

Outgoing international mobility of Australian university students

A recent Australian universities survey reported that in 2013, 14.8% of completing Australian undergraduate students enrolled onshore in Australian universities had undertaken an international study experience during their course, up from 13.1% in the previous year¹. An equivalent figure for US undergraduates studying abroad in 2011-12 was 14.2%².

In 2013, a total of 29,487 international study experiences at all levels were reported by the 37 universities that participated in the survey (Table 1). This was a 19.1% increase on the number of experiences reported by 38 universities in 2012. The majority (70.1%) of study experiences in 2013 were of less than one semester in duration³. In 2009, 59.7% of recorded experiences were less than one semester in duration.

In 2013, the top four destination countries for Australian university students were USA, UK, China and Canada. Almost one in ten (9.3%) experiences was to a New Colombo Plan pilot country in 2013 (Table 2). In 2013, Japan was the 8th most popular single destination country, Indonesia was 11th, Singapore was 12th and Hong Kong 18th.

The majority (73.4%) of international experiences were undertaken by undergraduates. Of all international experiences, 87.5% were for credit. By field of education, students were most commonly enrolled in Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (21.7%); then Health (19.2%); Management and Commerce (14.6%); and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (13.5%)⁴.

The latest UNESCO data for 2012 show there were 10,426 Australian students enrolled in tertiary courses in other countries⁵. This is a decline of 1.1% on the previous year. This statistic only counts Australians enrolled in a course of more than 2 years duration in an offshore institution and does not include data from some significant study destinations, such as China and Singapore. It is assumed that these students mostly represent an additional cohort of Australians studying full award courses in foreign institutions, who would not be counted by the survey of Australian university students described above.

The Australian Higher Education Statistics Collection indicates that in 2013, there were 477 Australian domestic students enrolled at an offshore campus of an Australian higher education institution⁶. These students can be assumed to have been counted within the survey of Australian university students described above.

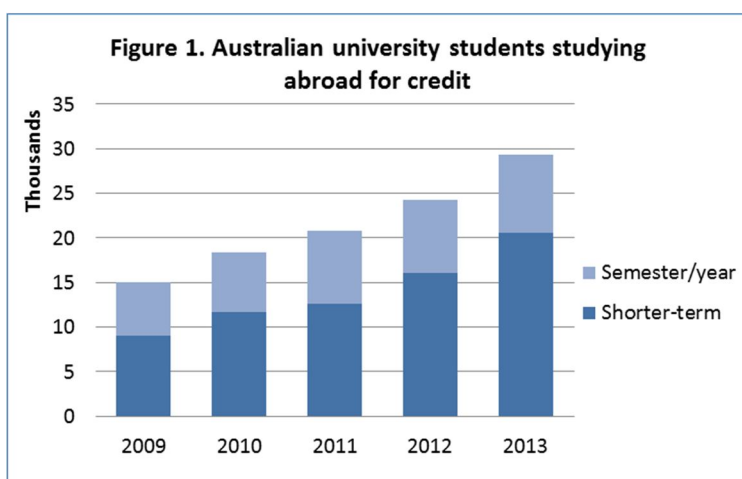


Table 1. Australian university students abroad - by type, 2010 -2013

Type of experience	2010	2011	2012	2013
Exchange	6,696	7,703	7,813	8,571
Other Semester or Year Programs	228	473	513	233
Short Term Programs	5889	7,137	8,570	10,158
Placements or Practical Training	2,650	2,727	3,707	5,874
Research	2,309	2,448	3,868	4,056
Other	568	418	292	595
Total	18,340	20,906	24,763	29,487
Number of Universities reporting	37	36	38	37

Table 2. Australian university students abroad - by country, 2012 and 2013

Top 5 destination countries	2012 Number of experiences	2012 % of all experiences	2013 Number of experiences	2013 % of all experiences
USA	3,672	15.5	4,196	14.3
UK	2,115	8.9	2,637	9.0
China	2,145	9.1	2,614	8.9
Canada	1,277	5.4	1,381	4.7
Germany	933	3.9	1,168	3.9
New Colombo Plan pilot countries⁷				
Japan	835	3.5	999	3.4
Singapore	461	1.9	580	2.0
Indonesia	442	1.9	669	2.3
Hong Kong	384	1.6	470	1.6
Other	11,337	47.9	26,571	90.7
Total	23,664*	100.0	29,289*	100.0

*Total of instances where destination reported are less than the totals in Table 1.

- Olsen, A. (2014), 2014 Research Agenda: Australian Universities International Directors' Forum, available at <http://www.spre.com.au/download/AIEC2014AUIDFRResearchPaper.pdf> Data for earlier years has been drawn from previous iterations of this publication and journal article (Olsen, 2008, International mobility of Australian University students: 2005).
- For more information, see <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors>
- The sum of 'Exchange' and 'Other Semester or Year Programs' are considered to represent all experiences of at least one semester duration.
- Field of Education refers to students' major field of study in Australia and may not always reflect the area of study undertaken overseas.
- UNESCO data used in this snapshot is from <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/tableviewer/document.aspx?ReportId=143>. Students in countries which did not report to UNESCO are not included.
- Higher Education Statistics available from university-statistics@education.gov.au (Department of Education).
- For more information on New Colombo Plan pilot countries, see <https://www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan/pilot-locations.html>