



## 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 2018<sup>1</sup>. 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 US<sup>2</sup> undergraduates in 2017/18 was 16 per cent and for UK undergraduates was 8 per cent in 2017/18<sup>3</sup>.

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 Plan<sup>4</sup>, an 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)<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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> GlobalEdServices: <http://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/>

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

<sup>3</sup> Universities UK: [International facts and figures 2019](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/international-facts-and-figures/2019)

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

<sup>5</sup> Unpublished Higher Education Statistics data [Department of Education, Skills and Employment](https://www.de.gov.au/department-of-education-skills-and-employment)

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

**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
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,144</b>	<b>44,045</b>	<b>49,263</b>	<b>52,171</b>
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 experiences	% of all experiences	Number of experiences	% of all 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%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>49,263</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>52,171</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

