

# Collaborating to recruit effectively in Vietnam/Southeast Asia



Chau Mai, Joe McKinney, Thuy Nguyen

^this presentation^



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# Who are we?



**Chau Mai**

Associate Director, Vietnam  
Grok Global

9 years in International Education



**Joe McKinney**

Head of Careers and University  
Guidance  
British International School Hanoi

6+ years university and 2+ years  
counsellor



**Thuy Nguyen**

Senior International Recruitment  
Advisor–Southeast Asia  
York University

12 years in International Education



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# Kahoot



# Agenda

1. Schools in Vietnam and SEA
2. Expectation management
3. University support
4. What is the region telling us?

**When they open  
powerpoint and you see  
"slide 1 of 243"**



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# Student Segments: Local vs. International Schools

## Local Schools (Public & Private)

- National curriculum (+ enhancements)
- Large student populations → Major source of outbound students
- Diverse financial backgrounds
- Limited university guidance resources

## International Schools

- International curricula (e.g., IB, A-Level)
- Smaller student populations
- Strong financial backgrounds
- Dedicated university guidance support



# Vietnam High-School Landscape

## International School Community

More than **80 international schools** nationwide, and some do not offer high-school programs

→ Around **6000 graduating students per year**

→ Small, elite segment.

## Total Student Population

Vietnam has approximately 3 million high-school students

- **89 % public high schools**
- 11 % private + international schools

## Outbound Students

Approximately **40,000 Vietnamese students** study abroad yearly, **primarily from local schools.**



# Local school: student and parent expectations

**Affordability:** Tuition, living expenses, scholarships

**Academics:** Rankings, reputation, program quality

**Employability:** Part-time work opportunities, internships, career prospects

**Student Experience:** Culture, outside of classroom opportunities, community

**Safety:** Personal security, stability, healthcare access



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# Access Local Schools

## Key Challenges

- Regulatory barriers
- Limited dedicated resources
- Language & communication gaps
- Lack of mutual awareness

## Why should local schools choose to work with you?

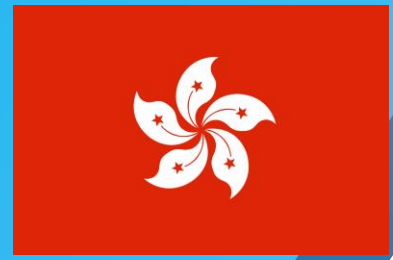
- What value do you bring to students and staff?
- How do you support their priorities and constraints?
- What makes your approach different or sustainable?



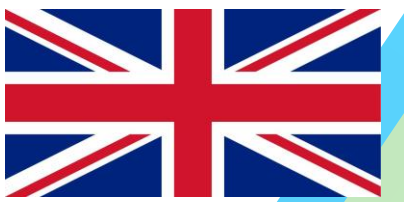
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# International school: student and parent expectations



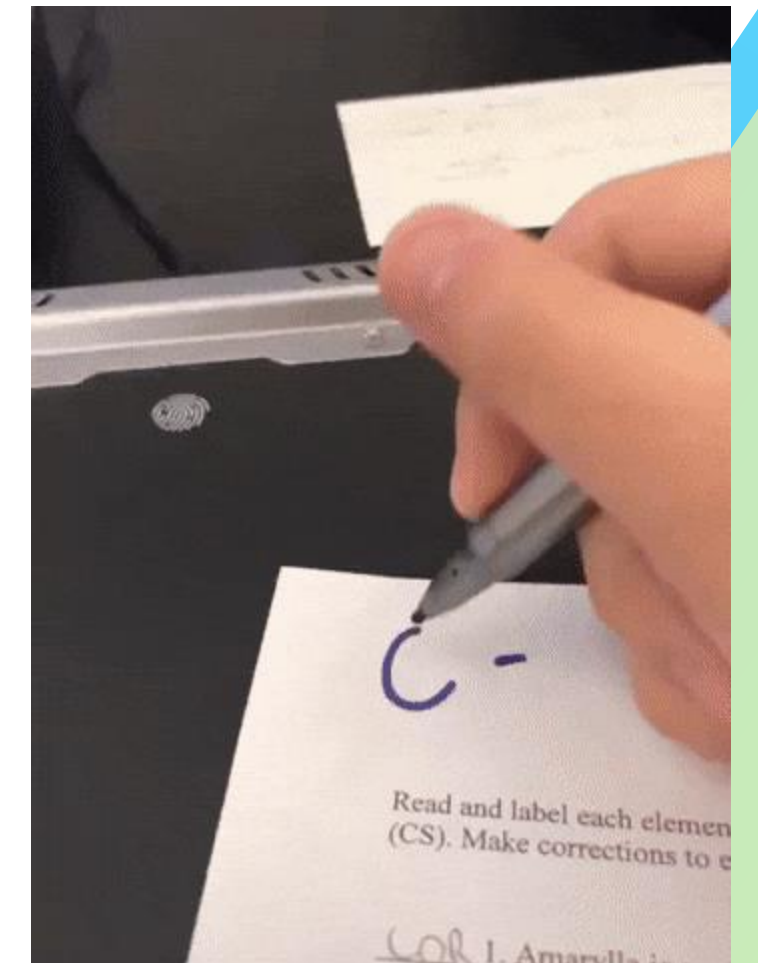
- **International outlook**  
Mostly look for international options
- **Popular locations**  
UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong...
- **Parents are key**  
Many parents are key decision makers as fee payers, language can be an issue
- **Tactical parental decisions**  
Home fees and PR options for parents
- **Grade grades grades!**  
Predicted grades are everything to these students!





# Expectation management for counsellors

- **Engage early**  
Key to engage parents as early as possible, curb unrealistic expectations
- **Data is your friend**  
Utilise platform metrics and grade mapping to show parents grades VS successful applications
- **Open options**  
Provide students with a full range of global options
- **Grades grades grades!**  
Liaise with teachers to provide realistic grades



# Expectation management for university representatives

- Early engagement is key
- Consistent presence builds impact
- Specific topics outperform general university presentations
- Partner with local groups (e.g., VISCA Hanoi) to maximize reach and engagement



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# University support for students and parents

- Offer-holder & pre-departure events (in-country, online, or both)
- On-campus welcome: orientation, airport pickup, arrival support
- Academic support (e.g., in-session English)
- Personal tutors & student union support
- Engagement with parents, guardians, and counsellors



# Good practice from YorkU

## Building Strong Relationships with School Counsellors

- Understand the school context
- Establish early and consistent communication
- Be responsive and reliable
- Personalize your engagement
- Be a trusted resource



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# Good practice from YorkU

## Collaborating Effectively to Support Students

- Provide clear and timely updates
- Simplify communication channels
- Follow up and close the loop
- Show appreciation and partnership

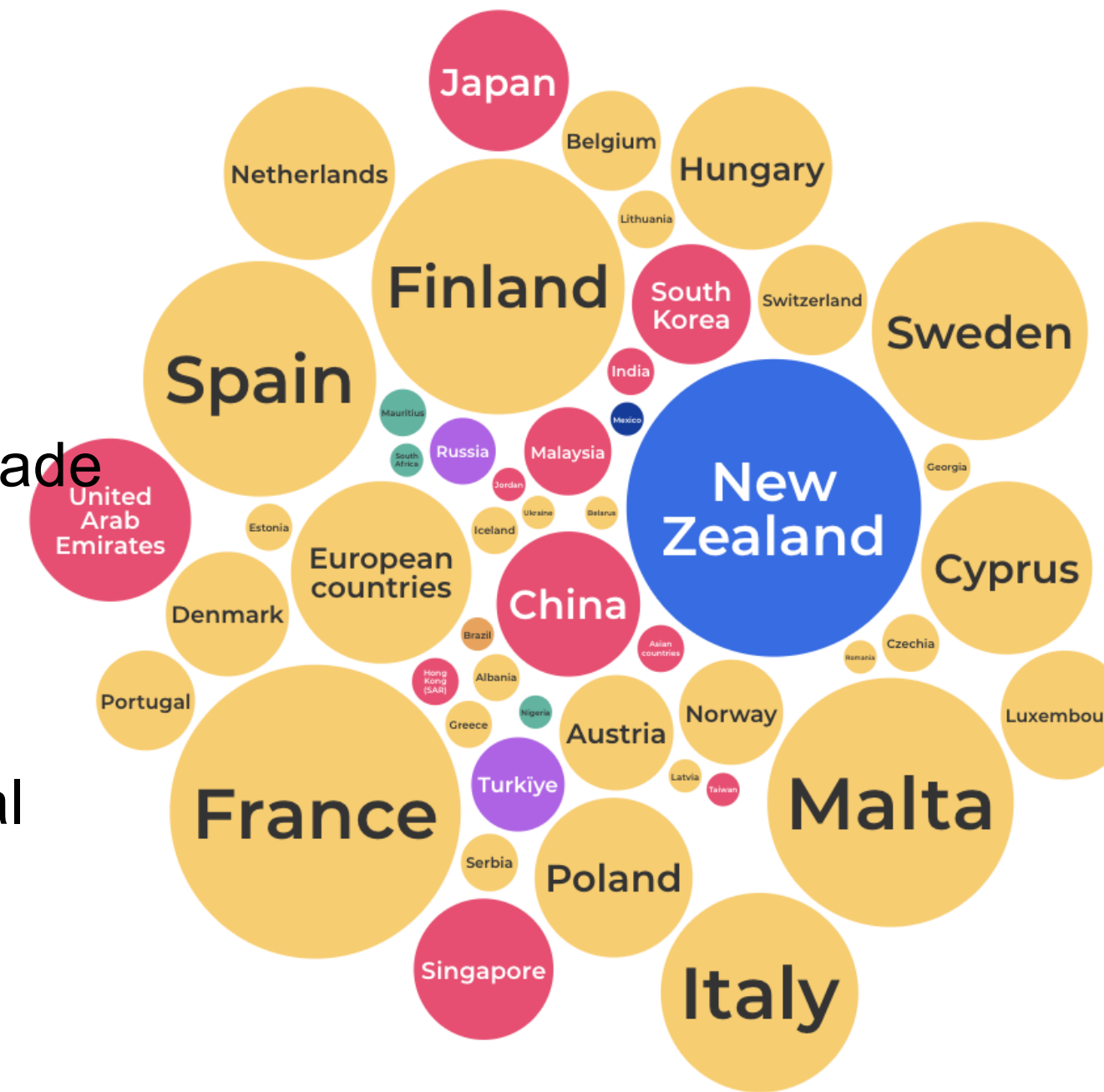


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# What is the region telling us?

## Market Shifts in Study Abroad Landscape

- **Macro-driven changes** reshaping student preferences
- **Demand diversification:** from “Big Four” → “Big Ten”
- **New skills demands** (digital skills, climate adaptation, trade infrastructure, and environmental sustainability)
- **Rising competition** from local institutions with TNE
- **Agent influence evolving** with greater reliance on digital channels and direct applications



# What is the region telling us?

## Effective Student Recruitment Strategies

- **Segment your audience:** Tailor messaging, channels, and offerings and engagement approach
- **Go beyond school visits:** Use webinars, workshops, alumni talks, competitions
- **Add value:** Offer career insights, application support, skills sessions
- **Leverage digital marketing:** Social media, search, targeted campaigns
- **Localize messaging:** Focus on ROI, employability, affordability
- **Activate alumni & ambassadors:** Peer-driven engagement builds trust



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# What do you think? Discussion

Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/josephmckinney1/sea-collab-int-acac-sea-collab-oyla6tmsygo7gc4x>

Everyone

- What has worked well for visits and fairs this year?
- What has not worked as well as hoped?

Universities

- What has been constructive in your counsellor interactions?
- What would make your visits better?

Counsellors

- What have you done in your school to get creative with university engagement



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# Thank you!



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