

## International mobility of Australian university students

An annual survey of Australian universities<sup>1</sup> found that students from 36 universities had undertaken 38,144 international study experiences in 2015 (Table 1). This was a 19.5% increase on the number of experiences reported by 34 universities in 2014. Around 92% of these experiences were undertaken by domestic students in 2015, the remainder by international students.

The 24,715 overseas experiences undertaken by domestic undergraduate students represented 19.3% of the graduating cohort from the same 36 universities. The equivalent figure for US undergraduates studying abroad in 2014-15 was 15.1%<sup>2</sup>.

Student exchange programs (28%) and faculty-led study tours (26%) were the most popular types of study experiences among undergraduates in 2015. Postgraduate students most often travelled for research-related experiences (29%) followed by conferences or international competitions (19%) in 2015.

The majority (77%) of study abroad experiences were for academic credit. Most (74%) experiences were for less than a semester, the remainder being exchange and other semester or year-long programs. Over half of undergraduate and postgraduate experiences were for less than one semester (Figure 1).

In 2015, over one third of all experiences (39%) were in the top five destination countries (USA, China, UK, Indonesia and Canada) (Table 2). Students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields were more likely to study abroad (20% of all experiences) than students in other fields.

In 2015, 11,157 undergraduate domestic students travelled to countries identified as priority destinations under the New Colombo Plan<sup>3</sup>, an increase of 32% on 2014. The top 5 Indo-Pacific destinations for undergraduate domestic students in 2015 were China (19.3% of total), Indonesia (11%), Japan (9.6%), India (9.2%) and Cambodia (6.5%).

Australia's Higher Education Statistics Collection shows there were 340 Australian students enrolled in an offshore Australian higher education campuses in 2015, slightly less than in 2014 (430)<sup>5</sup>. It is likely that these students are also counted within the survey of Australian university students described above.

The latest UNESCO data for 2014 show 11,447 Australian students enrolled in tertiary courses in other countries<sup>4</sup>. This is a 3.4% increase since 2013. This statistic only counts Australian students enrolled in a course of more than 2 years duration in another country. It is assumed that these students represent an additional cohort of Australians studying towards full qualifications in foreign institutions – and who are hence not counted in the survey of Australian university students described above.

**Table 1. Australian university students mobility - by type (All Levels)**

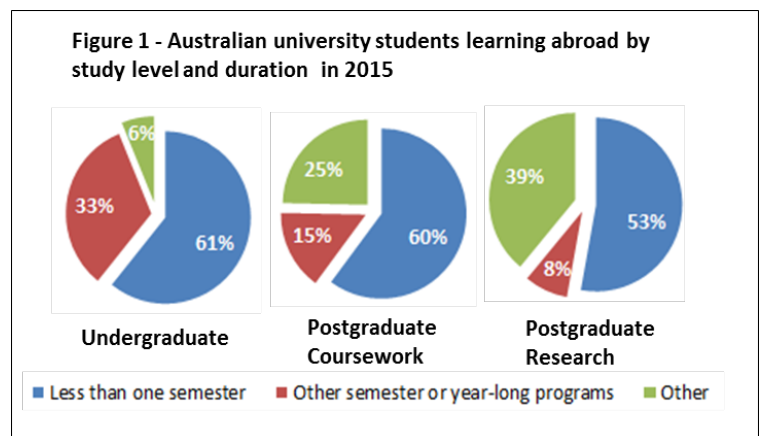
Type of experience	2012	2013	2014	2015
Exchange	7,813	8,571	8,750	8,539
Other semester or year - long programs	513	233	340	1,517
Short-term Programs	8,570	10,158	13,870	15,748
Internship or other practical placement	3,707	5,874	5,259	7,934
Research-related experience	3,868	4,056	2,135	3,257
Volunteering or community engagement experience	NR	NR	858	807
Other	292	595	700	342
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,763</b>	<b>29,487</b>	<b>31,912</b>	<b>38,144</b>
Number of universities reporting	38	37	34	36

NR- not reported

**Table 2. Australian university students abroad by country (all levels)**

Top 5 destination countries (2015)	2014	2014	2015	2015
	Number of experiences	% of all experiences	Number of experiences	% of all experiences
USA	5,129	16.1	4,769	13.0
China	3,054	9.6	3,524	9.0
UK	2,919	9.1	3,304	9.0
Indonesia*	1,110	3.5	1,675	4.0
Canada*	1,583	5.0	1,468	4.0
Other	18,117	58.2	23,404	61.0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>31,912</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38,144</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*In 2014 Canada ranked fourth and Indonesia sixth. Japan ranked fifth in 2014 and sixth in 2015



<sup>1</sup> The 'Learning Abroad 2015' (2016) Australian Universities International Directors' Forum (AUIDF) report by i-Graduate (unpublished). The data for earlier years were drawn from previous iterations of the AUIDF Research Agenda reports.

<sup>2</sup> Fast Facts - Open Doors 2016 available at: <http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors>.

<sup>3</sup> Information on New Colombo Plan 2015 Indo-Pacific host locations is available at: <http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/scholarship-program/Pages/host-locations.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO data used in this research snapshot is from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>. Students in countries which did not report to UNESCO are not included.

<sup>5</sup> Unpublished data of Higher Education Statistics available on <https://www.education.gov.au/>

For further information about this research, Snapshot Series contact the International Research and Analysis Unit by email: [IEResearch@education.gov.au](mailto:IEResearch@education.gov.au). The Research Snapshot series can be accessed from <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/pages/default.aspx>