

	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HOMESTAY SOURCING, SCREENING AND MONITORING POLICY AND PROCEDURE
Approved: Principal	Date approved: 4 October 2017
Responsible Officers: Manager, International Programs, Chief Financial Officer	Policy Review Date: 4 October 2018

Rationale

Billanook College chooses to manage the Homestay Program for FFPOS internally rather than outsourcing this crucial element of our International Program to a third party. This decision has been made in the interests of quality control and to ensure consistency of standards and requirements for all stake-holders.

Billanook College has a dedicated Homestay Officer who reports directly to the Manager, International Programs.

Sourcing and Screening Homestay Families

Consistent marketing and promotion of the Billanook College Homestay Program, seeking Expressions of Interest, occurs through social media channels, the College Website and via word of mouth referral both within our College community and in the broader community.

It is essential that close communication occurs between the Manager, International Programs and the Homestay Officer such that monitoring of effectiveness of all policies and procedures in this area is consistent and continuous. Such communication is serviced by a weekly meeting as well as consultation as required.

All proposed Homestay provider enquiries are directed to the appointed Homestay Officer with a performance expectation for there to be prompt initial contact by phone in response.

The initial telephone contact will involve extraction of basic facts from the proposed Homestay provider and in most cases an opportunity is offered by the Homestay Officer to the proposed Homestay provider for a more detailed Introductory Interview within the Homestay residence. Such an interview would generally be scheduled within the following 5 – 10 days.

It is a performance expectation of the Homestay Officer position that they be available to attend such introductory interviews when all adult members of the Homestay residence are available – generally in the evenings.

The introductory interview involves the Homestay Officer gathering data on the nature and scope of the proposed Homestay provider to be an effective match to the requirements of Billanook College Homestay Families. Potential families are encouraged but not compelled to provide the names of two independent character referees. It is at the discretion of the Homestay Officer to make contact with referees.

An initial assessment of potential Homestay providers is made based on such factors as:

- a. The apparent motive for the family to be offering Homestay accommodation;
- b. The understanding and acceptance of the key functions of the Homestay family;
- c. Capacity of the family to provide the necessary day to day support of the FFPOS;
- d. Willingness and ability of the family to involve the FFPOS in family life;
- e. Willingness and ability of the family to provide an effective study environment;
- f. Available space and facilities in the home to ensure that the FFPOS has required privacy;
- g. Proximity to Billanook College and access to daily transport to the College campus;

- h. Response by the potential Homestay provider to points raised and questions posed on the importance of adherence to Child Safe Standards when dealing with International Students.

All adult members of the Homestay family are required to undertake a Working with Children Check. The Homestay officer shall explain that a FFPOS cannot be placed at the Homestay residence until such time that all WWCC documentation is lodged with Billanook College.

The Homestay Officer presents a copy of the Billanook College Homestay Policy Handbook to the prospective Homestay provider and outlines key aspects and required standards of our program. Mention is also made of the importance of attendance by all Homestay families at the annual Homestay Family Orientation Evening in February each year.

The Homestay Officer maintains a record of findings throughout the introductory interview and consults with the Manager, International Programs at their weekly meeting on families that should be invited to join our program.

Confirmation is sent to all families in writing as to whether Billanook College shall be inviting the family to join the program. An email response is requested from the prospective Homestay Provider to confirm that they are willing to proceed, prompting Billanook College to place that family on the waiting list.

It is a performance expectation of our Homestay Officer that a waiting list of approximately 10 – 20 families be maintained at all times to allow for optimum choice and growth in our FFPOS Program.

The Homestay Officer is provided with centralised administrative support by the International Student Administrative Assistant in all aspects of written communication, publication and issuance of documents and maintenance of confidentiality of record keeping in line with provisions of the Privacy Act.

Selecting the Accommodation, Support and Welfare Arrangements of Students (under the age of 18 years)

As part of the written offer and acceptance process parents of FFPOS applicants are required to submit an Expression of Interest for Long Term Homestay form. This is accessible to the Homestay Officer and the focus of discussion as forward planning for intake of new FFPOS comes under notice.

If FFPOS are attending an external ELICOS Centre in Melbourne prior to commencement at Billanook College, as a matter of process the Manager, International Programs and Homestay Officer will conduct an interview of the student approximately 10 – 12 weeks prior to the scheduled commencement date at Billanook College to explore Homestay placement wishes and to extract further details on suitable matchings to available Homestay families. Further information may also be extracted from the off-shore parents via the placement Agency.

The Homestay Officer and Manager, International Programs then consider families on the waiting list and makes a recommendation or several recommendations to the parents/Agent of the FFPOS, inclusive of a Homestay family profile.

The parents/agent are then invited to select or accept one of the proposed Homestay providers and advise the College in writing of their choice or acceptance via the Homestay Officer.

Prior to the pre-determined date of Homestay commencement, an opportunity may be created for the FFPOS to visit the Homestay family or at very least communication is encouraged between the Homestay family and the FFPOS via email or other forms of social media to assist with a smooth commencement.

Prior to commencement, Billanook College shall facilitate the appointment of a bi-lingual local support person (LSP), as facilitated by International Student Alliance – Guardianship and Welfare Services (ISA). This service is provided by Billanook College free of additional charge to the FFPOS and their families with all associated costs being borne by Billanook College for the duration of the FFPOS studies. Once appointed, the bi-lingual LSP shall visit the Homestay residence once the student has settled in to provide a brief independent report of the suitability of the Homestay arrangement to the parents of the FFPOS.

Billanook College acknowledges that the appointment of the bi-lingual LSP in no way mitigates the CAAW responsibilities of the College, but does provide the conduit for a reliable, bi-lingual, two-way communication at all times with parents of FFPOS.

On the date of Homestay commencement, Billanook College will facilitate either the airport greeting and Homestay placement process or the collection of the FFPOS from their appointed ELICOS Centre Homestay placement and relocation to the Billanook College Homestay residence.

The Homestay Officer will then make an appointment with the Homestay parents and the FFPOS to review the Billanook College Homestay Policy Handbook and to facilitate the signing of Acknowledgement of the Homestay Agreement by both the FFPOS and the Homestay parent/s. This will include clarification of arrangements for payment of Homestay fees and assistance to the students as deemed necessary with such matters as activating Internet banking. It will also include a re-emphasis of Child Safe Standards and ensure that the FFPOS is clear on the channels of communication available should they ever be concerned with any administrative, operational or welfare based aspects of their homestay placement.

Monitoring the Accommodation, Support and Welfare Arrangements of Students (under the age of 18 years)

Billanook College endeavours to set excellent standards of service provision for College approved Homestay families through publishing clear guidelines in the Billanook College Homestay Policy Handbook.

These guidelines are the focus of:

- a. Initial discussions with prospective Homestay providers;
- b. Introductory Interviews conducted by the Homestay Officer;
- c. Orientation processes and Homestay Agreement sign-off at commencement;
- d. The Homestay Orientation Evening Program in February of each year.

As a key performance function, the Homestay Officer is to undertake regular progress checks on Homestay placements through phone interviews of Homestay providers and through being accessible to and interviewing students within College hours. Diary notes and written records of matters of concern are placed on student file as required.

The bi-lingual LSP visit the FFPOS under their care, every second Tuesday, as scheduled, at the College campus, over a 2.5 hour period, to provide opportunities for discussion with FFPOS under their care and the Homestay Officer on any matters arising within the Homestay environment.

The FFPOS are well briefed on the importance of open communication with their Homestay families, with the Homestay Officer and with the bi-lingual LSP so that constructive intervention on any concerns may occur in a timely manner.

The parents of the FFPOS are clearly advised that the most effective means of gaining a prompt response on any concern they may have regarding accommodation, care or welfare of their child is to channel the concern through the bi-lingual LSP, who is then charged with responsibility for bringing the matter to the attention of the Homestay Officer or Manager, International Programs as deemed necessary.

All matters of concern or queries raised by the Homestay parents are channelled for discussion and resolution through the Homestay Officer, in consultation with the Manager, International Programs. Homestay parents are advised that they must maintain open and honest channels of communication with the College.

Matters typically raised by Homestay parents include:

- a. FFPOS adherence to specific Homestay rules eg. maintaining a tidy bedroom, lights out/ no technology times, curfew times, dietary issues, communication and social engagement with other family members;
- b. Financial matters – irregularity of Homestay fee payment;
- c. Arrangements for return of FFPOS to their home country during term break;
- d. Clarification of welfare considerations for FFPOS engagement in social activities out of school hours.

Billanook College understands and accepts that in signing off on the CAAW that we are assuming full responsibility for the welfare of our FFPOS at all times while they are on-shore in Australia, as holder of a student visa.

To this end Billanook College chooses to put in place the following procedures:

- a. Verifying parent awareness of travel plans by their child back to their home country for all term breaks and centralising all airport transfer arrangements from the Homestay to the airport, through to flight check-in and immigration clearance. Similarly Billanook College undertakes to co-ordinate airport greetings and transfer back to Homestay residences upon FFPOS re-entry to Australia;
- b. Billanook College facilitates a Weekend Driver Service whereby FFPOS are instructed on curfew times on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, with Billanook College providing a driver in a mini-bus to greet FFPOS at Mooroolbark Railway Station within designated hours in order to provide safe and convenient transport of the students back to their homestay residence.

Resolution of Homestay Grievances is considered a priority function of the Billanook College Homestay Officer. Once a matter is raised by either the Homestay family or by the student or their representative, the Homestay Officer is charged with responsibility for investigating the matter and empowered to implement action plans should the matter be deemed to be minor in nature. In the event of more significant matters arising, the Homestay Officer will generally consult the Manager, International Programs at the first available opportunity to devise an action plan.

NB – Billanook College policy is to initially attempt to mediate for change in preserving the Homestay placement relationship, consistent with our Homestay Policy Handbook but in the event of matters under dispute being deemed to be irreconcilable, Billanook College shall advise both parties that the Homestay placement will be terminated.