



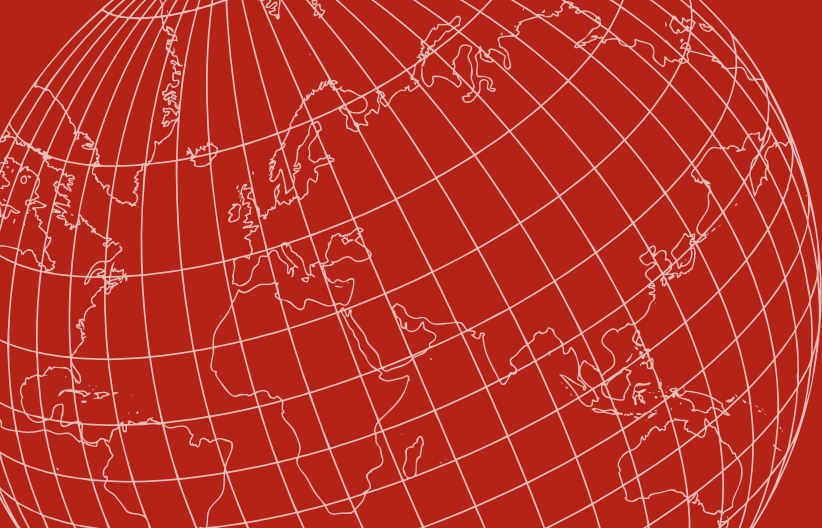
Australian Government

Australian Education International

2007 Follow-up International Student Survey

Executive Summaries – Higher Education and
Vocational Education and Training





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).

The *2007 Follow-up International Student Survey — Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training reports*, 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

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Follow-up International
Student Survey
Executive Summaries –
Higher Education and
Vocational Education and Training
May 2008

Higher education–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

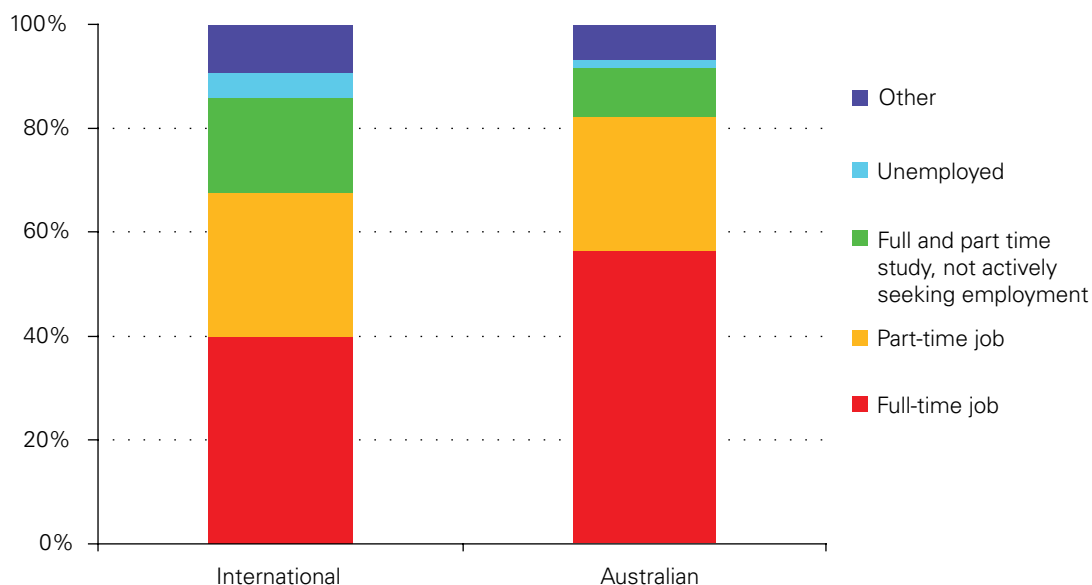
Overall employment and education outcomes (at August 2007)

- 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.

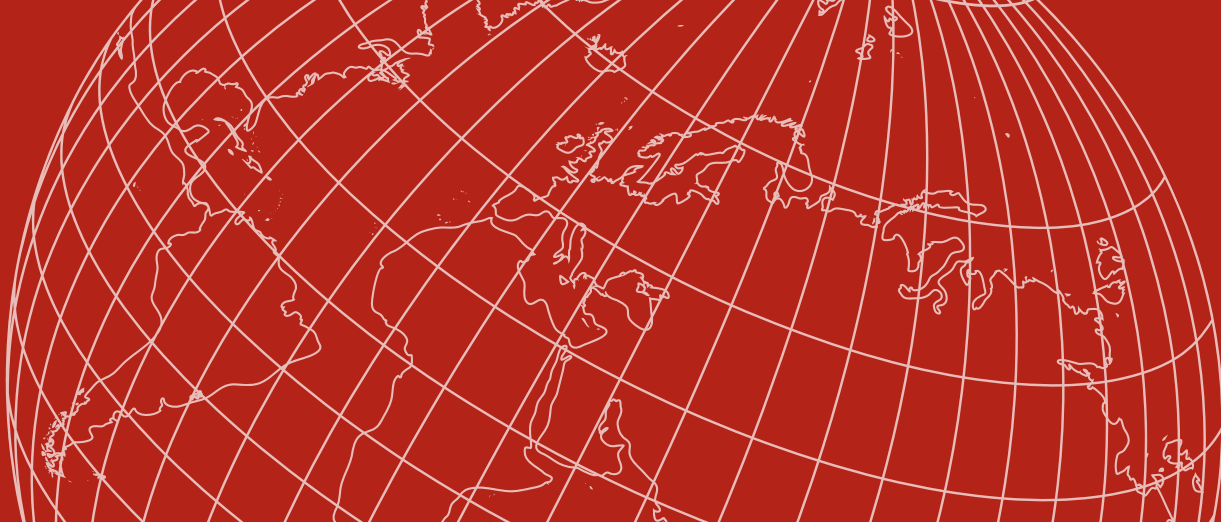
Satisfaction with the overall higher education experience is generally high though not as high as the experience of living in Australia. The higher education system in Australia is enabling the majority of respondents to achieve their employment and education aspirations.

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%).

Vocational education and training—Executive summary

In August 2005, Australian Education International (AEI) commissioned the International Student Survey (ISS). The first stage of the ISS, completed late in 2006, surveyed 14,946 international and Australian final year students who were completing a course of study in higher education institutions, in Vocational Education and Training (VET), in a 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 2006 International Student Survey).

The 2006 International Student Survey aimed to obtain a comprehensive view of the expectations and experiences of international students in Australia. Australian students were also sampled in 2006 (and for this report), allowing comparisons to be made between international and Australian students.

This 2007 Follow-up International Student Survey—Vocational Education and Training, collected further information from 198 graduates of VET courses previously surveyed in 2006, being 130 international and 68 Australian graduates who had responded to the online or hard-copy self-completion questionnaire sent in August/September 2007. This represented an overall response rate of 13% of the 2006 VET respondents (11% for international and 23% for Australian respondents) of those who agreed to participate in the 2007 Follow-up Survey.

The 2007 Follow-up Survey aimed to measure whether students' attitudes to, and satisfaction with, Australian VET institutions has 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 2007 Follow-up Survey are highlighted under the following headings.

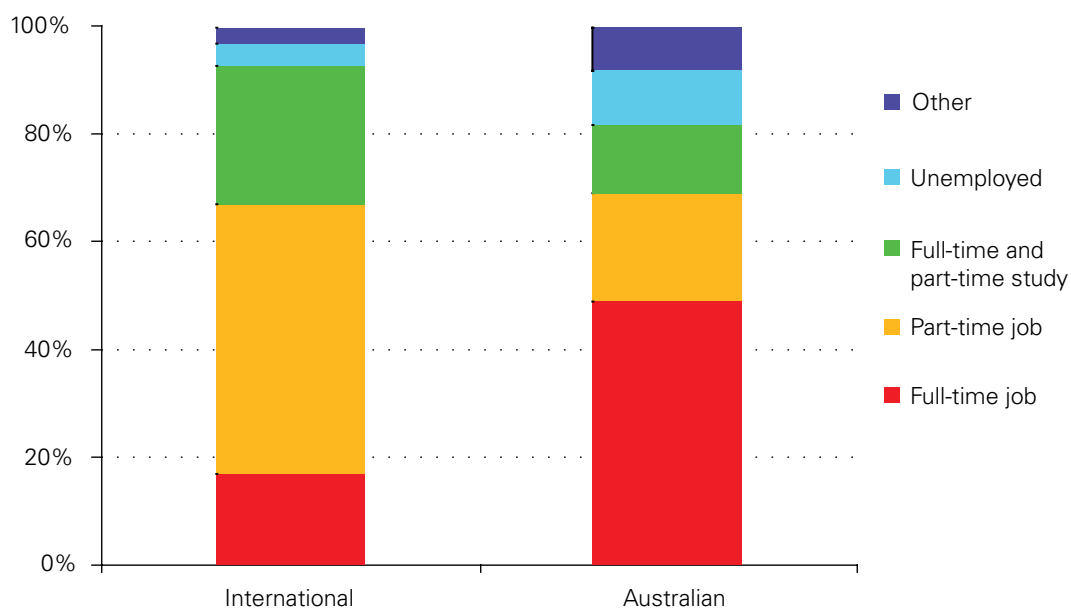
Outcomes

Overall employment and education outcomes (at August 2007)

- 17% of international, and 49% of Australian respondents, were working full-time or had accepted a full-time position; another 50% of international, and 20% of Australian respondents, had a part-time job.
- 84% of international and 100% of Australian respondents, with a full or part-time job were working in Australia.
- 26% of international, compared with 13% Australian respondents, were undertaking further study, either full-time or part-time, and not seeking immediate employment.
- Only 4% of international and 10% 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 84% and almost all of them (95%) were studying in Australia.
- In 2006, the majority (73%) 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 (79% for written, and 83% for spoken English skills).



2007 respondents' outcomes



Hours worked per week

On the average, employed international respondents were working 24 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' (50%) employment expectations when they finished their course compared to their Australian counterparts (61%).

Perceptions of study in Australia

Study satisfaction

Overall, a high proportion of international respondents expressed satisfaction with studying in Australia and with their course experience, although

this reported satisfaction had declined slightly since 2006. There was no significant difference in the reported satisfaction of Australian respondents between 2006 and 2007.

Perceptions of satisfaction with the quality of education changed minimally across both groups of respondents between 2006 and 2007. In 2007, 82% of international were satisfied, compared with 84% of Australian respondents.

The USA was perceived to offer better quality courses than Australia by 25% of international respondents (6% of Australians), while 22% of international respondents (7% of Australians) perceived the UK to offer better quality courses. Only 11% of international respondents perceived that their home country offers better courses than Australia and 38% indicated that their home country offers courses that are worse.

Willingness to recommend study in Australia

A high proportion of respondents indicated that they would continue to recommend studying in Australia, the course and the VET institution they attended, to family and friends.

88% of international and 90% of Australian respondents in 2007 indicated that they would recommend studying in Australia to their family and friends. However, the response rate for international respondents was significantly higher in 2006 (93%) than 2007.

70% of international respondents in 2007 were willing to recommend the course they completed, compared with 82% of Australian respondents.

80% of international respondents in 2007 indicated that they would recommend the VET institution they attended to family and friends, compared with 79% of Australian respondents.

Perceptions of living in Australia

Satisfaction with living in Australia

For international and Australian respondents, the level of satisfaction with living in Australia remains high. 83% of international respondents in 2007 were satisfied with living in Australia which was not significant from their reported satisfaction in 2006.

Making friends

Most international respondents reported that they kept in touch with other international students (88%), Australian students (75%) and with people they worked with (82%) while studying in Australia. 67% of international and 44% of Australian respondents were satisfied with being able to make close friends with each other.

Permanent residency

In 2007, 78% of international respondents either had applied for (30%) or planned to apply (48%) for permanent resident status in Australia.

Willingness to recommend living in Australia

87% of international respondents in 2007 would recommend living in Australia and the city they lived in to family and friends.

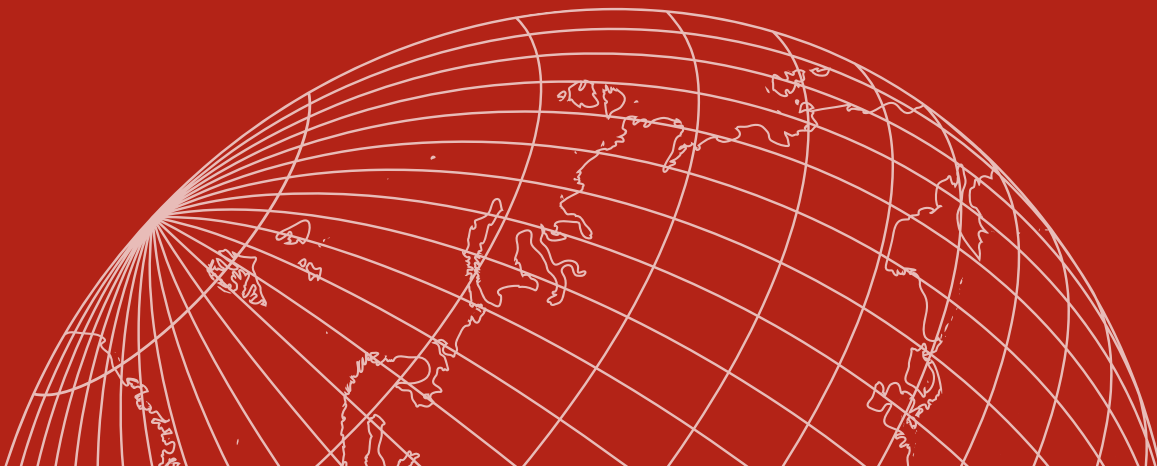
Conclusions

Former international VET students are generally satisfied with the experience of studying and living in Australia. One year after course completion, 67% of international respondents held full or part-time jobs. The majority (84%) of graduates who found employment did so in Australia and the majority (95%) of those enrolled in further study were studying in Australia. Seventy-eight per cent planned to be living in Australia in 12 months time, and the same percentage had, or planned to, apply for permanent resident status.

The levels of satisfaction with the overall VET experience were generally positive for international respondents, though not as high as their satisfaction with the experience of living in Australia. However, levels of satisfaction around education quality were stronger than those around employment outcomes.

In 2006, 37% of international respondents anticipated seeking a job on course completion. In 2007, 17% were working full-time and a further 50% were working part-time. At the same time, more respondents (64%) were undertaking further full-time study in 2007 than had anticipated doing so in 2006 (46%).

Both groups felt that the qualification from which they had graduated had prepared them well for further study. However, compared with the Australian respondents, significantly more



international respondents reported finding it difficult to find the employment in Australia they were aspiring for. Although it cannot be deduced unequivocally from the data, it may be that the high rate of part-time work was a necessary option for international respondents due to their visa conditions on working 20 hours per week while studying.

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 VET institutions they attended. Most feel that their international networks of contact have been extended.

A significantly higher proportion of international respondents (68%) reported dissatisfaction with the cost of Australian VET courses than Australian respondents (49%). Also, more than half of the international respondents were dissatisfied with the cost of living. More information provided about the total cost of courses and of the cost of living in Australia, prior to enrolment, could help reduce the levels of dissatisfaction felt by future international students.

