows, etc. is found to be a lot cheaper and provides a far greater return (in terms of student numbers) in money spent than group delegations.

The importance of a good, trustworthy local agent is stressed by all within the sector as the most essential tool for attracting students to Australia. To keep the relationship strong it is also recommended that institutions keep in constant contact with their agent, including traveling to Chile to keep them up to date with your institutions business.

For Australia's top eight ranked universities (ANU, Monash, Universities of Adelaide, Melbourne, New South Wales, Queensland, Sydney and Western Australia) another valuable source of marketing has been from Chilean scholarship providers (CONICYT). These providers advise and grant scholarships to students to undertake postgraduate study at Australia's most prestigious universities. University exchange agreements are also a valuable tool in marketing postgraduate study in Australia as many students chose institutions that their undergraduate university has contacts with.

Best Advice

The Australian government and many Australian universities and TAFEs have signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Chilean government that provide for enhanced cooperation between the two countries education sectors.

It is always better, and more respectful to undertake business negotiations in Chile using the Spanish language. If unable to yourself, make sure you take a trusted colleague or translator with you.

It must be noted that all business dealings in Chile (as with other countries in Latin America) take a long time. Before entering Chile you must be prepared to be there for the long haul and to spend considerable time in country building a relationship of trust with the companies you are negotiating with. It may take a considerable amount of time and money before you begin to reap the rewards of your labour. Once they like and trust your business is assured. Specifically for education providers this involves demonstrating a commitment to Chile and the region in general. Examples include investing in Chile, the proven interest of institutions with Latin American Studies or Spanish language programmes, negotiating exchange agreements, offering scholarships, etc. The point of this is to prove to them that you are doing more than just getting students and taking their money. All countries in Latin America are wary of foreigners who arrive and try to exploit them; past experiences mean they will not let this happen again. You must realise that the only thing that will occur rapidly in Chile is that your company will lose a lot of money.

The best strategy is to show them that your plans involve a two way relationship of mutual benefit that will be a win-win situation for them and for your own company. The Chilean education system is always interested in the availability of new

courses that provide their students with new skills in the areas they deem most suitable for the future. Institutions that enter with ideas of this nature will definitely be able to build strong relationships in Chile.

A good, trusted local agent forms the core of any education business dealings in Chile. Although many trips to Chile are still required, by keeping your agent informed of your institution's plans they are better placed, with their sound local knowledge, to market your company to perspective students. They will also assist to overcome the language barrier.

It is also advisable to acquire sound legal representation and advice before entering Chile. Chile has many complicated legal requirements and regulations for foreign education providers that only lawyers with sufficient knowledge of the country will be able to fulfil correctly. They will also be able to build you knowledge of the local market and how it operates. In other words: make sure you do your homework as you will be dealing with very smart and educated people.

If you already have operations in another Latin American country, do not attempt to enter Chile using the same strategy. You must realise that every country in the region is different and you therefore have to adapt your plans to suit. Looking upon the entire continent as one entity is at your own peril.

Chile, as a member of APEC and now of the OECD (the only Latin American member) is renowned for the stability of its economy, meaning that there are high numbers of students with the economic means to study in Australia. Chile also has the highest number of Australian companies operating within it, including being the only country in Latin America with an Australian Educational institution directly functioning. If you add these factors to the Australia – Chile Free Trade Agreement, and the Double Taxation Agreement (that still needs to be ratified by parliament) there exists numerous opportunities for Australian educational operations within Chile, especially within the ELICOS, VET and higher education sectors which have not been explored to their full capacity.