



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

April 2020

International mobility of Australian university students

An annual survey conducted by the Australian Universities International Director's Forum's (AUIDF) found that students from 34 universities had undertaken 52,171 international study experiences at all levels in 2018¹. This was larger than the 49,263 experiences reported by 37 universities in 2017 (Table 1). Around 57 per cent of experiences were undertaken by domestic undergraduates, 14 per cent by international undergraduates and remainder by postgraduates. The 29,535 international experiences undertaken by domestic undergraduates represented 24 per cent of the 2018 graduating cohort up from 22 per cent in 2017. The equivalent figure for US² undergraduates in 2017/18 was 16 per cent and for UK undergraduates was 8 per cent in 2017/18³.

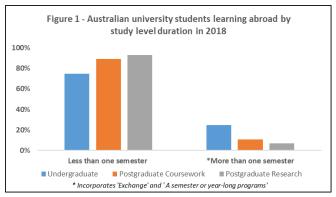
Faculty-led study (28%) and internship or other practical placements (22%) were the most popular types of study experiences among undergraduates in 2018. Postgraduate research students most often travelled for research-related experiences (55%) followed by conferences (42%) in 2018.

Nearly two-thirds of study abroad experiences undertaken by undergraduate (66%) and postgraduate coursework (66%) students were for non-compulsory academic credit. Almost four out of every five (80%) experiences were less than a semester, the remainder being exchange and other semester or longer programs. The majority of experiences for postgraduate coursework (89%) and research (93%) students were for less than a semester (Figure 1).

In 2018, two out of every five experiences (40%) were in the top five destination countries (China, USA, UK, Italy and Japan), the same top five as in 2017 (Table 2). The proportion of experiences in China grew in 2018 (14% of all experiences) from 11 per cent in 2017. Nearly half of undergraduate domestic students (14,481) had experiences in Indo-Pacific countries, up from 13,499 in 2017. In 2018, 14,998 university students received scholarships and grants to study overseas under the New Colombo Plan⁴, an

Table 1. Australian university students mobility - by type (All levels)							
Type of experience	2015	2016	2017	2018			
Exchange	8,539	9,046	9,205	8,172			
Other semester or year-long programs	1,517	1,594	1,042	807			
Short-term Programs	15,748	19,669	22,992	26,360			
Internship or other practical placement	7,934	8,334	10,094	10,753			
Research-related	3,257	3,960	4,461	4,304			
Volunteering/community engagement	807	1,234	1,030	1,064			
Other	342	208	439	711			
Total	38,144	44,045	49,263	52,171			
Number of universities reporting	36	35	37	34			

Table 2. Australian university students abroad by country (all levels)							
Top 5 destination countries (2018)	2017		2018				
	Number of	% of all	Number of	% of all			
	experiences	experiences	experiences	experiences			
China	5,526	11.2%	7,376	14.1%			
USA	5,472	11.1%	5,268	10.1%			
UK	4,065	8.3%	3,959	7.6%			
Italy	2,142	4.3%	2,261	4.3%			
Japan	2,066	4.2%	2,190	4.2%			
Other	29,992	60.9%	31,117	59.6%			
Grand Total	49,263	100.0%	52,171	100.0%			



increase of 63 per cent on 2017. The top destination was Indonesia followed by China.

Australia's Higher Education Statistics Collection shows there were 5,244 Australian students enrolled in offshore Australian higher education campuses in 2018, slightly less than in 2017 (5,622)⁵. It is likely that these students are also counted within the survey of Australian university students described above. The latest UNESCO data⁶ shows 13,495 Australian students enrolled in tertiary courses in other countries in 2017, an increase of 5 per cent from 2016. This statistic only counts Australian students enrolled in an award course in another country. Hence these students represent an additional cohort of Australians studying towards full qualifications in foreign institutions who are not counted in the survey described above.

For more information, visit https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/international-student-data/pages/default.aspx or contact IEResearch@dese.gov.au.

¹GlobalEdServices: https://www.globaledservices.com/blog/auidf-2018-learning-abroad-benchmarking-results; ICEF monitor; https://monitor.icef.com/2019/12/australian-students-studying-abroad-more-than-ever-before/

² Fast Facts; Open Doors 2019 available at: http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors

³ Universities UK: *International facts and figures 2019*

⁴ New Colombo Plan Indo-Pacific host locations are at: https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/about/Pages/about.aspx

⁵ Unpublished Higher Education Statistics data <u>Department of Education, Skills and Employment</u>

⁶ UNESCO data used in this research snapshot is from http://data.uis.unesco.org/