

2007 Follow-up International Student Survey

Higher Education



Australian Government
Australian Education International

2007 Follow-up International Student Survey Higher Education





Australian Government

Australian Education International

2007 Follow-up International Student Survey

Higher Education

May 2008

About this report

In late 2005, Australian Education International commissioned research to assess the overall satisfaction of international students studying in Australia. The *2006 International Student Survey* report prepared by Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd focussed on international students in their final year of study. The research included all four education sectors: higher education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), secondary school and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS).

This report, the *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Higher Education*, relates to employment and further education outcomes of international and Australian graduates (control group), a year after completing a course of study in a higher education institution in Australia in 2006. These graduates had also participated in the 2006 benchmark survey during the final year of their course.

About Australian Education International (AEI)

Australian Education International (AEI) is the international arm of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). AEI supports the development of a world class international education and training industry in Australia. For further information, please visit the website, www.deewr.gov.au or www.aei.gov.au. DEEWR/AEI owns exclusive usage rights to this study unless otherwise noted or agreed.

Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd

Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd is a public opinion, market and social research firm. The Ipsos research team included: Graeme Peacock, Stanislav Bondjakov, Preslav Bondjakov, Fiona Collis, Elishia Finger and Erik Okerstrom.

Acknowledgements

AEI would like to thank Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd for undertaking this study, the Australian educational institutions and peak bodies who participated in the research project, as well as all individuals who contributed by agreeing to interviews, supplying data and information and others who assisted in the conduct of the research. Dr Zak Rahmani was the project manager at AEI.

Disclaimer

The Commonwealth of Australia, its officers, employees or agents disclaim any responsibility for any loss howsoever caused, whether due to negligence or otherwise, from the use of information in this publication. No representation expressed or implied is made by the Commonwealth of Australia or any of its officers, employees or agents as to the currency, accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this report. The reader should rely on their own inquiries to independently confirm the information and comment on which they intend to act.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2008

This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney General's Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 or posted at <http://www.ag.gov.au/cca>

Table of contents

Executive summary	5
1. Research background and method	9
1.1 Quantitative research	10
1.2 Qualitative research: case studies	12
2. Educational and employment outcomes achieved	15
2.1 Qualifications completed in 2006	17
2.2 Path taken after completing 2006 studies	18
2.3 Enrolled for further studies in 2007	19
2.4 Looked for and found a job in 2007.....	22
2.5 Still looking for a job after graduation.....	31
3. Study in Australia	36
3.1 Study satisfaction	37
3.2 Usefulness of skills developed during studies.....	42
3.3 Willingness to recommend study in Australia.....	44
4. Living in Australia	48
4.1 Satisfaction with living in Australia	49
4.2 Willingness to recommend living in Australia	51
4.3 Life in Australia	52
5. Future career plans and aspirations	57
6. Summary of key findings	61
6.1 Objectives and overview	61
6.2 Overall education and employment outcomes	62
6.3 Characteristics of respondents enrolling in further studies	62
6.4 Characteristics of respondents in employment	63
6.5 Characteristics of respondents still looking for employment after graduation.....	64
6.6 Hours worked and satisfaction of employed respondents.....	64
6.7 Satisfaction of respondents with study in Australia	65
6.8 Satisfaction of respondents with life in Australia	67
6.9 Future plans of respondents.....	67

Appendix A – 2007 ISS follow-up questionnaire	69
Appendix B – Detailed data tables.....	79
Appendix C – Case study summaries	89
China.....	90
Singapore	94
Malaysia.....	98
Thailand	102
India	106
Australia.....	118
Interviews with employers: overview of findings.....	122

List of tables

Table 1: Fieldwork analysis by respondents type	11
Table 2: Survey responses by state/territory where degree completed in 2006.....	11
Table 3: Survey responses by home country – international respondents	12
Table 4: Situation as at 1 August 2007	17
Table 5: Path taken immediately after completing 2006 studies.....	19
Table 6: Place of enrolment for further studies	20
Table 7: Location of institution attended	21
Table 8: Finding a job.....	23
Table 9: Type of employer.....	26
Table 10: Hours work per week in main paid job	27
Table 11: Expected gross annual salary in main paid job.....	28
Table 12: Ease of balancing work commitments with family and social life.....	31
Table 13: Type of business likely to work in once finds a job	32
Table 14: Usefulness/importance of various skills developed during studies in Australia	43
Table 15: Permanent resident status intention.....	59
Table 16: Satisfaction with overall study and course experience	80
Table 17: Satisfaction with quality of education and course content	81
Table 18: Satisfaction with cost of the course.....	82
Table 19: Satisfaction with obtaining work experience in field of study and with help in getting a good job in field of study	83
Table 20: Willingness to recommend study in Australia	84
Table 21: Overall satisfaction with living in Australia	85
Table 22: Satisfaction with their life now	85
Table 23: Overall satisfaction with cost of living in Australia.....	86
Table 24: Willingness to recommend living in Australia and the city in which lived.....	87
Table 25: Importance of achieving various outcomes in next five years	88

List of figures

Figure 1:	Ease of finding job.....	24
Figure 2:	Employers' perception of Australian course value (according to respondents who found a job).....	25
Figure 3:	Extent to which job meets employment expectations when finished 2006 studies.....	29
Figure 4:	Satisfaction with industry and profession in which currently working	30
Figure 5:	Ease of finding work.....	33
Figure 6:	Employers' perception of Australian course value (according to respondents who are still looking for a job).....	34
Figure 7:	Satisfaction with overall study and course experience (Very satisfied/ satisfied).....	37
Figure 8:	Satisfaction with quality of education and course content (Very satisfied/ satisfied).....	38
Figure 9:	Satisfaction with cost of the course (Very satisfied/ satisfied)	39
Figure 10:	Satisfaction with obtaining work experience in field of study and with help in getting a good job in field of study (Very satisfied/ satisfied).....	40
Figure 11:	Perceptions of overall quality of Australian course compared to similar courses overseas	41
Figure 12:	Willingness to recommend study in Australia	45
Figure 13:	Overall satisfaction with living in Australia (Very satisfied/ Satisfied)	49
Figure 14:	Satisfaction with their life now (Very satisfied/ satisfied)	50
Figure 15:	Overall satisfaction with the cost of living in Australia (Very satisfied/Satisfied)	51
Figure 16:	Willingness to recommend living in Australia and the city in which lived.....	52
Figure 17:	Keeping in touch with close friends in Australia.....	53
Figure 18:	Making friends with Australians.....	55
Figure 19:	Importance of achieving various outcomes in next five years (Extremely important/ Important).....	58

Executive summary

The *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Higher Education* suggested most international respondents were satisfied with the experience of living in Australia and with the education they received. The survey found that the majority of employed graduates were working in Australia and the majority of those enrolled in new courses were studying in Australia. More than 60% plan to live in Australia in 12 months time, and around 70% have, or plan to apply, for permanent resident status.

The first stage of the International Student Survey (ISS), completed late in 2006, surveyed 14,946 international and Australian final year students who were completing a course of study in higher education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), secondary school or in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) institute in Australia. AEI published separate reports in September 2007 presenting detailed feedback from each of these four sectors and a consolidated report of overall key findings. The main aim of the 2006 survey was to obtain a comprehensive view of the expectations and experiences of international students studying and living in Australia.

This *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Higher Education* collected further information from international and Australian (control group) graduates of higher education courses previously surveyed in 2006. A total of 2,150 respondents, including 569 international and 1,581 Australian graduates, responded to the online or hard-copy self-completion survey sent in August/September, 2007. This represented an overall response rate of 32% (28% for international and 34% for Australian respondents) of those who agreed to participate in the 2007 Follow-up Survey.

The Follow-up Survey aimed to measure whether respondents' attitudes to, and satisfaction with, Australian higher education had changed significantly over time, and to ascertain the extent to which their career or further education aspirations were being achieved following course completion.

The key findings of the Follow-up Survey are highlighted under the following headings.

Outcomes

Overall employment and education outcomes (at August 2007)

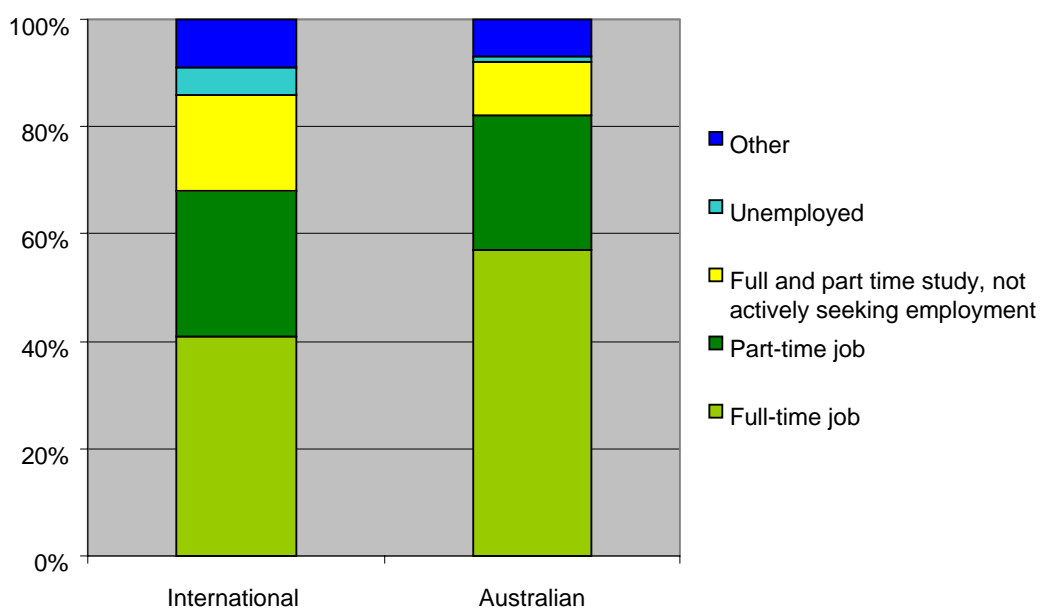
- 41% of international, and 57% of Australian respondents, were working full-time or had accepted a full-time position; another 27% of international, and 25% of Australian respondents, had a part-time job.
- 69% of international, and 97% of Australian respondents, with a full or part-time job, were working in Australia.
- 18% of international, and 10% of Australian respondents, were undertaking further study, either full-time or part-time, and not seeking immediate employment.
- Only 5% of international and 1% of Australian respondents reported being unemployed and actively seeking a job.

- Overlaying the above breakdown, many international respondents were both studying and working. The proportion of all respondents doing any further full or part-time study was 36% and most of them (84%) were studying in Australia.
- In 2006, the majority (78%) of international respondents indicated that their English language skills were up to the level required to undertake their studies. In 2007, the majority indicated that their English language skills were up to the level required to continue their studies or seek suitable employment (90% for written, and 86% for spoken English skills).

Hours worked per week

- On the average, employed international respondents were working 33 hours per week compared with 35 hours per week for the Australian respondents.
- Their main paid job (held on 1 August 2007) met a lower proportion of international respondents' (58%) employment expectations when they finished their course compared to their Australian counterparts (70%).

2007 respondents' employment and further education outcomes



Perceptions of study in Australia

Study satisfaction

- Overall, a high proportion of international and Australian respondents expressed satisfaction with studying in Australia (83%), with their study (81%), and course experience (77%). However, the proportion reporting satisfaction had declined slightly since 2006. There was no significant difference in the reported satisfaction of Australian respondents between 2006 and 2007.
- Conversely, a higher proportion of international respondents reported satisfaction with the quality of education in Australia in 2007 (83%) than they did in 2006 (76%).

- The USA was perceived to offer better quality courses than Australia by 33% of international respondents (9% of Australians), while 28% (9% of Australians) perceived the UK to offer better quality courses. Only 12% of international respondents perceived that their home country offers better courses than Australia and 40% indicated that their own country offers courses that are worse.

Willingness to recommend study in Australia

- A high proportion of respondents indicated that they would recommend studying in Australia, the course and the higher education institution they attended, to family and friends.
 - 83% of international, and 94% of Australian respondents, indicated that they would recommend studying in Australia to their family and friends. The response rate for international respondents was significantly higher in 2006 (89%) than 2007.
 - 68% of international, and 80% of Australian respondents, were willing to recommend the course they completed.
 - 71% of international respondents in 2007 indicated that they would recommend the university they attended to family and friends, compared with 78% of Australian respondents.

Perceptions of living in Australia

Satisfaction with living in Australia

- 83% of international respondents were satisfied with living in Australia, not significantly different from their satisfaction (85%) in 2006.

Willingness to recommend living in Australia

- Most international respondents would recommend living in Australia (85%) and the city they lived in (87%) to family and friends.

Making friends

- Most international respondents reported that they kept in touch with Australian students (67%) and with people they worked with (76%) while they were studying in Australia.
- 57% of international, and 36% of Australian respondents, were satisfied with being able to make close friends with each other.

Permanent residency

- 72% of international respondents either had applied for (36%) or planned to apply (36%) for permanent resident status in Australia.

Conclusions

International higher education respondents remain generally satisfied with the experience of studying and living in Australia up to a year after course completion. The majority of graduates now in employment and enrolled in new courses are in Australia. More than 60% plan to be living in Australia in 12 months time, and around 70% have, or plan to apply for, permanent resident status.

Satisfaction with the overall higher education experience is generally high though not as high as the experience of living in Australia. The higher education system in Australia is enabling the majority of respondents to achieve their employment and education aspirations.

In 2006, 56% of international students surveyed anticipated seeking a job on course completion. In 2007, only 41% had realised that ambition of working full-time. However, greater proportions (32%) were undertaking further full-time study in 2007, than had anticipated doing so in 2006 (21%). In comparison more Australians were working full-time in 2007 (57%), than had anticipated doing so in 2006 (48%); while a similar proportion (21%) were undertaking further full-time study in 2007 then had anticipated doing so in 2006.

Both groups felt that their qualification had prepared them well for post-graduate studies. However, compared with the Australian respondents, significantly more international respondents reported finding it difficult to find employment in Australia than they had expected.

Factors potentially contributing to respondents not achieving their employment expectations may include:

- not having working visa and permanent resident status
- insufficient relevant work experience during their period of study
- more course content relevant to the course-related profession/s and to the Australian workplace in general
- not having appropriate level of English language skills, both on enrolment and on completion of courses, and
- greater access to university careers services which are targeted to the needs of international students.

The majority have found the general skills developed while studying to be important and useful; and the majority of those employed are satisfied with the industry and profession in which they are working. Most are advocates for studying in Australia, for the course they completed and the university they attended. Most feel that their international networks of contact have been extended.

With respect to perceptions of Australia's international standing, many international respondents perceive that the USA and UK offer better courses than Australia. Canadian and New Zealand courses are considered on par with Australian higher education.

Two underlying issues that may make study in other countries attractive to future respondents are high levels of dissatisfaction with the cost of Australian courses (46%) and the cost of living in Australia (26%); and, the difficulty found by international respondents in making close friends with Australians (17%).

1. Research background and method

Australia is the world's fifth largest provider of education and training to international students, following the USA, UK, Germany and France¹. AEI commissioned Ipsos Australia Pty Ltd to conduct an International Student Survey to obtain a comprehensive, up-to-date measure of the experiences of international students in Australia and to ascertain their future career plans and aspirations.

The International Student Survey (ISS) research project involved two phases: a 2006 benchmark survey and a 2007 Follow-up Survey. The first phase, completed late 2006, surveyed 14,946 international and Australian (control group) final year students who were completing a course of study in higher education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), secondary school or in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) institute in Australia. AEI published separate reports² presenting detailed feedback from each of these four sectors and a Consolidated Report which presented the key findings.

The 2006 benchmark survey aimed to obtain a comprehensive, up-to-date measure of the experience of international students in Australia, and factors influencing their decision to study in Australia, prior to their arrival. Topics explored included their pre-arrival experiences of their choice to study in Australia; their level of satisfaction with education, pastoral and support services, social integration, and overall satisfaction with their stay in Australia; and their aspirations concerning their future career plans following course completion in terms of employment, further education or some other activity. Australian higher education and VET students were also sampled as a control group in 2006 (and for the Follow-up Survey in 2007), allowing valid comparisons to be made between the groups.

The main objectives for the 2007 Follow-up Survey were to:

- examine employment and/or further education outcomes of 2006 benchmark survey respondents after course completion
- examine, in retrospect, international students' level of satisfaction with studying and living in Australia during their studies and compare with the 2006 benchmark survey, and
- ascertain the future career plans and aspirations of international respondents post the 2007 Follow-up Survey.

¹ Source UNESCO Institute for Statistics – *Global Education Digest 2007: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World* at http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2007/EN_web2.pdf

² These reports published by Australian Education International were: 2006 International Student Survey - Higher Education Summary Report, September 2007; 2006 International Student Survey - Vocational Education and Training Summary Report, September 2007, 2006 International Student Survey - Final Year Secondary School Students Summary Report, September 2007, 2006 International Student Survey - English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students Summary Report, September 2007, 2006 International Student Survey - Report of the consolidated results from the four education sectors in Australia, September 2007, and 2006 International Student Survey - Sector Executive Summaries, September 2007.

This report focuses on the higher education respondents only; feedback from the VET respondents is presented in the *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Vocational Education and Training* available through AEI.

This report details the findings regarding the experiences of both international and Australian (control group) respondents who completed a course of study in a higher education institution in Australia in 2006 and participated in the 2006 benchmark survey.

The data contained in this document have been reported at the national level.

1.1 Quantitative research

In 2007 a self-completion survey instrument (Appendix A) designed for mail and online administration was distributed to two groups of higher education graduates: international graduates and a sample of Australian graduates acting as a control group. The survey consisted of one questionnaire, with appropriate skips for each respondents group. Each questionnaire consisted of 25 multi-part questions and took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1.1.1 Comparative data

One of the main objectives of the 2007 Follow-up Survey was to compare key measures with the 2006 benchmark survey, and where appropriate, comparisons have been made between the two survey periods. In order to make valid comparisons, 2006 benchmark survey data has been based on those participants who responded to the 2007 Follow-up Survey (referred to in this report as ‘2006 respondents’ or ‘2006 respondents participated in 2007’).

Tests of statistical significance were applied to the 2006 and 2007 data to highlight differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between the two groups. Throughout this report, the term ‘significant’ has been used to refer only to statistically significant differences.

1.1.2 Response rate

As shown in Table 1, all respondents to the 2006 benchmark survey who provided their contact details for the Phase Two survey were contacted – 6,854 respondents (2,113 international and 4,741 Australian). A total of 3,481 respondents updated their contact details (1,038 international and 2,443 Australian). Although, 3,373 respondents (1,075 international and 2,291 Australian) did not confirm their details, invitations were sent to all potential respondents, with the aim of obtaining the highest sample size possible. Cash incentives were also offered to all participants to increase the response rate.

Of the 6,854 potential respondents, 185 dropped out of the survey and 221 did not complete the survey.

An overall response rate of 32% was achieved; from a total of 6,669 eligible graduates invited, 2,150 responded. The response rate by respondents group was 28% for international and 34% for Australian respondents.

Table 1: Fieldwork analysis by respondents type

Respondent Type	Total number of Follow up invites sent	Total number of updated details	Total number of ineligible respondents	Total number dropped out midway	Total number completed
International	2113	1038	54	69	569
Australian	4741	2443	131	152	1581
Total	6854	3481	185	221	2150

As shown in Table 2, the majority (89%) of 2007 international respondents completed their degree in 2006 in New South Wales (31%), Queensland (21%), Western Australia (20%) and Victoria (17%). Eleven per cent completed their degree in South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Northern Territory. Significantly more international respondents completed their studies in Queensland (21% vs. 15%) and Western Australia (20% vs. 3%) than their Australian counterparts. Significantly fewer international (31%) than Australian respondents (47%) completed their studies in New South Wales.

Table 2: Survey responses by state/territory where degree completed in 2006

State/Territory	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	n=569	n=1581
NSW	31% (a, b)	47%
QLD	21% (a, b)	15%
WA	20% (a, b)	3%
VIC	17%	17%
SA	8%	10%
ACT/TAS/NT	4% (a, b)	9%

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

As shown in Table 3, international respondents from 65 countries participated in the 2007 Follow-up Survey. The majority (55%) of respondents came from China (20%), Malaysia (12%), Singapore (7%), Indonesia (6%), India (5%) and Hong Kong (5%). This profile is similar to the 2006 benchmark survey with the majority (58%) of respondents from the same countries (China: 23%, Malaysia: 11%, Singapore: 7%, India: 7%, Indonesia: 6% and Hong Kong: 5%).

Table 3: Survey responses by home country – international respondents

Home country	International respondents
	n=564
China	20%
Malaysia	12%
Singapore	7%
Indonesia	6%
India	5%
Hong Kong	5%
Other countries	45%

'Other countries' category includes 59 countries represented by less than 5% of respondents each, such as USA, Norway, UK, Germany, Canada, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and other countries.

In total, 5 respondents did not indicate the name of their home country, so they are not included in this table.

In terms of gender, 60% of the 2007 follow-up international respondents were female as were 68% of Australian respondents.

1.2 Qualitative research: case studies

Case study research is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context....and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.”³ It is an excellent way to bring researchers to an understanding of a complex issue or phenomenon, and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research⁴. In this context, the purpose of conducting case study research as part of this project was to provide an in-depth understanding of the attitudes and experiences of international and Australian respondents regarding both their study experiences in Australia, and their lives following the completion of their course (with a particular emphasis on employment).

Sixteen case studies of international and Australian respondents were conducted. Thirty-three interviews were conducted to inform the case study research; this included interviews with 16 respondents, 12 parents, and 5 employers.

³ Yin, R.K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods* (1st ed.). Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publishing.

⁴ Soy, S. K. (1997). *The case study as a research method*. Unpublished paper, University of Texas at Austin. Downloaded from <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~ssoy/usesusers/1391d1b.htm> on 13 March 2008.

The key issues explored as part of the case study research included:

- Former students' overall satisfaction with their study experience
- Former students' satisfaction with particular aspects of their study experiences, including the quality of the university, university support services, social integration and social networks, clubs and societies, course content, quality of teaching, future career opportunities, holding a part-time job, and living arrangements
- How soon after graduation did students return to their home country and for what reasons
- How long did it take to find work following graduation, how did they find their job, was finding a job easier or harder than they expected
- Did former students feel that their job matched their course of study, provide them with good pay, job security, opportunities for long term career progression, and are these the things that they are seeking in their jobs
- Employer perceptions of Australian qualifications, relative to competing markets
- Parents' perceptions of their child's study experience and future career opportunities
- Former students' plans for the future, and
- Former students' likelihood of recommending Australian education to others.

The case studies comprised the perspectives of higher education respondents, and wherever practicable, perspectives of the graduates' parents, and their current employer. The case study research took the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (where face-to-face interviews were not possible, interviews were conducted over the phone). Of the 16 case studies:

- 6 were conducted in India (13 interviews: 7 case studies comprised of student and parent(s) interviews, with 2 case studies comprised of student interviews only)
- 2 were conducted in Malaysia (6 interviews: each case study comprised of student, parent(s) and employer interviews)
- 2 were conducted in Thailand (6 interviews: as above, each case study comprised of student, parent(s) and employer interviews)
- 2 were conducted in Singapore (4 interviews: one case study comprised of student, parent(s) and employer interviews, with 3 case studies comprised of student interview only)
- 2 were students from China, still living in Australia (2 interviews: each case study comprised of a student interview only), and
- 2 were conducted in Australia (2 interviews: each case study comprised of student interview only).

All of the former students have returned to their home countries except for the Chinese students still living in Australia. Where possible, the former students' parent(s) and/or employer were also interviewed.

Recruitment was first attempted using participant lists generated from Phase 1 of this research project. Potential participants were telephoned by researchers in the first instance, and if telephone details were unavailable or incorrect, potential participants were sent an email outlining the purpose and scope of the case study research. Once student participants were

confirmed, an invitation to participate was extended to their parents and employers where relevant.

There were some difficulties experienced during the recruitment process. Multiple attempts were made to contact each person on the participant lists. When all options were exhausted, participants for the case studies were recruited in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and some in India.

The case studies with Chinese respondents were conducted in Australia, as the majority of those surveyed in 2006 had not left. While 3 former students provided contact details for their home address in China, they could not be contacted using available information.

For the 10 participants recruited from outside of the participant lists, the following eligibility criteria were applied:

- potential participants must have completed or undertaken university study in Australia in the last 2 years, and
- potential participants must be working full-time in their home country at the time of interview.

(It is noted that some Indian respondents were not employed full-time at the time of interview; however, recruitment proved extremely difficult, and consequently, these participants were accepted.)

Insights from the case study research are incorporated in the main body of this report. Participant case studies can be found in Appendix C.

The *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey—Higher Education* is based on feedback from 2,150 graduates of higher education courses completed in Australia in 2006. The total of 2,150 graduates, including 569 international and 1,581 Australian respondents completed the online or hard-copy self-completion survey in August/September 2007. Each respondent had previously participated in the 2006 benchmark survey.

This 'repeated measures' design, in which feedback was obtained approximately 12 months apart from the same respondents, was employed to measure whether students' attitudes to, and satisfaction with Australian education had significantly changed over time. The design was also used to ascertain the extent to which their future career plans or education aspirations were being achieved following graduation. More comprehensive information was obtained through 16 in-depth case studies completed with graduates from Australian higher education institutions who were citizens of 5 Asian countries.

2. Educational and employment outcomes achieved

Key findings

- In 2006, 57% of international respondents reported intending to find a job on graduation. By 1 August 2007, 41% found full-time employment, with a further 11% working part-time (and not studying full-time).
- In 2006, 21% of international respondents planned to enrol in further studies following graduation, and by 1 August 2007, 32% were undertaking full-time study, with another 4% studying part-time.
- In 2006, 48% of Australian respondents reported intending to find a job on graduation. By 1 August 2007, 57% had found full-time employment, with a further 10% working part-time (and not studying full-time).
- In 2006, 24% of Australian respondents planned to enrol in further studies following graduation, and by 1 August 2007, 21% were undertaking full-time study, with another 14% studying part-time.
- The 2007 Follow-up Survey found that 84% of the international respondents who continued in further studies (36% of the total sample) did so in Australia, as did 98% of the Australian respondents who continued their studies (35% of the total sample).
- The majority (88%) of international respondents who completed a course in 2006 and enrolled in further studies in 2007 believed their Australian qualifications have adequately prepared them for the course they were currently studying, similar to the finding reported by Australian higher education respondents (87%).
- Among those international respondents from 2006 who were working part-time or full-time by 1 August 2007 or who have accepted a full-time job offer (68% of the total sample), the majority (69%) found their jobs in Australia. Almost all (97%) of the Australian 2006 respondents who were employed by 1 August 2007 or who have accepted a full-time job offer (82% of the total sample), were working in Australia.
- Twenty-nine per cent of international respondents who found jobs indicated it was very difficult or somewhat difficult to find this job, more than the figure reported by their Australian counterparts (21%).
- The main difficulties faced by international respondents in finding jobs included lack of work experience and of permanent resident status, inability to find employment in field of interest, English language barriers, and the perception that employers preferred local to international applicants.
- More than half (57%) of international respondents who had actively sought employment thought employers highly valued the course they studied in an Australian university. This perception was significantly lower than the 70% reported by the Australian respondents.

- International respondents found work in a variety of areas. Twenty-two per cent found jobs in property and business services, 15% in education, 13% in health and community services, 10% in retail trade, 8% in manufacturing, 8% in the hospitality industry, and 20% in other areas such as finance, transport and government.
- The average number of hours employed international respondents worked in their main paid job was 33 hours per week, compared with 35 hours per week for employed Australian respondents.
- Twenty-eight per cent of the international respondents reported working 20 hours or fewer in their main paid job each week, compared to 19% for the Australian sample. Forty-five per cent of employees in both groups reported working 39 hours or more in the average week.
- The main paid job held by August 1 2007 was significantly more likely to have met the employment expectations of Australian higher education respondents (70%) when they finished their course than those of their international counterparts (58%). Conversely, international respondents were significantly more likely to feel their main job only somewhat met the expectations they had when they graduated (28% compared with 18% of the Australian employed respondents).
- The employed international group was only slightly less satisfied than the Australian respondents with the industry and profession in which they were currently working. Around three quarters of both groups reported being satisfied or very satisfied (international respondents were 74% satisfied, 7% dissatisfied and Australian respondents were 79% satisfied, 6% dissatisfied).

Respondents to the 2007 Follow-up Survey were asked to specify whether they were working in a paid job or studying as of 1 August 2007. As shown in, Table 4, the majority (73%) of the international respondents were either working or studying full-time, with 41% in full-time employment and 32% occupied with full-time study. In comparison, significantly more Australian respondents (57%) were engaged in full-time employment and significantly fewer (21%) were studying full-time.

Table 4: Situation as at 1 August 2007

Situation as at 1 August 2007	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=569	N=1581
Working full-time or had accepted full-time job offer	29% (a, b)	39%
Working full-time but seeking another job	10%	8%
Working full-time and studying part-time	2% (a, b)	10%
Working part-time but seeking full-time work	8% (a, b)	4%
Working part-time but not seeking full-time work	3% (a, b)	6%
Not working but seeking work	10% (a, b)	3%
Studying full-time only	17% (a, b)	9%
Studying full-time and working part-time	15%	12%
Studying part-time and working part-time	1%	3%
Studying part-time only	1%	1%
Other	4%	5%

Q7b As at 1 August 2007, which one of the following best describes your position with regard to study, paid work (including self-employment) or something else?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

2.1 Qualifications completed in 2006

Respondents were asked about details of the qualifications they completed in Australia in 2006.

The majority of the international respondents qualified in full for the award in which they were enrolled (93%), similar to Australian respondents (91%).

Significantly more international respondents studied at graduate or post-graduate level in 2006 (68%), relative to Australian respondents (52%). Masters degrees were completed by 41% of international respondents, significantly more than the Australian respondents (29%).

Significantly fewer international respondents studied at undergraduate level, such as bachelor degree or diploma (31%), compared with Australian respondents (48%).

In comparison to the Australian respondents (21%), significantly more (54%) international respondents studied in business fields such as accounting, finance and marketing. Fourteen per cent of international respondents studied in health and medical science fields such as nursing, public health and medicine, the same as their Australian counterparts (14%). While 13% of the 2007 international respondents studied humanities (areas such as psychology, education and sociology), significantly more Australian respondents studied these disciplines (27%).

The majority of the international respondents (84%) indicated the qualifications they completed in 2006 were recognised in their home country, 4% noted they were not recognised and 12% did not know.

The majority of the international respondents (70%) believed the qualifications they completed in 2006 would be recognised in overseas countries other than their home country; whereas fewer Australian respondents (56%) believed their qualifications would gain similar recognition.

The case study research indicated many international respondents who returned home did not take long to find employment, and for some, the jobs were not necessarily related to their degree. Reasons included lack of experience in their desired field and highly competitive job markets in certain industries.

“A marketing job is quite hard to find, because I don’t have marketing experience. So finally I got a financial job.”

2.2 Path taken after completing 2006 studies

In the 2006 benchmark survey, respondents were asked about their educational and/or employment outcomes as well as their intended path after completing their studies. In the 2007 Follow-up Survey, respondents were asked about the actual path they took immediately following their studies.

While 57% of the international respondents were intending to find jobs following graduation, significantly fewer actually looked for and found jobs immediately following their studies (38%). Lower proportions of Southern and Central Asian respondents (22%) found jobs in 2007 than those from Europe (51%) and South-East Asia (42%) regions. Though 48% of Australian respondents intended to look for work after graduation, 40% found jobs after they completed their studies in 2006.

As shown in Table 5, 17% of the international respondents were still looking for jobs immediately after completing their studies, significantly more than reported by the Australian respondents (6%). Slightly more (although not significant) international respondents (25%) enrolled for further studies in 2007 than those who intended in 2006 (21%), with very similar proportions found among the Australian respondents (25% and 24%, respectively).

Eleven per cent of the international respondents travelled or took extended time off in 2007, significantly more than their Australian counterparts (7%).

Table 5: Path taken immediately after completing 2006 studies

Immediately after completing studies in 2006/7, next thing done	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=565	n=1581	n=1573
Enrolled for further studies	25%	21%	25%	24%
Looked for and found a job in 2007 (Follow-up Survey)/ intended to find a job in 2006 (2006 benchmark survey)	38% (a, b)	57%	40% (c, d)	48%
Still looking for a job	17% (a, c)	-	6%	-
Travel/ extended time off	11% (a, c)	10%	7% (c, d)	12%
No plans for the future	1%	4%	4%	4%
Other	8% (a, c)	8%	20% (c, d)	14%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q4a Immediately after you completed your studies in Australia in 2006/7, what was the next thing you did?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q36a/Q30a Immediately after you complete your current course, what is the next thing you are most likely to do?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

2.3 Enrolled for further studies in 2007

As shown in Table 6, the majority of the international respondents (60%) who enrolled for further studies in 2007 enrolled at the same university in Australia, significantly fewer than their Australian counterparts (73%). Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the international respondents were enrolled at a different university in Australia, while 6% were enrolled at a university in their home country. These results were similar to the intentions for place of enrolment stated by the 2006 benchmark survey respondents.

Table 6: Place of enrolment for further studies

Where enrolled for further studies	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	D
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=138	n=113	n=388	n=350
At the same university in Australia	60% (a, c)	61%	73%	69%
At a different university in Australia	19%	26%	23%	29%
At a different VET/TAFE college in Australia	5%	-	2%	-
At a university in your home country	6%	4%	-	-
At a university in another country overseas	5%	6%	1%	2%
Other	5%	3%	2%	0%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q4b Where did you enrol for further studies?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q36b/Q30b Where are you planning to enrol for further studies?

Note: Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Forty per cent of the 2007 international respondents indicated their major field of study, which they have started subsequent to completion of their 2006 studies, was business studies related, including accounting, finance, marketing and management. One-quarter (25%) reported studying in humanities disciplines such as psychology, education and community work, while 15% have enrolled in health and medical sciences disciplines such as health promotion, medicine and mental health.

Forty per cent of the international respondents have enrolled in a masters degree program, while 19% have commenced a doctorate, and 12% have started an honours bachelor degree. Other qualifications include diploma or advanced diploma (9%), graduate or postgraduate diploma (8%), bachelor degree (7%), and other qualifications such as graduate certificate (6%).

Compared to the international respondents, significantly fewer Australian respondents enrolled in a masters degree program (20%), while significantly more had commenced an honours bachelor degree program (22%).

As shown in Table 7, 71% of the international respondents attended institutions in New South Wales (26%), Western Australia (20%), Queensland (15%) and Victoria (10%). In 2007, 11% attended institutions located overseas. In comparison, more Australian respondents attended institutions in New South Wales (39%), South Australia (13%), and ACT/Tasmania/Northern Territory (12%), while significantly fewer attended institutions in Western Australia (5%).

Table 7: Location of institution attended

Location of Institution	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=138	n=388
NSW	26% (a, b)	39%
WA	20% (a, b)	5%
QLD	15%	13%
VIC	10%	14%
SA	5% (a, b)	13%
ACT/TAS/NT	2%	12%
Institution located overseas	11% (a, b)	2%
Other mentions	7%	4%
Don't know	2%	0%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q5f What is the name of the institution you are, or will be attending?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

One-third of the international respondents (34%) who enrolled in further studies received a credit or advanced standing as a result of their Australian studies, while 57% have not. These results were similar to those for the Australian respondents (26% and 62%, respectively).

The majority of the international respondents (88%) believed their Australian qualifications have adequately prepared them for the course they were currently studying; this was similar to their Australian counterparts (87%).

2.4 Looked for and found a job in 2007

All respondents who looked for and found jobs since completing their Australian studies were asked a range of questions, including sources of information used, difficulties in finding work, perceived value of the course, extent to which their job met employment expectations, and satisfaction with current industry and profession.

The majority of the international respondents (69%) found jobs in Australia, while nearly one-third (31%) found jobs overseas. The majority of Australian respondents (97%) found work in Australia. Higher proportions of respondents from Southern and Central Asia (91%) found jobs in Australia than respondents from other regions (North-East Asia: 64%; South-East Asia: 62%; Europe: 58%; North and South America: 50%).

As shown in Table 8, one-quarter (24%) of the international respondents who looked for and found jobs did so with the help of family and friends, while 22% found jobs through an online job board. Significantly fewer Australian respondents found jobs through their family and friends (16%) or online job boards (17%).

Eighteen per cent of the international respondents used strategies to search for jobs such as approaching an employer directly (9%) or through work contacts and networks (9%). The corresponding proportion for Australian respondents was 23%. Seven per cent of international respondents used an employment agency, 6% were approached by an employer directly, and a similar proportion found jobs through a university careers service. The corresponding figures for the Australian respondents were 4% (employment agency), 11% (direct approach by employer) and 7% (university careers service). Advertisements in the print media were a significantly more common source of initial information about the job for Australian respondents (12%) than their international counterparts (7%).

The case study research revealed the international respondents utilised a variety of methods to find work and information about potential work opportunities. The internet was popular; however, more traditional methods such as dropping in a resume face-to-face and using recruitment firms were also adopted.

“I looked through several job seeking websites.”

In some instances, respondents adopted a combination of the above methods:

“I found this job on the internet. It was not announced, but I was interested in the organisation....so I just dropped in my resume, and I had a job 2-3 months later.”

Table 8: Finding a job

How first found out about job	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=409	n=1331
Family/friends	24% (a, b)	16%
Advertisement on the internet/online job board	22% (a, b)	17%
Approached employer directly	9% (a, b)	13%
Work contacts/networks	9%	10%
Advertisement in the newspaper or other print media	7% (a, b)	12%
Employment agency	7% (a, b)	4%
Approached by employer directly	6% (a, b)	11%
Australian university, VET/TAFE college careers service	6%	7%
Careers fair or information session in Australia	2%	3%
Other university, VET/TAFE college source (e.g. lecturer, faculty)	2%	3%
Other	6%	5%

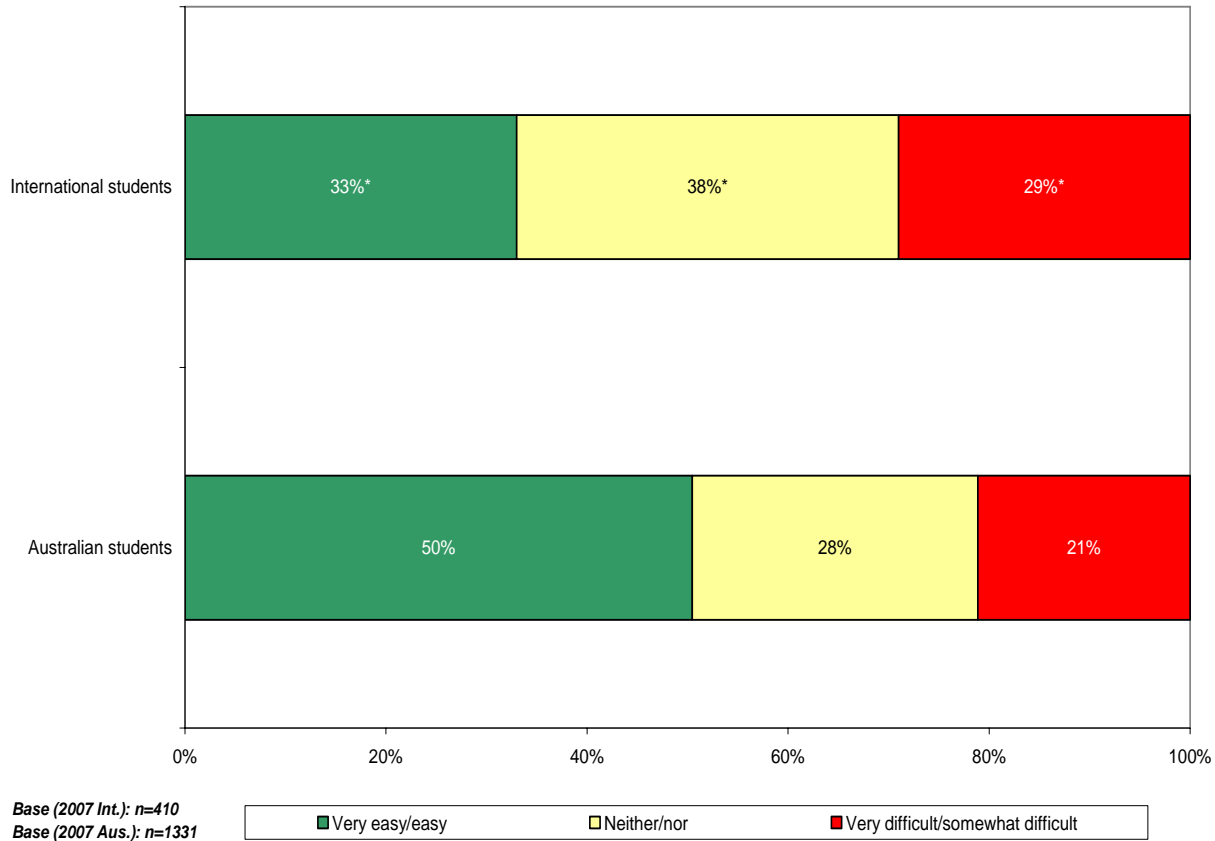
(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q8f Please indicate how you first found out about this job:

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses allowed.

As shown in Figure 1, 29% of the international respondents who have found employment in Australia or overseas indicated it was very difficult or difficult to do so, significantly more than the Australian respondents (21%). More specifically, those international respondents who found work in Australia reported it was significantly very difficult or somewhat difficult to find work (33%) compared to those who found work overseas (21%). Higher proportions of international respondents from Southern and Central Asia (44%) found it very difficult or somewhat difficult to find work, than those from South-East Asia (25%). Additionally, higher proportions of international respondents aged 26 years or older (36%) found it difficult or very difficult to find work, than those aged 16-25 years (24%).

Figure 1: Ease of finding job



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q10 How difficult was it for you to find this job?

An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

The main difficulties faced by international respondents included lack of work experience, of permanent resident status, and of jobs in field of interest; English language barriers; and perceptions that employers preferred local to international respondents.

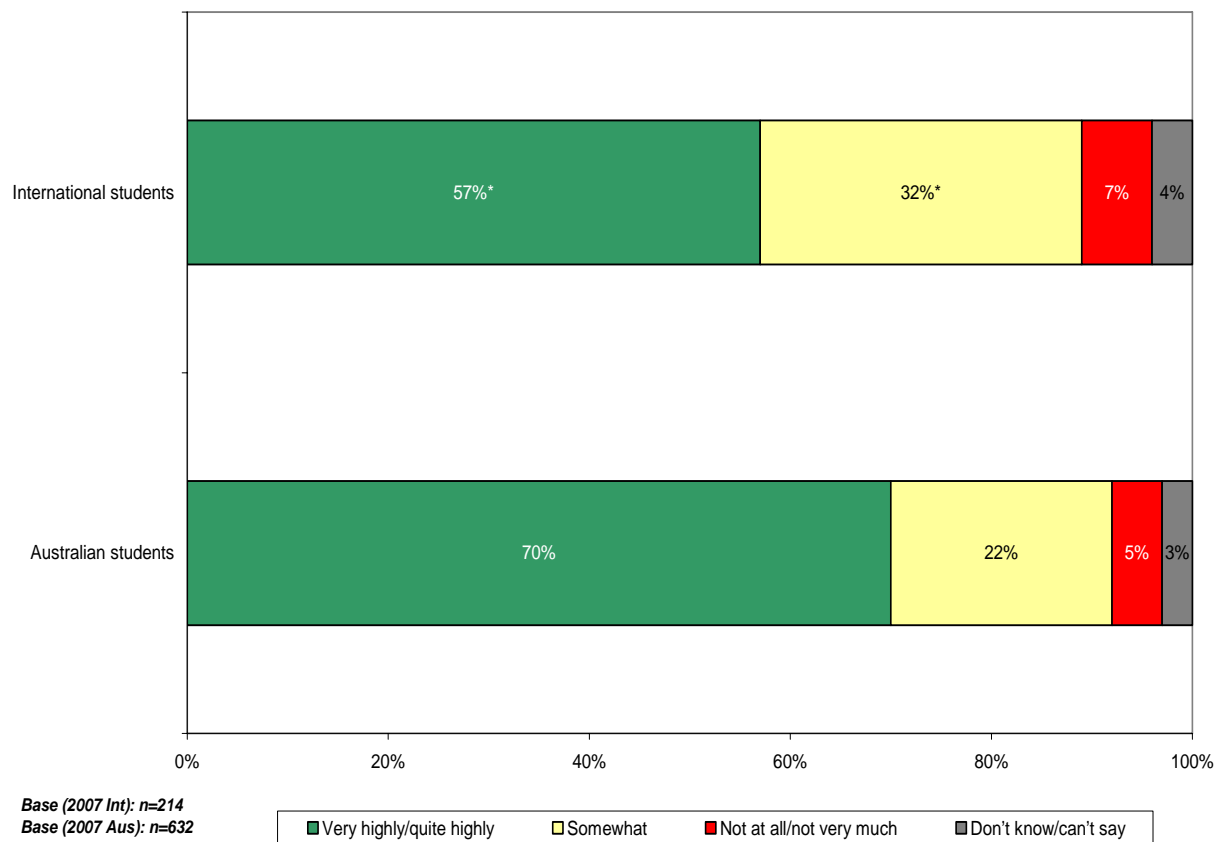
The case study research revealed some of the international respondents expressed disappointment with the lack of work experience opportunities available to them compared to local students.

“I was expecting a lot of practical experience...with industries, but I am a little disappointed as we were not [offered] much practical experience.”

For some respondents wanting to stay in Australia, it was felt that the lack of professional networks due to the lack of work experience opportunities put them at a disadvantage compared with the local students when searching for full-time work.

International and Australian respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought employers value the Australian course they completed in 2006. As shown in Figure 2, more than half (57%) of the international respondents who found jobs believed employers highly valued the Australian course they completed, while significantly more Australian respondents (70%) believed so. Higher proportions of European respondents (70%) indicated that employers value their course than those from South-East Asia (49%).

Figure 2: Employers’ perception of Australian course value (according to respondents who found a job)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q6f In your experience, do you think employers value the course you studied in an Australian institution?
An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

As shown in Table 9, the majority of international respondents (69%) found jobs in the non-government sector, while 21% found employment in the government sector. Comparatively, significantly fewer Australian respondents found jobs in the non-government sector (54%) and significantly more were employed in the government sector (40%).

International respondents found work in a variety of areas. Twenty-two per cent found jobs in property and business services, 15% in education, 13% in health and community services, 10% in retail trade, 8% in manufacturing, 8% in the hospitality industry, and 20% in other areas such as finance, transport and government. In comparison, the main areas in which Australian

respondents found jobs included education (24%), health and community services (23%), property and business services (17%), and in other areas such as retail, government and manufacturing (37%).

Table 9: Type of employer

Is your employer in:	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	D
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=410	n=310	n=1331	n=737
Private Sector	49% (a, c)	44%	38% (c, d)	25%
Self-employed/ own business	14% (a, b); (a, c)	9%	7% (c, d)	4%
Not for profit organisation	6%	-	9%	-
Total Non-Government	69% (a, b); (a, c)	53%	54% (c, d)	29%
Government, State, Provincial	9% (c, d)	-	28%	-
Government, Federal	7%	-	9%	-
Government, Local	5%	-	3%	-
Total Government	21% (a, b); (a, c)	32%	40% (c, d)	60%
Other, not known	10% (a, b); (a, c)	15%	6% (c, d)	11%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q8b Is your employer in...

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q36e/Q30f Once you graduate from your current course, where are you likely to work?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

As shown in Table 10, international respondents reported that in their main jobs, they worked, on average, 33 hours per week, similar to Australian respondents (35 hours per week). Nearly

half (45%) of international respondents indicated they worked 39 hours or more per week, the same as the Australian respondents.

Looking at the average number of hours worked by international respondents employed overseas versus those employed in Australia, the former reported working on average (37 hours) and the latter, 31 hours.

Table 10: Hours work per week in main paid job

Hours worked in main job in an average week	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	B
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=410	n=1331
10 hours or less per week	10%	9%
11 to 20 hours per week	18% (a, b)	10%
21 to 30 hours per week	6% (a, b)	10%
31 to 38 hours per week	20% (a, b)	26%
39+ hours per week	45%	45%
Mean number of hours	33 hours	35 hours

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q8g How many hours do you/will you work in your main paid job in an average week?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b.)

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Just over half (54%) of the international respondents were employed in a position for 12 months or more, while 23% were employed on a casual, and 19% on a temporary basis. Significantly more Australian respondents were employed on permanent basis (66%), while significantly fewer were in casual employment (14%).

As shown in Table 11, the 2007 international respondents reported receiving an average annual salary of \$30,900, considerably less than Australian respondents (\$44,100).

Looking at the average annual salary of international respondents employed overseas versus those employed in Australia, international respondents working overseas reported earning slightly less than those working in Australia (\$29,900 vs. \$31,400, respectively).

Table 11: Expected gross annual salary in main paid job

Gross annual salary in \$AUD	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=410	n=1331
Less than \$10,000	29% (a, b)	14%
\$10,000 - \$20,000	13% (a, b)	9%
\$21,000 - \$30,000	13% (a, b)	7%
\$31,000 - \$40,000	14%	14%
\$41,000 - \$50,000	14% (a, b)	26%
\$51,000 - \$60,000	9%	11%
More than \$60,000	9% (a, b)	19%
Mean salary (\$)	\$30,900	\$44,100

2007) (Int./Aus.) Q8i What is/will be your gross (pre-tax) annual salary in \$AUD? (estimate will be sufficient)

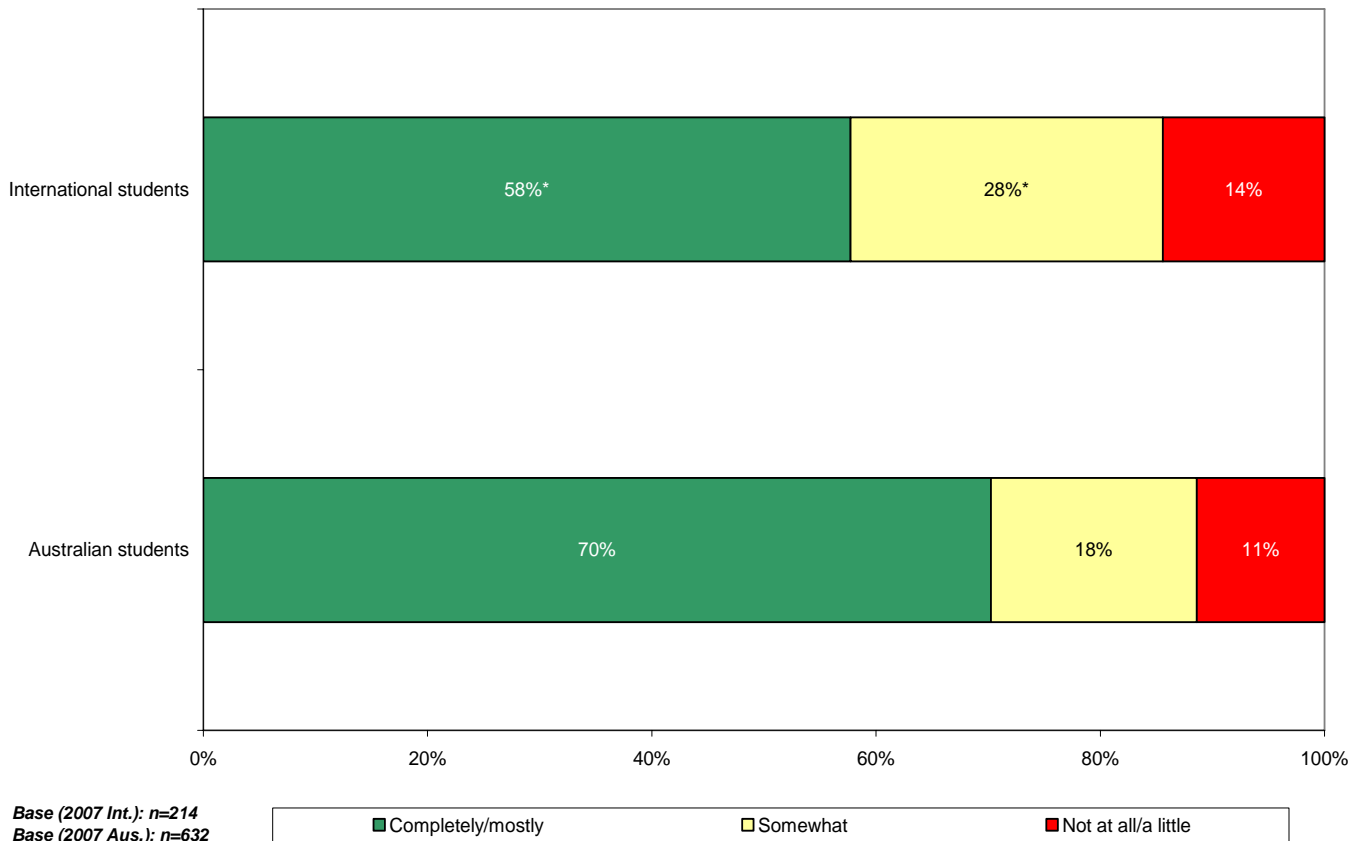
Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b, shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Some of the main reasons the international and Australian respondents indicated for not working in a position that fulfilled their expectations were: lack of work or practical experience and lack of jobs in their field of interest. For the international respondents, being a non-Australian resident was another factor.

As shown in Figure 3, 58% of the international and 70% of the Australian respondents felt their job completely or mostly met their employment expectations when they finished their studies in 2006. Higher proportions of international respondents aged 26 years or older (67%) felt their job completely or mostly met their employment expectations, compared to those aged 16-25 years (53%). Also, more international (28%) than Australian respondents (18%) felt their job somewhat met their employment expectations when they finished their studies in 2006.

Figure 3: Extent to which job meets employment expectations when finished 2006 studies



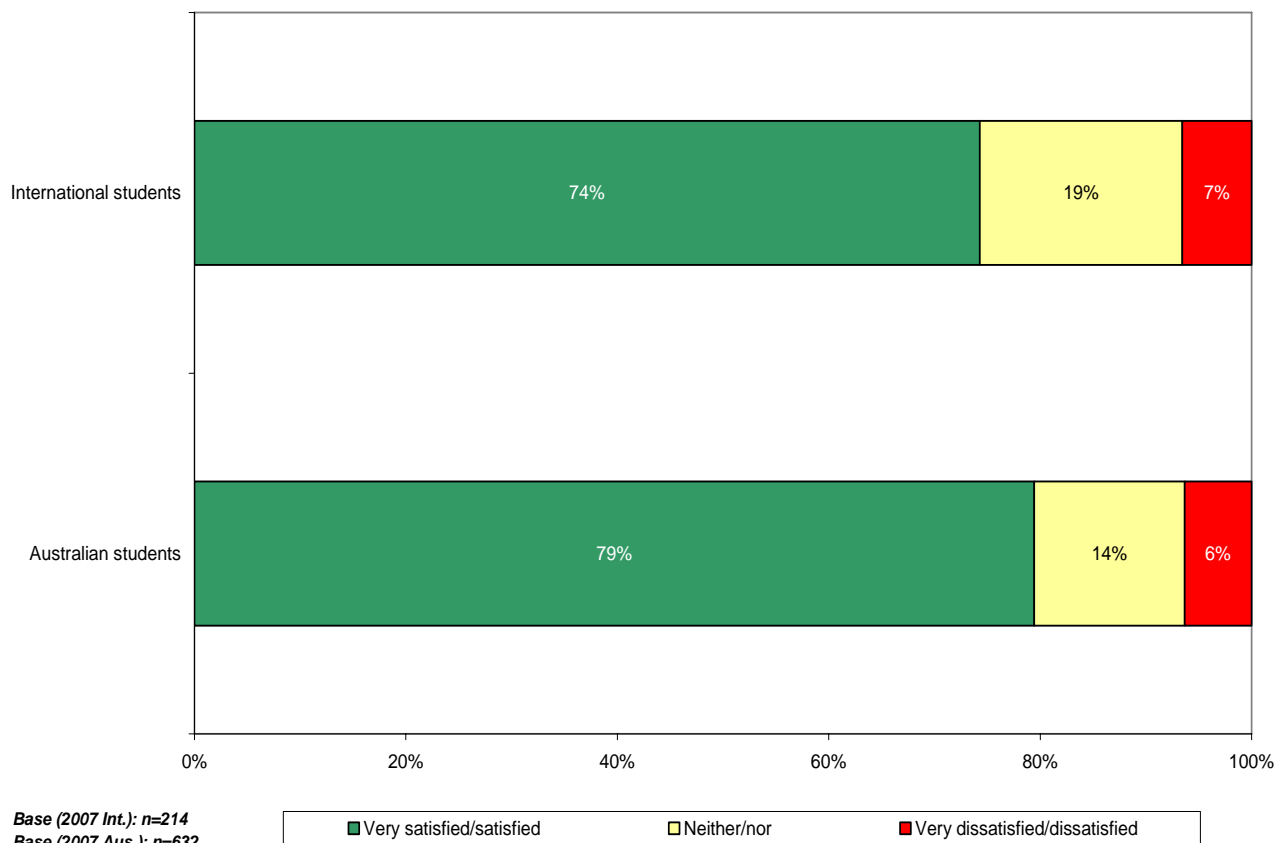
(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q9a To what extent does this job meet the employment expectations you had when you finished your course in Australia? An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Sixty-four per cent of international respondents and 69% of Australian respondents indicated they prefer employment with good job security despite the average income. While 36% of international respondents indicated they prefer jobs with above average income but with lesser job security, significantly fewer Australian respondents had this preference (31%).

High proportions of the international and Australian respondents (64% and 66%, respectively) considered the course they studied to have adequately prepared them for the work force.

As shown in Figure 4, relatively high proportions of the international (74%) and Australian respondents (79%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the industry and profession in which they were currently working. Higher proportions of international respondents aged 26 years or older (85%) were very satisfied or satisfied with their industry and profession, compared to those aged 16-25 years (68%).

Figure 4: Satisfaction with industry and profession in which currently working



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q9c How satisfied are you with the industry and profession in which you are now working?
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

The qualitative research revealed that the international respondents currently working full-time highly value a good income as well as job security. However, other factors such as opportunities for further development were also seen as important when considering accepting a graduate role.

“It’s about job enhancement.”

Some employers in home countries noted that graduates educated overseas were often more demanding in terms of salary, compared to their local graduates:

“For me, local grads are not as demanding, they don’t spend more time on education so they are actually more willing to work hard at lower pay in the beginning.....international grads are more demanding and ask for higher pay. Their self-esteem is normally much higher.”

International and Australian respondents, who were working or studying full-time, were asked to indicate the extent of ease in balancing their study or work commitments with their family and social life. As shown in Table 12, 31% of international and 27% of Australian respondents found it very easy or easy. Higher proportions of international respondents from Europe (46%) and North and South America (45%) found it very easy or easy to find the right balance than those from North-East Asia (16%) and South-East Asia (26%). Twenty-nine per cent of international and 18% of Australian respondents were studying full-time, while 26% of international and 18% of Australian respondents were working full-time. Significantly more Australian (49%) than international respondents (29%) found it very difficult or somewhat difficult to balance their work with family and social life.

Table 12: Ease of balancing work commitments with family and social life

Ease of balancing work commitments with family and social life	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=417	n=1198
Very easy/easy	31%	27%
Neither difficult nor easy	40% (a, b)	24%
Very difficult/somewhat difficult	29% (a, b)	49%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q7c Now that you are working full-time or studying full-time, how easy do you find it to balance your study or work commitments with your family and social life?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

2.5 Still looking for a job after graduation

Seventeen per cent of international and 6% of Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up Survey reported they were still looking for jobs. As shown in Table 13, one-third (33%) of international respondents indicated that they were likely to work in a private company and 32% were planning to work in the public or government sector. One-fifth (19%) were likely to do contract work.

Table 13: Type of business likely to work in once finds a job

Place to work once found a job	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	B	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=98	n=310	n=88	N=737
Private company	33% (a, c)	44%	20%	25%
Public sector/Government	32% (a, c)	32%	52%	60%
Contract work	19% (a, b); (a, c)	5%	6%	3%
Your own business	2%	4%	5%	1%
Family business	1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	13%	15%	17%	11%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q6b Once you find a job, where are you likely to work?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q36e/Q30f Once you graduate from your current course, where are you likely to work?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

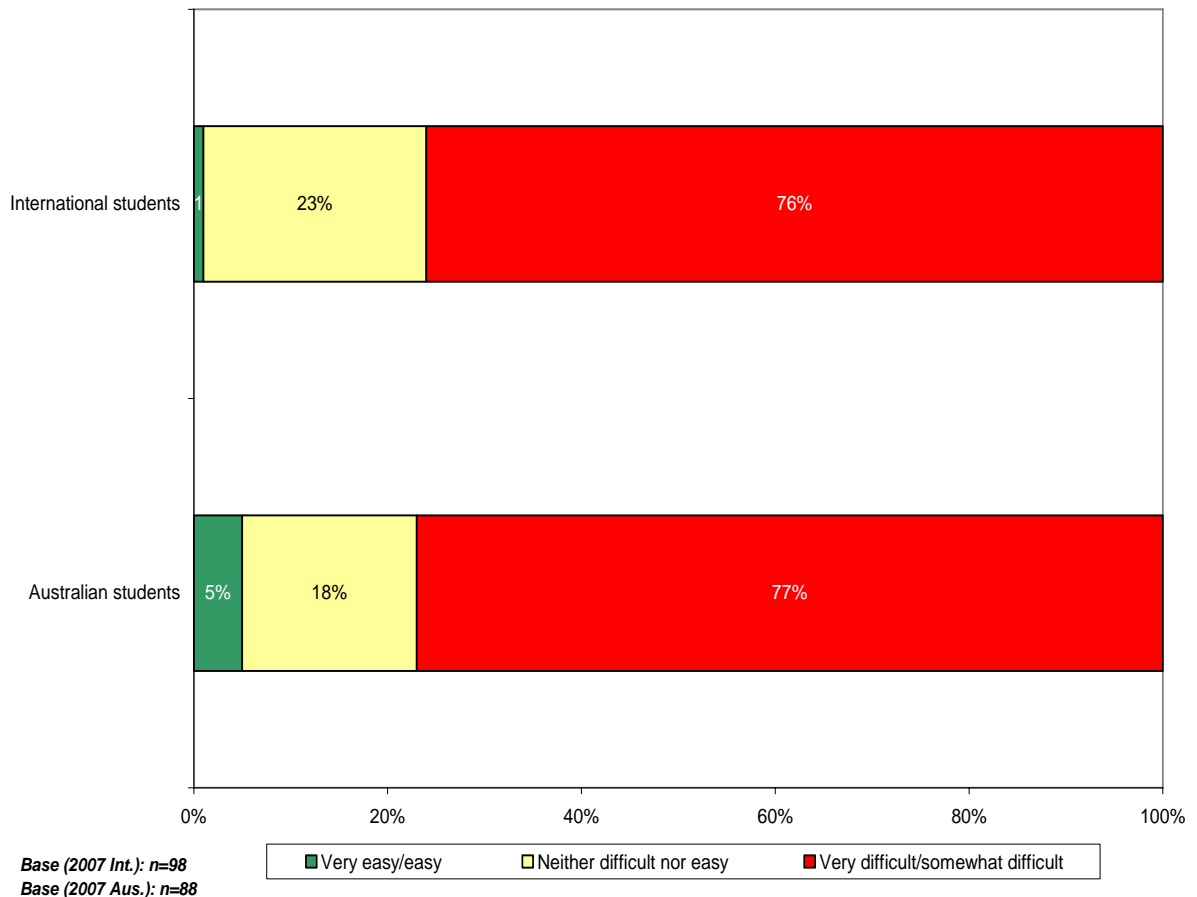
As shown in Figure 5, the majority of the international (76%) and Australian respondents (77%) who completed their 2006 studies, and who were still looking for work, reported it to be difficult or very difficult. The main difficulties faced by international respondents included lack of work experience, and of permanent resident status and visa, as well as English language barriers. The main reasons cited by Australian respondents included lack of work experience and lack of jobs in field of interest.

Some international respondents who wanted to work in Australia felt disadvantaged compared to the local students when looking for full-time work. They thought limited work experience opportunities hindered the development of a professional network.

“There are a lot of opportunities in Australia for mechanical engineers, but the main problem is permanent resident status. I was selected for a job and I was rejected, as I [did not have] permanent resident status.”

“It would have been good to have some mentors from industry. International students don’t have networks of families and friends which they can use to help them find placements and ongoing jobs. I feel that I am at a disadvantage.”

Figure 5: Ease of finding work

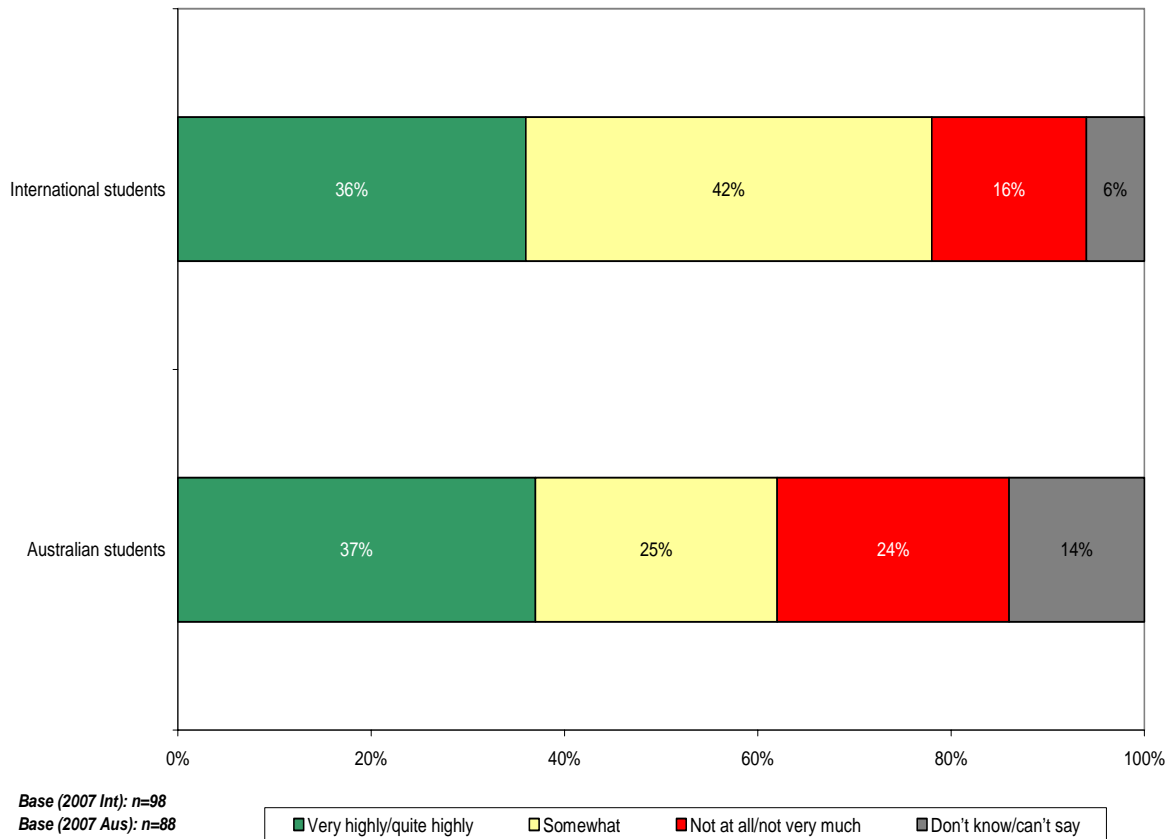


(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q6d How difficult has it been for you to find work?
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

International and Australian respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they believed employers valued the course they completed in 2006. As shown in Figure 6, just over one-third (36%) of international and Australian respondents (37%) thought employers valued the course they completed in 2006. Where employers do not value the course, the perception was that employers were more interested in graduates’ hands-on practical experiences than the actual degree.

The qualitative research suggested perceptions of Australian qualifications overseas, from an employer’s perspective, varied across organisations and industries. Australian qualifications, on the most part, were very highly regarded, although at times their reputation often fell short of degrees undertaken in the USA and the UK.

Figure 6: Employers' perception of Australian course value (according to respondents who are still looking for a job)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q6f In your experience, do you think employers value the course you studied in an Australian institution?
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

“Benefits from graduating from Australia:

- *They are quality people, have discipline, [are] trustworthy*
- *Environment is better than the USA – it’s clean and good to study there.*
- *Not too big a population.*
- *Not many entertainment complexes to distract students, compared with the USA.”*

“In my field, the USA has better qualifications, although Australia is perceived to not be far behind them.”

However, the research also suggested employers simply want someone who can do the job, regardless of where their qualifications came from.

“They just want to employ someone who’s willing to do the job and is capable of handling the tools.”

“We don’t give any privilege to grads from anywhere. We are not concerned with which country they graduated from...yet we are more concerned with their ability and attitude.”

The qualification itself was, at times, not as important as the broader skills international students attain as a result of their study experiences. High-level English skills, independence, confidence and openness of mind were traits highly regarded by employers and were often seen as skills less apparent in local students.

In summary, more international respondents were enrolled in further studies and fewer were in employment compared to their plans in their last year of study. On the other hand, a higher proportion of the Australian respondents were working and/or studying than was their reported aspiration as final year higher education students.

Proportionately more international than Australian respondents were seeking full-time work as at 1 August 2007. Overall, Australian higher education facilitated students to achieve their employment and education aspirations.

Fewer international and Australian respondents actually enrolled for further studies at a different Australian university than was their intention in 2006.

The majority of international and Australian respondents enrolled in further studies believe their Australian qualifications have adequately prepared them for the course they were currently studying.

A large percentage of international and Australian respondents still looking for work after completing their course in 2006 reported it was difficult or very difficult to do so. The main difficulties faced by international respondents were the lack of work experience and the lack of permanent resident status or visa permitting work. Additionally, they cited English language barriers.

More than one-quarter of international and Australian respondents working or studying full-time found balancing these commitments easy or very easy. However, half of Australian respondents reported this balance to be somewhat difficult or very difficult.

3. Study in Australia

Key findings

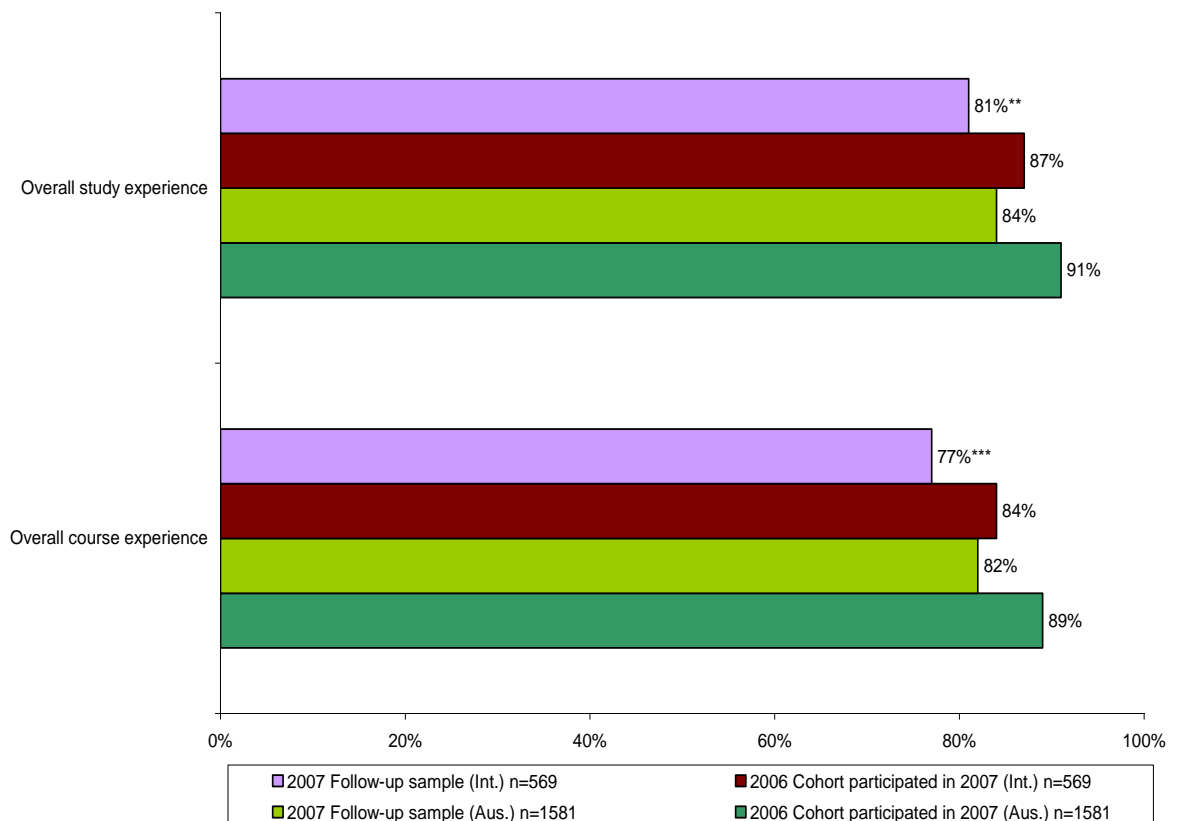
- The majority of international respondents were satisfied with their overall study experience and overall course experience in Australia. However, satisfaction with the study experience had significantly declined (from 87% to 81%), and similarly, satisfaction with the course experience declined (from 84% to 77%) between 2006 and 2007. Australian respondents reported slightly higher satisfaction levels on each of these measures.
- Around 4 in 5 respondents in both the international and Australian respondents rated the quality of education and course content as satisfactory. Among international respondents, satisfaction with both the course content and the quality of the education increased significantly between 2006 and 2007, from 73% to 78% and from 76% to 83% satisfied, respectively.
- The cost of Australian higher education courses was generally an issue of concern. In 2007, international respondents were significantly less satisfied (22%) than Australian respondents (42%).
- Although it was still an issue of concern, there was significant improvement in the proportion of respondents who were satisfied with getting work experience in their field of study between 2006 and 2007. Significantly more Australian respondents were satisfied with this aspect in 2007 (50%) compared with 2006 (43%), and significantly more international respondents (42%) were satisfied with their ability to get work in their field of study in 2007 compared to 25% in 2006.
- Both international and Australian respondents regarded a range of general cognitive, analytical, inter-personal and communications skills to be just as important to develop during their education in Australia, and were subsequently finding these skills to be useful. For the international respondents, the 13 general skills investigated ranged ratings in importance of developing during the course and usefulness after graduating from 'analytical thinking' (95% important, 92% useful) to gaining the 'characteristics of self-reliance and leadership' (85% important, 83% useful).
- In 2007, international respondents were asked to indicate their perceived level of written and spoken English language skills when they completed their course in Australia. The majority indicated their English language skills were up to the level required to continue their studies or seek suitable employment (90% for written, and 86% for spoken English skills).
- Around one-third of the international (37%) and Australian (40%) respondents were satisfied with the help they received in getting a good job in their field of study.

3.1 Study satisfaction

As shown in Figure 7, a high proportion of international and Australian respondents were satisfied with studying in Australia as well as with their course experience. Significantly fewer international respondents in 2007 (81%) than in 2006 (87%) indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall study experience. Similarly, Australian respondents in 2006 (91%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall study experience, compared to 2007 follow-up respondents (84%).

In 2007, 77% of international and 82% of Australian respondents reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall course experience. The case was similar in 2006; 84% of international and 89% of Australian respondents reported they were satisfied or very satisfied.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with overall study and course experience (Very satisfied/ satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20b/Q16 Overall, how satisfied are you with your study experience in Australia?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q22/Q18 Overall, how satisfied are you with the course you are currently completing?

Two asterisks (**) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent.

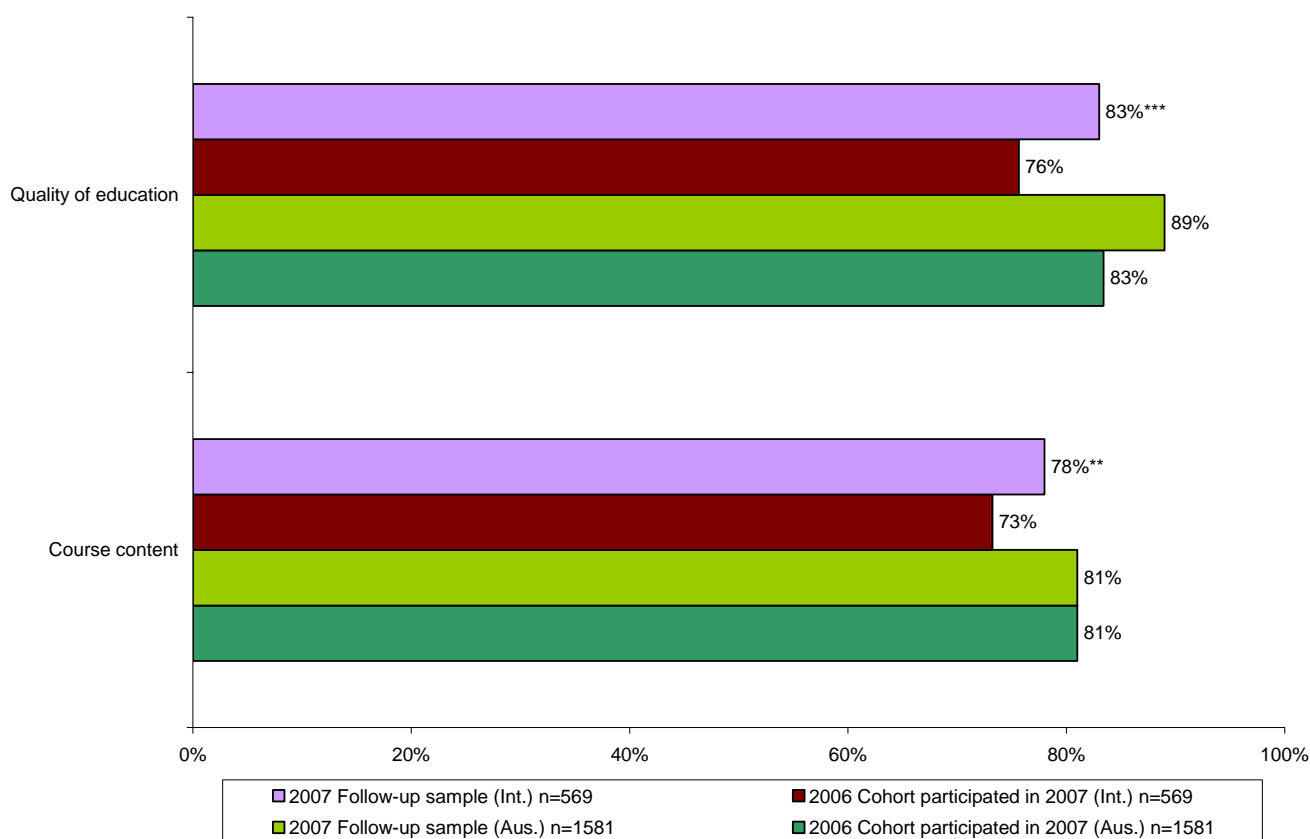
Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 16

As shown in Figure 8, respondents' satisfaction with the quality of education and course content was high. Specifically, satisfaction with the quality of education was higher among international respondents at 83% in 2007, compared to 76% in 2006. Comparable figures for Australian respondents were 89% in 2007 and 83% in 2006.

In relation to course content, more international respondents in 2007 (78%) than in 2006 (73%) were satisfied or very satisfied. Eighty-one per cent of Australian respondents in 2006 and 2007 were satisfied or very satisfied with the course content in both 2007 and 2006.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with quality of education and course content (Very satisfied/ satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20a/Q14 How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the university at which you are studying?

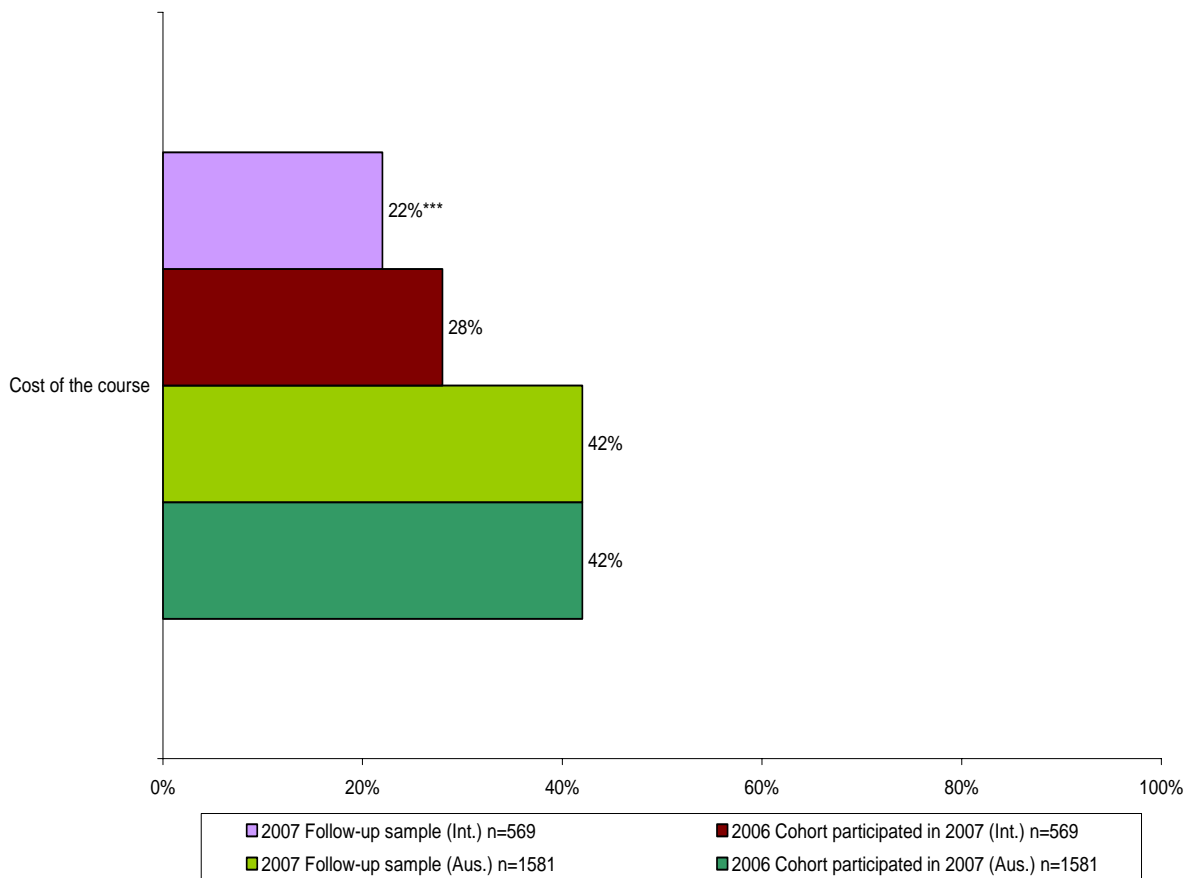
Two asterisks (**) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent.

Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 17

As shown in Figure 9, satisfaction with the cost of the course was relatively low among international and Australian respondents, both in 2006 and in 2007. Highest levels of satisfaction were noted among Australian respondents in the same periods (42%). Twenty-two per cent of international respondents in 2007 reported satisfaction with the cost of the course, significantly lower than reported in 2006 (28%). Forty-two per cent of Australian respondents reported satisfaction with the cost of the course (42%) in both years.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with cost of the course (Very satisfied/ satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20a/Q14 How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the university at which you are studying?

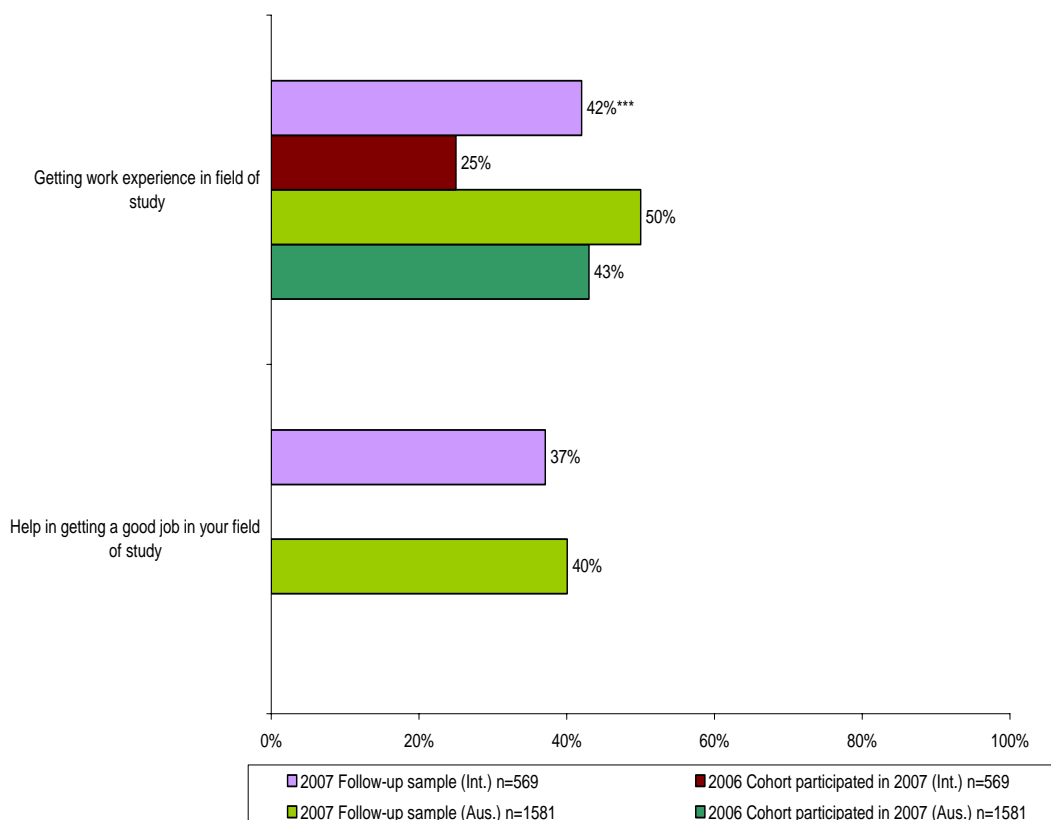
Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 18

As shown in Figure 10, respondents' satisfaction with getting work experience in their field of study was relatively low. Satisfaction for international and Australian respondents was at 42% and 50%, respectively.

Respondents' satisfaction was low in 2007 with regards to receiving help in obtaining good jobs in their field of study, namely 40% and 37% for Australian and international respondents, respectively.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with obtaining work experience in field of study and with help in getting a good job in field of study (Very satisfied/ satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20a/Q14 How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the university at which you are studying?

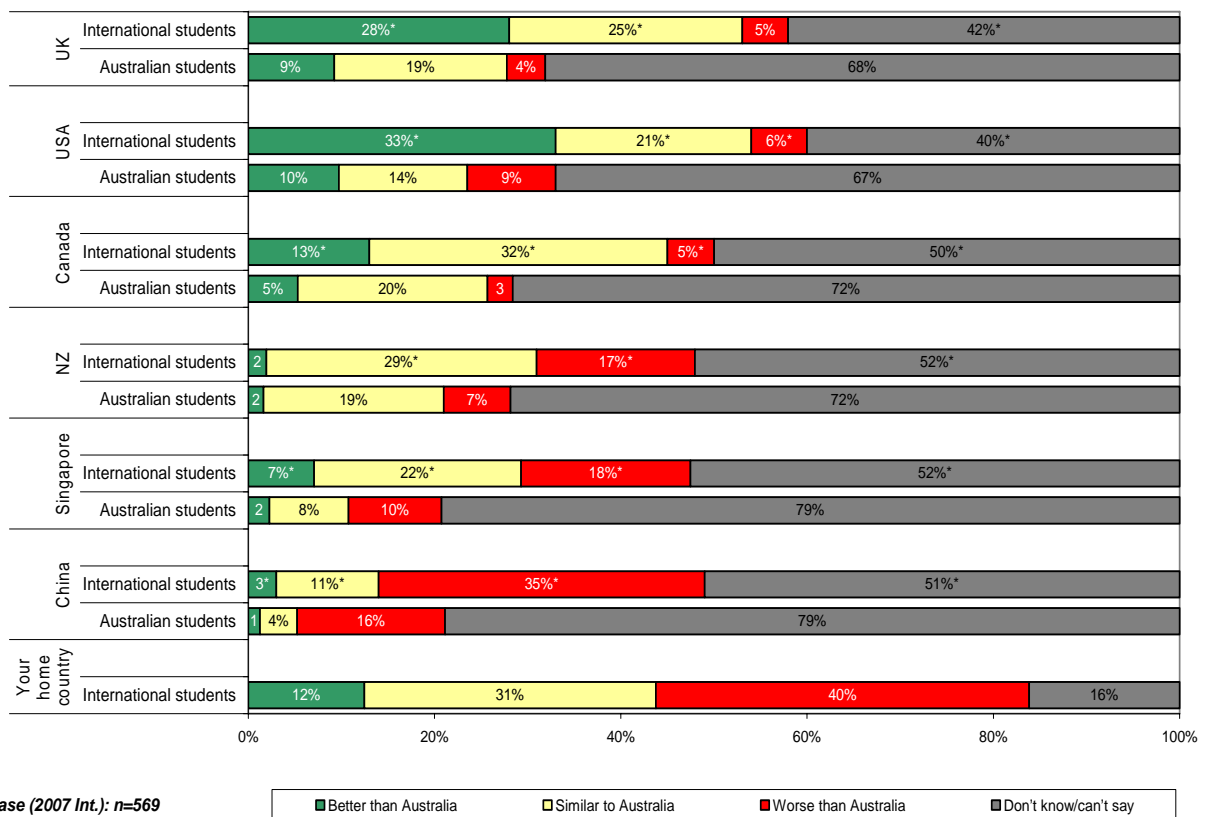
Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 19

International and Australian respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of their Australian course compared to graduates who studied similar courses from the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore and China. As shown in Figure 11 international and Australian respondents' perceptions varied about the overall quality of the Australian course compared to similar courses overseas. Relatively high proportions of respondents (both international and Australian) did not know whether the overall quality of the Australian course they studied was better, similar or worse, than comparable courses that graduates studied in other countries. Yet, 83% of international respondents were able to provide a rating of the overall quality of their Australian course compared to similar courses offered by other countries.

The USA was perceived to offer better courses than Australia by 33% of the international respondents, mainly from Southern and Central Asia, while 28% of international respondents perceived the UK to offer better courses than Australia mostly by students originating from Asia⁵. Thirty-two per cent of international respondents indicated that Canada offered similar courses to Australia (again perceived predominantly by Asian respondents), while 29% of international respondents, mainly from the Northeast and Southeast Asian countries, were of the view that New Zealand offered similar courses to Australia.

Figure 11: Perceptions of overall quality of Australian course compared to similar courses overseas



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q21 How do you rate the overall quality of your Australian course compared to graduates who studied similar courses from the following countries...?

An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding..

Forty per cent of the international respondents indicated their own country offered courses that were worse than those offered in Australia – a perception mainly shared by Southeast Asian

⁵ Includes all the Asian geographic classifications used in this report

respondents. China was the country perceived by the largest proportion of the international respondents (35%) to offer courses that were of worse quality. Singapore was second, and 18% of international respondents believed their courses were of lower quality.

According to the international respondents, some of the best aspects of studying in Australia were related to experiencing a new, different and local culture; gaining independence and confidence; course content; meeting new people; and making new friends. These views were fairly uniform between males and females, as well as younger (16-25 yrs) and older (25+) age groups.

However, the younger international respondents, recorded an open-ended responses, appreciated the aspects of independence and confidence to a greater degree than their older counterparts. European respondents held greater regard for course content and meeting new people than other international respondents, while North and South American respondents had the greatest appreciation (nearly three times the average) for experiencing a new and different culture.

For the Australian respondents, some of the best aspects of their study related to course content; quality and standard of education; and living in Australia. These views were shared uniformly across age and gender.

Both international and Australian respondents had fairly uniform views, recorded an open-ended responses, across gender and age, about how studying in Australia can be improved. These views included the course fees and related costs, course structure, content, relevance and delivery of course, integration of international respondents or cross cultural development, assistance to gain work experience relevant to studies and in the field of interest, and teacher or lecturer quality, competency and staff commitment.

Other areas of improvement (although mentioned by relatively lower proportions of respondents) were related to receiving more practical/hands-on experience, concerns about cost of living, access to student services, and provision of transport concession cards for all students.

North and South American respondents were least concerned with course fees. Southern and Central Asian respondents believed course structure and content, and assistance to gain work experience were areas that needed the most improvement, whilst a greater proportion of Northeast and Southeast Asian respondents felt integration of international respondents or cross cultural development needed the most improvement.

3.2 Usefulness of skills developed during studies

International and Australian respondents were asked in 2006 to indicate the importance of developing various skills during their course; in 2007 they were asked to indicate how useful these skills were. As shown in Table 14, in 2006, the skill Australian respondents considered least important to develop was attributed to the importance of having an international perspective (69%) compared with 72% in 2007. International respondents in 2006 rated social and ethical responsibility (80%) as their lowest priority skill which increased to 84% in 2007.

Table 14: Usefulness/importance of various skills developed during studies in Australia

Skills developed during course (usefulness in 2007 vs. importance in 2006)	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1578
Analytical thinking	92% (a, b); (a, c)	95%	95% (c, d)	97%
Effective communication in a variety of contexts	92%	93%	94%	94%
Ability to work independently	90% (a, c)	93%	96% (c, d)	94%
Knowledge and skills pertinent to a particular discipline	90%	92%	91% (c, d)	96%
Knowledge and skills pertinent to a particular professional area	88% (a, b)	93%	89% (c, d)	94%
Effective problem-solving	88% (a, b); (a, c)	95%	95% (c, d)	97%
Ability to work collaboratively	88% (a, c)	90%	91% (c, d)	88%
Creative thinking	86% (a, b)	91%	88%	90%
Capacity for life-long learning	85% (a, c)	87%	93%	94%
Social and ethical responsibility	84%	80%	85%	85%
An international perspective	83% (a, c)	86%	72%	69%
Characteristics of self-reliance and leadership	83% (a, c)	85%	89%	88%
English language competency	82%	-	80%	-

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q13 How useful to you now are the following skills you may have developed during your course in Australia?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q21/Q17 How important to you are developing the following skills during your course in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); and c and d shown as (c, d).

Percentages reflect very useful/useful categories in 2007 and very important/important categories in 2006.

In 2006 respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of the above skills, whereas in 2007 they were asked to rate the usefulness of these skills. Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

In 2006, almost all Australian respondents (97%) indicated analytical thinking was an important skill for them to attain. Similarly, analytical thinking was the most important skill for international respondents (95%), equal to acquiring ability in effective problem-solving (95%).

In 2007, a high proportion of international respondents (82%) reported English language competency was useful, as were analytical skills (92%), effective communication (92%), and ability to work independently (90%). A high proportion (95%) of Australian respondents also perceived analytical thinking and effective problem solving skills were useful.

Other important skills for both international and Australian respondents were knowledge and skills that were pertinent to a particular discipline and professional area, and the ability to work collaboratively.

In 2006, international respondents were asked to indicate their perceived level of English language skills when they started their course. The majority (78%) indicated their English language skills were up to the level required to undertake their studies. In 2007, international respondents were asked to indicate their perceived level of written and spoken English. The majority indicated their English language skills were up to the level required to continue their studies or seek suitable employment (90% for written and 86% for spoken English skills). These findings indicate international respondents generally perceive they have sufficient knowledge of English by the time they complete their course and show a slight increase in their own perceived competency after course completion.

There was no difference between gender, age and home country for self reported competency in written English in 2007. The same applies to self reported competency in spoken English with the exception of respondents from Northeast Asia. Twenty-five per cent of this group reported they require further training to improve their spoken English.

3.3 Willingness to recommend study in Australia

As shown in Figure 12, high proportions of international (83%)⁶ and Australian respondents (94%) indicated they would recommend studying in Australia to family and friends. Sixty-eight per cent of international respondents were willing to recommend the course they completed, a similar level to 70% in 2006. Eighty per cent of Australian respondents reported they were willing to recommend their course compared to 84% in 2006.

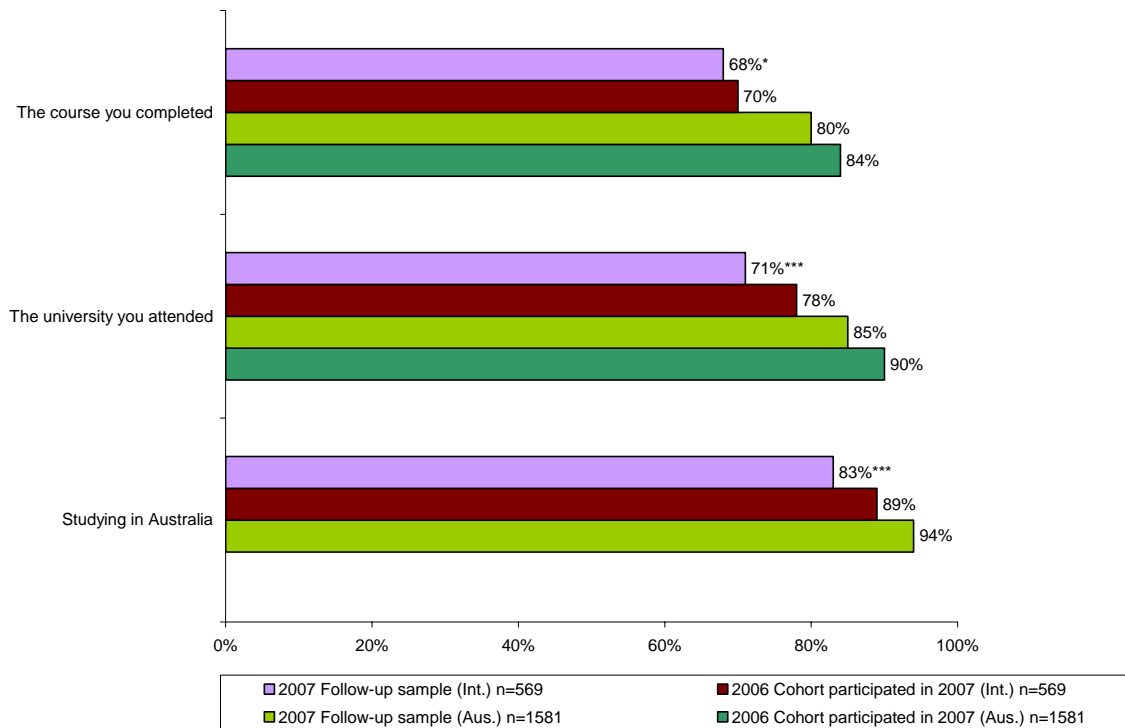
Seventy-one per cent of international respondents indicated that they would recommend the university they attended to family and friends. This is significantly lower than the response of 78% in 2006. Similarly, 85% of Australian respondents in 2007 stated they would recommend the university they attended, compared with 90% in 2006.

While there were no significant differences between international respondents' gender and age respondents, fewer international respondents from Northeast Asia (67%) or Southern and Central Asia (72%) were willing to recommend study in Australia in 2007. This is below the average, across nationalities, of 83%.

⁶ This represents a 6 point drop in willingness to recommend study in Australia by international respondents in the 2006 survey (89%).

There were no significant differences in the international respondents’ demographic profiles regarding their willingness to recommend the course they completed or college they attended to friends or family. Respondents from Northeast Asia recorded the lowest proportions for both and were less likely to recommend these aspects than international respondents from other regions.

Figure 12: Willingness to recommend study in Australia



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q16a Would you recommend to others the following...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q23/Q19 Would you recommend the following to friends or family?

One asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 20

The level of satisfaction with the quality of education increased significantly for international and Australian respondents between 2006 and 2007. Satisfaction with the course content for international respondents also increased. More than three-quarters of respondents in both groups expressed satisfaction in these areas in 2007.

Satisfaction with the overall study experience had significantly declined for international respondents in the year or so since they completed the 2006 benchmark survey. Satisfaction also declined for Australian respondents.

Likewise, satisfaction with the overall course experience significantly declined for both groups of respondents in the year since they had completed their studies. However, in 2007, more than three-quarters of respondents, in both groups, were satisfied with both their overall study and course experience.

Satisfaction with the cost of the course was low among international respondents in 2006. In both 2006 and 2007 satisfaction with the cost of the course was significantly lower for international than Australian respondents. However, less than half of the Australian respondents were satisfied with the cost of their education at either point in time.

Satisfaction with the help received in getting jobs in the international or Australian respondents' field of study remained relatively low in 2007. The level of satisfaction regarding work experience in the field of study increased in 2007 for international respondents. Half of Australian respondents were satisfied with the work experience they obtained in their field of study.

Some of the best aspects of studying in Australia, recorded in open-ended responses, by the international respondents were: experiencing a new, different and local culture; gaining independence and confidence; course content; meeting new people; and making new friends. For Australian respondents these were: course content; quality of education or standard of education; and living in Australia.

Both groups of respondents considered the following aspects that needed improvement when studying in Australia: the course fees and related costs, integration of international respondents or cross cultural development and assistance to gain work experience relevant to studies and in the field of interest.

Generally, high proportions of the international and Australian respondents would recommend studying in Australia to family and friends, although levels of satisfaction declined from the previous year for international respondents. A lower, although not significantly, proportion of international respondents were willing to recommend the course they completed. Seventy-one per cent of international respondents indicated they would recommend the university they attended to family and friends, a figure significantly lower than recommendations by international respondents (78%) in 2006 and Australian respondents (85%) in 2007.

4. Living in Australia

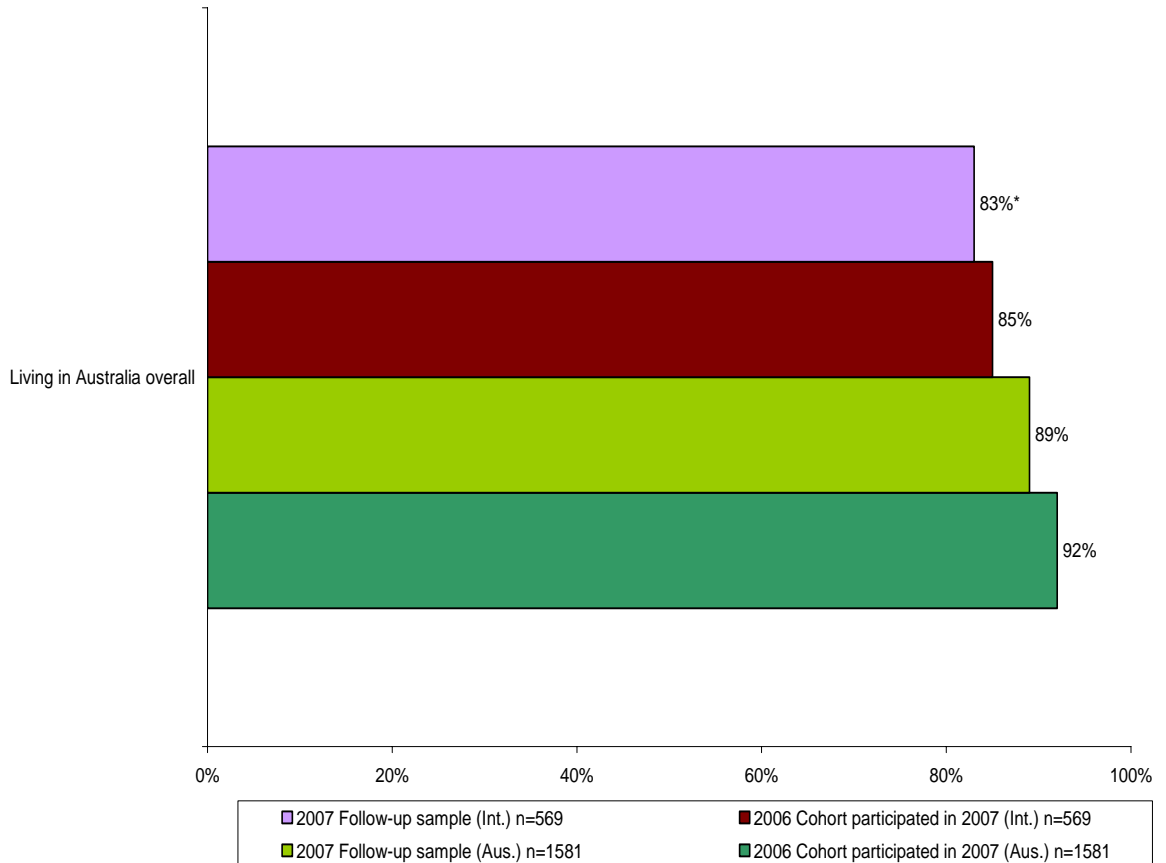
Key findings

- Generally, high proportions of international (83%) and Australian respondents (94%) indicated they would recommend studying in Australia to family and friends. Advocacy among international respondents significantly declined from 89% in 2006. In addition, 68% of international respondents in 2007 were willing to recommend the course they completed, slightly lower than the 70% recommendation in 2006. This compares to 80% of Australian respondents saying they were willing to recommend their course versus an 84% recommendation in 2006.
- Seventy-one per cent of international respondents in 2007 indicated they would recommend the university they attended to family and friends. This was significantly lower than the recommendation in 2006 (78%). Australian respondents also recorded a significant decrease of 5% in 2007 with 85% of the respondents saying they would recommend their university to family and friends.
- In 2006, a majority of both international (85%) and Australian (92%) respondents were satisfied with living in Australia overall, and again on reflection in 2007 (international – 83%, Australian – 89%). In 2007, 74% of international respondents and a significantly higher 84% of Australian respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their life situations.
- Consistent with their concerns about the cost of their course, there was also general concern among respondents regarding the cost of living in Australia. Half or less of the international and Australian respondents were satisfied with the cost of living. Thirty-seven per cent of the international group were satisfied in 2007 compared with a significantly higher 51% of the Australian respondents.
- In 2007, 57% of international respondents were satisfied with the opportunities to make close friends with Australians, while 36% of Australian respondents were satisfied about opportunities to make close friends with international students.
- More than two-thirds (68%) of international respondents felt Australians treated them with respect and courtesy.
- Overall, 74% of the 2007 international respondents were satisfied with learning about Australian culture (significantly higher than the proportion of Australian respondents (49%) who reported their satisfaction about learning new cultures).
- The majority of both international and Australian respondents would recommend living in Australia to others (85% international and a significantly higher 96% for Australian respondents) and the city they lived in (87% international, 88% Australian).

4.1 Satisfaction with living in Australia

The level of satisfaction with living in Australia for international and Australian respondents was positive as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Overall satisfaction with living in Australia (Very satisfied/ Satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q32b/Q28b Overall, how satisfied are you with living in Australia?

An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

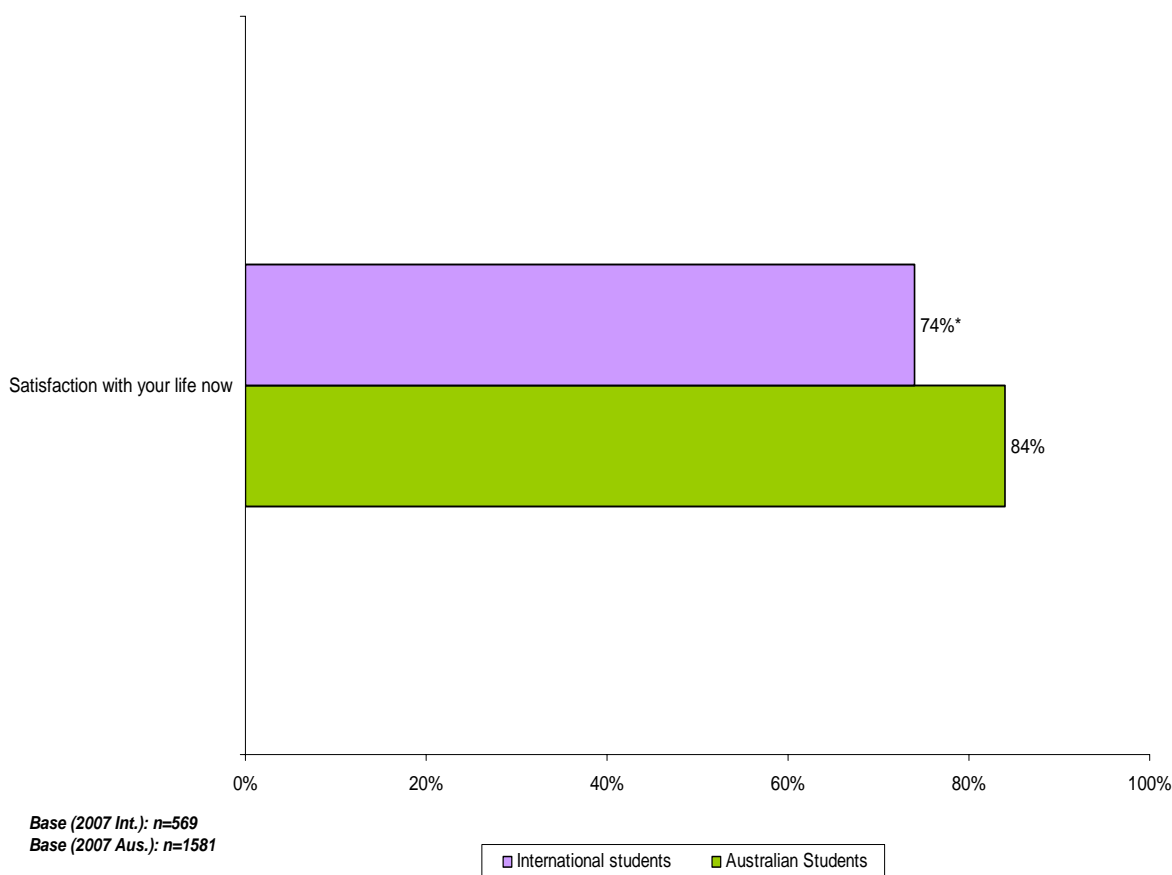
For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 21

Eighty-three per cent of international respondents in 2007 were satisfied with living in Australia, significantly lower than Australian respondents (89%). Respondents from Northeast Asia were significantly less satisfied with this aspect (69%) than were all international respondents.

International and Australian respondents were asked to think back about their course and about living and studying in Australia. They were also asked to express their satisfaction with their life now. As shown in Figure 14, respondents were quite satisfied with their life; however, significantly fewer international (74%) than Australian respondents (84%) were satisfied.

A greater proportion of European respondents (84%) and respondents from North and South America (91%) were satisfied with their life compared to international respondents from other geographic areas.

Figure 14: Satisfaction with their life now (Very satisfied/ satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

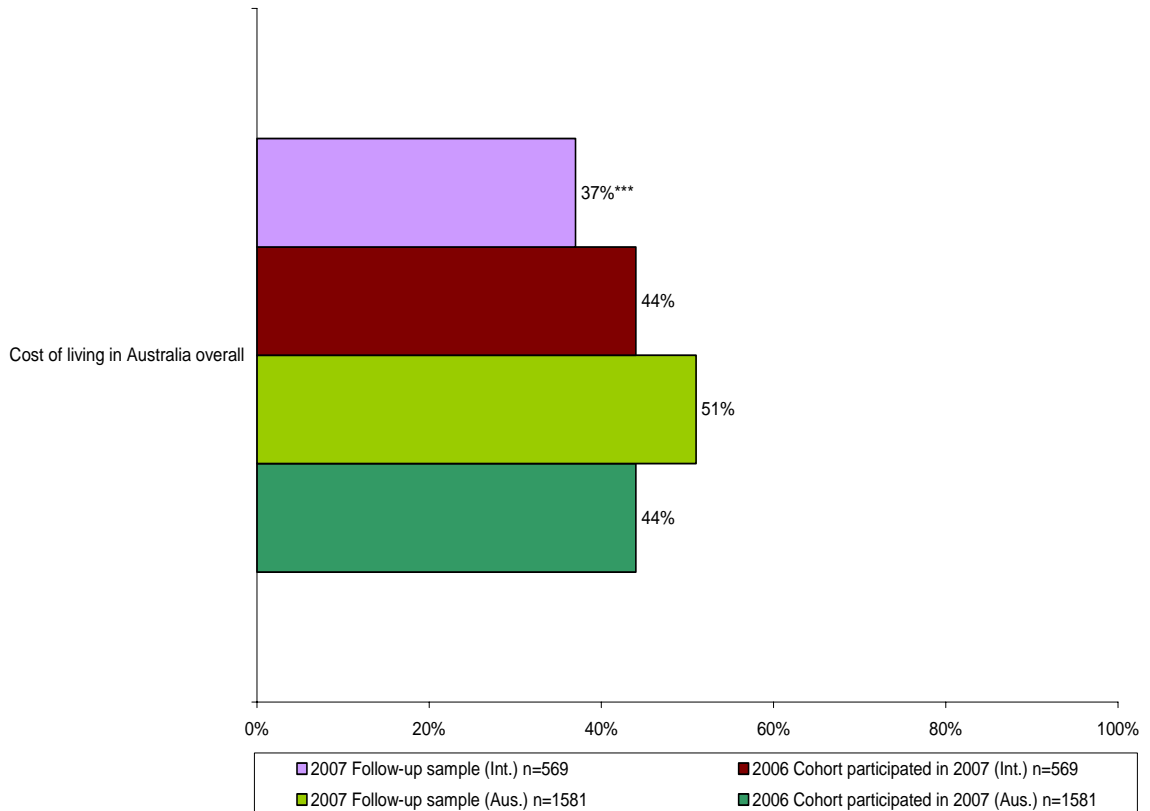
An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample..

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 22

When asked to think back about the cost of living in Australia, a relatively low proportion of the respondents (both international and Australian) were satisfied (Figure 15). More specifically, a significantly lower proportion of international (37%) than Australian respondents in 2007 (51%) were satisfied. This compared with 44% for both international and Australian respondents in 2006. Twenty-eight per cent and 26% of international respondents reported that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the cost of living in 2006 and 2007 respectively, whereas this figure varied from 34% in 2006 to 19% in 2007 for Australian respondents. The remainder of the respondents were non-committal.

Respondents coming from Northeast Asia (18%) and Southeast Asia (28%) were less satisfied with the cost of living compared to respondents from all other geographic areas. While European respondents were more satisfied (72%), those from North and South America were around the average (42%).

Figure 15: Overall satisfaction with the cost of living in Australia (Very satisfied/Satisfied)



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q32a/Q28a How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of living in Australia?

Three asterisks (***) indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample and international respondents in the 2006 Respondent; and between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 23

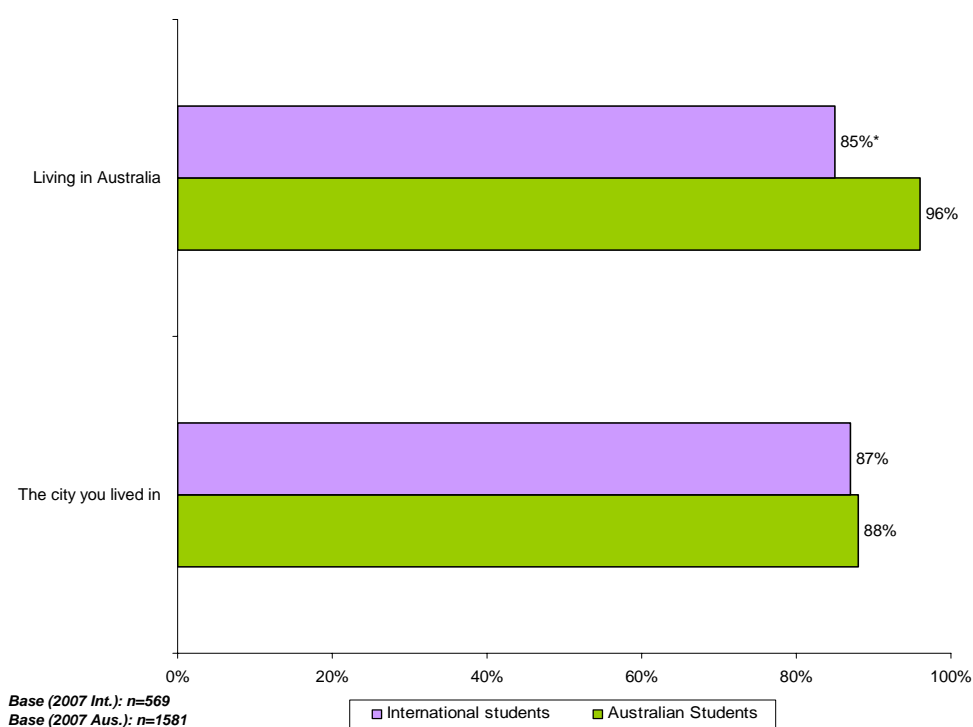
4.2 Willingness to recommend living in Australia

Generally, international respondents in 2006 and in 2007 were highly likely to recommend living in Australia and the city they lived in to family and friends (Figure 16). Eighty-five per cent of international and 96% of Australian respondents were willing to recommend living in Australia. Similar proportions of international and Australian respondents in 2007 (87% and 88%, respectively) were willing to recommend the city they lived in to family and friends.

Willingness to recommend the city they lived in was uniformly high among international respondents regardless of age, gender and country of origin. However, fewer respondents from Northeast Asia (79%) were willing to recommend their city than the overall average of 87%.

Again, fewer international respondents from Northeast Asia were willing to recommend living in Australia (69%), while international respondents from other countries recorded consistently higher levels near the overall average of 85%. There were no significant differences between other demographic measures.

Figure 16: Willingness to recommend living in Australia and the city in which lived



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q16a Would you recommend to others the following...?

An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007

Follow-up sample

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 24

4.3 Life in Australia

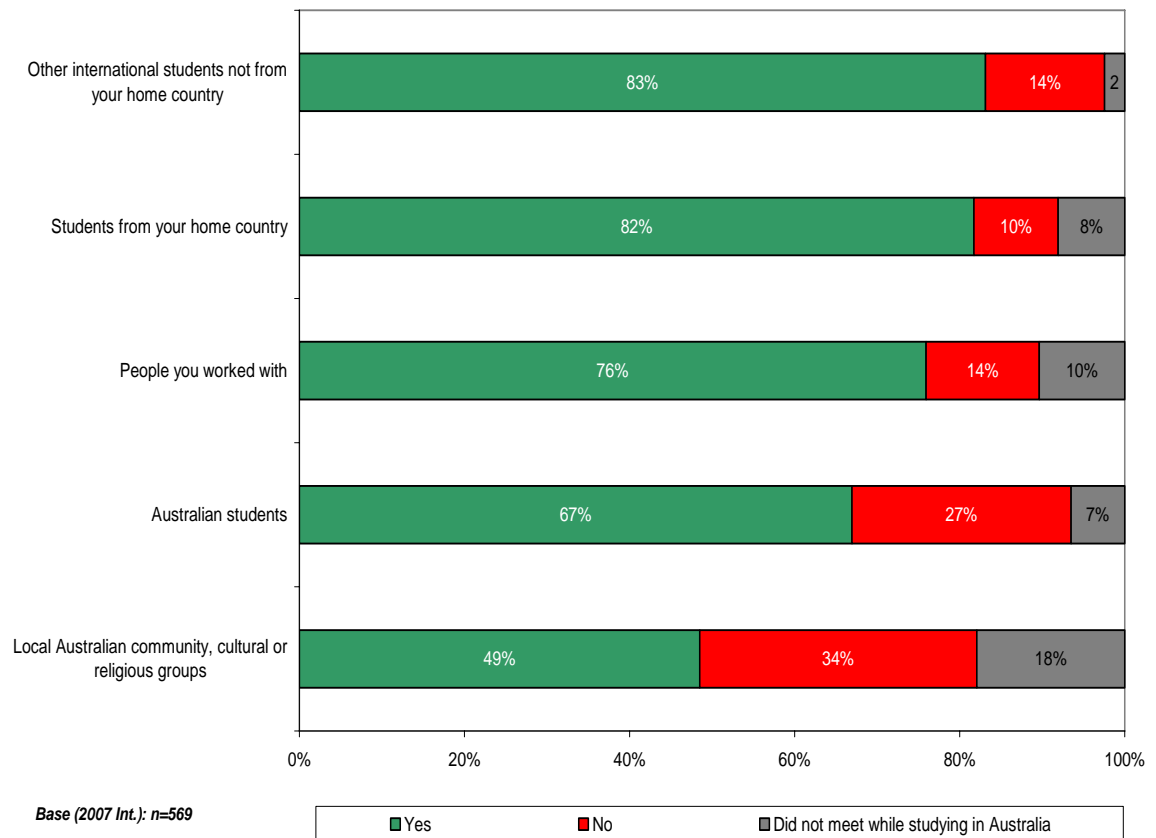
4.3.1 Making friends

International respondents were asked to indicate if they still keep in touch with various people whom they met while studying in Australia.

As shown in Figure 17, high proportions of international respondents indicated they kept in touch with people they met while studying in Australia. The majority (83%) of international respondents kept in contact with other international students, not from their own country and 82% with students from their own country. International respondents kept least contact with

members of the local community in which they stayed in Australia, including cultural or religious groups (49%). Sixty-seven per cent of the international respondents reported they kept in touch with Australian students.

Figure 17: Keeping in touch with close friends in Australia



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q19 Do you keep in touch with members of the following groups of people whom you met while studying in Australia...?
Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

A higher proportion of younger (85%), rather than older, international (76%) respondents were likely to have maintained contact with other international respondents from their own country. More respondents from Asian countries, compared to European or North and South American respondents were likely to have kept in touch with other international students.

European respondents (80%), along with North and South American respondents (76%), were more likely to maintain contact with Australian students they have met than Asian students (generally below the average of 67%).

All international respondents groups maintained similar levels of contact with fellow international students from other countries, as well as contacts in the local community including cultural or religious groups – these were consistent with overall averages. However, fewer North and South American respondents maintained levels of contact with the local community (33%) than the overall average (49%).

A higher proportion of Southeast, Southern and Central Asian respondents maintained contact with people they had worked with (79% and 87%, respectively), whilst fewer North and South American respondents maintained contact with work colleagues (62%).

According to the participants in the case study research, having strong social networks were frequently mentioned as one of the best parts about studying in Australia. While many found it difficult to connect with local students, overall, coming to Australia offered the opportunity to meet people from a range of different backgrounds.

“I’ve been through many happy times with my course mates in the campus café...to discuss or share together. Everyone is very friendly....so long as you are willing to open up, willing to ask and share, then everybody will be willing to accept you.”

Many respondents also valued Australia’s carefree lifestyle which offered more choice and freedom than many of their home countries. Excellent university facilities and support services were also very highly regarded.

“The facilities here are so much better than what we have back home.”

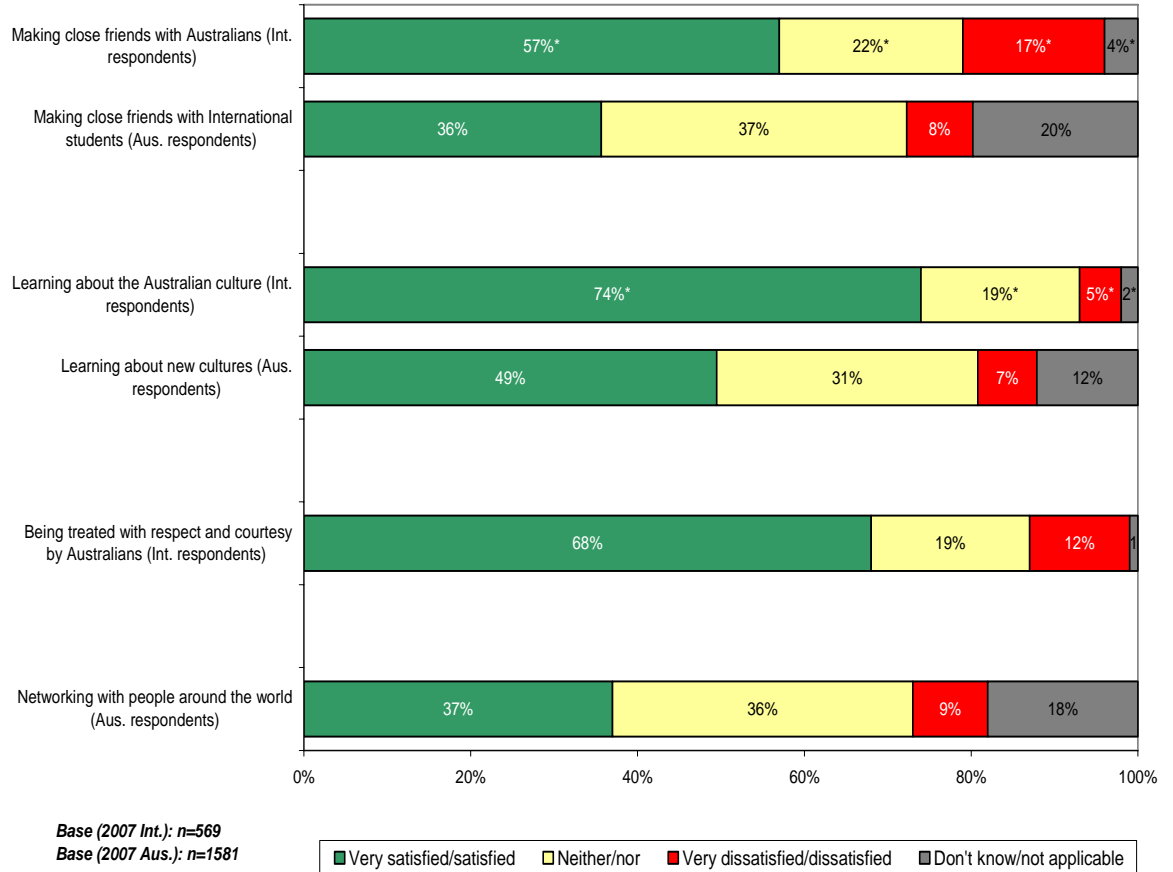
International and Australian respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with various aspects of making friends during their studies in Australia. As shown in Figure 18, the majority (74%) of international respondents were satisfied with learning about Australian culture, while 49% of Australian respondents were satisfied with learning about new cultures. Over two-thirds (68%) of international respondents were satisfied with the way they were treated with respect and courtesy by Australians. Fifty-seven per cent of International respondents were satisfied with making close friends with Australians, whereas 36% of Australian respondents were satisfied with making close friends with international students. Only 37% of Australian respondents indicated they were satisfied with networking with people around the world.

These findings suggest the international respondents were generally satisfied with the way they were treated by Australians; a view shared equally among various age and gender groups. However, there were significant differences between home countries. Northeast Asian respondents had the lowest reported satisfaction (48%) with how they were treated – significantly below the overall average (68%). Greater proportions of European (86%) and North and South American (82%) respondents felt satisfied.

International respondents’ satisfaction in learning about the Australian culture was a good sign of social integration among international respondents. A lesser proportion of respondents, from Southeast Asia (72%) were satisfied with this aspect, compared to Southern and Central Asian (83%), European (85%) and North and South American (80%) respondents.

Almost half of the Australian respondents were satisfied with learning about new cultures (49%), despite this not being a primary aim for Australian respondents in the same way it would be for international respondents. A large proportion of Australian respondents (31%) stated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with this aspect.

Figure 18: Making friends with Australians



(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

Totals for each bar on the graph may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Thirty-eight per cent of the international respondents indicated they were members of an international student alumni grouping. The percentage was higher, although not significantly, for male international respondents. Higher proportions of Southeast Asian respondents were members of an international student alumni grouping than were those from other regions.

In summary, the majority of the international and Australian respondents reported satisfaction with living in Australia. Three-quarters of the international, and significantly more Australian respondents, reported feelings of satisfaction with their life a year or so after completing their course.

Respondents reported consistent levels of dissatisfaction with both the cost of the course and the cost of living in Australia.

There was strong evidence that university education was strengthening international networks. High proportions of international respondents indicated they kept in touch with people they met while studying in Australia. The majority of international respondents kept in contact with other international students who were not from their home country. In addition, most international respondents kept in touch with students from their own country whom they met in Australia. Two-thirds of international respondents reported they kept in touch with Australian students they met while studying, and three-quarters reported they kept in touch with people they worked with in Australia.

These findings suggest that, although international respondents are generally more comfortable keeping in touch with other former international students, the majority are still keeping in touch with Australian nationals.

International respondents were generally satisfied with the way they were treated by Australians, though more would like the opportunity to make close friends with them. Moreover, their eagerness to learn about the Australian culture indicated good signs for social integration among international students.

Generally, international respondents were willing to recommend living in Australia and the city they lived in to family and friends. However, significantly fewer international respondents than Australian respondents were willing to recommend living in Australia. Similar proportions of international and Australian respondents were willing to recommend the city they lived in to family and friends.

5. Future career plans and aspirations

Key findings

- The top 3 goals for the international and Australian respondents in the next 5 years were: having a satisfying and rewarding career; having a secure job; and getting a full-time job.
- Relatively low proportions of the international and Australian respondents indicated they would give up their work to have a family – significantly fewer international than Australian respondents.
- Sixty-two per cent of international respondents and 89% of Australian respondents intend to live in Australia in 12 months time.
- Seventy-two per cent of international respondents were planning to apply (36%) or have already applied (36%) for permanent resident status in Australia. Twenty-nine per cent were not planning to apply for permanent resident status.

About two-thirds (68%) of international and three-quarters (76%) of Australian respondents indicated they intend to continue studying, working or doing something else for at least another 12 months as at 1 August 2007. However, this view was held by fewer international than Australian female respondents; fewer international respondents aged 16 to 25 years than Australian respondents of the same age; and by predominantly Southeast Asian respondents.

Seventy-three per cent of international and 79% of Australian respondents currently working were intending to do so for at least 12 months. However, a lower proportion (66%) of international and 73% of Australian respondents currently studying indicated they will continue their studies in the next 12 months.

Twenty-four per cent of international respondents indicated they would do something else in the next 12 months. Of those, 65% noted that they would work in the next 12 months, 37% indicated that they would look for a different job, and 21% would study. Another 3% indicated they would do something else, including travelling. Of those international respondents who were currently working, 27% indicated they intend to study in the next 12 months. Ninety per cent of international respondents currently studying indicated they intend to work for the next 12 months. Fifty-six per cent of respondents currently working indicated they would look for a different job in the next 12 months.

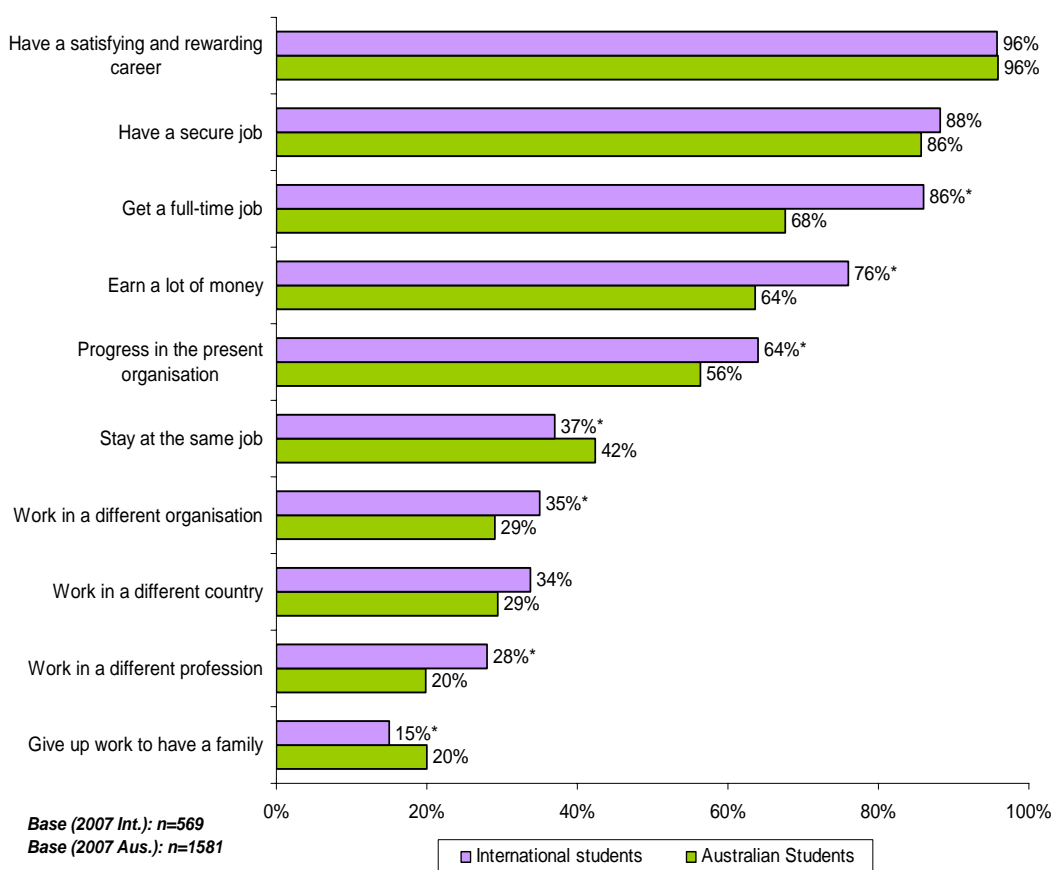
In comparison, 17% of the Australian respondents did not intend to continue their present activity. Of those, 46% noted they would work in the next 12 months, 36% would look for a different job, and 27% would study. Also, 44% of Australian respondents currently working intended to look for a different job in the next 12 months.

Sixty-two per cent of the international respondents indicated they intended to live in Australia in 12 months time, 26% planned to live in their home country, 5% in another country and 7% did

not know. In comparison, 89% of Australian respondents intended to live in Australia in 12 months time, 6% in another country and 4% did not know.

As shown in Figure 19, the top three goals for both international and Australian respondents for the next five years were: having a satisfying and rewarding career (96% for both international and Australian respondents); having a secure job (88% of international and 86% of Australian respondents); and getting a full-time job (86% of international and 68% of Australian respondents). These goals were consistent for both groups regardless of age, gender or home country. An exception was significantly fewer European respondents (73%), than the average (86%), cited securing a full-time job as being important for them to achieve, in the next 5 years.

Figure 19: Importance of achieving various outcomes in next five years (Extremely important/ Important)



Q15b (Int./Aus.) Still thinking about the future, please indicate how important the following will be for you to achieve in the next five years... An asterisk (*) indicates differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between international and Australian respondents in the 2007 Follow-up sample.

For detailed category breakdown please see Appendix B, Table 25

Respondents mentioned other important goals including:

- earning a lot of money. This was significantly more important for international (76%) than Australian respondents (64%), and more important for younger (80%) than older respondents (72%). European respondents (60%) and North and South American respondents (64%) thought this to be less important than Asian respondents, and
- progressing in the present organisation where they work. This was significantly more important for international (64%) than Australian respondents (56%), with no significant differences between demographic profiles within these groups.

Relatively low proportions of the international (15%) and Australian (20%) respondents indicated they would give up their work to have a family.

Significant differences existed between groups of Australian respondents, with those aged 16-25 years (24%) indicating they would give up work to have a family over the next five years compared to only 16% of those aged 26 years or older. Over twice as many Australian female respondents (24%) than Australian male respondents (11%) indicated they would give up work to have a family. There were no such significant difference existed for international respondents.

International respondents in 2006 and 2007 were asked to indicate their intention to apply for permanent resident status in Australia. As shown in Table 15, the proportion of international respondents who planned to apply for permanent resident status in Australia in 2006 (64%) was significantly higher than those who planned to apply in 2007 (36%). This was due to a large proportion of the 2006 respondents having already applied for permanent resident status.

Table 15: Permanent resident status intention

Planning to apply for permanent resident status in Australia	International respondents	
	a	b
	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample n=569	Respondent participated in 2007 n=568
Yes, you are planning to apply	36% (a, b)	64%
Yes, you have already applied	36% (a, b)	5%
No, you are not planning to apply	29%	31%

(2007) (Int.) Q17a Are you planning to apply or have you already applied for permanent residency (PR) in Australia?

(2006) (Int.) Q35a Are you planning to apply or have you already applied for a permanent residency (PR) in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

A significantly greater proportion of younger international respondents (40%) planned to apply for permanent resident status than older international respondents (28%). Again, this was mostly due to a higher proportion of older respondents having already applied for permanent resident status.

Only 5% of international respondents in 2006 indicated they had already applied for permanent resident status. The proportion of international respondents who were not planning to apply was similar in 2006 and 2007 (31% and 29%, respectively). Compared to Asian respondents, a greater proportion of European as well as North and South American respondents indicated they did not plan to apply. This was the only difference on this aspect based on demographic characteristics.

Of those international respondents who were planning to apply for permanent resident status, significantly fewer respondents in 2007 (52%) were planning to apply within the next 12 months than respondents in 2006 (71%). Again this may have been due to respondents having already applied in 2006. No other significant differences were apparent regarding this measure.

Nearly two-thirds of the international respondents indicated they intended to live in Australia in 12 months time, one-quarter intended to live in their home country, and less than 1 in 10 intended to live in another country. In comparison, almost all Australian respondents intended to live in Australia in 12 months time, while less than 1 in 10 intended to live in another country.

The proportion of international respondents who were planning to apply for permanent resident status in Australia in 2007 was significantly lower (36%) than the same group in 2006 (64%). The significantly lower proportion planning to apply in 2007 was due to the fact that 36% have already applied for permanent resident status (including 5% who applied in 2006). The proportion of international respondents who were not planning to apply for permanent resident status was similar in 2006 and 2007 (about 30%).

6. Summary of key findings

The *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey – Higher Education* found most international respondents are satisfied with the education they received (81%) and the experience of living in Australia (83%). Also, a high proportion of respondents would recommend studying (83%) and living in Australia (85%) to others.

The Survey suggested the majority (73%) of respondents were either working full-time (41%) or studying full-time (32%). Sixty-nine per cent of the respondents were working in Australia and 84% who continued in further studies did so in Australia.

More than 60% plan to live in Australia in 12 months time, and around 70% have, or have planned to apply for permanent resident status.

6.1 Objectives and overview

The ISS project involved two phases: the 2006 benchmark and the 2007 Follow-up Survey. Phase 1 involved surveying four education sectors, higher education, VET, secondary schools and ELICOS. Phase 2 involved a Follow-up Survey and qualitative case studies with higher education and VET graduates who participated in the 2006 study. A control group of Australian students was included in both the benchmark and Follow-up Survey.

The aim of the 2007 Follow-up Survey was to examine employment and/or further education outcomes after course completion; in retrospect, examine respondents' level of satisfaction with overall studying and living in Australia; and ascertain the future career plans and aspirations of respondents.

The 2007 Follow-up Survey collected further information from 2,150 graduates of higher education courses completed in Australia in 2006 or early 2007. The total of 2,150 graduates, including 569 international citizens and 1,581 Australian nationals, responded to the online or hard-copy self-completion survey sent in August/September, 2007. This represented an overall response rate of 32% (28% for international and 34% for Australian respondents). Each respondent had previously participated in the 2006 benchmark survey of final year students at higher education institutions across Australia. This 'repeated measures' design, in which feedback was obtained approximately 12 months apart from the same respondents, was employed to measure whether students' attitudes to, and satisfaction with Australian education have changed significantly over time, and to ascertain the extent to which their future career plans or education aspirations were being achieved following graduation.

This report focuses on the higher education 2007 Follow-up Survey respondents only, including feedback from 16 case studies with graduates from Australian institutions who were citizens of Australia and 5 Asian countries.

6.2 Overall education and employment outcomes

As of 1 August 2007, 41% of international respondents were working full-time or have accepted a full-time job offer; 8% were seeking full-time work; 32% were studying full-time; 5% were involved in part-time study or work (or both); and the remaining 4% reported some other activity. In total, 27% of international respondents were working in part-time positions, 16% in combination with study, and 1% were studying part-time only.

In the 2006 benchmark survey, 57% of international respondents reported intending to find jobs on graduation. By 1 August 2007, 41% had achieved full-time employment, with a further 11% working part-time (and not studying). In 2006, 21% of international respondents planned to enrol in further studies following graduation, and by 1 August 2007, 32% were undertaking full-time study, with another 4% studying part-time.

In contrast, 57% of Australian respondents were working full-time or had accepted full-time job offers; 4% were seeking full-time work; 22% were studying full-time; 10% were involved in part-time study or work (or both); and the remaining 5% reported some other activity. In total, 25% of Australian follow-up respondents were working in part-time positions, 15% in combination with study, and 14% were studying part-time.

In the 2006 benchmark survey, 48% of Australian respondents reported intending to find jobs on graduation. By 1 August 2007, 57% were working full-time, with a further 10% working part-time (and not studying). In 2006, 24% of final year Australian respondents planned to enrol in further studies following graduation, and by 1 August 2007, 21% were undertaking full-time study, with another 14% studying part-time.

Among those international respondents from 2006 who were working part-time or full-time on 1 August 2007 or who had accepted full-time job offers (68% of the total sample), the majority (69%) found their jobs in Australia. In comparison, almost all (97%) of the Australian 2006 respondents who were employed on 1 August 2007 or who had accepted full-time job offers (82% of the total sample), were working in Australia. Similarly, the 2007 Follow-up Survey found that 84% of the international respondents who continued in further studies (36% of the total sample) did so in Australia, as did most (98%) of the Australian respondents who continued their studies (35% of the total sample).

In summary, a higher proportion of Australian respondents were both working and studying than was their reported aspiration as final year students. More international respondents were enrolled in further studies than they planned as final year students, and slightly fewer were in employment than was planned as undergraduates. Significantly, more international than Australian respondents were seeking full-time work as of 1 August 2007. Overall, the higher education system generally facilitates students to achieve their employment and education aspirations.

6.3 Characteristics of respondents enrolling in further studies

Sixty per cent of the international respondents who enrolled for further studies following graduation (36% of the 2007 respondents) did so at the same university in Australia, while 19% enrolled in a different university in Australia, 6% in a university in their home country and 5% in a university in another country overseas. Five per cent have continued their studies at a VET

institution in Australia, and 5% have enrolled in some other type of course. The move to the VET system was less pronounced (2%) among Australian respondents who had enrolled for further studies (35% of the total sample), and only 1% of those were continuing to study at an overseas university. Seventy-three per cent of Australian respondents who continued their studies did so at the same university in Australia, a figure significantly lower than their international counterparts, while 23% have enrolled at a different university in Australia.

Fewer international and Australian respondents actually enrolled for further studies at a different Australian university than was the intention expressed as final year students in 2006.

Forty per cent of international respondents who continued their studies have enrolled in a masters degree program, 19% have commenced a doctorate, 12% an honours bachelor degree, with the remaining 29% enrolling in a bachelor degree, diploma or graduate certificate course. In comparison, significantly fewer Australian respondents have enrolled in a masters degree program (20%), while significantly more have commenced an honours bachelor degree program (22%). At present, international higher education graduates comprise large numbers within the post-graduate programs offered by Australian universities.

The majority of international respondents enrolled in further studies (88%) believed their Australian qualifications have adequately prepared them for the course they were currently studying, similar to the finding reported by the Australian respondents (87%).

6.4 Characteristics of respondents in employment

Among those international respondents who were working part-time or full-time on 1 August 2007 or who have accepted full-time job offers (68% of the total sample), the majority (69%) found their jobs in Australia, while nearly one-third (31%) were working overseas. More Australian respondents who were employed on 1 August 2007 or who had accepted full-time job offers (82% of the total sample), were working in Australia (97%).

One-quarter (24%) of international respondents who looked for and found employment did so through family and friends, while 22% found jobs through an online job board. Significantly fewer Australian respondents found jobs through family and friends (16%) or online job boards (17%).

Eighteen per cent of international respondents who actively sought employment used strategies to search for jobs such as approaching an employer directly (9%) or through work contacts and networks (9%). The corresponding combined proportion was 23% for Australian respondents seeking employment. Seven per cent of the international respondents who actively sought employment used an employment agency, while 6% were approached directly by an employer and a similar proportion initially discovered the job through a university careers service. The corresponding estimates for the Australian respondents seeking employment were 4% (employment agency), 11% (direct approach by employer) and 7% (university careers service). Advertisements in the print media were a significantly more common source of initial information about the job for the Australian respondents (12%) than their international counterparts (7%).

Twenty-nine per cent of international respondents who found jobs indicated it was very difficult or difficult to find this job, significantly more than reported by Australian respondents (21%). The main difficulties faced by the international respondents in finding jobs included lack of work experience and of permanent resident status, inability to find jobs in field of interest,

English language barriers and a perception that employers preferred local to international graduates.

More than half of the international respondents who found jobs (57%) believed employers highly valued the Australian course they completed; a figure significantly lower than their Australian counterparts (70%). One-third of the international group (32%) felt employers only somewhat valued the course they studied in Australia, compared to a significantly lower 22% of the Australian respondents who reported this perception.

Among the international respondents who were employed on 1 August 2007, 69% were employed in the private sector (including not-for-profit organisations), despite having expressed this only around half (53%) as final year respondents; conversely, fewer had taken government positions (21%) compared to their intentions as final year respondents (32%). This contrast was even stronger for employed Australian respondents, 29% of whom expressed the likelihood of working in the non-government sector as final year respondents, with 60% expecting to take up public sector employment. By 1 August 2007, 54% were employed in the non-government sector and 40% in one of the three spheres of government (mainly State).

6.5 Characteristics of respondents still looking for employment after graduation

The 17% of international respondents who were still looking for jobs immediately after their studies in Australia were asked in which sector they were likely to work – the split was almost even between a private company or family business (34%) and the public sector (32%), followed by contract work (19%). Government employment was the preference for 52% of Australian respondents still looking for work immediately following their course, followed by work in the private sector (20%), as a contractor (6%) or in their own business (5%).

The majority of international respondents (76%) who were still looking for work reported it was difficult or very difficult to find work after completing their 2006 studies, similar to that reported by Australian respondents (77%). Difficulties reported by the international job seekers included lack of work experience, not having permanent residence status, and English language barriers.

Just over one-third (36%) of international respondents who were still looking for work immediately after they completed their studies thought employers highly valued the course they completed in 2006, similar to the perception of Australian respondents (37%). However, 16% of the international and 24% of the Australian respondents, felt employers did not put much value on the course they had studied in Australia. Many held the perception that employers were more interested in the graduates' hands-on practical experience than the actual degree.

6.6 Hours worked and satisfaction of employed respondents

The mean number of hours that employed international respondents worked in their main paid job was 33 hours per week, compared with 35 hours per week for the employed Australian respondents. Eighteen per cent of international and 23% of Australian respondents reported working 41 hours or more during the average week. Twenty-eight per cent of international respondents reported working 20 hours or fewer in their main paid job in an average week, compared to 19% for Australian respondents.

The main paid job held on 1 August 2007 was significantly more likely to meet the employment expectations of Australian respondents (70%) when they finished their course than those of their international counterparts (58%). Conversely, employed international respondents were significantly more likely to feel their main job only partly meets the expectations they had when they finished studying (28% compared with 18% for the Australian respondents). The international respondents were slightly less satisfied than the Australian respondents with the industry and profession in which they were now working – although at least three-quarters of both groups report being satisfied or very satisfied.

International and Australian respondents who were working or studying full-time were asked how they found balancing their study and work commitments with their family and social life. More than one-quarter of both groups found this balance easy or very easy (31% for the international and 27% for the Australian respondents), but half of the Australian respondents reported this balance to be somewhat or very difficult (49%) compared with a significantly lower 29% for their international counterparts.

6.7 Satisfaction of respondents with study in Australia

Around four-fifths of international respondents were satisfied with their overall study experience and overall course experience in Australia, although satisfaction in both areas significantly declined (from 87% to 81% for the study experience and from 84% to 77% for the course experience) between 2006 and 2007. Australian respondents reported slightly higher satisfaction levels on these measures, although, again, both declined significantly between 2006 and 2007.

The quality of education and course content was also rated as satisfactory by around four-fifths of both the international and Australian respondents, with international respondents giving significantly higher ratings on both of these measures in 2007 compared with 2006 (from 76% to 83% and from 73% to 78% satisfied, respectively). It appears the experiences of some international graduates improved their perceptions of both the course content and the quality of education in Australia.

Dissatisfaction with the cost of Australian higher education courses was generally an issue of concern. In 2007, international respondents were significantly less satisfied (22%) than Australian respondents (42%). The proportion of international respondents satisfied with the cost of the course had fallen 6% from 28% in 2006, whilst the proportion of satisfied Australian respondents did not change over this period. A significant difference was found between both male and female international respondents and their Australian counterparts in satisfaction with the cost of their course, with the international gender groups both significantly less satisfied.

Although it was still an issue of concern, there was significant improvement in the proportion of respondents that were satisfied with getting work experience in their field of study between 2006 and 2007. Significantly more Australian respondents were satisfied with this aspect in 2007 (50%) compared with 2006 (43%), and significantly more international respondents (42%) were satisfied with their ability to get work in their field of study in 2007 compared to 25% in 2006.

More than one-third of the international (37%) and Australian respondents (40%) were satisfied with the help they received in getting a good job in their field of study.

Attention needs to be given to these issues of cost, practical work experience, and assistance in finding relevant employment if Australian education is to maintain its strong market position. Many international respondents rate the quality of courses in the USA and the UK as better than those offered in Australia. Australian post-secondary education courses need to be kept cost competitive, relevant and recognised so as to help students to attain their employment aspirations.

Some of the best aspects of studying in Australia indicated by international respondents related to experiencing a new, different and local culture; gaining independence and confidence; course content; and meeting new people and making new friends.

Overall, 74% of international respondents were satisfied with learning about the Australian culture (significantly higher than the proportion of Australian respondents (49%) who were satisfied with learning about new cultures).

Both international and Australian respondents regarded a range of general cognitive, analytical, inter-personal and communications skills as important to develop during their education in Australia, and were subsequently finding the skills they developed to be useful. For the international respondents, the thirteen general skills investigated ranged in importance and usefulness ratings from 'analytical thinking' (95% important, 92% useful) to gaining the 'characteristics of self-reliance and leadership' (85% important, 83% useful). There was much more being gained from Australian education than the knowledge acquired of the particular profession or discipline under study.

However, English language competency remains an issue for some international respondents. In 2006, international respondents were asked to indicate their perceived level of English language skills when they started their course. The majority of international respondents (78%) in 2006, indicated their English language skills were up to the level required to undertake their studies. In 2007, international respondents were asked to indicate their perceived level of written and spoken English language skills when they completed their course in Australia. Again, the majority of respondents in 2007 indicated their English language skills were up to the level required to continue their studies or seek suitable employment (90% for written, and 86% for spoken English skills). These findings indicated international respondents generally have a sufficient knowledge of English by the time they complete their course, and even showed a slight increase in their own perceived competency after they complete it. However, there was room for improvement for some international respondents in their self-assessed written and spoken English language skills.

High proportions of international (83%) and Australian respondents (94%) indicated they would recommend studying in Australia to family and friends. In addition, 68% of international respondents were willing to recommend the course they completed, lower than 70% in 2006, but not statistically significantly different. This compares to 80% of Australian respondents reporting they were willing to recommend their course, versus 84% in 2006.

Seventy-one per cent of international respondents indicated they would recommend the university they attended to family and friends. This was 7% lower than in 2006 (78%), a statistically significant difference. Australian respondents also recorded a significant drop of 5% in 2007 to 85% reporting they would recommend their university to family and friends.

6.8 Satisfaction of respondents with life in Australia

In 2006, more than five-sixths of both international and Australian respondents were satisfied with living in Australia overall and again, on reflection, in 2007. By 2007, around three-quarters of the international respondents (74%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their life situation compared with a significantly higher 84% of Australian respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with their life situation.

Consistent with their concerns about the cost of the course, there was also general concern among respondents regarding the overall cost of living in Australia. Half or fewer of the international and Australian respondents were satisfied with the cost of living here: 37% of the international respondents were satisfied compared with a statistically significantly higher 51% of Australian respondents.

Even so, the majority of both international (85%) and Australian (96%) respondents would recommend living in Australia to others and the city they lived in (87% international; 88% Australian).

International respondents were asked whether they kept in touch with members of various groups of people whom they met while studying in Australia. The strengthening of international networks through education was apparent. More than two-thirds reported to have kept in touch with other international students not from their home country (83%); with students from their home country (82%); with people they worked with (76%); and with Australian students (67%). Forty-nine per cent reported to have kept in touch with local Australian community, cultural or religious groups. Thirty-seven per cent of Australian respondents were satisfied with their opportunities for networking with people from around the world.

As in 2006, a minority of international respondents, again, reported dissatisfaction with the opportunities to make close friends with Australians (17%), although significantly more were satisfied with this aspect than were Australian students regarding their opportunities to make close friends. There is an opportunity for the higher education sector to consider ways of helping both groups of students get to know each other better with a view to building closer friendships, and better understanding each others' cultures. More than two-thirds (68%) of international respondents felt Australians treated them with respect and courtesy.

6.9 Future plans of respondents

Sixty-two per cent of international respondents and 89% of the respondents intended to live in Australia in 12 months time. Among those international respondents who were working part-time or full-time on 1 August 2007 or who have accepted full-time job offers (68% of the total sample), the majority (69%) found their jobs in Australia. Almost all (97%) of the Australian respondents who were employed on 1 August 2007 or who had accepted full-time job offers (82% of the total sample), were working in Australia. Furthermore, the data suggested that there was little leakage from the Australian education system among either international or Australian students who completed a higher education course in 2006 and then enrolled for further studies in 2007. The survey suggested at least 84% of the international respondents who continued with further studies did so in Australia (36% of the total group surveyed), as did almost all (98%) of the Australian respondents (35% of the total sample).

The top four goals international and Australian respondents indicated would be important for them to achieve in the next five years were:

- having a satisfying and rewarding career (96% of both international and Australian respondents)
- having a secure job (88% of international and 86% of Australian respondents)
- getting a full-time job (86% of international and a significantly lower 68% of Australian respondents), and
- earning a lot of money (76% of international and a significantly lower 64% of Australian respondents).

Seventy-two per cent of international respondents were planning to apply (36%) or have already applied (36%) for permanent resident status in Australia. Only 29% were not planning to apply for permanent residence status. Clearly, most of the international respondents believed they can achieve their medium-term career goals in Australia, and were satisfied with both the education they received and with living in Australia overall. The majority will be strong ambassadors for Australia, and will recommend studying in Australia, the university they attended, the course they completed, the city they lived in and living in Australia in general.

Appendix A – 2007 ISS follow-up questionnaire



Australian Government

Australian Education International



Follow-up Survey of VET and University Graduates

INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

who completed a course of study in Australia during the period between August 2006 to July 2007.

2007



This questionnaire is to be completed by international and Australian students and can be completed only once.

Australian Education International (AEI) is an arm of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) with responsibility for attracting students from around the world to study in Australia and ensuring that international students have a successful and enjoyable study experience.

AEI is researching the experiences and views of international and Australian students who completed a course of study in Australia during the period of August 2006 to July 2007.

Thank you for participating in the first part of this survey in 2006.

This follow-up questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Alternatively, you can complete this questionnaire online at www.studentsurvey.com.au

© Commonwealth of Australia [2007].
This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney General's Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 or posted at <http://www.ag.gov.au/cca>

2007 Follow-up Survey of International and Australian VET and University Graduates

- *If you cannot give an exact answer to any question, please provide your best estimate.*
- *For questions with boxes, please tick the appropriate box.*
- *There is space at the end of the survey to write any comments you may have about your studies or experiences at your VET college or university in Australia.*

Dear Student,

Thank you for participating in the 2006 survey and for agreeing to participate in this important follow-up survey in 2007.

This research will provide valuable information to industry and Government on the experience of international and Australian students in Australian education institutions.

I hope your studies in Australia have been enjoyable and rewarding and I wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Fiona Buffinton
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Education International

Department of Education, Science and Training

August 2007

About this survey

The aim of the follow-up survey is to ask you about your progress in relation to employment or future study following your graduation from the course you completed in Australia.

The information from this survey will be used by Australian Education International (AEI) and will be published in a report.

The information we gather from you and other graduates will give us a better understanding of the overall educational experience of international and Australian students.

AEI has contracted Ipsos Australia to conduct the survey. Please return your completed questionnaire by:
Monday, 8th October 2007.

Privacy

You do not need to give your name or any other information which can identify you on the survey form (and we will not release any data which will allow individuals to be identified).

We will make sure that your responses are treated in strict confidence and you can be assured that the content of individual responses will not be divulged.

However, if you wish to enter the draw for cash prizes (see below), you will need to complete the optional section at the end of this survey and fill in your contact details.

Any personal information collected will not be disclosed to any third party.

Cash prizes

34 cash prizes will be offered to randomly selected, eligible respondents (with contact details) in 2007.

The prize winners in 2007 will be contacted by Ipsos by both letter and email by December 2007. The prizes will be delivered to the mail addresses provided. All eligible students submitting a completed questionnaire with contact details before the nominated closing date – **Monday, 8th October 2007** – will be included in the prize draw.



WIN
one of four
\$500 cash prizes
or
one of thirty \$100 cash

Need further information?

If you have any questions about this survey, or completing this questionnaire, please call Preslav Bondjakov, Project Manager at Ipsos Australia on 1800 791 000 or email preslav.bondjakov@ipsos.com.au

1. Your Background

We would like to start by asking you some questions about your background. Your responses to the following questions will be treated as anonymous and confidential.

Q1a What is the name of the university, VET or TAFE College at which you completed your course between August 2006 and July 2007?

Q1b In which State or Territory of Australia is that University or College located? (Please tick one box only)

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| NSW | 1 <input type="checkbox"/> | WA | 5 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| VIC | 2 <input type="checkbox"/> | TAS | 6 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| QLD | 3 <input type="checkbox"/> | NT | 7 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SA | 4 <input type="checkbox"/> | ACT | 8 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q1c What month and year did you complete the course you last finished in Australia?

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Month

--	--	--	--

Year

Q2a What was the title in full of the course which you completed in 2006/2007 (e.g. Bachelor of Science, Diploma of Education)? (Write in the box below)

Q2b What were the major fields of study (e.g. information technology, civil engineering, drama, pure maths, hotel management)? (Write in the box(es) below)

		Office Use only
i	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
ii	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="text"/> <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

Q2c What was the level of the course which you completed in 2006/2007? (Please tick one box only)

- Certificate 1
- Diploma 2
- Advanced diploma 3
- Associate degree 4
- Pass bachelor degree 5
- Honours bachelor degree 6
- Graduate entry bachelor degree 7
- Graduate certificate 8
- Graduate/Post graduate diploma 9
- Postgraduate Qualifying / preliminary 10
- Masters Degree 11
- Doctorate 12
- Other course 13

Q2d Is this course part of a combined or double degree (e.g. BA/LLB., BSc/BE.)? (Please tick one box only)

- Yes 1
No 2

Q2e In what year did you commence this course?

--	--	--	--

Q2f Was your attendance for the course you have just completed: (Please tick one box only)

- Wholly or mainly full-time 1
Wholly or mainly part-time 2

Q2g Was your study for the course you have just completed: (Please tick one box only):

- Wholly or mainly internal (on-campus) 1
Wholly or mainly external 2

AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS NOW GO TO QUESTION 3b

Q3a INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO ANSWER:

Is the course you have recently received in Australia recognised in your home country? (Please tick one box only)

- Yes 1
No 2
Don't know 99

Q3b ALL STUDENTS:

Is the course you have recently received recognised in overseas countries, other than your home country, in which you might live in the future? (Please tick one box only)

- Yes 1
No 2
Don't know 99

Q4a Immediately after you completed your course in Australia in 2006/7, what was the next thing you did? (Please tick one box only)

- Enrolled for further studies 1 ▶ GO TO Q4b
- Still looking for a job 2 ▶ GO TO Q6a
- Looked for and found a job 3 ▶ GO TO Q6c
- Travelled or had extended time off 4 ▶ GO TO Q7a
- No plans for the future 5 ▶ GO TO Q7a
- Other (please specify) 6 ▼

 ▶ GO TO Q7a

COMPLETE QUESTIONS 4b to 5i ONLY IF YOU WERE ENROLLED IN FURTHER STUDY AT 1 AUGUST 2007

OR IF YOU HAVE ACCEPTED THE OFFER OF A PLACE IN FURTHER STUDY.

ALL OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE QUESTION 6a

Q4b Where did you enrol for further studies? (Please tick one box only)

- At the same university in Australia 1
- At a different university in Australia 2
- At the same VET/TAFE college in Australia 3
- At a different VET/TAFE college in Australia 4
- At a university in your home country 5
- At another private/public institution in your home country 6
- At another university in another country overseas 7
- At a another public/private institution in another country overseas 8
- Other (please specify) 9 ▼

AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS TO ANSWER QUESTION 2f and QUESTION 2g.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS GO TO QUESTION 3a

Q5a What is the full title of the course (e.g. Bachelor of Science, Diploma of Education)? (Write in the box below)

Q5b What are/will be your major fields of study (e.g. information technology, civil engineering, drama, pure maths, French, hotel management)? (Write in the box(es) below)

i		Office Use only		
ii				

- Q5c** What is the level of the course? (Please tick one box only)
- Diploma or advanced diploma 1
 - Associate Degree 2
 - Pass bachelor degree 3
 - Honours bachelor degree 4
 - Graduate entry bachelor degree 5
 - Graduate certificate 6
 - Graduate/Post graduate Diploma 7
 - Postgraduate qualifying/preliminary 8
 - Masters Degree 9
 - Doctorate 10
 - Other course 11

- Q5d** How are you/will you be attending this course? (Please tick one box only)
- Wholly or mainly full-time 1
 - Wholly or mainly part-time 2

- Q5e** Is the study for the course mainly: (Please tick one box only)
- Wholly or mainly internal (on-campus) 1
 - Wholly or mainly external 2

Q5f What is the name of the institution you are, or will be attending? (Write in the box below)

Q5g What month and year are you likely to **complete** this course?

Month								Year					

- Q5h** Did you receive any credit or advanced standing for this course as a result of the studies you completed in Australia? (Please tick one box only)
- Yes 1
 - No 2
 - Don't know 99

- Q5i** Do you think that your Australian qualification has adequately prepared you for the course you are currently studying/about to study? (Please tick one box only)
- Yes 1
 - No 2
 - Don't know 99

STUDENTS STILL LOOKING FOR A JOB (QUESTION 4a, Code 2)
ANSWER QUESTION 6a and QUESTION 6b;

THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND A JOB (QUESTION 4a, Code 3) **GO TO INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE QUESTION 6c;**

ALL OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE QUESTION 7a

- Q6a** Where are you planning to find your next job in your field of study? (Please tick one box only)
- Not planning to find a job in this field 1
 - Australia 2
 - Another country overseas (Please specify in box below) 3
-

(INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY) Your home country 4

- Q6b** Once you find a job, where are you likely to work? (Please tick one box only)
- Your own business 1
 - Contract work 2
 - Family business 3
 - Other private company 4
 - Public sector/Government 5
 - Don't know 99

STUDENTS STILL LOOKING FOR A JOB (QUESTION 4a, Code 2) **OR**
STUDENTS WHO HAVE FOUND A JOB (QUESTION 4a, Code 3)
TO ANSWER QUESTIONS 6c to 6g

ALL OTHERS GO TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE QUESTION 7a.

- Q6c** If you actively sought employment since you graduated, please indicate below which of the following strategies or sources of information you used: (Please tick all that apply)
- Australian university, VET/TAFE college careers service 1
 - Other Australian university, VET/TAFE college source (e.g. lecturer, faculty) 2
 - Careers service outside Australia 3
 - Other institution careers service outside Australia 4
 - Other institution source (i.e. lecturer, faculty) outside Australia 5
 - Careers fair or information session in Australia 6
 - Careers fair or information session outside Australia 7
 - Advertisements in the newspaper or other print media 8
 - Advertisements on the internet/online job boards 9
 - Posted resumes on the internet 10
 - Family/friends 11
 - Approached employer directly 12
 - Employment agency 13
 - Work contacts/networks 14
 - Did not actively seek employment since graduation 15
 - Other (Please specify below) 16

- Q6d** How difficult has it been for you to find work? (Please tick one box only)
- Very easy 1
 - Easy 2
 - Neither difficult nor easy 3
 - Somewhat difficult 4
 - Very difficult 5

Q6e Please write in the main difficulties or barriers you have faced in finding work if any... (Write in the box below)

Q6f In your experience, do you think employers value the course you studied in an Australian institution? (Please tick one box only)

- Very highly 1 ► GO TO Q7a
- Quite highly 2 ► GO TO Q7a
- Somewhat 3 ► GO TO Q7a
- Not very much 4 ► GO TO Q6g
- Not at all 5 ► GO TO Q6g
- Don't know/can't say 6 ► GO TO Q7a

Q6g Answer Q6g if in Q6f you answered *not very much* or *not at all*: Why do you say that? (Please write in the box below)

2. What you were doing on 1 August 2007

ANSWER QUESTION 7a ONLY IF NOT PLANNING TO FIND A JOB IN YOUR FIELD OF STUDY (QUESTION 6a, CODE 1)

ALL OTHERS GO TO QUESTION 7b

Q7a What are the main reasons that you are NOT planning to find your next job in your field of study? (Please write in the box below)

Q7b As at 1 August 2007, which one of the following best describes your position with regard to study, paid work (including self-employment) or something else? (Please tick one box only)

- Studying full-time only 1
- Studying part-time only 2
- Studying full-time and working part-time 3
- Studying part-time and working full-time 4
- Studying part-time and working part-time 5
- Working full-time or had accepted full-time job offer 6
- Working full-time but seeking another job 7
- Working part-time but seeking full-time work 8
- Working part-time but NOT seeking full-time work 9
- Not working but seeking full-time work only 10
- Not working but seeking part-time work only 11
- Not working but seeking any work (full-time or part-time) 12
- Not working or studying 13
- Extended time off (i.e. travelling) 14
- Other (Please specify below) 15

--

COMPLETE QUESTION 7c ONLY IF YOU ARE STUDYING OR WORKING FULL-TIME (I.E. CODES 1,3,4,6,7 IN QUESTION 7b),

OTHERWISE GO TO INSTRUCTION BEFORE QUESTION 8a

Q7c Now that you are working full-time or studying full-time, how easy do you find it to balance your study or work commitments with your family and social life? (Please tick one box only)

- Very easy 1
- Easy 2
- Neither difficult nor easy 3
- Somewhat difficult 4
- Very difficult 5

COMPLETE QUESTION 8a to QUESTION 8j ONLY IF YOU HAD A PAID JOB OR WERE SELF-EMPLOYED ON 1 AUGUST 2007 OR IF YOU HAD ACCEPTED AN OFFER OF A JOB,

IF YOU HOLD MORE THAN ONE JOB, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BASED ON THE JOB IN WHICH YOU CURRENTLY WORK MOST HOURS

OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 11

Q8a Are you working in Australia? (Please tick one box only)

- Yes 1
- No 2

IF NO WRITE COUNTRY BELOW

If Australia, postcode (Write in the box below)

--	--	--	--	--

If overseas, country: (Write country in the box below)

Office Use only

--	--

Q8b Is your employer in: (Please tick one box only)

- Government, Federal 1
- Government, State, Provincial 2
- Government, Local 3
- Self-employed 4
- Other Private Sector 5
- Not for profit organisation 6
- Other, not known 7

Q8c Please write in the type of business carried out by this company or organisation (Write in the box below)

Office Use only

Q8d Please write in the date you started or will start this job: (Please write in the box below)

Month										Year			

Q8e In this job, what is your occupation? Please give full job title or designation. (Write in the box below)

Office Use only

Q8f Please indicate how you **first** found out about this job:
(Please tick single most applicable response only)

Australian university, VET/TAFE college careers service	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other university, VET/TAFE college source (e.g. lecturer, faculty)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers service outside Australia	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other institution careers service outside Australia	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other institution source (i.e. lecturer, faculty) outside Australia	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers fair or information session in Australia	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers fair or information session outside Australia	7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertisement in the newspaper or other print media	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertisement on the internet/online job board	9	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family/friends	10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approached employer directly	11	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approached by employer directly	12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment agency	13	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work contacts/networks	14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify below)	15	<input type="checkbox"/>

▼

Q8g How many hours do you/will you work in your main paid job in an average week? (Write in the boxes below)

--	--

Q8h In this job which one of the following best describes your employment? (Please tick one box only)

Permanent (likely to be more than 12 months)	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short-term/temporary (likely to be less than 12 months)	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Casual job	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify below)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>

▼

Q8i What is/will be your gross (pre-tax) annual salary in \$AUD (estimate will be sufficient) (Write in boxes below)

\$

--	--	--

 ,

--	--	--

 .00

Q8j If your job is full-time, is this your first full time job of any sort (other than vacation jobs)? (Please tick one box only)

Yes	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	2	<input type="checkbox"/>

ONLY ANSWER QUESTION 9 IF
YOU ARE ALREADY WORKING IN THIS JOB
(QUESTION 4a CODE 3),

OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 10

Q9a To what extent does this job meet the employment expectations you had when you finished your course in Australia? (Please tick one box only)

Completely	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	▶	GO TO Q9c
Mostly	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	▶	GO TO Q9c
Somewhat	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	▶	GO TO Q9b
A little	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	▶	GO TO Q9b
Not at all	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	▶	GO TO Q9b

Q9b What are the main reasons that you are not working in a position that allows you to fulfil the expectations you had when you finished your Australian course?
(Please write in the box below)

Q9c How satisfied are you with the industry and profession in which you are now working? (Please tick one box only)

Very satisfied	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfied	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dissatisfied	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very dissatisfied	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q10 How difficult was it for you to find this job?
(Please tick one box only)

Very difficult	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Somewhat difficult	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neither difficult nor easy	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very easy	5	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q11 Of the two statements written below, please tick the statement that most applies to you... (Please tick one box only)

I would prefer a job that gives me good job security but which may have only average income	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would prefer a job that gives me above average income but which may deliver little job security	2	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q12 Do you believe that the course you completed in Australia has adequately prepared you for the work force?
(Please tick one box only)

Yes	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	99	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q13 How useful to you **now** are the following skills you may have developed during your **course** in Australia?
(Tick only one box per row)

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Don't know/ not developed in Australia
Effective communication in a variety of contexts	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to work independently	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to work collaboratively	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Creative thinking	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Analytical thinking	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective problem-solving	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Capacity for life-long learning	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge and skills pertinent to a particular discipline	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge and skills pertinent to a particular professional area	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Social and ethical responsibility	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
An international perspective	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Characteristics of self-reliance and leadership	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
English language competency	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

3. Future Plans

Q14a Whether you are studying, working or doing something else at the moment, is this what you intend to do for at least the next 12 months? *(Please tick one box only)*

Yes ¹ GO TO Q15a
 No ² GO TO Q14b
 Don't know ⁹⁹ GO TO Q15a

Q14b Answer Q14b if in Q14a you answered No: What do you intend to do next? *(Please tick all that apply)*

Study ¹
 Work ²
 Look for a different job ³
 Other *(Please specify below)* ¹⁷

Where do you intend to be living in 12 months time?
Q15a *(Please tick one box only)*

In Australia ¹
 In home country ²
 In another country ³
 Don't know ⁹⁹

Q15b Still thinking about the future, please indicate how important the following will be for you to achieve in the next five years...
(Please tick only one box in each row)

	Extremely important	Important	Neither	Not important	Not at all important	Don't know / NA
Get a full-time job	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Stay at the same job	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Progress in the present organisation	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Have a satisfying and rewarding career	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Work in a different profession	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Work in a different organisation	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Work in a different country	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Earn a lot of money	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Have a secure job	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>
Give up work to have a family	¹ <input type="checkbox"/>	² <input type="checkbox"/>	³ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁴ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁵ <input type="checkbox"/>	⁹⁹ <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Final Questions

Q16a Would you recommend to others the following...?
(Please tick one box in each row only)

Yes No Not sure

i) Studying in Australia ¹ ² ³

If NO, please write below the reason(s) why not

ii) The university or VET/TAFE college you attended ¹ ² ³

If NO, please write below the reason(s) why not

Q16 continued...

Would you recommend to others the following...?
(Please tick one box in each row only)

Yes No Not sure

iii) The course you completed ¹ ² ³

If NO, please write below the reason(s) why not

iv) The city you lived in ¹ ² ³

If NO, please write below the reason(s) why not

v) Living in Australia ¹ ² ³

If NO, please write below the reason(s) why not

QUESTIONS 17 TO 19 FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY

AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 20

Q17a Are you planning to apply or have you already applied for permanent residency (PR) in Australia?
(Please tick one box only)

Yes, you are planning to apply ¹ **▶** GO TO Q17b
 Yes, you have already applied ² **▶** GO TO Q18a
 No, you are not planning to apply ³ **▶** GO TO Q18a

Q17b When are you planning to apply for permanent residency (PR) in Australia? *(Please tick one box only)*

Within the next 12 months ¹
 In the next 1 to 2 years ²
 In the next 2 to 3 years ³
 In the next 4 to 5 years ⁴
 In the next 6 years or more ⁵

Q18a When you completed your course in Australia, your **written English** skills were: *(Please tick one box only)*

Up to the level required to continue your studies or seek suitable employment ¹
 In need of improvement through further training ²

Q18b When you completed your course in Australia, your **spoken English** skills were: *(Please tick one box only)*

Up to the level required to continue your studies or seek suitable employment ¹
 In need of improvement through further training ²

Q19 Do you keep in touch with members of the following groups of people whom you met while studying in Australia...?
(Please tick one box only for each group of people)

Yes No Did not meet while studying in Australia

Australian students ¹ ² ³
 Students from your home country ¹ ² ³
 Other international students not from your home country ¹ ² ³
 Local Australian community, cultural or religious groups ¹ ² ³
 People you worked with ¹ ² ³

Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...? (Please tick only one box in each row)

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know / N/A
Quality of education	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Course content	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of the course	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Overall course experience	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Overall study experience	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Getting work experience in your field of study	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Help in getting a good job in your field of study	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of living in Australia overall	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Living in Australia overall	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Satisfaction with your life now	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY:

Making close friends with Australians	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Being treated with respect and courtesy by Australians	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Learning about the Australian culture	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS ONLY:

Making close friends with International students	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Networking with people around the world	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Learning about new cultures	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

Q21 How do you rate the overall quality of your Australian course compared to graduates who studied similar courses from the following countries...? (Please tick only one box in each row)

	Better than Australia	Similar to Australia	Worse than Australia	Don't know/ can't say
UK	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
USA	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Canada	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
NZ	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
Singapore	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
China	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY:

Your home country	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	99 <input type="checkbox"/>
-------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------

Q22 What were the best aspects of studying in Australia? (Write in the box below)

Q23 What aspects of studying in Australia are most in need of improvement? (Write in the box below)

QUESTION 24a FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ONLY, AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 24c

Q24a Are you a member of the International Student Alumni? (Please tick one box only)

Yes No

Q24b Would you be agreeable to someone from Australian Education International contacting you in the future to assist in the promotion of study in Australia? (e.g. through the student alumni; local fairs or exhibitions; or giving talks to prospective students) (Please tick one box only)

Yes No

IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS IN Q26 AT THE END OF THIS SURVEY BOOKLET. YOU WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE CASH PRIZE DRAW

Q24c Would you be agreeable to participate if sometime in the future Australian Education International (AEI) conducts a further follow up survey? (Please tick one box only)

Yes No

IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS IN Q26 AT THE END OF THIS SURVEY BOOKLET. YOU WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE CASH PRIZE DRAW

Your Comments...

Q25 If you would like, please write in the box below any other comments about your studies or experiences in Australia, including suggestions for what could be improved.

Thank you for completing this survey
We can assure you that your personal details will not be identified.

Please complete the following page if you would like to enter the cash prize draw, or if you would be interested in finding out about the international student alumni, or participating in a future survey similar to this (as indicated in the survey).



Optional Section

Q26 I submit my personal details and agree: (Tick box)

To be included in the cash prize draw for this survey

Your name (first name and surname)	<input type="text"/>
Present mailing address (if living in Australia)	<input type="text"/>
Permanent address in Australia (if different from above)	<input type="text"/>
Residential home address overseas	<input type="text"/>
Please specify other addresses where we can contact you (if different from above)	<input type="text"/>
Main email address	<input type="text"/>

If you have more than one email address, please specify your other email addresses in the boxes below:

Other email address 1	<input type="text"/>
Other email address 2	<input type="text"/>
Other email address 3	<input type="text"/>
Telephone number in Australia	<input type="text"/>
Telephone number overseas	<input type="text"/>
Mobile phone number in Australia	<input type="text"/>
Mobile phone number overseas	<input type="text"/>

What to do now

Please submit your completed survey by no later than **Monday, 8th October 2007**.

In this section we ask you to provide your contact details. **Please note that this is optional and you should only complete it if you wish to be included in the cash prize draw for 2007 or to be part of an international student alumni or to participate in future follow-up surveys (as indicated above).**

An important part of this survey is the follow-up with students after they have completed their course of study to find out their employment and future study outcomes. Therefore it is important for us to receive as many completed questionnaires as possible.

Please complete your name and contact details to be eligible for the cash draws in 2007 once you have completed and returned your questionnaire.

Your Privacy

Your personal details will be treated in strict confidence and will only be used by Australian Education International and Ipsos for the purpose of the cash prize draw, or for the international student alumni or for future survey participation, should you have given approval for these above.

Names and contact details provided by you **will be kept in a secure password protected file** and will not be shared with any government or educational institution.

No responses will be linked with individual respondents. **All of your personal details will be deleted once we complete the cash prize draw for 2007.**

Appendix B – Detailed data tables

Table 16: Satisfaction with overall study and course experience

Overall study experience	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1579
Very satisfied/satisfied	81% (a, b); (a, d)	87% (b, d)	84% (c, d)	91%
Neither/nor	15% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	10% (b, d)	10% (c, d)	4%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	4%	4%	6% (c, d)	4%
Overall course experience	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1579
Very satisfied/satisfied	77% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	84% (b, d)	82% (c, d)	89%
Neither/nor	16% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	11% (b, d)	10% (c, d)	5%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	6%	5%	8% (c, d)	6%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20b/Q16 Overall, how satisfied are you with your study experience in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 17: Satisfaction with quality of education and course content

Quality of education	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=567	n=1581	n=1578
Very satisfied/satisfied	83% (a, b); (a, c)	76% (b, d)	89% (c, d)	83%
Neither/nor	12% (a, c); (a, d)	13% (b, d)	6%	7%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	5% (a, b); (a, d)	11%	5% (c, d)	10%
Course content	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1578
Very satisfied/satisfied	78% (a, b)	73% (b, d)	81%	81%
Neither/nor	15% (a, c); (a, d)	16% (b, d)	11%	9%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	7%	9%	7% (c, d)	9%
Don't know/not applicable	1%	2%	0%	1%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20a/Q14 How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the university at which you are studying?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding

Table 18: Satisfaction with cost of the course

Cost of the course	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1577
Very satisfied/satisfied	22% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	28% (b, d)	42%	42%
Neither/nor	29% (a, d)	29% (b, d)	25%	24%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	46% (a, c); (a, d)	41% (b, d)	32%	33%
Don't know/not applicable	2%	3%	1%	1%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q20a/Q14 How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of the university at which you are studying?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 19: Satisfaction with obtaining work experience in field of study and with help in getting a good job in field of study

Getting work experience in field of study	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1578
Very satisfied/satisfied	42% (a, b); (a, c)	25% (b, d)	50% (c, d)	43%
Neither/nor	22% (a, c); (a, d)	19% (b, d)	18% (c, d)	15%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	26% (a, b)	43% (b, d)	22% (c, d)	28%
Don't know/not applicable	9% (a, b); (a, d)	14%	9% (c, d)	13%
Help in getting a good job in your field of study	n=569	-	n=1581	-
Very satisfied/satisfied	37%	-	40%	-
Neither/nor	28%	-	27%	-
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	26%	-	22%	-
Don't know/not applicable	9%	-	11%	-

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q32a/Q28a How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of living in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 20: Willingness to recommend study in Australia

Would recommend the course you completed	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample n=569	Respondent participated in 2007 n=561	Follow-up sample n=1581	Respondent participated in 2007 n=1576
Yes	68% (a, c); (a, d)	70% (b, d)	80% (c, d)	84%
No	12% (a, b); (a, c)	17% (b, d)	9%	11%
Not sure	19% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	14% (b, d)	11% (c, d)	6%
Would recommend the university you attended	N=569	n=561	n=1581	n=1579
Yes	71% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	78% (b, d)	85% (c, d)	90%
No	7% (a, b)	13% (b, d)	5% (c, d)	7%
Not sure	22% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	10% (b, d)	10% (c, d)	3%
Would recommend studying in Australia	N=569	n=566	n=1581	
Yes	83% (a, b); (a, c)	89%	94%	-
No	3% (a, c)	5%	1%	-
Not sure	14% (a, b); (a, c)	6%	5%	-

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q16a Would you recommend to others the following...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q23/Q19 Would you recommend the following to friends or family?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 21: Overall satisfaction with living in Australia

Living in Australia overall	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=566	n=1581	n=1578
Very satisfied/satisfied	83% (a, c); (a, d)	85% (b, d)	89% (c, d)	92%
Neither/nor	13% (a, c); (a, d)	11% (a, c); (b, d)	7% (c, d)	4%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	3%	3%	2%	3%
Don't know/not applicable	1%	1%	2%	0%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q32b/Q28b Overall, how satisfied are you with living in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Table 22: Satisfaction with their life now

Satisfaction with your life now	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=569	n=1581
Very satisfied/satisfied	74% (a, b)	84%
Neither/nor	18% (a, b)	10%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	8% (a, b)	5%
Don't know/not applicable	0%	1%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 23: Overall satisfaction with cost of living in Australia

Cost of living in Australia overall	International respondents		Australian respondents	
	a	b	c	d
	2007	2006	2007	2006
	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007	Follow-up sample	Respondent participated in 2007
	n=569	n=568	n=1581	n=1579
Very satisfied/satisfied	37% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	44%	51% (c, d)	44%
Neither/nor	36% (a, b); (a, c); (a, d)	27% (b, d)	26% (c, d)	17%
Very dissatisfied/dissatisfied	26% (a, c); (a, d)	28% (b, d)	19% (c, d)	34%
Don't know/not applicable	1%	1%	3%	4%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q20 Thinking back about your course and time living and studying in Australia, how satisfied are you with each of the following aspects...?

(2006) (Int./Aus.) Q32a/Q28a How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of living in Australia?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b); a and c shown as (a, c); a and d shown as (a, d); b and d shown as (b, d); c and d shown as (c, d).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 24: Willingness to recommend living in Australia and the city in which lived

Living in Australia	International respondents	Australian respondents
	a	b
	2007	2007
	Follow-up sample	Follow-up sample
	n=569	n=1581
Yes	85% (a, b)	96%
No	2%	1%
Not sure	13% (a, b)	3%
The city you lived in	n=569	n=1581
Yes	87%	88%
No	4%	6%
Not sure	9% (a, b)	6%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q16a Would you recommend to others the following...?

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each column may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 25: Importance of achieving various outcomes in next five years

Importance of achieving various outcomes in next five years (2007 follow-up sample)	Extremely Important/ Important	Neither/ nor	Not important/ Not at all important	Don't know / NA
Have a satisfying and rewarding career				
International respondents	96%	2%	2%	1%
Australian respondents	96%	2%	2%	1%
Have a secure job				
International respondents	88%	7%	3%	1%
Australian respondents	86%	8%	5%	1%
Get a full-time job				
International respondents	86%	4%	4%	5%
Australian respondents	67%	10%	10%	12%
Earn a lot of money				
International respondents	76%	17%	6%	1%
Australian respondents	64%	21%	14%	1%
Progress in the present organisation				
International respondents	64%	14%	15%	7%
Australian respondents	57%	16%	21%	7%
Stay at the same job				
International respondents	37%	27%	29%	7%
Australian respondents	42%	23%	29%	6%
Work in a different organisation				
International respondents	35%	36%	24%	5%
Australian respondents	29%	32%	32%	7%
Work in a different country				
International respondents	33%	36%	25%	5%
Australian respondents	29%	27%	39%	5%
Work in a different profession				
International respondents	28%	33%	32%	7%
Australian respondents	20%	28%	45%	7%
Give up work to have a family				
International respondents	15%	30%	44%	10%
Australian respondents	20%	25%	42%	14%

(2007) (Int./Aus.) Q15b Still thinking about the future, please indicate how important the following will be for you to achieve in the next five years...

Respondent bases (2007 Follow-up sample): International respondents n=569 and Australian respondents n=1581

Letters in data cells indicate differences at the 95% level of statistical significance between columns: a and b shown as (a, b).

Totals for each row may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix C – Case study summaries

ALIASES HAVE BEEN USED THROUGHOUT THESE SUMMARIES

China

Case study 1: “Li”

Higher education – postgraduate, inorganic chemistry

Li, currently in his mid 40s, was born in and lived in China until coming to Australia about five years ago. He completed his undergraduate degree in chemistry in 1983, at a university in a rural area in China.

Li found there was much opportunity in rural China to use the skills he developed as a chemistry graduate, as he lived in a highly agricultural area and chemistry was used heavily in farming. Since completing his bachelor degree, Li worked as a lecturer in chemistry at the same university where he had studied, until leaving for Australia in 2003.

Li came to Australia as a result of an exchange program. He was awarded a scholarship via China Scholarship Council to come to Australia and study for his PhD.

While alternative destinations included the USA and Canada, Li preferred Australia:

“It’s easier to pursue your PhD in Australia, and [the university] is known to be prestigious. I had a friend in Australia already, which was an additional attraction. I also considered the USA, but it’s too competitive there. And I prefer the weather here than in Canada.”

The process of getting here was lengthy and difficult. Li needed to travel a long distance to undertake his English test and to have his visa approved prior to leaving for Australia. While Li had previously undertaken a similar English test in 1999, he found it much harder the second time around.

“The visa process took 1 year – a long time! It was very frustrating. I was also not expecting to have another English test when I arrived in Australia.”

Li completed his PhD in inorganic chemistry in 2007. Overall, he found the PhD experience very exciting, although it required a lot of hard work.

“I worked hard and achieved a good result, and results were published, so I am very proud of my work.”

While studying his PhD, Li worked as a lab assistant in the university’s chemistry department and helped supervise chemistry honours students. In addition, Li was quite active with Chinese student associations. He was the vice president of an association for a while and really enjoyed helping other students from China. He also took part in a young Australians business program with other PhD students, where they designed and sold a product, and consequently, formed a company.

Li’s wife and son travelled with him to Australia in 2003. Li’s son was in his final year of high school. His wife, now working at a nursing home, found it hard to adjust when they first

arrived. This was primarily because she did not have many friends here and her English skills were very poor. She felt lonely during the week while Li was at work and their son was at school. She took English classes during the day; with improved English skills and a full-time job, she is now finding things much easier.

Since completing his PhD in 2007, Li has secured a position (under a one year contract) as a visiting research fellow. He undertook further work in the fields of inorganic chemistry and dentistry.

“I can’t get a permanent position because I don’t have PR yet. Although I plan to return to China, having PR here would make it much easier to apply for grants, which would make my job easier.”

After completing his PhD, Li decided not to go back to China right away. He said there were better educational opportunities for his son in Australia, especially developing his English skills. Living in Australia also offered him further opportunities to refine his research skills and to work on projects that he would not otherwise be exposed to in China. He has enjoyed having a break from lecturing and having the opportunity to do something different by coming to and staying in Australia.

Case study 2: “Yang”

Higher education - undergraduate, biomedical science

Yang was in his early 20s and was in the second year of his PhD in Biochemistry. He completed his Bachelor of Biomedical Science in 2006. Yang has been in Australia for 6 years, having completed his final year of high school here while living with an Australian family in a home stay arrangement.

Yang did not have much say in the decision-making process regarding his coming to Australia:

“It was purely my parents’ decision. I had no say, I did what they told me to.”

His parents wanted him to go to the USA, but decided against it because they were concerned about safety and security. Yang reported that his parents wanted him to study in a well-developed, Western country, so he would be exposed to a different way of living and would become more independent, while obtaining high quality education.

Overall, Yang found his undergraduate experience relaxed and comfortable. He noted the hours of study were less here than for most of his friends studying at universities back home in China. This was a positive thing, as it gave him more opportunities to socialise. He very much enjoys the Australian social environment.

“Australian students have a lot more freedom than Chinese students. There’s less study and more free time.”

Another positive aspect of Yang’s study experiences was the higher standard of university facilities (the buildings, libraries etc.) here than those in China; Yang highly valued this.

One of the hardest things about Yang’s undergraduate study experience was to learn to write in English:

“I can speak English well, but writing it is completely different. Writing essays and assignments require more advanced skills. I found doing assignments very hard, and when I got them back, they were covered in red ink.”

Yang noted he did not make much use of the support services provided by the university during his time there, although he was well aware they existed. He utilised the university’s counselling service when he broke up with his girlfriend and described the service as invaluable.

Yang decided to complete his PhD after close consultation with his parents and friends. He did not like the idea of going straight into industry, as he was uncertain of what exactly he wanted to do. He also felt it would help his long-term prospects.

“A PhD will place me in good stead for the future.”

Yang would like to return to China upon completion of his PhD, due to China’s booming economy and the job opportunities that accompany it.

“I’d like to go back to China. While I’d prefer to live in Australia, I’d prefer to work in China. There are many prospects, the economy is booming. There are more opportunities for me there.”

Yang perceived that when he returns to China, his Australian qualifications will be valuable, but not as valuable as they would have been 5-10 years ago. Now, he said, because of the increasing numbers of overseas students in Australia, Australian qualifications were no longer unique. In addition, Yang believed the social skills he developed through Australian education were more valuable than the academic knowledge he obtained.

“People who go to study in Australia think differently. They understand Western people. That’s more important than the qualification.”

If he had the opportunity to do things differently, Yang would have remained in China to finish high school and complete an undergraduate degree. He perceived there was not much difference between education offered in China and Australia at an undergraduate level, but that it was at the postgraduate level where the key differences exist.

“Undergraduate education is not much different between countries... at postgraduate level in Australia, you own your own project. You get to choose what you study. In China, you work on your supervisor’s project.”

Yang would recommend others from China to come and study in Australia. However, he cautions future students to ensure their English skills was at its best and recommends living with Australians, as this was a great way to practise their spoken English.

Singapore

Case study 3: “Sally”

Higher education – undergraduate, psychology

Sally completed a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in psychology at a regional university. She subsequently completed a postgraduate diploma in psychology at the same university over a 4 year period.

Sally’s primary reason for choosing Australia as a place to study was lower costs relative to other destinations she considered (USA and Canada). She reported this was the only factor she considered when making her decision.

Her decision-making process was largely independent from the influence of family members. All decisions were about her education were of her own making, but her family was happy to support her once she had made them.

“I think she’s big enough to look after herself.”

Sally’s father noted that all parents would probably prefer their children to stay locally to study. However, her parents did not pressure her to stay; they were pleased that she was studying and wanting to further her knowledge. Although, Sally’s father conceded that it looks better to have children who studied overseas, as they appear more intelligent.

“It has more face value than if your children are studying in a local university.”

Overall, Sally was very satisfied with her study experiences here in Australia, due to a range of factors, including the course content, and the friendliness of staff and her classmates.

“Oh, I loved studying there because I studied what I love. I love psychology, so that’s one thing. Also, the people I met were very friendly, like my departments, heads of department, my lecturer; the classmates were all very helpful – not because I’m Asian.”

She described her social experiences as being very positive, and was heavily involved in clubs and societies at the university campus. Her openness to others, she felt, was important in encouraging others to open up to her.

“So long as you are willing to be open, willing to ask, and share, then everybody will be willing to accept you. That’s what I feel. Everyone is friendly.”

Sally was also highly satisfied with the quality of the education she received. There were comprehensive resources available to her, and while she highlighted that many of the subjects she completed were run online, she was comfortable with that. She noted, however, that attending lectures would provide more opportunity to ask questions then and there.

She was also very impressed with the support services made available, particularly for international students. Lecturers were particularly understanding of her issues.

“I’m very satisfied with it....if you need anything they would, like, they have counsellors, a counselling service, and if you have any problems you can just go to them. The lecturers are fantastic, like, if you have a problem you can just tell them.”

Sally graduated in December 2006, returning home to Singapore in February 2007. She stayed a few extra months following her graduation for recreational purposes.

“I just wanted to stay and not work, just to have fun.”

Back in Singapore, Sally secured a job working as a research officer and tutor at a Singaporean university, researching children’s welfare. She was employed on a contractual basis, on 3-month assignments. Although this does not provide her with much job security, she was pleased regarding her salary. Sally also felt her job very much matches her course of study.

Sally applied for other positions prior to securing her current role, for which she was not successful. She found it quite hard to secure a job, however because she did not follow up with interviewers, she does not really know the reasons why she was unsuccessful. She guessed that it may have been her age and lack of experience.

“I applied for counselling and I had no experience in counselling, so um, maybe they wanted somebody who can do that, so maybe just wrong field.”

Sally believed her Singaporean employer valued overseas qualifications in Psychology more highly than local qualifications, although she was not completely sure that this was the case. Her overseas experience changed her a lot, and facilitated much personal growth that was now valuable in the workplace.

“I think going overseas changed me a lot. Because I...didn’t know anybody, so it was a totally new environment, so I learnt a lot of new things. [I am] more open and the experience actually helps in knowledge gain.”

In the future, Sally plans to pursue further studies in psychology and enrol in her masters degree. Ideally, she would like to work in an academic environment. She does not want to necessarily remain in Singapore, and she was open to travelling overseas again. This may be a necessity, because there may not be the opportunity to complete the masters degree she wants to do in a Singaporean university. She would certainly return to Australia at some point, whether this was for work, study or personal reasons.

Case study 4: “Kristine”

Higher education – postgraduate, forensic science

Kristine spent two and a half years studying in Australia, completing postgraduate studies in forensic science and chemistry. She chose Australia as a study destination because it offered her the opportunity to study her desired course, which was not available back home. Kristine chose the city she moved to as her preferred destination within Australia, as she knew a friend there who would provide support and to help her set herself up when she first arrived.

Kristine also considered Canada and New Zealand, but preferred the Australian climate.

“I considered Canada. But I think it is a rather too cold place for me to stay. New Zealand as well.”

While Kristine had completed undergraduate studies in chemical engineering back in Singapore, she was looking to change her career direction upon coming to Australia.

“It is hard to find a job in chemical engineering in Singapore for females.”

She considered studying either textile or forensic science for her postgraduate studies; however, she pursued forensic science as her friends advised it would offer her better career opportunities in the long-term.

Upon arriving in Australia, Kristine initially stayed with friends before moving into a shared house with four other Singaporean students. During her time here, Kristine also lived in a shared house with students from a broad range of backgrounds, from Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Germany and Australia.

One of the biggest challenges Kristine faced as an international student was the written language. She found writing in English difficult, and as part of her course, had to write reports everyday. Understanding spoken English was also a challenge.

“Their English and our English is slightly different. So they don’t really understand what I’m trying to say”.

Kristine was satisfied with the course units she completed, as well as the course content; however, the administrative processes was where she felt her university fell short, particularly in the area of enrolment. This caused a lot of frustration.

“I would not recommend that anyone go to that university.”

Socially, Kristine reported she did not have many local students as classmates, which did not provide much opportunity for her to make friends with Australians. She tended to socialise only with Singaporeans, however acknowledged there was more she could have done to improve her interactions with local students.

“I believe that it could have been better if I was more spontaneous at certain times, like getting to know more people, but sometimes studies didn’t allow it because I had to write a lot of reports...”

Upon completing her studies two to three years ago, Kristine returned to Singapore where she was currently working as an assurance engineer in the electrical field. Her role was not entirely related to her postgraduate degree; however, she does use her skills and knowledge in chemistry, obtained both in her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. It took Kristine six months to find a job upon returning to Singapore: she was happy there and felt the company offered strong job security.

Overall, Kristine believed her employer did not really care whether her qualifications were from Australia or from overseas – it was a person’s ability to perform in the role that was more important.

“They just want to employ someone who’s willing to do the job and is capable of handling the tools.”

Mandarin was a requirement for her position, so being able to speak English was not seen to be as important in securing a position with the company.

Kristine left Australia when her visa expired; however, she would like to return to Australia in the near future. Ideally, she would like to secure permanent resident status in Australia in the next five years, but was open to experiencing working in other countries. If the opportunity came up, Kristine would like to travel to Europe to complete further study.

“I want to experience another culture.”

Kristine would recommend other students to go to Australia, to study as she had. However, she would advise them that they need to be confident in their English. She would also encourage them refrain from living with fellow Singaporeans, in an effort to expose themselves to different cultures.

Malaysia

Case study 5: “Lina”

Higher education – postgraduate, economics and finance

Lina completed a 4-year undergraduate degree in computer science in Malaysia. Subsequently, she came to Australia in July 2005 to undertake her masters degree in economics and finance. Lina pursued postgraduate study because she wanted to further her academic knowledge beyond information technology. Her masters degree took 18 months to complete.

Lina chose Australia as a study destination because it was more affordable than other destinations she considered.

“I think it’s more affordable...the cost is not so high....I did consider the UK, but the exchange rate is too high.”

She made her decision to come to Australia entirely on her own, with limited influence from her parents. She undertook extensive research prior to applying to study here, with her application process run through an education agent.

“For consideration, I checked on the courses offered by the chosen universities, the universities’ quality....I did go to a centre ...I submitted all my applications to them, and I did contact the advisor for all the information I needed.”

Lina’s parents were a little worried about her safety and security while abroad. However, when they weighed up the benefits, they saw the experience as being a highly positive one for their daughter.

“The experience was generally good for her. She could learn to be independent, to solve all kinds of problems on her own, from study to her daily living. She’s much more mature now....I don’t mind where my children study, as long as they want to study.”

Lina reflected upon her overall study experience with a mixture of both happiness and disappointment. The most positive aspect of her study experience was the social opportunities it afforded; making friends and spending time with her classmates were her happiest memories of Australia. She also appreciated the openness of the lecturers and tutors at the university, which made it easy to interact with them.

“We felt good to share with them our feelings because they treated us like friends.”

The key reason for her disappointment was she felt there were too many international students enrolled in her course. Lina felt the English skills of many other international students were very poor, and found it difficult to understand them in class. She thought the university was too loose in its acceptance of new students, and as such, this lowered the standard and respectability of her degree.

“There was too big a group of them...I didn’t feel like I was studying in Australia.”

“It has pulled down the standard and meaning of the masters course. Also, the masters course content was not challenging enough for masters level.”

On the other hand, Lina felt the university offered good support services and a wide range of clubs and societies. Lina joined a range of clubs during her stay in Australia, including the cooking society and the campus Christian society. She also worked part-time as an economics tutor, which she found out about through the university’s careers website.

Upon returning to Malaysia, Lina found a job working for a global information technology firm. While she was currently working in an IT role, which is related to her undergraduate degree, she was planning to pursue a role in the finance area. She believed the firm she works for, being a large company, was well positioned to allow her to move across departments, as well as provide many opportunities for promotion. She was very happy with her pay and job security.

In her experience in the workplace, Lina believes that her Australian qualifications are better recognised than local qualifications, but not necessarily more highly regarded than those obtained in other overseas countries.

“Of course foreign graduates are looked higher upon. [My employer] mostly accepts foreign graduates, and their qualifications are well recognised. Of course, UK and USA graduates will be look higher upon than [those from] Australia.”

Overall, Lina enjoyed her study experience in Australia and was satisfied with her time here. It afforded her the opportunity to grow and develop, beyond simply broadening her academic knowledge.

“I have grown up a lot from studying abroad....my life [in Australia] has opened my eyes and mind....I have become more open and flexible to adapt with change.”

In future, Lina was planning to undertake more study (namely, an MBA specialising in finance); however, she would study somewhere other than Australia just for a different experience.

Case study 6: “Sofia”

Higher education – postgraduate, medical imaging

Prior to coming to Australia to study, Sofia completed a Bachelor of Health Science (majoring in medical radiation) at a Malaysian university. In Australia, Sofia completed her postgraduate studies in medical imaging.

Sofia stayed in Australia for one year in total as she completed her studies. Between her undergraduate and masters degrees, Sofia worked in a hospital in Malaysia for 8 months; however, her parents considered that studying overseas was an important thing she should do.

“It’s a matter of exposure....exposure is very important to open up their minds.”

Sofia’s mother took the lead with researching and arranging overseas study options for Sofia. Sofia’s mother undertook a lot of research about courses on offer, different universities and the cost of living in different countries. Whereas her son was studying in the UK, Sofia’s mother was happy for her to come to Australia because it is much cheaper. In addition, the city was selected because it was seen as most affordable. Sofia’s mother supported her financially. She also encouraged her daughter to study medical imaging as opposed to medicine, as medical imaging offers better career prospects in Malaysia.

Sofia had a cousin living in Australia, studying at the same university. While it was encouraging for Sofia to have family here, she preferred to stay on campus due to the convenience of being close to the university.

Having her cousin here certainly helped Sofia with settling in when she first arrived. Sofia did not experience difficulties socialising with locals or other international students, although being a Muslim, she noted, resulted in excluding herself from social activities which involved drinking alcohol and clubbing. Sofia found the Muslim community in the city she lived in was strong and noted there was a mosque at the university, with a growing congregation.

“At the mosque, people from different countries mix together. We have a strong society there.”

Sofia was highly satisfied with the university facilities.

“I think it’s a very good university because it has very good facilities in order to provide students knowledge and practical experience....they provide a library, and an electronic database, which is easy for me to search for references.”

She found the course content good, but different from what she had studied in Malaysia – the Australian course was a lot more practically focused. The lecturers were particularly helpful and understanding of the needs of international students.

Sofia also highly valued the university’s orientation process for international students.

“The orientation is important, because as a foreign student over there, we don’t have any knowledge about what’s going on there. It was my first time studying overseas and the orientation really helped a lot to get to know the culture there. In my first semester actually, they had extra English classes for anyone to join...to learn more and to improve themselves....and we also had workshops on how to use the database and the library. Sometimes the graduate society had gatherings for students to discuss problems they had faced.... Sometimes they also arranged for outings, to go to beaches.”

After graduating, Sofia returned home immediately because her visa expired. She currently works as a medical imaging quality controller in a government hospital in Malaysia. She found it easy to get a job upon completing her degree and she had received an offer for a position there when she returned home during her mid-semester break. Sofia found her job through an advertisement on the internet.

Sofia felt that her job matches well with her course of study, and provided her with good pay and job security. She considered the future looks bright for her, as there are many opportunities in the medical imaging field in Malaysia.

Sofia believed her employers probably viewed the qualifications of USA graduates more highly, but Australian graduates were still well regarded.

“In my field, the USA has better qualifications, although Australia is perceived to not be far behind them. Australian graduates are appreciated.”

In future, Sofia plans to pursue further study and complete her PhD. At the time of the interview, Sofia was 24 years old, and plans to commence her PhD when she reached 30 years. For now, she was happy gaining experience in the workplace, obtaining experience in different environments and gaining further exposure to the industry. While she would probably go to the UK to complete her PhD, she would consider returning to Australia to visit a medical centre here, to learn more about the latest technologies in the medical imaging field.

Thailand

Case study 7: “Tasanee”

Higher education – postgraduate, hospitality

Tasanee completed her undergraduate degree in English at a Thai university, prior to coming to Australia to complete her masters degree in hospitality. Prior to commencing her masters degree, Tasanee also completed a short course in culinary art in another Australian city over a 2 to 3 month period. Between her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, Tasanee also spent some time in China learning Chinese.

Tasanee’s decision to leave Thailand to study overseas was completely independent of her parents. As her mother noted:

“She totally made up her own mind from the beginning, where to go, what to study... we agreed with her because we think she is a leader.”

Tasanee chose Australia as a study destination because of its pleasant scenery and because it was an English-speaking country not too far from Thailand compared to other potential study destinations (such as the USA and Canada). Australia’s relative affordability compared with other overseas destinations was also favourable, although her parents considered the tuition fees here to still be quite expensive.

In choosing the university:

“I didn’t consider my university from the ranking, I paid attention to the curriculum. My friends recommended this university and [the university] offered the course I wanted.”

Tasanee found living in her chosen Australian city to be particularly appealing, reminding her of home.

“It’s like home. People are friendly. It is safe and has a good quality of life. Around campus and the apartments, there are many cafes to hang out with friends. The city is cute and is suitable to live in and to study in.”

While in Australia, Tasanee shared an apartment with another Thai girl studying at the same university. Their apartment was close to campus and most of the tenants in the building were also students. This made it safe and convenient to walk to classes. Tasanee also highlighted that sharing with someone else made rent more affordable.

Overall, Tasanee had a positive experience studying in Australia. She made many friends from classes, both international and local students, as well as friends made in her part-time job. She noted it was helpful to work in groups in class. Switching groups in class often offered greater opportunities to meet people.

She found the curriculum to be good, although she found it hard to study, initially, due to the language barrier. Understanding the technical terms was especially hard, because she didn't have prior experience in the industry.

She noted the only thing she was dissatisfied with was the length of time to submit and receive the work permit for international students. Although she did find work as a waitress eventually, she felt the delay in receiving her work permit lost her opportunities. Having a part-time job was important to her.

“It’s very important [to have a part-time job] because as an international student, we had lots of free time. We could earn some money to pay for our day to day expenses and make some friends. And since I had part-time jobs, I didn’t have to focus solely on study. It made my student life relaxing and not boring.”

Tasaneer now works for a small not-for-profit organisation in Bangkok, as an executive secretary and event coordinator. It was her second job since she returned to Thailand from Australia around 18 months ago. She first worked in a hotel, but did not like her job due to the irregular hours. She found her job through approaching the organisation directly and leaving her resume – a few months later she was successful in gaining a position with them.

Tasaneer noted that her firm employs people primarily with bachelor degrees. Half of their current staff holds masters degrees, primarily in hospitality backgrounds. She noted that all staff needed to speak English, as it was the language used in the organisation. While overseas experiences certainly help with this, the location of where employees’ qualifications were obtained was not a critical factor in the hiring decisions made by her organisation.

“I don’t think the employer would focus on which university you graduated from. Instead, they would look at individual attitudes and chemistry between them and particular employee.”

Things were different now for Tasaneer than what she was expecting the work life would be:

“Things in the real world are harder than I thought they would be and I had never worked full-time before. I’ve learned to be more realistic and not so much of a dreamer.”

In the future, Tasaneer would love to own and run her own business. She does not wish to pursue further formal study; however, she was interested in learning another language. She would like to return to Australia at some point to relax, travel or to complete a course in baking.

Case study 8: “Mali”

Higher education – postgraduate, commerce

Mali completed a Bachelor of Finance from a Thai university, before travelling to Australia to complete further study. She completed a Master of Commerce in Marketing at university in 2006.

During her first ten weeks in Australia, Mali completed an English course. During this time she lived in a shared house with a group of Japanese students. Her mother also stayed with her during her time to help her adjust to the new environment. Upon moving to another city to commence her masters degree, Mali stayed in university apartments close by.

Mali came to Australia to undertake her postgraduate study because her parents wanted her to. Her parents had studied in Sydney themselves when they were younger. She would have preferred to go to the USA, but from her parents’ perspective, this was too far away.

“We considered the USA since someone suggested it to us. However, we did not select the USA because it is far away and we are not familiar with the country. We are familiar with Sydney. We used to live there.”

Mali’s parents wanted her to study abroad because she would learn to live independently and improve her English. Although, her parents noted they made the decision to study together.

“It depended on herself as well, and we just gave her the suggestion.”

Mali and her parents chose the university because a friend advised them there were no English requirements for entry into the course. Mali also did not want to complete an extra five weeks of English study that were required. Even after this additional five weeks, a place at a university could not be guaranteed.

Mali enjoyed the university environment:

“It was beautiful and peaceful. It made me feel good. The location was convenient as well. It was located in the heart of the city.”

However, Mali felt pressured because she felt the university expected a high standard of work. It was very stressful for her to adjust to using English.

“I feel that pressure is too much on international students that lecturers expect too much. We are not native English speakers, so our English is not 100% like Aussie students. i.e. we tried so hard on report writing but the lecturer felt like ‘this is the best you can do?!’”

Senior lecturers taught better than newer lecturers, Mali thought, because their expectations were not as high. Her degree was a new degree at the time of her enrolment, but in her view, it was not good. Again, she reported that expectations placed on students were too high and that lecturers had no empathy for international students.

Her most satisfying experience while studying here was making a good network of friends, who still maintain contact with each other. However, she noted she was not close with many local students, as there were not many Australians enrolled in her course.

After graduation in August 2006, Mali immediately returned to Thailand at her parents' request. Upon returning home, she was hoping to find work in marketing, however finding a job in marketing in Thailand is difficult. She did however find work as a financial officer. Her position is stable, with many opportunities for development; thus, Mali was satisfied in her current role. While her current position was not related to her postgraduate study, Mali believed her experience studying overseas was of particular value to this company.

“This job doesn't match with my masters degree, but it matches with my bachelor degree. However, having graduated from abroad helps me somehow. The vision of the CEO is to expand so as to be a multinational corporation, so the company is seeking employees who have vision and good English.”

Mali was unsure, however, of how her employer would rate her Australian qualifications relative to those obtained in other overseas countries.

To search for employment when she returned home, Mali used the internet. It took her 3 months to find her job – she thought that this was a respectable time. Mali's mother lives with her during the week, and they live together in Bangkok at the family home at the weekends. Her mother also came to Australia as much as possible while her daughter was studying to provide her support and encouragement from home.

Mali believed the best skill she developed through her study experience in Australia was the courage to speak her mind. Overall, she believed the challenges she experienced in Australia made her a tougher person.

Mali was unsure of what the future will hold. She may study again, but if she does, she would prefer to go to USA, as she does not want to go to the same country in which she studied. Mali would certainly return to Australia; however, purely for leisure purposes, including visiting friends.

India

Case study 9: “Mayo”

Higher education – postgraduate, engineering

Mayo completed his two-year masters in engineering in advanced manufacturing. He was currently attempting to secure permanent resident status in Australia, so he was planning to return here shortly.

While studying, Mayo lived in a shared house with friends, who were already living and studying in Australia. Although the university provided accommodation, if he required it, Mayo reported his friends advised him it was cheaper if he stayed in a shared house with them.

Mayo’s father reported that it was Mayo’s decision completely to study overseas.

“No, I never thought of this at all, to send my son to some other country....It was my son’s decision. I gave all rights and decision-making rights to my son.”

He would have preferred to study in the USA; however, the process was not as simple as that in Australia. The Australian visa process was also described as being faster.

“In Australia, it was very clear and it is easy to get admitted.”

“The crime rate... is low in Australia and...the quality of life is very good. We have excellent transport and there are few problems of [traffic] jams and there is a free flow of traffic.”

Mayo’s father also mentioned that Mayo had considered Germany and Sweden, however the visa processes in Australia were more straightforward than in these countries as well.

Mayo was very satisfied with the facilities at the university:

“We have a very good library in the university. It is...an excellent campus and it is spread over a huge area of land. We have good quality and speed of internet....a good collection of books in the library, so we don’t need to buy books which are very expensive.”

He also reported the lecturers were of a high standard, and he valued their international experience. Overall, he considered the quality of education he received to be very good, and particularly enjoyed the practical emphasis of the degree.

“Most of the lecturers are showing interest in practical experience rather than the theory stuff... They are interested in the real experience and implementation of that and they give really good assignments... [which are] beneficial in the real world.”

However, Mayo felt that a key thing missing from his degree was the opportunity to get industry experience, which is not available for international students.

“There is no chance of industrial experience and we feel that we should also work on live projects so that we will have a good practical experience. It needs permanent resident status for a student to get career opportunities, and it takes a long time to achieve that status.”

Mayo made friends in Australia; however, they were primarily other Indians or international students from other Asian countries. He experienced some fear in getting too close to Australian students, as he thought they tended to drink too much alcohol. However, Mayo became involved in clubs and societies on campus.

Mayo saw having a part-time job as being important as a social tool for international students, for getting to know locals. He felt by not having one, he was being left behind.

“If feel that when [we have [a part-time job we can communicate with many local Australians. [Our] communication... can be developed and we can interact with them and we can learn about the culture – I mean, we can understand them, as well as how they behave and how they interact.”

At times, he found understanding the Australian accent difficult:

“It takes time to learn the Australian accent.....it was a bit difficult to understand.....the accent is totally different to the USA accent.”

Since finishing his degree in Australia, Mayo returned home (where he remains). He was planning to return to Australia in the near future to pursue permanent resident status. At home in India, Mayo was spending his time studying how to use a particular computer program/software, which would help him in future engineering work.

His father was very pleased with his son's efforts:

“I feel happy that my son completed his higher studies.”

While Mayo considers the quality of his study experience in Australia to be high, it was different to what he expected, particularly with regard to the lack of availability of industry experience for international students. He considered if he went to the USA, he would have had better opportunities in this area.

“I went to Australia at the same time that my friend went to the US and he was selected in a job as soon as he completed [his course]. Universities in the USA have lots of relationships and collaborations with a lot of industries, so I feel that is the reason.”

In future, Mayo plans to find work in engineering. He was planning to search for full-time work in Australia if his application for permanent resident status was approved. Australia was an attractive prospect for Mayo, because of its 'boom time' reputation for engineering. He was also seeking to study an MBA at some point; this would preferably be in the USA.

Case study 10: “David”

Higher education – undergraduate, hospitality management

David spent three years in Australia, completing a bachelor degree in hospitality management. Prior to this, he completed qualifications in primary and secondary education in India.

He was currently living at home with parents in India; during his stay in Australia he stayed at his cousin’s home, as she had settled here with her husband.

David chose to study in Australia because his cousin recommended it. Although, David reported that Australia was the only destination he considered, his father mentioned he had also applied to study in Canada, however his Canadian visa application was rejected.

Prior to enrolling in his course in Australia, David spoke with students who were already enrolled in the course, as well as graduates of the course. Most graduates, he noted, had found jobs easily in a range of countries, including the USA and Canada.

“The university has a good name, especially for this course. My relatives have also done this course and they all have received good jobs and have set up their businesses very nicely...almost every one recommended this university.”

His father would have preferred him to stay in India, as there were plenty of business opportunities at home; however, David was very keen to study overseas.

David’s father noted that he did not play a big role in the decision-making process. He was comforted in the knowledge that the qualification his son obtained in Australia was valuable both in Australia, as well in India. His general view of Australian education is high:

“[It is] the best you can see in our society. Out of 29 houses [in my neighbourhood] at least 1 member from every house has gone to Australia.”

Overall, David was satisfied with his educational experience in Australia. He reported the university offered good quality teaching staff and the right balance between academic and practical learning, which was taught in a way that was easy for students to understand.

“[The teachers] have very good knowledge regarding the subjects – they...teach us the management things but many practical things as well which have been very useful in our current lives. They give us very good guidance and help us to make the right path for our future.”

The placements offered as part of the university course were also highly valued.

“Studying here helps us in every path of life...we undertake placements in some of the well reputed companies who have a good name in Australia.”

David thought that the university provided good support services to international students, including career programs, advice with finding work as well as helping out with visa application processes.

David returned home following his graduation in 2007 to spend time with his father. He plans to return back to Australia to further his career, and already has a job offer with a company here, which he plans to commence later in 2008. Other family members are also planning to settle here, including his younger brother who was currently in his final year of a bachelor degree in India. David can see his future being firmly rooted in Australia.

David would definitely recommend studying in Australia to others:

“As I have had such a good experience, due to this reason I shall definitely recommend others to come to Australia. The environment here is very friendly; we don’t even feel that we belong from other country.”

Case study 11: “Aisha”

Higher education – undergraduate, forensic science

Aisha enrolled in a Bachelor of Forensic Science degree program. She spent one and a half years in Australia in total, before returning home to India without completing her degree. She married and commenced living with her husband, and was currently continuing her studies in her home country.

Aisha did not have a happy time in Australia, and was not very forthcoming about her experiences. While she described her study experience overall as being neither good, nor bad, she reported she left her degree due to feelings of loneliness and depression.

“I left the study in the middle because I was feeling lonely and I was depressed.”

While here, she lived independently, renting a room in a shared house. She described both the quality of the university and the support services as being OK, but she did not have a strong social network while here. Her reason for choosing Australia as a study destination was that the likelihood of obtaining permanent resident status was seen as higher than any other country. Upon reflection, however, Aisha considered her chances of obtaining permanent resident status here were virtually non-existent, and thus her future career opportunities here would be limited.

Aisha referred to a feeling of experiencing racist behaviour from Australians and being disadvantaged because of her international background. These were other reasons which contributed to her decision to return home earlier than planned.

“I left in the middle because of partial racism. People...abroad are not as good as you think. They comment to Asian people. They exploit us. It doesn't matter how much [of a] hard worker we are. They provide financial opportunity to their people only.”

Clearly, her experience in Australia was not what Aisha expected or had planned. She felt that she would have been better off if she had stayed home in India.

“I have had a worse experience in Australia [than I would have had back home]. If I studied in India only, then it would be no waste of time.”

She was currently continuing her bachelor degree at home in India, and has no plans to undertake any further study abroad. She certainly does not want to return to Australia, or recommend it to others.

“No, I don't want to go there again. There are no...sweet memories in Australia.”

Case study 12: “Leesa”

Higher education – postgraduate, communications/advertising

Leesa completed her Master of Communications (majoring in advertising). The course took Leesa 18 months to complete, and she spent a total of 20 months in Australia. Leesa subsequently married and was living with her husband in India.

When making the decision to study overseas, Leesa considered Australia as her only study destination.

“I actually did not want to go to other countries. I had already visited the USA and some places during my holidays, and had been there for pleasure and fun. Since I had never been to Australia in my life, I selected Australia for further studies thinking I can study, as well as see the country.”

Leesa’s father confirmed that her decision to study abroad was completely her own.

“She is trying and doing what she thinks is best. I don’t influence her or guide her in her decision. We never forced her or discouraged her in anything she wanted to do.”

Her father would have preferred her to stay home in India, and was quite cynical about Australian education and the benefits it might offer.

“Personally, I never liked the idea of her going away, but she is of independent nature. What she decides, she does.”

“Indians have a mindset that the standard of education is better in foreign countries than India, and foreign countries also think that the [standard of Indian education] is low. So in the process, foreign students are hooking in Indian students and are cashing in on them.”

The most important thing to Leesa’s father, however, was that his daughter was happy.

“I am happy, as long as she takes care of herself. After all, it’s her life.”

Overall, Leesa was pleased with the course, especially enjoying the elective subjects she was able to choose herself. In general, she thought the lecturers and professors were of a high quality: intelligent, good and brilliant.

“The teaching standards at the university are a class apart.”

However, she reported being treated differently by one professor, although noted that this did not change her overall positive attitude towards her study experience in Australia.

“On a personal level, I faced some racism from one of the professors. Basically, his attitude was different to other students, then different towards me.”

She considered the university atmosphere to be excellent, and highlighted that the university made an effort to make international students feel welcome at the start of every semester.

“From the university’s side, there were brilliant efforts made at the start of every semester by holding meetings for the students from all over the world. This gave us the opportunity to mix and make friends with people from all walks of life.”

While living in Australia, Leesa stayed on campus for the first year of her course, before moving into a rental apartment with friends. Overall, she found Australians to be very friendly and helpful, and made friends with other international students by attending meetings of various cultural societies based at the university, including Chinese, Malaysian and Christian groups.

Upon completing her university degree two years ago, Leesa returned home and secured a job with an advertising firm. She returned home because her visa expired. She stayed at the firm for 18 months, before working as a freelancer in the fashion industry. She has recently married and decided to leave her freelancing job.

In describing her reasons for leaving her job, Leesa referred to strong family expectations:

“After moving back home to India and getting more and more influenced by Indian society, which expects girls to get married after a certain age, I ended up following my parents and society’s wants and needs rather than fulfilling my ambitions. Initially, I was not happy, but then in time I realised that who would not want to be pampered and have the life of a queen, which I am enjoying.”

Leesa had no plans for further study, however plans to return to work in future, once her family is settled.

Leesa would happily recommend studying in Australia to others:

“I do recommend Australia to study...to all people known to me and who are researching universities and countries to go to for studying. It was one of the [most] fulfilling and soul satisfying experiences one can achieve in Australia.”

“I have already recommended [Australia] to 2-3 friends.”

Case study 13: “Ravi”

Higher education – postgraduate, business studies

Ravi completed his Masters in Business Studies, a one and a half year degree. While in Australia, he lived off-campus, in a shared house with other students not far from the university.

Ravi chose the university as a study destination because of the course and its reputation. The relatively low cost required for study in Australia compared to in the USA and Europe, as well as Australia’s multiculturalism were other draw cards.

“Australia is quite a multicultural country. You will find people from all round the world in one destination. You can taste different cuisine along with that.”

Ravi’s father was heavily involved in the decision-making process:

“My involvement was complete, right from the beginning. I was very much into what he was thinking. I tried my best to give him the best assistance at each and every level, right from selecting subjects...to visas and other formalities.”

Ravi’s father reflected that he did not wish Ravi to study overseas initially (that is, when Ravi was in junior and middle school); however, as Ravi finished high school and commenced his undergraduate studies, his father considered that overseas study would be beneficial.

“I had thought of sending him abroad for the simple reason that their views and horizons grow many folds. I don’t mean to say that in India we don’t have big horizons, but if you go abroad, your vision obviously grows much bigger.”

From his father’s perspective, Australia was seen to be a more desirable study destination than the USA or Europe. He saw life in Australia as been easier, having a better ambience, and a more disciplined, regulated life than in the USA.

Overall, Ravi described his study experience as a helpful one for him. He appreciated the opportunity to study with students from all over the world, and as a result, he was exposed to different cultures. He also felt this enabled him to develop strong professional networks. He rated the university and its lecturers very highly, making comparisons to education in the USA:

“The lecturers were definitely some of the best lecturers in the world, and the study system is quite similar to the USA, at least in [the university]...it seems to be quite an affiliated one and I really got a good background and a good understanding of the subject.”

“[The university] is one of the top universities in the world, so there is no doubt about its quality.”

Ravi considered the university's support services to be strong, and he also sought assistance from other international students when he needed help (e.g. looking for accommodation or dealing with personal problems).

He felt limited in the career opportunities available to him in Australia compared to the many opportunities available to him at home in, India. He seeks to explore opportunities for his own business in India, which he established prior to leaving for Australia, despite having tried to look for work elsewhere.

"I am like an entrepreneur."

"I tried and am still looking for a job. In India, it's a bit of a challenge looking for a job that is relevant to the course....In India there is huge job demand, but at the same time you are getting huge graduate numbers every year."

He believes that employers in India look towards the quality of the course and the university when hiring graduates, rather than which country they studied in. However, on the whole, he believes USA graduates were more highly regarded in India than Australian graduates.

In future, Ravi might undertake further studies once he has additional work experience, although would remain in India if he did pursue this:

"I would like to be more accustomed to business in India. In Australia, I came to know about different cultures, and how to work with them. They talked of teamwork being very important – in India, you have to understand policies which are more country-oriented than global-oriented. So I would like to do an MBA in India, if I do [further study]."

Overall, Ravi's father is very pleased with the outcomes of his son's international experience:

"I am happy to see that he has grown up well and I see that his future is good."

"He thinks big, his attitude to life has changed, and things are for the better."

His only concerns were feelings of insecurity he felt resulting from broader societal incidents which took place during Ravi's stay here (namely, problems experienced by the Indian cricket team and the Dr Haneef incident), and difficulties with the migration and PR process:

"[The] PR system is not very clear, and every now and then they keep changing [it]. That makes it very difficult for the students to decide their future plans."

Lastly, Ravi's father suggested that studies in Australia should provide a more global perspective.

"Studies should be more on a global level, so that once you complete your studies and you want to move on somewhere else...you are at a par with others."

Case study 14: “Harshi”

Higher education – postgraduate, information systems

Harshi spent a total of three years in Australia, from 2004 until the end of 2006. During her first two years here, Harshi completed a Master of Information Systems degree. In her third year here, she worked as a laboratory assistant in a major laboratory. Prior to coming to Australia, she had completed a Bachelor of Science, majoring in microbiology.

Harshi came to Australia only because her brother was living and studying here. He was studying the same course as Harshi, at the same institution. Otherwise, Harshi would not have thought of travelling overseas to study. Harshi’s father noted that while he was not involved in helping her make the decision to come and study here, he was more involved with her brother’s decision-making. Harshi’s brother applied to study in Australia, after applying to study in Canada and not being accepted. Harshi’s father was pleased both his children went overseas to study:

“They have achieved independence with self-discipline, which I am sure they would not have achieved [in India].”

Harshi’s father also considered that the Australian climate and lifestyle were good, and that processes for gaining visas and permanent resident status were easier than in other Western countries:

“Australia is the only country which makes [achieving] PR so fast. Naturally, [my children] are in a better position there than in our home country.”

Information technology (IT) was not Harshi’s preferred area of study. She would have liked to undertake further studies in microbiology; however, she did not achieve grades high enough in her bachelor degree for acceptance into a postgraduate course in Australia. IT was her second choice, after speaking with university representatives who were marketing Australian education in her home city.

While living in Australia, Harshi lived in a shared house with her brother, her boyfriend (who travelled to Australia to be with her) and her brother’s friend. From home, it took her 45 minutes to travel to the university campus.

Overall, Harshi thought the quality of teaching at her university and the course content of her degree was very good. However, she felt her course did not provide her with as much practical experience and industry training as she would have liked. She also noted that some Indian students, including herself, had trouble completing assignments because the style of teaching in Australia was different to that back home.

Harshi felt that she did not have a strong social network at her university, compared to what she had heard about other universities. Her university predominantly has overseas students studying there, so she felt that she missed out on meeting and socialising with more Australian students. Harshi did not

become involved in clubs or societies on campus, as she worked on weekends (when most of the club activities were held) at an Indian take-away bar based in a shopping centre food court.

Harshi's father observed that her brother had more difficulty adjusting to the Australian lifestyle than she did.

Upon completing her degree, Harshi did not return to India immediately; she stayed in Australia for a year afterwards, in order to achieve permanent resident status. While she initially searched for a job in IT, Harshi felt that future career opportunities in IT in Australia were limited because according to her, most of Australia's IT needs are outsourced. Harshi also felt that IT employers in Australia do not have faith in international graduates:

“[Finding an] IT job was impossible, because it seems that Australian employers don't have faith in fresh students, because they think if the student goes back then there is a loss of money, time and effort...so they probably don't change their regular employees or they give jobs to students who are born and brought up [in Australia].”

She ended up finding a job working as a laboratory assistant, which she enjoyed, although the work was better matched to her undergraduate degree. However, after one year in the role, Harshi resigned from her laboratory job in early 2007 to return to India to get married. She was happy to remain a housewife for now, although her aim was to set up her own business in about 5 year's time.

Although coming to Australia to study was not one of Harshi's original plans, she enjoyed the experience overall and would recommend the experience to others.

Australia

Case study 15: “Genevieve”

Higher education – undergraduate, social science

Genevieve was in her late 20s and lived in a shared house in the inner suburbs of a large Australian city. She completed a Bachelor of Social Science in 2006, and was now undertaking a masters degree. At the time of interview, she was working full-time as a manager of a busy pub in the city, but was hoping to reduce her hours when university resumes in March 2008.

Genevieve applied to university when she was in her early 20s, and was a few years older than most of the other students in her course. Her goal was to find work in an area that would allow her to contribute to society. She chose a university that required students to undertake work experience as part of the course.

“[University] was seen as really leading the way.”

There were many aspects of life as a student she enjoyed: the lifestyle, the sense of life on campus, and above all, the satisfaction she gained from broadening her knowledge of the world.

“I became more aware, more educated. That’s a very positive outcome.”

However, there were also various challenges and frustrations. After a year and a half of full-time study, she found herself struggling to pay the rent, and as such, started taking on more and more late night shifts in the pub where she worked part-time. She started missing classes because she was tired, and after a while stopped going to class altogether. At the end of her second year, she was sent a letter notifying her she had failed.

“I got sick of living hand to mouth. There’s no financial support, which makes it hard. Around half the people living under the poverty line are students and I think that’s a major cause of drop out. Some people can go back to their parents and raid their fridge if things get tough, but I can’t because my parents live far away.”

A year later she finally returned to finish her course; she felt that standards at the university had slipped. She felt the course was badly organised, and staff no longer seemed to care about undergraduate students. Naturally, she felt frustrated. However, her main concern was the university had lost its reputation a ‘leading edge’ university.

“There was, like, this big financial scandal, and then the place just went down hill. It was like no-one really gave a stuff. It used to be the place to be, but then it lost all its shine.”

Because she was juggling work and study, she spent very little time on campus, and found it hard to get to know the other students in her course. She enjoyed her work placement, but felt that she didn't learn anything especially new.

Her decision to continue studying following completion of her undergraduate degree was motivated primarily by a lack of confidence in her ability to secure work in the social science field with the training she received during her undergraduate degree. Although she had considerable work experience, having worked in hospitality as well as having undertaken the work placement as part of her course, she felt under-qualified for most of the jobs she had seen advertised. She hoped that further studies would help her find a better job.

“Having a degree gives you a sense of importance, but it doesn't really prepare you for work. For most people, I'm not sure that a degree teaches them all that much stuff.”

Her future plans include working amongst Indigenous youth, and she hoped that publishing a thesis would lift her profile and give her the credentials she needed to find work.

Case Study 16: “Emma”

Higher education – undergraduate, environmental science

Emma was 29 years old. She finished high school in 1995 and enrolled directly into a Bachelor of Arts degree. However, after the first 18 months, she started to have doubts that a general arts degree would help her to work, so she dropped out and found work as a travel agent.

Four years later, during which she spent two years travelling and working across Europe, Emma returned to Australia and decided to return to study. She chose environmental science, because she wanted a career where she could work outdoors. She chose the university because she liked the idea of doing a work placement program as part of her degree. She also liked the fact there were only 35 students in the course.

“I had this idea that getting some practical experience would give you a leg-up. They also had small classes, which appealed to me after doing Arts [at a different university], where there might be 200 people or more crammed into a lecture theatre.”

In first year of her course, students were required to choose from a range of ‘generic’ social science subjects, such as politics and sociology. Much to her surprise, she found herself enjoying this immensely.

“I really liked that you got a broad education, but some of the others students weren’t very happy. They were like, ‘what’s this have to do with environmental science?’”

Second and third year had a much stronger focus on environmental issues. However, it was then she started to have doubts whether she had chosen the right course. Although looking back, she realised she learned a great deal of important information she needed as a foundation in the area, at the time, she found both the lecturers and the materials rather boring.

“It was too theoretical. Half way through second year, I realised that I didn’t want to go in the direction the course was heading. I discovered that careers in environmental science were not as appealing as I had thought, and I was starting to wish I had chosen something else, like a park ranger’s course. I was very tempted to drop out.”

Although she had little choice over the subjects she could study as part of the course, in the second half of second year, she enrolled in a subject that was offered through the education faculty; she thoroughly enjoyed it.

“It was hard but it was really really cool. It was about teaching environmental science to middle school students and was lectured by teachers. It made me realise how much I had actually learnt about the environment, which was good, too.”

In third year, she chose a subject involving a study trip overseas, which she also thoroughly enjoyed. She enjoyed a subject taught by a guest lecturer who had current experience in the environmental movement.

“It was inspiring enough to get me through the subjects I didn’t want to do.”

Although Emma had some difficulty finding a suitable place to do her work placement, she found the overall experience interesting and enjoyable. Her only disappointment was that it did not lead to full-time paid employment.

After completing her degree at the end of 2006, Emma applied for a number of positions but was rejected due to her lack of experience in the field. After a few months, she found a job with one of her old lecturers, but resigned after a few months because she did not enjoy the work.

“I went into it knowing that I wouldn’t really love it, but that I would learn something. So I stuck it out until October, and then quit.”

Since then, Emma has struggled to find work in the field of environmental science. She was contemplating to return to university to undertake a Diploma of Education to improve her employability. She says most of her peers have had the same problem, and are either working in hospitality, or have gone back for further study.

“I don’t think I’m qualified for what’s being advertised. They all want more experience than I’ve got. I could go and get a hospitality job, but the whole reason I did a degree was to avoid that. So I’m not quite sure what to do. Perhaps I should go back and do a Dip Ed.”

Interviews with employers: overview of findings

Description of research

Eight employers of international graduates were interviewed between January and March 2008 as part of the qualitative research program of Phase Two of the International Student Survey project.

Employers were located in the key markets of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and China, and worked in a range of industries and roles, as follows:

- Malaysia: General Manager of sales and marketing, printing company
- Malaysia: Marketing Manager in the fast moving consumer goods firm
- Thailand: Head of Finance in a manufacturing firm
- Thailand: Management Executive, a not-for-profit events and tourism management organisation
- Singapore: Project Director, electronics and telecommunications firm
- China: Strategic Investment Director, investments firm
- China: Human Resources Supervisor, wholesale goods firm, and
- China: Director of Power and Air Conditioning, electronics firm.

The following discussion summarises the key findings from these interviews.

Graduate employment

As would be expected, respondents' organisations varied in the type and mix of staff employed, including graduates. Most organisations employed a mix of degree and non-degree qualified staff, depending on each organisation's particular staffing needs. Of degree qualified staff, a mix of masters and bachelor degree level staff were employed; again, the proportion depending on the organisation's specific needs.

The type of university graduates employed was highly dependent upon graduates' skills matching the requirements of the industry and the precise requirements of the job. Only one employer reported that they sought graduates from any field, as this would encourage creativity and breadth of contributions in the workplace; however, this was the exception.

Graduates were hired for various reasons, including their 'freshness', their willingness to learn and a willingness to share their ideas. Hiring graduates offered the opportunity for some organisations to 'mould' the new graduate into their way of thinking.

"Graduates are fresh, willing to work and willing to share ideas."

"We prefer grads because they are outspoken, young and more daring to express their ideas."

“Graduates have no experience and they can be moulded to our needs.”

Employers sought a range of attributes from graduates. Most frequent mentions included strong academic performance and high-level communication skills. Other common mentions were a willingness to learn, commitment to the organisation, strong language skills (including English proficiency) and personality.

“Confidence, willingness to participate, willingness to work overtime....to share ideas and to brainstorm. Good language ability and communication skills.”

“We only consider capability and related academic disciplines. Also, we consider language skills and personality...[this should be] friendly and service-minded....and an understanding of the organisation.”

“A willingness to accept the company’s culture. Interpersonal and considerate personalities.”

In the first year of employment, employers’ key expectations of graduates were to learn and grow towards greater autonomy, to develop a thorough understanding of the organisation, strategy and culture, and to improve upon their ‘hands on’ ability on the job.

International graduates

Most of the employers interviewed reported that their organisation employed only small numbers of international graduates. Of those international graduates employed, the majority have qualifications from the USA, the UK and Australia, with Canada and France less frequent mentions.

The employers interviewed were able to recognise the many benefits of employing graduates with international qualifications. International graduates were generally perceived to be more confident and outspoken, to have stronger English skills, to be more open to other cultures (of most value to multi-country organisations) and were seen to be more independent. The benefits of having exposure to education in societies where technologies and theories were more advanced were also mentioned by employers as being of high value.

“International grads are more outspoken than local grads...maybe international grads have more exposure? Moreover, they have better English skills, which is very essential to us in communicating with clients. They are dynamic and dare to take up more challenges...maybe they are more confident in their own ability?”

“Overseas graduates express stronger agility in thinking and understanding – they learn faster. They have better interpersonal skills, and are quicker at picking up new things.”

“[International graduates] return with a different mindset – they’re willing to learn.”

“They bring a global business perspective.”

However, most of the employers interviewed indicated a preference for local graduates, or did not identify a difference between international and local graduates. For instance, compared to international graduates, locals were perceived to be more willing to work hard for less pay, to work in lesser roles (for example, ‘on the floor’), more committed to the organisation, more humble, and less demanding, particularly in terms of promotion and salary increases.

“Locals are more willing to work. They are more down to earth, committed and humble.”

“Foreign grads are more calculative and demanding than local grads – maybe they think they [are of] better quality and have better ability than local grads.....normally [overseas graduates] request higher pay in the beginning, or request for benefits and allowance for their extra effort on work. They always think their value is high.”

“Machines and workshop are losing appeal to graduates....local graduates are more stable in terms of committing to the organisation. Overseas graduates hold higher expectations.”

“For me, local and international graduates are not so different.”

In some cases, employers reported that salaries of local and international graduates did not differ.

“Everyone is the same in the beginning.”

However, for other employers, international graduates were clear winners on the salary scale, particularly in the longer-term. However, one employer noted that this was because of the attributes of the individuals, not just because their qualification is from overseas.

“Salaries of employees with Australian qualifications are higher than those with local qualifications, but mainly because they possess better language skills, more desirable attributes or are considered to have greater potential, not simply because they have overseas qualifications.”

Australian graduates

Most of the employers interviewed employed only small numbers of staff with Australian qualifications, and as such, their ability to comment on Australian education was limited. However, based upon these experiences, although Australian graduates were very highly regarded, on the whole they were considered inferior to qualifications from the USA and the UK. Reasons provided included that graduates from the USA and the UK were more self-assured, the higher cost of the degrees in

those countries made their qualifications more valuable, and with respect to US education in particular, US education was seen to be better at encouraging students to think proactively and independently.

Whilst all employers interviewed were willing to consider employing Australian graduates in the future, Australian education was mostly valued in terms of the benefits that an international qualification can bring in general. Additional comments included:

“Australian education is cheap, and close to home.”

“Australian grads have independence – they are not spoon fed.”

“[Australian graduates] are quality people. They have discipline and are trustworthy.”

Employers were quick to point out, however, that it was not where the qualification was obtained that mattered most to them, but the attributes of the individual and their ability to fulfil the requirements of their particular role that was important to them in a graduate.

“We don’t assess them on which country their qualification is from....it’s more about the ability, capability, attitude and personality of a person.”

“We look at them more on their abilities. We don’t give privilege to grads from anywhere....we are more concerned with their own ability and attitude.”