2.5.1 Homestay Provider Engagement and Monitoring Policy and Procedure

1.0 Purpose

The Homestay Program aims to accommodate international students in a safe, secure and enriching environment. Acknowledge Education Pty Ltd, trading as Melbourne Language Centre and Stott's College (AE, Acknowledge Education or the Provider), is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing and appropriate accommodation of overseas students under 18 years of age in accordance with the National Code of Practice, the VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years, and the Child Safe Standards.

Where AE issues a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW), AE accepts responsibility under the Migration Regulations 1994 for approving and monitoring students' accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements. All accommodation and welfare arrangements, including any services delivered by third-party providers, such as the Australian Homestay Network (AHN), must meet Child Safe Standards and be appropriate to the student's age and individual needs. Approved homestay accommodation will consist of provider-approved homestay placements sourced either directly by the Provider or through the AHN. The engagement of third-party providers, such as AHN is also governed by AE's Procurement Policy for Third-Party Services and Child Safety, which requires appropriate due diligence, assessment, contracting, and ongoing monitoring to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children and students are protected.

The AE Homestay Provider Engagement and Monitoring Policy and Procedure sets out the guidelines to meet the requirements for provision of homestay for all overseas students under the age of 18 years who are in Australia pursuant to a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter issued by AE.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy and procedure provides guidance to all staff engaging, reviewing, and managing partnerships with Homestay Providers.

2.2 Students must be at least 13 years of age to be accommodated by a Homestay Provider.

2.3 Parents of all students under the age of 18 years may propose that the student resides with a 'nominated guardian' approved by the Department of Home Affairs, who can be the overseas student's parent, person who has legal custody, or an eligible relative who is aged over 21 years and is of good character.

2.4 A student not staying with a parent or nominated guardian must stay in accommodation approved by AE. In this case, AE will issue a CAAW letter.

2.5 This policy applies to homestay hosts sourced directly by AE and via third-parties, such as the Australian Homestay Network (AHN).

3.0 Regulatory Context

3.1 The Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) is the key legislation governing international education. The ESOS Act sets out the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (2018) as a framework governing delivery of education to overseas students in Australia on a student visa.

The National Code sets nationally consistent standards to help providers deliver quality education and training to overseas students. Standard 5 (Younger overseas students) requires that registered providers take responsibility for the welfare of overseas students under the age of 18 years and must ensure that the overseas student is in living arrangements that are safe and adequately meet their needs. Registered providers must take all practical steps to ensure the overseas student's welfare is always maintained, regardless of the overseas student's study circumstances.

3.2 Child Safe Standards

This policy and procedure is framed to comply with the 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards and outlines the actions put in place to keep all students under the age of 18 years safe. The procedure further aligns with Ministerial Order 1359, which specifies how organisations should manage the risk of child abuse in schools and boarding premises.

3.3 VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years

The VRQA Guidelines provide a framework to ensure that education providers offering programs to overseas students under 18 years of age maintain safe, age-appropriate and supportive accommodation, welfare, and general wellbeing arrangements. Their purpose regarding homestay accommodation is to ensure that students are placed in suitable homes or registered school boarding premises that meet regulatory and child safety standards, that hosts are appropriately screened and trained, and that accommodation is monitored regularly to protect the safety, welfare, and development of minor international students.

4.0 Policy

4.1 Student Safety and Wellbeing

- The health, safety, welfare, and developmental needs of students under 18 years of age are paramount in all homestay arrangements.
- AE will ensure that all hosts adhere to Child Safe Standards and acknowledge's:
    - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
    - Child Safety Code of Conduct
    - Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse

4.2 Regulatory Compliance

- The Provider is responsible for ensuring compliance with all regulatory obligations, including ESOS, the National Code, Child Safety Standards, VRQA Guidelines, and Migration Regulations.
- Where a **Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW)** is issued, responsibility for approving and monitoring accommodation and welfare arrangements is **non-delegable**.

4.3 Selection and Recruitment of Hosts

- Hosts are recruited through a documented process assessing suitability, including Working with Children checks, police checks, references, and property inspections.
- Hosts must demonstrate the ability to provide a safe, supportive, and age-appropriate environment.
- Hosts will enter into a written agreement with AE.

4.4 Training and Orientation

- All hosts receive training in child safety, cultural awareness, communication, and welfare responsibilities, with annual recertification.
- All hosts are provided with key policies, procedures and guidelines and are expected to comply with these at all times.
- All hosts are expected to participate in all mandatory training to ensure all responsibilities and obligations are understood.
- Students are provided with orientation covering safety, communication, cultural awareness, and welfare support.

4.5 Monitoring and Review

- Homestay arrangements are monitored through ongoing communication, feedback collection, and formal reviews at least every six months.
- All incidents or concerns affecting student safety or welfare are documented, reported, and addressed promptly.

4.6 Emergency and Critical Incident Management

- Hosts and students have access to 24/7 emergency contacts.
- Clear procedures exist for responding to welfare concerns, student absence, or other critical incidents.
- AE will provide Hosts with access to the Critical Incident policy and procedure and ensure that Hosts understand their role and responsibilities with respect to this policy ad procedure.
- Procedures are in place for managing emergency situations when welfare arrangements are disrupted for students under 18 years of age – refer to section 5.8 of ***2.3.8 Welfare Arrangements Policy and Procedure.***

4.7 Student Rights and Support

- Students are placed in accommodation appropriate to their age, cultural needs, and personal circumstances.
- Students may raise complaints or appeals without obstruction.

4.8 Termination of Homestay Arrangements

- The Provider reserves the right to terminate agreements where hosts fail to maintain a safe environment, breach child safety requirements, or impede student welfare.

4.9 Agreement with the Australian Homestay Network (AHN)

- AE has an agreement with the Australian Homestay Network (AHN) to provide end-to-end homestay accommodation and welfare management support services in some instances. **This agreement does not absolve AE of its responsibility for the selection, screening, approval and ongoing monitoring of accommodation and welfare arrangements to ensure continuous compliance with all applicable legislative, regulatory and child safety requirements.**

- The AHN Homestay Provider Agreement details the complete terms and conditions that apply to the provision of services by the Australian Homestay Network (AHN) to AE.
- The AHN agreement has been established in accordance with AE's Procurement Policy for Third-Party Services and Child Safety and includes requirements relating to child safety, regulatory compliance, service delivery standards, reporting obligations, and ongoing performance monitoring.

5.0 Procedures

5.1 Recruiting a Homestay Provider

AE will either recruit Homestays directly, e.g., through a process of referral from existing providers, OR via the Australian Homestay Network.

Where a homestay is sourced through the Australian Homestay Network (AHN) and has undergone AHN's screening processes and documentation requirements, Acknowledge Education Pty Ltd (AE) retains ultimate responsibility for approving the accommodation and welfare arrangements of students under 18 years of age. AE will independently conduct its own screening and approval processes, including verification of the homestay's suitability, and will require copies of all relevant documentation as outlined in this Policy and the Homestay Agreement. Engagement with AHN does not relieve AE of its legal, regulatory, or child safety responsibilities.

Prior to engagement and throughout the term of the arrangement, AE assesses and monitors third-party providers to ensure continued compliance with contractual obligations, child safety requirements, and applicable legislative and regulatory standards.

5.1.1 Criteria Assessment

To be offered an agreement, the Homestay Provider must be:

- Australian citizens or permanent residents.
- Temporary residents whose visa expiry date is beyond the student's visa expiry date.
- A couple with teenage children of their own.

Any applicant who does not meet any of the above criteria may discuss their suitability to host with AE's Homestay Coordinator.

5.1.2 Documents in Support to be Provided.

The following documentation shall be provided and retained for all Homestay Providers:

- Written Agreement between the Host family and AE, signed by each member of the household.
- All residents over 18 years at the provider's home are required to provide a valid working with children check.
- Copy of the host's current driver's licence.
- Name and contact details for two referees.
- Proof of residence:
    - Council rates notice, to demonstrate ownership of the host's residence OR

- Tenancy agreement if the residence is not owned by the host.

5.1.3 Assess Suitability of Provider and Lodging

On receipt of a homestay host application form, the Homestay Coordinator shall conduct an initial inspection of the property. During the inspection, the Coordinator shall:

- Sight the original documentation required under 5.1.2.
- Complete the Homestay Checklist to assess suitability of the lodging. This checklist is mapped to the student accommodation minimum standards in the VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years.
- Ensure that copies of the documentation and completed Homestay checklists are filed securely in the AE SharePoint.

5.1.4 Two reference checks must be completed for the applicant. On a positive outcome from both checks, the applicant is required to complete a written agreement to register as an approved Homestay Provider.

5.2 Entering into a Written Agreement

Where individuals meet the above eligibility criteria, and their residence has been assessed as suitable, the Homestay Coordinator will arrange for a written agreement to be provided. The agreement form must be completed and returned to AE within seven days.

This agreement sets out the responsibilities of Acknowledge Education Pty Ltd (AE) and the Homestay Host in providing safe, age-appropriate accommodation and welfare for international students under 18. AE retains ultimate responsibility for approving, monitoring, and supporting all homestay arrangements to ensure compliance with the National Code, VRQA Guidelines, and Child Safe Standards. Hosts agree to provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming home, maintain appropriate supervision and insurance, comply with AE policies and child safety requirements, and report any concerns or incidents promptly. The agreement also outlines procedures for student placement, monitoring, and termination of the homestay if safety, wellbeing, or compliance issues arise.

The agreement is to be signed by the host and all residents. The host can sign on behalf of residents who are under 18 years old.

5.3 Onboarding Process for Homestay Provider

After the provider completes, signs, and returns the written agreement, the Homestay Coordinator shall:

5.3.1 Upload the agreement, along with sighted documentation and Homestay visit checklist to Homestay SharePoint.

5.3.2 The Homestay Provider shall be provided with the homestay guidelines, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse, Critical Incident Policy and Procedure and any other relevant policy or other documentation. In addition to the Homestay Agreement, the Homestay Provider also signs the Homestay Student and Homestay Host Family

Guidelines declaration to confirm their responsibility of hosting overseas students under the age of 18 years.

5.3.3 During the induction process, Homestay Providers are to be reminded of their responsibilities and obligations as a host to overseas students under the age of 18 years.

5.4 Placement of Student with Provider

5.4.1 As part of the admissions process, all overseas applicants under the age of 18 years are required to complete a Nomination of Accommodation and Responsible Adult form. This form is sent to the agent and parent/guardian along with the Letter of Offer.

5.4.2 A parent or legal guardian is to complete the nomination of accommodation form and submit it to AE, along with the signed Letter of Offer. The form requires the parent or legal guardian to provide the accommodation details for the student on their arrival in Australia.

5.4.3 The Registrar shall notify the Homestay Coordinator when a request for homestay is received.

5.4.4 The Homestay Coordinator shall send the Homestay Application form and guidelines to the student.

5.4.5 The application is completed and signed by the student and their parent/s or legal guardian/s as an acceptance of the terms and conditions.

5.4.6 Airport Pickup services

5.4.6.1 Via AHN - Under 18 students arriving from overseas, who are staying in an AE-approved homestay sourced via AHN may access the AHN APU service. AHN will provide the airport pickup information to the students and the Homestay Coordinator.

5.4.6.2 Students arriving with parents - In circumstances where the students arrive with their parents, an application to exclude airport pickup services must be made, and the following documentation is requested:

- A copy of the student's and parent's flight itinerary to show they are arriving with their parents
- A copy of their parent's passport and visa document
- Parent's contact number and address in Melbourne

5.4.6.3 Parent-nominated accommodation – Where students will be staying in parent-nominated accommodation, the nominated hosts will either be family, friend or relative, and they will be responsible to meet the students at the airport on their arrival. The Homestay Coordinator requests the student's flight itinerary, a confirmation from their hosts that they will be picking up the students from the airport, and notification by email when they have arrived home.

5.4.7 The Homestay Coordinator is to assess and identify a suitable provider based on the students' needs and forward the details to the provider for acceptance.

5.4.8 On the provider's acceptance to host the student, confirmation and details of the stay are to be sent to both the student and the provider.

5.4.9 The host confirms the safe arrival of the student at their residence to AE.

5.4.10 Orientation during the first week after arrival is organised by the Homestay Coordinator with the student and feedback is collected.

5.4.11 AE is to provide, with the CAAW letter, a Student Security Card, which includes:

- the host's address, home telephone number (where available) and mobile numbers
- the education provider's contact details, including 24/7 contact details for the education provider's international student coordinator, and general emergency contact information (i.e. 000)
- a statement that Acknowledge Education is regulated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). Students can contact VRQA at: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au.

5.5 Monitoring Procedure

5.5.1 The Homestay Coordinator is to maintain regular contact with providers; keep written records of contact; and provide up-to-date information on:

- The student's welfare details,
- Child safety concerns
- Any critical incidents

5.5.2 AE will monitor student and homestay provider feedback along with any complaints or appeals lodged by students or homestay providers regarding accommodation for the purposes of ongoing continuous improvement.

5.5.3 The Homestay Coordinator shall conduct formal reviews at least every six months against the approved criteria. The Homestay Coordinator may conduct visits more frequently if required, for example, following a Critical Incident.

5.5.4 If there are any problems or incidents, these are reported immediately to the Head of School by the Homestay Coordinator.

5.5.5 There is to be ongoing communication between the Homestay Provider and Homestay Coordinator of any critical incidents and student welfare.

5.5.6 The Homestay Coordinator will maintain written reports after each contact with the homestay provider and student and provide a detailed written report after each formal six-monthly review to the VCE and ELICOS Quality and Compliance Committee.

5.6 Cancellation or Termination of Agreement

Mutual agreement

5.6.1 At any time, this Agreement can be terminated with immediate effect if there is written mutual agreement between the student, the Host and the Provider.

Parent/legal guardian or Student-initiated exit

5.6.2 The Student may only exit the Homestay prior to the agreed end date of the Homestay where:

- the student or their parent/legal guardian has received written approval from the Provider; and
- the student provides two weeks' notice to the Host.

5.6.3 Where:

- the student's parent/legal guardian initiates the exit of the student from the Homestay; or
- the student initiates the student's exit from the Homestay,

this Agreement terminates on the date that the student permanently exits the Homestay.

Provider-initiated exit

5.6.4 The Provider may authorise and require the temporary or permanent removal of the student from the Homestay if the Provider has reason to believe that the Host or a resident:

- is not complying with the agreement, Laws or applicable policies and procedures; or
- is or is at significant risk of committing an offence or engaging in conduct that detrimentally affects or may affect the student's welfare, wellbeing or safety.

5.6.5 If the removal of the student is permanent, this Agreement terminates on the date which the student exits the Homestay.

5.6.6 If the removal of the student is temporary, this Agreement is suspended until the date that the student returns to the Homestay.

Host termination rights

5.6.7 The Host may terminate this Agreement by providing at least two weeks' prior written notice to the student and the Provider.

Provider termination rights

5.6.8 The Provider may immediately terminate the Agreement by written notice to the Host if the Host:

5.6.8.1 fails to comply with a notice to remedy a breach of this agreement; such as failing to provide the child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, shelter or supervision – see: https://www.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards-definitions or isolating student from household activities;

5.6.8.2 repeatedly breaches this Agreement;

5.6.8.3 commits a material breach of this agreement;

5.6.8.4 commits a breach that is incapable of remedy;

5.6.8.5 fails to remedy a breach within the cure period specified in any notice of breach issued by the Provider;

5.6.8.6 fails to disclose important information or provides false information to the Provider which impacts the student's safety;

5.6.8.7 fails to report any actual or suspected instances of child abuse or instances of harm to the student's wellbeing or welfare to the Provider;

5.6.8.8 has engaged in, or is reasonably believed by the Provider to have engaged in, fraud (such as exploiting students financially), collusion, improper, dishonest or criminal conduct or any other serious misconduct; or

5.6.8.9 commits any act or does anything that is, in the opinion of the Provider, contrary to prevailing community standards, or is otherwise regarded by the public as unacceptable or which brings the reputation of the Host or the Provider into disrepute and as a consequence the Provider believes that its continued association with the Host will be prejudicial or otherwise detrimental to the reputation of the Provider.

5.6.9 If the Provider determines that a homestay provider is unsuitable, they will send the homestay provider a letter advising that they may no longer be able to provide homestay related services and that the impending termination is open to complaint.

6.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
CAAW letter	A Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare letter, which is issued where the principal executive officer of the education provider has taken responsibility under the Migration Regulations for approving the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for a student who has not turned 18 (who will not be residing with a parent or a Department of Home Affairs approved relative in Australia).
Child Safe Standards	The Child Safe Standards made under section 17(1) of the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.
Critical Incident	A traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.
Education provider	A registered school or another education or training organisation or institution.
Homestay accommodation	The provision to an overseas student of board and/or lodgings by a host family either voluntarily or for a fee, provided the host is accommodating no more than 3 students in total.
National Code	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018.
Overseas student	A person who holds a visa under the Migration Act 1958 (Cth) that allows them to study in Victoria.
WWC clearance	A Working with Children clearance issued in accordance with the Worker Screening Act 2020.

7.0 Related Documents

Document Name
VCE1.0 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
VCE-CC-03 Child Safety Code of Conduct
VCE-GUI-06 Guidelines to responding to incidents, disclosures and suspicions of child abuse
VCE-POL-02 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
VCE-POL-04 Anaphylaxis Management Policy and Procedures

VCE-POL-05 Bullying Prevention Policy
VCE-POL-07 Supervision Policy
VCE-POL-10 First Aid Policy
VCE-POL-11 Asthma Management Policy and Procedures
VCE-POL-12 Medication Management Policy
VCE-POL-13 ICT Policy
6.2.3 Critical Incident Policy and Procedure
2.3.8 Welfare Arrangements Policy and Procedure
7.3.3 Student record management policy and procedures

8.0 Document Information

Document Name	Homestay Provider Engagement and Monitoring Policy and Procedure
Document Number	2.5.1
Purpose	To detail the requirements for provision of homestay for all overseas students under the age of 18 years who are in Australia pursuant to a CAAW letter issued by AE.
Audience	☒Staff | ☒Students| ☒Public
Category	Student Wellbeing
Subcategory	Accommodation
Approval Date	22 January 2024
Effective Date	22 January 2024
Last date of approval	19 February 2026
Next Review Date	19 February 2028
Policy Advisor	Homestay Coordinator
Approving Authority	Board of Directors
Endorsing Authority	VCE and ELICOS Quality and Compliance Committee
Contact	Quality Assurance Regulator.compliance@ae.edu.au

8.0 Change Log

Date	Version	By	Notes
04/12/2023	1.0	Quality Assurance Manager	Created
09/01/2026	2.0	Head of Quality and Risk	• Strengthened Purpose section to explicitly reference commitment to obligations under key legislation and guidelines. • Incorporated details of relationship with and services provided by AHN. • Added VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years to the Regulatory Context Section. • Re-structured document to include clear, overarching policy

			clauses, followed by procedures. • Updated documents to be provided to Homestay Hosts, including key Child Safety policies and procedures. • Explicitly referenced that AE's Homestay Agreement with AHN does not absolve AE of its responsibility for the selection, screening, approval and ongoing monitoring of accommodation and welfare arrangements to ensure continuous compliance with all applicable legislative, regulatory and child safety requirements. • Updated and clarified screening procedures section with respect to the above. • Updated some procedures to reflect current practice and more explicit alignment with VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years. • Updated and strengthened Cancellation or Termination of Agreement section to mirror updated Homestay Agreement. • Expanded Definitions. • Updated Related Documents Section. • Updated approving authority from Academic Board to Board of Directors. • Added updated airport pickup service details and process.
29/05/2026	2.1	Head of Quality and Risk	• Strengthened information on governance of third-party homestay providers (AHN) by incorporating references to the Procurement Policy for Third-Party Services and Child Safety and clarifying requirements for provider due diligence, contractual arrangements, ongoing monitoring, and child safety oversight.