

## **A tale of four cities: Community perception of international students in New Zealand**

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Recent research in New Zealand has shown that the amount of interaction between international and domestic students is low, despite international students expecting it to be greater. The interaction of international students with host communities is less often studied. This study explores community perception of international students in four cities representing low, medium and high concentrations of international students. In each city, researchers visited public places such as libraries, food courts and entertainment centres where the presence of international students is high, and interviewed customers and businesses regarding their perception of international students. Community organisations providing support services for international students were also interviewed to identify initiatives undertaken to promote social integration. We identified initiatives in the four cities and found these initiatives emphasise the particular character or milieu of the city: in Auckland, meeting new challenges; in Christchurch, bridging cultures; in Hamilton, education and information sharing; and in Tauranga, personalised service. The results are discussed in the wider context of intergroup interaction and relations and focus on social capacity to provide effective support for international students as well as acceptance and integration by both international students and the local community.