

## Market Insight: Republic of Korea

July 2020

### Summary

While the Republic of Korea (South Korea) has been generally regarded as effectively managing the coronavirus pandemic, some restrictions such as travel warnings are still in force. The majority of schools and universities are delivering education online, with the government considering remote and blended program delivery going forward.

- Korean students' demand for and interest in study abroad remains positive, with the likelihood of travel dependent on destination travel restrictions and health and safety conditions.
- The adoption of edtech is high due to the increase in remote learning and online lecture delivery at all school levels.

### South Korea's Current Status and Coronavirus Response

The South Korean Government issued a special travel warning which was recently extended until 19 July 2020. The Victorian Government Trade and Investment (VGTI) office in Seoul has been actively managing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic by regularly providing emails to stakeholders in South Korea, including the Victorian Government's support for international students. The office has also been active in arranging three-way virtual meetings between South Korean institutions, Victorian providers and the VGTI office.

### Economic Impact

South Korea was among the first countries impacted by coronavirus, however the Government acted promptly to contain the spread and to limit the damage to the domestic economy by introducing several economic support measures. In June 2020, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) predicted South Korea's Gross Domestic Product would decline by 1.2 percent in 2020.

On 30 April 2020, the Korean National Assembly approved a 12.2 trillion-won (USD 10 billion) supplementary budget to fund emergency benefits for households coping with the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. This supplementary budget is larger than the government's original proposal as the scope of the recipients increased to include all households. It is the second extra budget related to managing the pandemic, following an 11.7 trillion-won supplementary budget created in March 2020. In addition, on 3 July 2020, a third supplementary budget of 35.1 trillion-won (USD 29.1 billion) was approved. This was the single largest extra budget and marked the first time since 1972 that a third extra budget had been approved within a single fiscal year.

## Education Sector

On 20 May 2020, schools re-opened for in-person lessons in four gradual phases depending on grades. Due to the semester start delay, South Korea's College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT) – university entrance exam – date has been delayed two weeks to 3 December 2020.

According to the Korean Association of Private University Presidents (KAPUP), more than 85 per cent of universities in South Korea decided to deliver classes fully online for the entire semester and/or until the pandemic is suppressed. In terms of the semester start delay and online delivery mode duration, a similar trend has been observed among most of Korea's 136 vocational colleges in Korea. Since 27 March 2020, KAPUP has conducted a weekly survey of 193 universities nationwide (40 national/public universities and 153 private universities).

Given the emphasis on remote learning at all school levels, collaborative government-level support measures for remote learning were introduced, including complimentary remote learning content and resources available at all school levels and unlimited free high-speed mobile data.

Many student mobility programs in the Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors have been delayed or cancelled, and decisions surrounding study abroad destinations have also been delayed.

## 2020-21 Key Activity Summary

The VGTI office will continue to provide in-market support to Victorian providers, build Victoria's profile and identify partnership opportunities throughout 2020/21. The types of activities will be similar to previous years, however, the nature and content of activities will pivot to the most relevant support of market conditions. For example, activities will be delivered in virtual, remote and online settings for the remainder of the year and a blended delivery when restrictions allow, including:

- profiling activities such as information sessions, webinars and virtual exhibitions
- strengthening higher education and VET partnerships
- exploring science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and edtech related projects.

## Opportunities

Despite the challenges of recent months, there are opportunities in South Korea as an education market for the following reasons:

- positive feedback towards remote and online learning
- unique/innovative programs being sought in collaboration with overseas partners
- demand for hands-on overseas experiences
- ongoing interest in academic-level research collaboration.

## **Online and in-country delivery**

To differentiate from low-cost (or free of charge) online General English courses available in market, offering student experiences that used to be included in the in-person (onshore) programs in a virtual setting may be valuable. These extracurricular activities could include but are not limited to e-homestay (Australian families); career support programs such as English CV writing, mock job interviews, special lectures by industry experts, and micro-project assignments by companies; and 360-degree or livestream city tours and cultural excursions.

Examples of programs currently under consideration include:

- remote short-term English Plus (summer and winter breaks)
- remote and blended study abroad (semester-based, English + Subject or Subject Only)
- virtual (remote) internships
- academic-level remote research collaboration.

## **Contacts and further information**

Please contact Betty Chung, Education Services Manager – South Korea, if you have questions or want to follow up on the information in this update:

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