



The global context of tertiary student mobility

In 2012, there were 4.5 million foreign tertiary education students enrolled outside of their country of origin, up from 4.3 million in the previous year and 3.8 million in 2009. The number of foreign students has more than doubled from 2.1 to 4.5 million in the thirteen year period from 2000 to 2012, representing an annual average growth of 7% per year (Figure 1)¹.

The OECD's *Education at a Glance 2014* report defines 'foreign students' as students who are not citizens of the country where they are enrolled. Tertiary education consists of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) program levels 5A, 5B and 6. Level 5A is traditional university programs (i.e. requiring at least 3 years full-time study), level 5B is shorter vocationally-oriented programs, including diplomas (minimum 2 years full-time study), and level 6 is advanced research programs such as a doctoral degree.

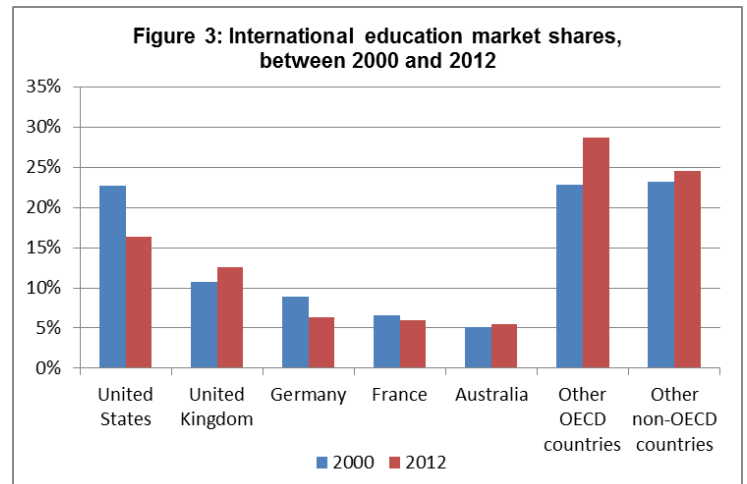
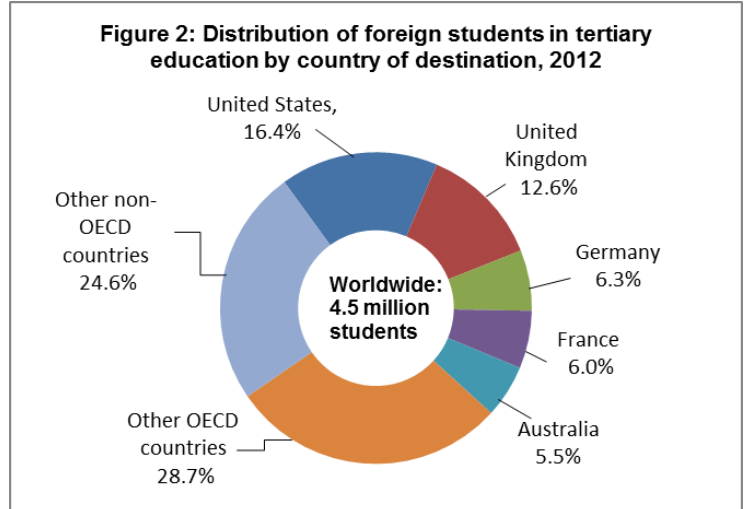
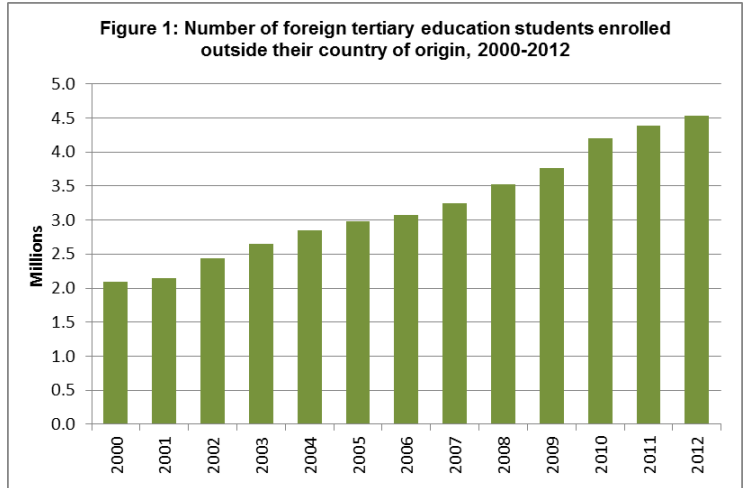
Major destination countries

The United States received the most foreign students (16.4%), followed by the United Kingdom (12.6%), Germany (6.3%), France (6.0%) and Australia (5.5%). These five countries hosted about half of all tertiary education students pursuing their studies abroad in 2012 (Figure 2). The share of international students who chose the United States as their destination dropped from 22.8% (or 475,169) in 2000 to 16.4% (or 740,475) in 2012. During the same period, Australia's share increased from 5.1% (or 105,764) to 5.5% (or 249,588) (Figure 3)².

Top five home countries

China had more students studying abroad than any other country in 2012. There were 761,992 Chinese students studying abroad (or 16.8% of all students studying abroad). The next largest were India (217,319 or 4.8%), Germany (140,553 or 3.1%), the Republic of Korea (134,549 or 3.0%) and France (86,185 or 1.9%). These five countries accounted for 29.6% (or 1.3 million) of all international students³ studying abroad.

One in four (or 27.6%) of all Chinese students studying abroad choose to study in the United States, followed by Japan (12.7%), Australia (11.5%), the United Kingdom (10.9%) and the Republic of Korea (5.7%). Australia was also the fourth most popular destination for students from India and for the students from the Republic of Korea⁴. Asian student enrolments accounted for 81.5% of all international tertiary students enrolled in Australia in 2012⁵.



1. OECD (2014), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, Table C4.6, page 361.

2. OECD, Chart C4.2, page 345.

3. The OECD use the term 'international student' to refer to students who have moved from their country of origin with the purpose of studying.

4. OECD Table C4.7, (Web only) page 353.

5. OECD Table C4.7, (Web only) page 353.