



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Guidelines for IFP Friends

The aim of the International Friendship program is to introduce international students to local individuals and families for the purpose of developing cross-cultural friendships.

Why should I become involved

The benefits of joining the IFP are numerous. It may be that you have travelled or intend to travel overseas and that you would like to be introduced to a student from a particular country to share experiences. For those who are learning a new language, being introduced to an International student can provide you with an opportunity to learn and practice. Some families join so that their children can be exposed to different culture. For others the benefits are in being part of a multicultural community, contributing to the local community or developing new friendships.

Some members of the program have stayed with their student in their home country and many have even attended students' weddings! These are great examples of the potential for long term friendships developed through the IFP.

For students, the IFP is about having a social and cultural outlet, easing the adjustment to life in Australia and broadening their experience. Ultimately, it is the chance to meet local people and experience real Aussie culture which is the drawcard.

How does the IFP work

Once we have received your application we will contact you to make an appointment to see one of the International Support staff members. This is an informal interview to clarify your expectations of the program, answer any questions you may have and to ascertain your suitability. The appointment will take approximately 30 minutes and is a compulsory part of the application process.

Once your application has been approved you will receive a letter welcoming you to the program. We then search our database to find an International student to introduce you to. You will be invited to attend an introduction night where you will be introduced to your student. Sometimes finding a suitable student takes time and we appreciate your patience. Once you have been introduced it will be up to you and your student to organise a time and place to meet. It is preferable for you to make the first contact with the student as they may be a little shy.

What would I do with my student

The types of activities you and your student do will depend on your interests. You may invite them to your home for a meal, meet for a coffee, go to the movies, go camping or bushwalking, play a game of sport or attend church together. The options are endless, so be sure to share your interests with your student so that you can choose activities you will both enjoy. Remember that most students will be money conscious so it is important to let them know of any expected costs associated with an activity and to be understanding if they cannot afford to participate.

Several times during the year, we organize joint social functions for all members of the IFP. These are a good opportunity to get to know others in the program and to have a great time in our special multicultural community.

What is expected of IFP members

Managing the IFP requires considerable time and effort from a lot of people. It is because of this that we expect people joining the program to be committed to making the most of it. As a member we would expect you to:

- try to meet with your student at least **three** times over a semester
- respect the culture and beliefs of your student. Check with your student if there is anything that they will not eat for religious or other reasons and be sensitive that some topics or jokes may be embarrassing or offensive
- not think of your student (or yourself) in terms of national stereotypes. Allow the student to be him/herself rather than a representative of a particular country
- not encourage students to indulge in any form of illegal drug use. Be aware that students may be unfamiliar with many Australian laws such as drink-driving limits
- encourage your student to seek assistance of USQ staff for serious personal, academic or financial problems. Although you will naturally be concerned for the welfare of your student, you are not required to be a student counsellor
- not financially support your student in any way, including offering a loan
- let the IFP Coordinator know if you are having any problems with your student, if you are no longer interested in being in the program or if you have changed your contact details
- be yourself and have fun!

How do I join the IFP

If you have read through the guidelines thoroughly and would like to be part of the program, please complete and sign the application form available at

<http://mscms.usq.edu.au/USQ/studentservices/international/livexpense/ifp.htm>

Please note: it is our policy not to process unsigned application forms.