



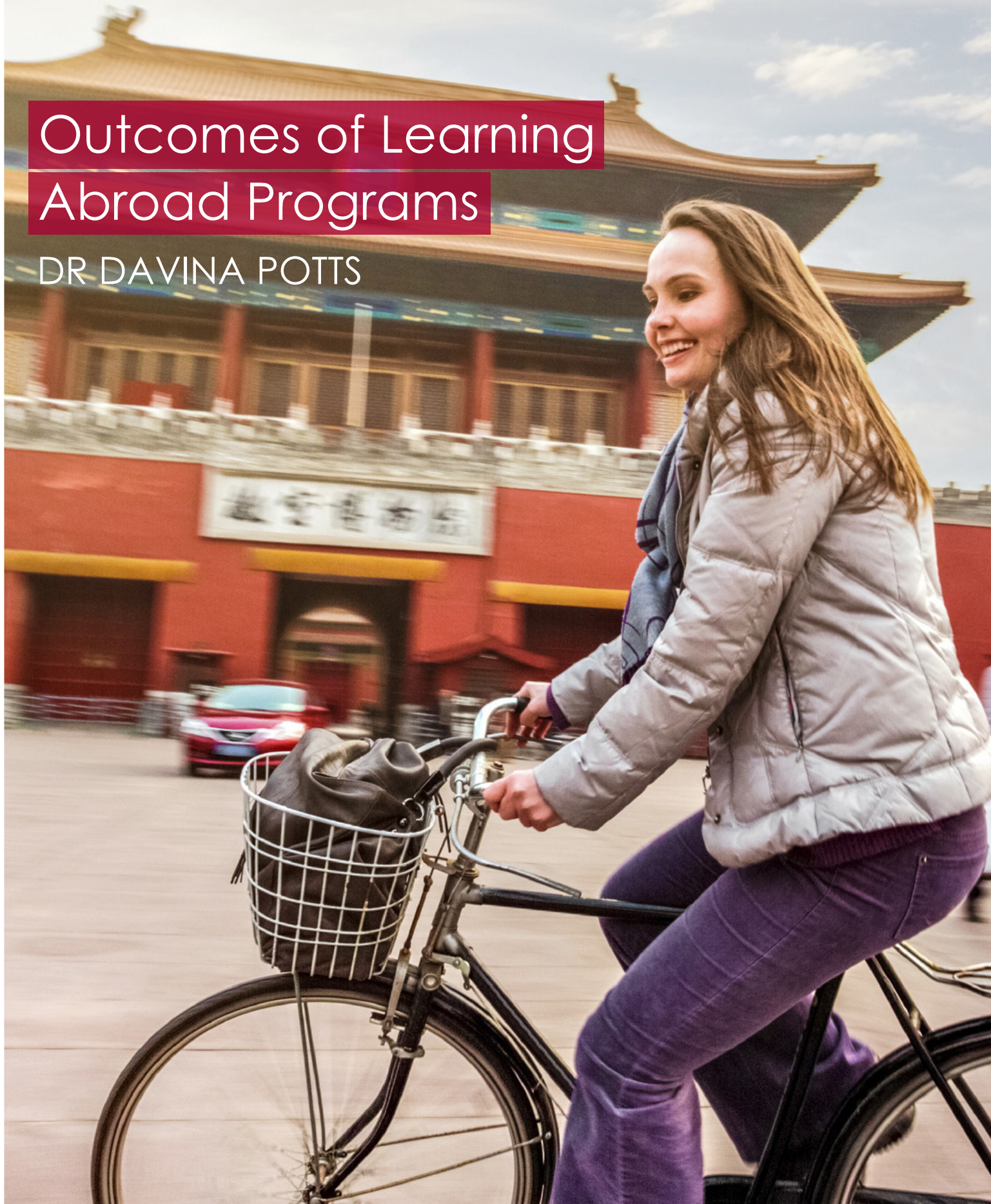
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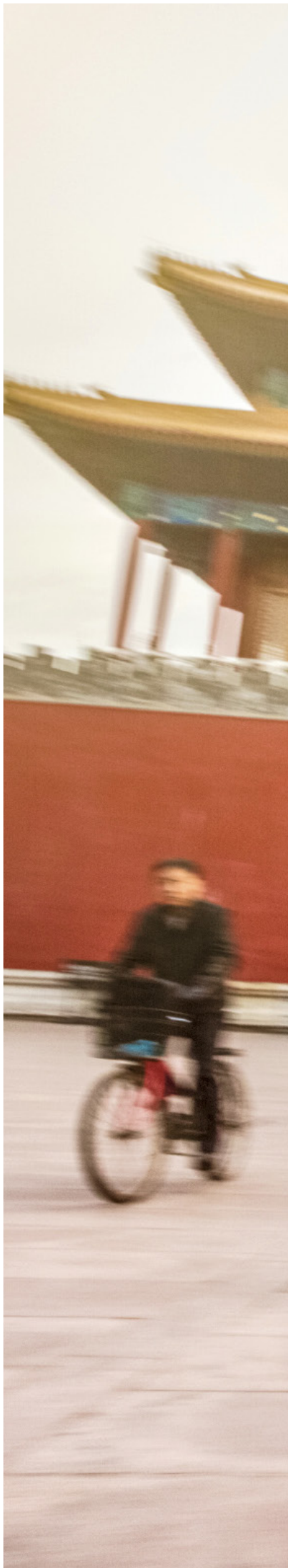
DISCOVER LEARN LEAD

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International Education
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Outcomes of Learning Abroad Programs

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Outcomes of learning abroad programs

INTRODUCTION

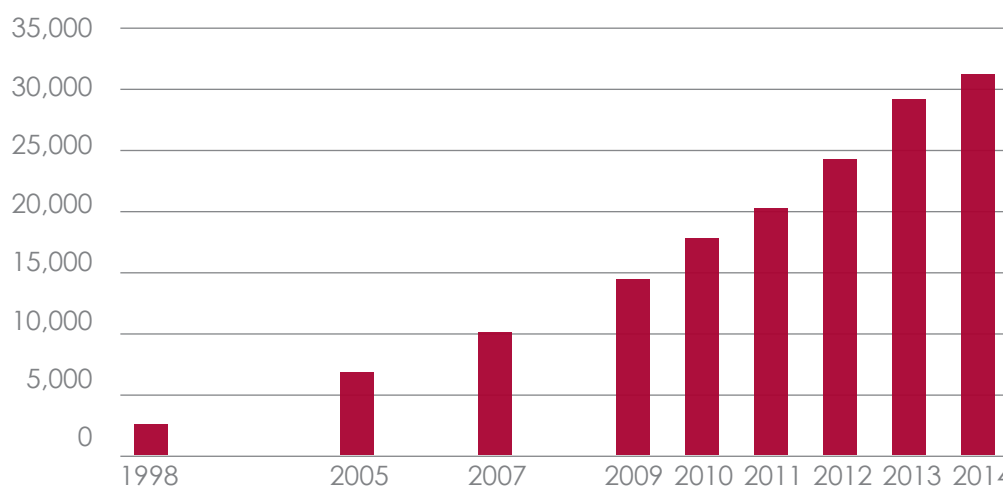
In the last reporting year, more than 30,000 students from Australian universities travelled abroad to undertake study, work or community service as part of their Australian degree program (AUIDF, 2015). Although this represents only a minority of students – approximately 11 per cent of the cohort – participation in learning abroad programs has increased fourfold over the last 10 years. Learning abroad is now an educational activity that many Australian students aspire to undertake, and the scope of available programs may influence their university and course choice.

Learning abroad is known by several names including education abroad, student exchange, study abroad, international learning mobility, credit mobility and international student mobility. For the purpose of this paper, it will primarily be referred to as learning abroad – an inclusive term that encompasses overseas study, international work experience, internships, practicum placements, volunteering, community service and other learning endeavours, where students remain enrolled at their home institution while travelling abroad for a component of their home degree. Students at Australian universities now have access to a broad range of options in learning abroad programs offered through their home university, through overseas universities or through an external provider organisation.

The participation of students in learning abroad programs has become a key component of university internationalisation strategies in Australia and abroad (Adams, Banks & Olsen, 2011). Student mobility can underpin important international collaborative partnerships that may also generate research outputs. Spending a period of study at a partner university can expose students to new knowledge, technologies and methods. Additionally, learning abroad can initiate the development of research networks, which may lead to more meaningful collaborations in the future. In the competition for the best talent, sending and receiving the brightest students can enhance the reputation of universities with future generations of researchers and employers.

The growth in participation in learning abroad in Australia has been notable. The earliest census in 1998 (Davis, Milne & Olsen, 1999) included 3,375 participants. As shown in Chart 1, this number more than doubled by the time of the second data collection in 2005. Annual data collection from 2009 has tracked participation rates from 6.1 per cent for all students and 8.8 per cent for undergraduates (in 2009) to 11.4 per cent for all students and 16.5 per cent for undergraduate students in 2014 (AUIDF, 2015). This is comparable to the 2013–14 US undergraduate participation rate of 14.8 per cent (Institute for International Education, 2015). Growth of learning abroad in Australia has been supported through a range of government and institutional initiatives including the OS-HELP loan program, introduced in 2004, the Study Overseas website, the World Class campaign, and the AsiaBound and New Colombo Plan grant and scholarship programs.

CHART 1. PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS FROM AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES IN LEARNING ABROAD PROGRAMS 1998–2014



As the culture of learning abroad develops on Australian campuses, it will be necessary to shift the focus from participation, to access (i.e. who participates and how can we expand access to under-represented groups) and outcomes assessment. The Forum on Education Abroad defines outcomes assessment as “the process of measuring effectiveness, usually through the articulation of goals, the development of associated measures and the identification of observable outcomes, used to inform whether the initial goals were achieved.” (Forum on Education Abroad, 2016). In short, it’s “what students are learning and how and where this learning is taking place” (Ibid).

A focus on individual learning, however, does not take into consideration outcomes for institutions and outcomes for the higher education system and society as a whole. Hudzik (2014) outlines four levels of analysis to frame the impacts and outcomes of internationalisation:

Level 1: Students and other individual stakeholders

Level 2: Individual higher education institutions

Level 3: National and societal

Level 4: Global and supranational

According to his work on comprehensive internationalisation, Hudzik proposes that outcomes assessment should align internationalisation goals and intended outcomes with the overall goals of the institution including student learning, research, engagement and graduate outcomes. Measuring outcomes in an environment of constrained resources is especially important to shift the discussion from beliefs and anecdotal evidence, to policy and practice informed by data. In the case of Australia, the data should go beyond enrolment totals and participation rates to consider the outputs of internationalisation activities.

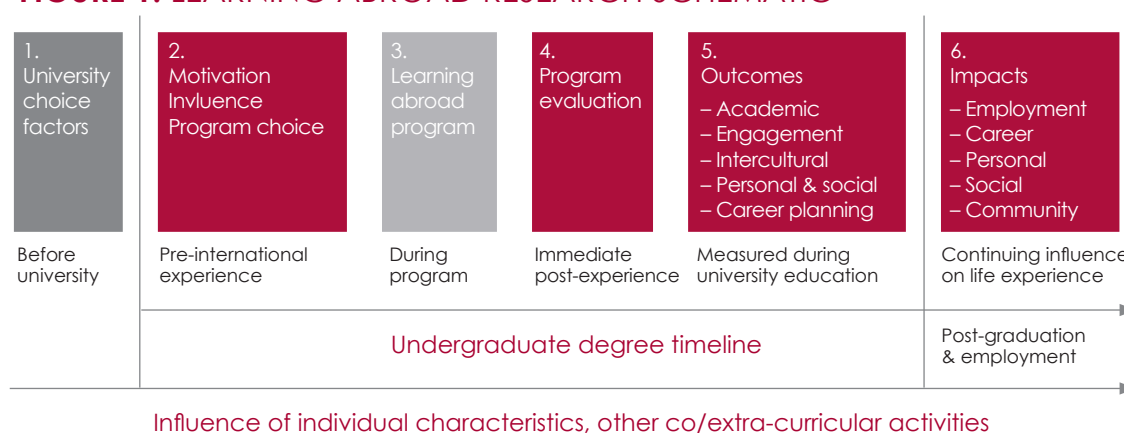
The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of what is known about the benefits of learning abroad, including the benefits to individuals (Level 1) and the benefits to society (Level 3), noting that the benefits to individuals often overlaps with the benefits to institutions (Level 2) and nation/society. As the evidence base in Australia is currently very small, the literature used for this review is global. Where Australian data is available, it will be noted. Part A presents the individual benefits and Part B presents the societal benefits.

Framing learning abroad research

Since the 1980s, researchers and practitioners have been studying the outcomes and impacts of learning abroad. This started with a focus on language acquisition and quickly expanded to include cultural learning, personal and developmental outcomes, academic outcomes and more general life impacts. Several large-scale studies in US and Europe have considered outcomes in multiple domains and although the field has advanced considerably, the research is complex as outcomes may not be fully realised until many years after the learning abroad experience.

A helpful way of conceptualising learning abroad research is to consider the higher education experience of a student. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of this experience and how research has been used to understand each stage. While this paper focuses on boxes 5 and 6, an overview of the schematic will situate these stages within the overall higher education experience.

FIGURE 1. LEARNING ABROAD RESEARCH SCHEMATIC



Firstly, as previously discussed, learning abroad opportunities are becoming increasingly prominent to prospective student audiences in university recruitment and profiling activities. The availability of learning abroad programs can influence university and program choice, indicating the importance students now place on international learning opportunities as part of their overall higher education experience.

Following university and program choice, a cluster of research has considered intent to study abroad (or not), and motivations (Chew & Croy, 2011; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2014; Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2010; Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2009; Stroud, 2010; Vossensteyn, et al, 2010) and influences on program choice (Beerkens, Souto-Otero, de Wit, Huisman, 2015; Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap & Axelsson, 2015). Background characteristics such as socio-economic status and previous mobility experiences have emerged as some of the most important factors influencing the decision to study abroad (Lörz, Netz, Quast, 2015; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

The third type of research occurs during the learning abroad program. Often these studies utilise ethnographic methodologies in an attempt to capture the lived experience of participants as it is unfolding in the host location. Sources such as journals, interviews and observation provide the data. Immediately following the end of a program, evaluations are often undertaken to assess success against objectives and to guide future program development. (See Dolby, 2008; Palacios, 2010; Tan, 2015 for Australian examples).

Program evaluations typically take the form of surveys and interviews, which form an important part of the quality assurance process and may lead to the development of more sophisticated outcomes research in the future. Many practitioner-researchers begin outcomes assessment by undertaking simple program evaluations as a first step towards studying learning abroad outcomes (see Campbell & Walta, 2015 for an example of this).

The fifth stage of the diagram represents outcomes, the category within which a majority of learning abroad research can be classified. This body of literature has developed from foundational studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Carlson, Burn, Useem & Yackimowicz, 1990; Oppen, Teichler & Carlson, 1990; Teichler & Maiworm, 1994), and now includes hundreds of new studies each year. Although the primary outlet for outcomes research is professional practice conferences such as NAFSA and EAIE, increasing rigour in methodologies and theoretical frameworks, which link learning abroad to established research fields in education, sociology and economics, means that increasingly, learning abroad research is published by major journals and leading policy organisations.

Outcomes research is generally undertaken immediately following the learning abroad program, and may follow a pre-post program format, where researchers are seeking to understand changes that have occurred as a result of the international experience. Domains that are generally considered in outcomes research include academic, student engagement, intercultural skills and learning, and personal and social development. Outcomes research takes advantage of the presence of participants on campus following their experience. However, a potential disadvantage may be the short time lapsed since the experience abroad, considering that the phenomenon of interest may take additional time to manifest.

The final category of research, impacts (box 6), links closely to outcomes research but extends time period of interest beyond graduation to include employment, further study and other effects on personal, professional and community life. This is the most difficult research to undertake both logistically, in terms of contacting former participants, and methodologically, considering many other factors that need to be taken into account in the analysis. Notwithstanding the barriers, impacts research is very important to understanding the long-term value of learning abroad as a worthwhile educational investment.

Learning abroad impacts research has spanned up to 50 years post-graduation, and has provided some of the most compelling evidence of the benefits of learning abroad. Employment and career-focused research from Europe, spanning multiple countries, has provided a foundation of knowledge about how the ERASMUS program has supported the realisation of some of the most important goals of the European Union. This includes the mobility of residents across borders, the expansion of education opportunities for young people and the development of a European identity (see Bracht, et. al., 2006; Brandenburg, et. al., 2014). Other studies have highlighted the cross-generational social mobility benefits (see Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) and the benefits for civic and environmental engagement and the development of more globally aware citizens (see Dwyer, 2004b; Fry et. al., 2009).

Part A: Individual benefits of learning abroad

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES: ACADEMIC EFFECTS, LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Research in the area of academic outcomes from learning abroad has primarily been concentrated in the US, to support the expansion of study abroad programs at large public institutions. By studying academic outcomes, institutions can target policy to groups who are more likely to fall behind, or are at risk of not completing their degree. Early research in this area (Carlson, et.al., 1991) identified a sense of academic achievement and a high pattern of graduate degree completion among study abroad alumni. Given the generation of the programs and the nature of the study abroad group, it was not possible to untangle the variables to determine if study abroad students were more academically focused regardless of the study abroad program, or if study abroad could impact students in this area. In a further unique study, Hadis (2005) identified and tested an outcome of studying for the pleasure of learning, rather than a grade, and found significant connections between academic focusing, increased independence and increased open-mindedness as a result of study abroad.

“Studying abroad not only has an impact on aspects of students’ development in general as claimed by the literature, but also influences their learning behaviors and processes upon their return as students during the senior year.”

Gonyea, 2008, p. 19

Learning abroad is now included as a high-impact education practice in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Several large-scale studies on the academic effects of learning abroad have been completed and the major results are summarised below.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS, PERFORMANCE AND COMPLETION

RESEARCH FINDING	SUMMARY OF THE STUDY
Learning abroad may lead to higher graduation rates	Participants of learning abroad programs graduated at higher rates than non-participants. Sutton & Rubin (2010) found the results were consistent while controlling for gender, race, and academic achievement (measured by SAT scores). However, at the high end of the academic spectrum, it is difficult to achieve significance when analysing data. Barclay-Hamir (2011) identified similar issues with GPA >3.30 (out of 4) (Barclay-Hamir, 2011; Huckel, Potts & Ramirez, 2015; Sutton & Rubin 2010; Xu, de Silva, Neufeldt & Dane, 2013).
Learning abroad may promote degree progression	Participants of learning abroad programs are more likely to progress in their degree at all major stages, that is, from first-to-second year, from second-to-third year, from third-to-fourth year. Note that this study did not account for prior academic performance or timing of the learning abroad program (Huckel, Potts & Ramirez, 2015).
Learning abroad does not delay graduation	Participants of learning abroad were more likely to graduate in standard time-to degree (4 years) (Barclay-Harmir, 2011; University planning, institutional research and accountability, 2009; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Malmgren & Gavin, 2008; Huckel, Potts & Ramirez, 2015; Sutton & Rubin, 2010; Xu, de Silva, Neufeldt & Dane, 2013)
Learning abroad participants graduate with a higher GPA than non-participants	Graduates who participated in learning abroad programs completed their degrees with a higher GPA than non-participants (though it should be noted that causality cannot be totally attributed to learning abroad) (University planning, institutional research and accountability, 2009; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Malmgren & Gavin, 2008)
Learning abroad may promote better academic outcomes for at risk students	Participation in learning abroad for 'at risk' students has been linked to higher graduation rates (Malmgren & Gavin, 2008)
Learning abroad increases interest in graduate study	Several studies support a link between participation in an international education experience and increased interest and enrolment in graduate study, including in Australia (Carlson et. al., 1991; Dwyer, 2004b; Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow & Nam, 2009; Nunan, 2006; Teichler, 2011). One alumni study reported that 60 per cent of former learning abroad participants had pursued an advanced degree (Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow & Nam, 2009).
Results around program variables are inconclusive	The impact of program duration, program type, destination region and timing of learning abroad within the undergraduate degree has yielded varying results in the literature (see Barclay-Hamir, 2011; Sutton & Rubin, 2010), and further research is needed to develop an understanding of how program design can maximise learning outcomes for participants.
Learning abroad promotes deep learning	Research using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has found that learning abroad has an impact on two measures of learning, specifically integrative and reflective learning (Gonyea, 2008).
Learning abroad promotes cognitive development	Overseas study promotes holistic and global student development. In particular, it promotes cognitive development in the area of what students understand about cultural difference (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). On the Measure of Intellectual Development, McKeown (2009) found that participation in learning abroad may provide an opportunity for those who have not traveled before to catch up to their peers in cognitive development. He labeled this the First Time Effect.

RESEARCH FINDING	SUMMARY OF THE STUDY
Learning abroad promotes creative thinking	Creative thinking skills are developed through learning abroad, which can support innovative idea generation, high order reasoning and learning processes. Creative thinking is also associated with tolerance to ambiguity (Lee, Therriault & Linderholm, 2012).
Learning abroad develops applied knowledge	Studying overseas helps students to develop applied knowledge in some subject areas through the context provided by the international learning environment (Sutton & Rubin, 2010).
Learning abroad supports the development of language skills	In terms of language learning, multiple studies confirm the value of learning abroad programs to support the further development of language skills. Programs of at least a semester in duration that also allow students to take academic courses in the target language promote significant foreign language gains (Carlson, et al., 1990; Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Page, 2009; Watson & Wolfel, 2015).
Learning abroad promotes life-long learning	Experiential projects in an international context can successfully promote self-directed and life-long learning skills in students, complementing campus-based courses and making students more confident in their writing, critical thinking and research skills (Jiusto & DiBiasio, 2006).

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES: INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

One of the most common areas of outcomes measurement in learning abroad in the US focuses on the development of intercultural competence. Since the mid-1990s, intercultural competence assessment in learning abroad has rapidly grown as an area of study (Bennett, 2010). This interest aligns closely with the goals of a liberal arts education and the development of global citizenship, reflecting the traditional roots of learning abroad in small, liberal arts colleges (Burn, 1991; Gore, 2005). Fantini (2006) catalogued 87 different instruments designed to measure intercultural communicative competence. Some of the more commonly used instruments in learning abroad include the BEVI (Beliefs, Events, Values Inventory), the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory), the ILO (Intercultural Learning Outcomes), the GPI (Global Perspectives Inventory), and the CCAI (Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory).

“...on average studying abroad significantly affects the positive development of intercultural competence. Furthermore, this effect appears to be general rather than conditional. This analysis found no evidence to indicate that the effect of studying abroad varies systematically by gender, race, SES, institutional type, pre-college tested academic preparation, pretest score, or college experiences.”

Salisbury, 2011, p. 92

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993; Bennett & Hammer, 2002) measures individual progress through defined stages of denial, polarisation, minimisation, acceptance and adaptation. Using the IDI, learning abroad has been found to improve intercultural competence, with even stronger results found if participants had learnt a language in high school, took classes in a target language as well as language classes, was female, and was abroad for one semester (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Page, 2009). However, respondents have also been found to regress on intercultural competence when tested several months after returning home (Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton & Hubbard, 2008; Rexeisen, 2015; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Page, 2009). One difficulty of using pre and post-test design in measuring change following the learning abroad experience is the short period of time that has usually elapsed. Measurement tools may not be sensitive enough to capture the change and therefore difference scores are low.

Using the Global Perspectives Inventory, learning abroad has been found to positively impact holistic and global development, through promotion of learning across the intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive domains (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009). When comparing learning abroad with travelling for recreational purposes, learning abroad has been found to promote more significant increases in multiple areas of intercultural and global competence. This includes abilities in understanding the complexity of global issues, applying disciplinary knowledge in a global context, having linguistic and cultural competency in at least one language other than their own, and working with people from other cultures (Stebbleton, Soria & Cherney, 2015).

Other results indicate that regardless of a variety of pre-college characteristics, learning abroad has been found to have a significant and positive affect on the development of intercultural competence (Salisbury, 2011). Considering additional outcomes from language learning, study in the target language for a semester or a year has been found to promote progress in intercultural competence in the range of 33–40 per cent, although some regression was also noted (Engle & Engle, 2004). Finally, in considering the effect of nine high-impact educational practices, learning abroad was found to modestly enhance growth in intercultural effectiveness and openness to diversity (Kilgo, Ezell Sheets & Pascarella, 2014).

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

As indicated previously, more recent studies have developed the concept of global citizenship, an overarching construct which can include social responsibility, global competence and global civic engagement (Morais & Ogden, 2010). It has also been conceptualised as four manifestations of change that promote a global mindset including broadened perspectives, cosmopolitan hospitality, accelerated maturity and widened horizons. In a pilot study of their model of global citizenship, Lilley, Baker & Harris (2015) found that interpersonal encounters and 'out of comfort zone' experiences facilitated changes in learning abroad participants, moving them towards thinking like global citizens. This included comparative thinking and connecting knowledge across contexts.

Tarrant, Rubin and Stoner (2014) defined global citizenry through an environmental lens. Learning abroad alone is not the most powerful tool for developing global citizenry, but a combination of course content and location produced significant change after a 4-week program (Tarrant, Rubin and Stoner, 2014). In a comparative study of Australian and US students, young Australians studying overseas viewed themselves as part of a global network that has a multitude of opportunities to offer in terms of their academic, personal and career goals. Australian students construct identity and move towards global citizenship through spending time in multiple contexts (Dolby, 2008).

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Developmental outcomes in the personal and social domains are the most frequent findings of research on learning abroad. Such outcomes are important in the development of independence, confidence and interpersonal skills, which can support student learning in the academic environment. The process of adjusting to a new living and learning environment often results in dissonance, acting as a trigger for development, which occurs as participants try to reconcile new experiences with existing knowledge structures (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Carlson et al., 1990). This area of research is also connected to experiential learning theory with a foundation in learning through doing (see the work of such authors as Kolb, Dewey & Piaget).

As part of the overall higher education journey, learning abroad has been found to promote significant development across the domains of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive development (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). A summary of the major research findings is presented below:

- While accounting for demographic variables and participation in other college activities, learning abroad is positively associated with gains in the ability to understand moral and ethical issues, communication skills and overall satisfaction with their educational experience (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2014).
- Australian participants in one institutional study were found to become more self-confident, particularly in communication with other people, and to report a sense of intellectual connection with the world. However, the authors recommended that participants be encouraged to undertake a deeper level of considered analysis in order to enhance the pedagogical outcomes (Forsey, Broomhall & Davis, 2011).
- Learning abroad promotes lifelong learning skills and self-directed learning, open-mindedness and independence, personal growth and development, and is effective in advancing students' attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of multiculturalism, and reducing ethnocentrism (Jiusto & DiBiasio, 2006; Hadis, 2005; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Fairchild, Pillai & Noble, 2006).
- International mobility is a life event that serves as a catalyst of personality maturation. In a study of personality development, learning abroad was found to accelerate development of openness and agreeableness, while at the same time, fostering a steeper decline in neuroticism (Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013).
- Learning abroad leads to significantly increased internal locus of control for participants, compared to peers who did not participate. Internal locus of control relates to effective problem solving, and is associated with better personal relationships and academic achievement. Former learning abroad participants are better equipped to deal with personal and academic challenges (McLeod et al., 2015).

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES: CAREER DIRECTION

Career direction as an outcome of learning abroad has not been directly studied in the literature surveyed for this paper. However, several studies have found that learning abroad supports students to make decisions about their future careers, and may be a determining experience in relation to career choice (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). This is important because research on university career services in Australia indicates that not enough emphasis is placed on assisting students in finding their career direction and this may lead to poor academic results and attrition (Bridgestock, 2009).

An early study of learning abroad outcomes found that participants “*planned on careers that could be substantially, although indirectly, enhanced by the knowledge and perspectives that the sojourn abroad offered*” (Carlson, et. al., 1990, p. 72). A large-scale alumni survey found that 63 per cent of former participants said learning abroad *influenced their decision to expand or change academic majors* and 62 per cent reported that learning abroad *ignited an interest in a career direction* (Dwyer, 2004b). The ERASMUS impact study reported that following participation in learning abroad, 87–92 per cent of participants “*have a better idea what I want to do after graduation*” (Brandenburg, et al., 2014, p.110).

Learning abroad experiences have also been attributed with widening horizons and recalibrating future lives and careers (Lilley, Baker & Harris, 2015, P. 237). In a study of career outcomes of Australian participants in learning abroad programs, 69 per cent of respondents rated their learning abroad experience as worthwhile or very worthwhile for increasing their motivation and passion for their chosen career direction (Potts, 2015). While it is logical to connect international study experiences with an international career, it is also possible that participants subsequently decided not to pursue an international career. Rather, learning abroad may provide a space to experiment with opportunities not available in their home context, and in the case of internships, for students to clarify their area of professional interest for a future career. Internships may be just as important for determining which areas not to pursue for a career (Benedict-Augustine, 2010).

Practice now leads research in this area as several leading institutions have designed programs to combine career advising with learning abroad selection, preparation and return home programs. The Global Internship Conference and the University of Minnesota Career Integration Education Abroad Conference showcase best practice in career development through learning abroad programs.

LEARNING ABROAD IMPACTS RESEARCH

From the student lifecycle perspective, research on the impact of learning abroad focuses on the long-term effects of an international study experience (following graduation from university) extending as far as 50 years. This research is important because it approaches international education from a more comprehensive and summative perspective (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Some of the most profound effects on individuals may not be realised within the parameters of the higher education experience (Salisbury, 2011), but may become apparent many years following learning abroad. Impact studies seek to establish a link between learning abroad participation and subsequent life choices and perceptions. Although causality can rarely be determined because of the complexity involved in the measurement of many variables, researchers frequently endorse the significance of learning abroad on subsequent life experiences (Carlson et. al., 1990; Dwyer, 2004a; Fry et. al., 2009; Paige et. al., 2009).

INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS: CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT

The area of careers and employment is the only area for which the majority of research studies have been conducted in Europe. The ERASMUS program, and a strong tradition of international mobility for students across borders in European countries, has resulted in many national and multi-national studies of employment outcomes. The long history of research and the use of common questions by researchers outside of Europe means that comparable data is available in some areas. The research findings in careers and employment should always be considered within the national or regional context of the sample and the time of the study, because of the impact of labour market conditions on graduate employment. In any case, trends are notable and generally support the impact of learning abroad on careers and employment.

RESEARCH FINDING	DETAILS OF THE STUDIES
Learning abroad is helpful in obtaining a job after graduation	As the most important step after graduation, across a range of national contexts including Europe, Canada, Australia and the US, an international education experience is perceived to be helpful in obtaining a job (Anderson, 2015; Bracht Engel, Janson, Over, Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Brandenburg, et. al., 2014; Marcotte, Desroches & Poupard, 2007; Nunan, 2006; Potts, 2015; Teichler & Janson, 2007).
Learning abroad is valued by employers when they are recruiting	<p>Up to 61 per cent of learning abroad alumni reported that learning abroad was important to their employer when they were recruited. This result was for European students. The equivalent statistic was 45 per cent for US and 44 per cent for Australia (Brandenburg, et. al., 2014; Anderson, 2015; Potts, 2014).</p> <p>In a global study of employers, 62 per cent of respondents indicated that they seek or attribute value to an international study experience when recruiting (Molony, Sowter & Potts, 2011).</p> <p>72 per cent of Australian employers indicated that second language skills are viewed positively in the graduate recruitment process and may lead to career opportunities in the future (Prospect Marketing, 2006).</p>
Learning abroad promotes interest in an international career	Across a range of countries and regions including Australia, the US, Japan and the European Union, international experience was found to generate interest in an international career (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2007; Norris & Gillespie, 2009; Nunan, 2006; Orahood, Woolf & Kruze, 2004; 2008; Wiers-Jenssen, 2008).
Employers associate learning abroad with key employability skills	International study experiences are associated by Australian employers with the development of key employability characteristics such as tolerance, open-mindedness, creativity, initiative, the ability to take on responsibility, empathy and respect (Crossman & Clarke, 2009).
Former participants recognise the value of learning abroad in the development of employability skills	Studies across Europe, the US and Australia indicate that former participants in learning abroad programs rated their experience as worthwhile or very worthwhile for the development of a range of competencies or soft skills. These include maturity and personal development, interpersonal and communication skills, critical and analytical thinking, and working with or appreciating people from diverse backgrounds (Anderson, 2015; Bracht, et. al., 2006; Potts, 2014).
Learning abroad may promote career advancement and lead to internationally-focused work assignments	<p>International study experiences may support Australian graduates to advance more quickly in their careers and provide opportunities for internationally-focused work assignments (Prospect Marketing, 2006).</p> <p>Graduates who have studied in another country experience more horizontal differences in their work assignments; they more often reported an international dimension to their job tasks and competencies required in the workplace (Teichler, Gordon & Mailworm, 2000; Teichler & Jahr, 2001; Teichler & Janson, 2007).</p>

RESEARCH FINDING	DETAILS OF THE STUDIES
Learning abroad promotes professional mobility after graduation	22 per cent of European graduates who participated in learning abroad programs experienced some form of professional mobility during the first four years after graduation. This compared to 5 per cent for non-participants (Teichler, Gordon & Mailworm, 2000; Teichler & Jahr, 2001). The most recent European data indicates that this figure has increase to 40 per cent of learning abroad participants changing countries at least once since graduation (Brandenburg, et. al., 2014).
Learning abroad graduates find a job more quickly and are less likely to be unemployed	Alumni who have participated in learning abroad programs may experience a shorter job search time period than those who did not study abroad. Bracht, et. al., (2006) reported an average of five months for the international study group compared to seven months for the non-participant group. The most recent ERASMUS study reported that the unemployment rate of participants was 23 per cent lower than non-participants five years after graduation (Brandenburg, et. al., 2014). The extent that these results relate to other factors such as motivation and academic performance should be considered.
Learning abroad can lead to job offers	One-third of European alumni who undertook job placements abroad were offered employment by their host organisation (Brandenburg, et. al., 2014).
Learning abroad may foster entrepreneurship	Almost 1 in 10 European alumni who undertook job placements abroad started their own company (Brandenburg, et. al., 2014).
Learning abroad may lead to a higher starting salary	Several studies have reported a higher starting salary for graduates with an international education experience. However, these results should be interpreted cautiously and consider such factors as motivation, ability, social background, sector of employment, discipline and expatriate salary differentials (Messer & Wolter, 2007; Saarikallio-Trop & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010; Teichler, 2011; UK Higher Education International Unit, 2015).
Former participants associate learning abroad with positive long-term career prospects	Former learning abroad participants are very positive about their future careers and attribute learning abroad as contributing towards this. Across Europe (53%), Australia (63%) and the US (66%), former participants in learning abroad programs rated learning abroad as worthwhile or very worthwhile for their long-term career prospects (Anderson, 2015; Bracht, et. al., 2006; Potts, 2014).
Learning abroad contributes to the development of career capital	International work and travel can be an important form of knowledge acquisition and individual growth, contributing to development and accumulation of career capital (Inkson & Myers, 2005).

INDIVIDUAL IMPACTS: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

Research in the areas of personal and social impacts from learning abroad relates conceptually to the goals of a liberal arts education espoused primarily in the US education system. However, many of the topics considered in this research are relevant for international higher education globally. Learning abroad has been found to contribute to citizenship development, environmental awareness and actions, community participation, greater engagement in global issues, obtaining graduate degrees and forming life partnerships. Some of the important research studies are outlined below. As researchers have replicated studies in different countries, some comparative data is available.

“This study shows that study abroad has a significant impact on students in the areas of continued language use, academic attainment measures, intercultural and personal development, and career choices. Most importantly, the study illustrates that this impact can be sustained over a period as long as 50 years.”

Dwyer, 2004b, p. 161

Charting the impact of study abroad

In a major multiple-institution alumni survey, Dwyer (2004b) found that over 95 per cent of respondents agreed that learning abroad increased maturity and self-confidence, and had a long-term effect on their worldview. The same study with an Australian participant group confirmed results at a similar level (92–93%) (Nunan, 2006). 52 per cent of learning abroad alumni had achieved a graduate degree, with lower rates for the most recent graduating cohorts studied indicating that this percentage will likely increase in the future (Dwyer, 2004b). Anderson (2015) reported that 31 per cent of respondents in her study attributed learning abroad as influencing their choice to undertake a graduate degree. In an Australian study, 47 per cent of respondents indicated that learning abroad made me interested in graduate study (Nunan, 2006).

Exploring the perceptions of the early career benefits of learning abroad

99 per cent of Australian learning abroad alumni rated learning abroad as moderately worthwhile to very worthwhile for their maturity and personal development. 96 per cent also indicated that learning abroad was moderately worthwhile to very worthwhile for developing new perspectives on your home country, an aspect that can contribute to the development of citizenship knowledge and values (Potts, 2014).

ERASMUS impact study

Compared to non-mobile students, alumni who participated in learning abroad programs reported a stronger relationship with Europe (82% compared with 66%). The development of a European identity is one of the objectives of the ERASMUS program.

90 per cent of former learning abroad participants could easily imagine living abroad at some point in the future, compared with 73 per cent of non-mobile alumni (Brandenburg, et al., 2014).

33 per cent of former ERASMUS participants and 32 per cent all former learning abroad participants in the ERASMUS impact study had life partner of different nationality.

90–96 per cent of learning abroad alumni agreed with the statement: I appreciate my home university more now than before. What this means in terms of alumni engagement was not tested and should be the subject of future research.

Study abroad for global engagement

Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) project was a retrospective tracer study of over 6,000 study abroad participants up to 50 year after graduation. Considering the dimensions of civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship and voluntary simplicity, the authors found that learning abroad was perceived to have influenced over 50 per cent of reported participant involvement in global engagement activities. Results also indicate that 35 per cent of participants had enrolled in an internationally-oriented graduate degree and 35 per cent attributed learning abroad as helping their career to a large degree (Paige et. al., 2009).

Study abroad and its transformative power

Educational choices, occupational choices, lifestyles, perspectives, behaviors, and personal and social skills are listed among the impacts of international education participation in a study of 689 alumni 5–10 years after graduation. The authors note important lifestyle changes as a result of exposure to different environments. For example, an alumnus who rides her bike instead of driving because she learnt about the effects of climate change while abroad (Fry et. al., 2009).

Student mobility and narrative in Europe

International education has an intergenerational effect. Murphy-Lejeune (2002) developed the concept of mobility capital referring to the high incidence of previous international mobility of parents and/or the participant of learning abroad programs. Exposure to foreign environments, living abroad, integration in a multicultural community can predispose a young person to learning abroad at university.

“Participants across all three stakeholder groups made connections between international experience and the development of key personal characteristics such as, tolerance (also described as open-mindedness, acceptance of others for example), creativity, initiative, the ability ‘to take on responsibility’, empathy, respect, being informed and humanity.”

Crossman and Clarke, 2009, p.609

Part B: Societal outcomes from learning abroad

This paper has focused on reporting the empirical evidence of individual outcomes of learning abroad. Turning now to societal outcomes, the evidence base becomes less substantial. That is not to say that societal outcomes are less significant or less important. But rather it reflects the nature of the research to date, and the difficulty in measuring some of the concepts around the societal impact of learning abroad. It also indicates that more research is needed in this area.

Possibly the best demonstration of the complexity of measuring societal outcomes stems from the field of economics, where researchers have been working on capturing the externalities of education or the non-monetary benefits of human capital development. Economists contend that normal market mechanisms cannot be used to measure the social benefit or cost even though there may be other evidence of the social benefit or cost (Chapman & Launkaew, 2015; McMahon, 2009). For example, through learning abroad, international skills and experience of graduates enhance technical change in society, which is necessary to create advancement in the labour force to better engage with an increasingly global marketplace. Ultimately this should lead to benefits such as economic growth and an increased capacity to compete with other countries. The exact contribution of learning abroad to these benefits is difficult, if not impossible to measure. However, without considering the benefit of the increase of international skills and knowledge in society as more graduates are added to the workforce, we would be underestimating the true value of learning abroad (see Chapman & Lounkaew, 2015, for a full discussion of externalities in higher education).

In other areas of human capital research, McMahon (2009) has also been developing methods of measuring the social benefits of higher education. While it has been established long ago that higher education benefits society through the higher taxation paid by highly educated individuals, less is understood about the non-market returns. For example, an individual who has undertaken a higher education degree and participated in learning abroad is able to apply that knowledge and experience to their workplace, hopefully benefiting their organisation through advanced knowledge and experience. When that individual is not working, their decisions and attitudes are also influenced through their previous knowledge and experiences including learning abroad. The human capital benefits are embodied in the individual and therefore apply to non-work household and community activities. In general, non-market benefits from higher education can include better health, greater longevity, reduced infant mortality, reduced fertility rates, increased democratisation, greater respect for human rights, political stability, environmental quality, and the reduction of poverty, inequality and crime (McMahon, 2001).

From this foundation, it is not difficult to speculate that some of the non-market and societal benefits of learning abroad might include a citizen base which is better informed around the benefits of democracy and the functions of government, higher voter participation, higher levels of community engagement and volunteering, increased tolerance of multiculturalism and related issues. The benefits might also include increased awareness of global environmental issues and the relationship to local action, and intergenerational benefits such as the education of future generations with an understanding of their place in the world. At a stretch, learning abroad may contribute to greater human happiness, kindness towards others and peace between nations. However, it is unwise to make such claims before the evidence base is examined in more depth. The next section of this paper will focus on the points of evidence, most of which have been presented previously, which may be extrapolated as social outcomes from learning abroad.

Before presenting the data, it is important to note the critical perspectives on learning abroad outcomes, particularly as they relate to broader claims around the development of global citizenship and reduced ethnocentrism in society. Dolby (2004) found that the US participants in her study needed to gain a better understanding of issues of national identity before they are able to move on to such espoused outcomes as intercultural understanding. Twombly et. al. (2012) present a well argued case for stronger methodology and more balanced approaches to research on learning abroad outcomes. As a starting point, the use of control groups and recognition that self-selection is likely to influence research outcomes would strengthen the credibility of reported results.

The following table classifies research outcomes already presented in this paper into categories of social benefit including civic engagement, public diplomacy, economic, trade, development of higher education institutions and intergenerational benefits. When connected with the social context, these outcomes expand from the individual to society as a whole.

Civic Engagement

Learning abroad is associated with development in areas such as understanding moral and ethical issues, self-confidence, openness to diversity, attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of multiculturalism, openness and agreeableness, and effective problem solving.

Learning abroad has been found to reduce ethnocentrism, which may lead to greater levels of tolerance in society.

Learning abroad has a long-term impact on the world-view of participants. Learning abroad moves participants towards thinking like global citizens, which includes comparative thinking and connecting knowledge across contexts.

Learning abroad has been attributed with influencing over 50 per cent of participant involvement in global engagement activities. In one study, 48 per cent of former participants had engaged in international work or volunteerism since their learning abroad experience.

Learning abroad can foster a sense of regional identity, which in the case of the European Union, is a strong policy imperative.

Learning abroad increases understanding of the home country, which may support the development of the knowledge and attitudes that underpin citizenship values. Former learning abroad participants may be more likely to vote and to understand the values of a democratic society.

Lifestyle choices such as environmental awareness and actions have been attributed to participation in learning abroad.

Public diplomacy

Learning abroad contributes towards the development of language skills, intercultural competence, openness to diversity and a global mindset. These skills underpin public diplomacy efforts and help to prepare graduates to work in roles that promote public diplomacy.

Learning abroad and international education promote public diplomacy through relationship development with regional and international institutions and the facilitation of the mobility of students across borders (Adams, Banks & Olsen, 2011).

Policy efforts to support visible outbound mobility of Australian students, such as the University Mobility in the Asia Pacific (UMAP) program, have been effective in countering criticisms of international education in Australia being too commercial and positioning Australian engagement in higher education as an effort to foster genuine engagement between Australian and Asian institutions (Meadows, 2011).

Economic

Higher graduation rates reported for learning abroad participants reduces the cost of higher education to society through reduced dropout rates. This result is especially important to at-risk students.

Reduced time to degree (or at least, graduating within the expected degree timeframe) means that graduates are contributing to society (via the taxation system) sooner than if graduation was delayed.

Increased interest/participation in graduate study increases the number of highly skilled citizens in society, which should build on the overall stock of human capital.

Increased interest in lifelong learning should lead to workers who are self-directed in professional up-skilling, and able to retrain as needed by the workforce.

Learning abroad promotes career direction, which may lead to higher completion rates in higher education and faster movement towards a desired career. Former participants may be less likely to restart their career after joining the workforce.

Employability skills developed through learning abroad can support better prepared graduates, who can make a stronger contribution to their employment sector and society as a whole.

Reduced time to finding a job after graduation and lower unemployment rates overall mean that learning abroad participants may contribute more to society and cost less in terms of the cost of unemployment.

Learning abroad fosters entrepreneurship and creativity, which can support innovation.

International trade

Across a range of countries, learning abroad has been found to generate interest in an international career.

Learning abroad promotes professional mobility after graduation; it also provides opportunities for internationally-focused work assignments.

Learning abroad supports the further development of language skills, which assist with engagement in international trade.

Engagement with higher education institutions overseas, which is necessary to operate learning abroad programs, enhances Australia's soft power in the education sector, which helps to deflect the overly commercial image of Australian higher education abroad.

Development of higher education institutions

Increased participation in learning abroad may contribute to the enrichment of the Australian campus environment through the development of increased openness to diversity and higher levels of intercultural competence of students.

Learning abroad encourages reciprocity from students on the host campus which can lead to increased internationalisation of Australian campuses and a cultural and economic benefit to the local community and the local institution.

Learning abroad increases interest in graduate study and may increase enrolment in graduate programs at Australian universities.

Through the development of employability skills and career direction, graduates who participated in learning abroad programs are more likely to find employment, increasing graduate employment rates for their university. In turn, Australian universities become known for the quality of their graduates by employers globally.

Learning abroad may promote loyalty to the home institution; 90–96 per cent of learning abroad graduates agreed with the statement I appreciate my home university more now than ever before (ERASMUS Impact Study). Learning abroad may also increase satisfaction with the overall education experience.

Intergenerational benefits

Learning abroad encourages family mobility, that is, participants are more likely to travel with their family and to live overseas in the future, supporting children to live in diverse environments and to experience cultures different to their own.

Learning abroad promotes an interest in graduate study. Generally, higher levels of parental education impact upon the education levels of future generations.

Recommendations for future research

This report has highlighted the need for learning abroad policy and practice in Australia to increasingly focus on the outcomes of learning abroad through high quality research and assessment. Very little of the existing learning abroad outcomes and impact research has been undertaken within the Australian context and there is an over-reliance on international research to fill the gaps. Notwithstanding, research studies from other countries can be used to inform the research agenda in Australia.

Some of the most useful and policy-relevant research in the US has come from large, multi-purpose, multi-institution datasets of student learning and engagement, such as the National Survey of Student Engagements (NSSE) and the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. These data sets have facilitated the comparison of learning abroad against other educational opportunities, while controlling for a range of academic and background characteristics. The long-term nature of these studies has also provided a perspective of developments over time, which can support policy evaluation at several levels. At the same time, the types of analysis used for learning abroad research should be strengthened to better support the overall student experience and graduate outcomes.

Another area of focus should be on longitudinal data, to understand the long-term impact of learning abroad on individuals, careers and society. Areas like public diplomacy, increased tolerance to diversity in society, and climate on campuses of higher education institutions will take time to develop, and a longitudinal approach offers the best potential in assessing meaningful impact. The short-term nature of both national and institutional policy-setting is a barrier to longitudinal studies, and it therefore may become the role of consortiums or other multi-institution organisations to facilitate such research.

Access, and related issues of outcomes and impact for underserved populations, in learning abroad is an urgent issue that promises to support its expansion. While increased scholarships and travel grant funding for learning abroad has supported overall growth, multi-dimensional strategies will be necessary to expand access and inclusion. Where learning abroad can support other educational outcomes such as academic achievement and graduation rates, new sources of funding may be found to create pilot projects and expand the purpose of international study as a valuable part of the higher education experience.

Finally, some specific suggestions for research projects may inspire grant applications, doctoral students, industry organisations or professional bodies to contribute to our knowledge in this area. Here are a few examples:

1. A study of comparative learning outcomes for short-term and long-term learning abroad programs for Australian students
2. A multi-institution study of the contribution of learning abroad to learning outcomes in specific professional disciplines, as they relate to requirements for accreditation
3. A national study of the social impact of learning abroad within one specific domain, such as the contribution of former participants to community engagement activities
4. A longitudinal tracer study of the career impact of learning abroad
5. A study on the impact of graduates with an international experience on Australian employers. Within this context, international experience may be defined more broadly and be combined with the current research agenda on graduate employment and international students in Australia
6. A multi-institution study of the academic outcomes for learning abroad participants including academic achievement (such as GPA) and graduation rates
7. The development and impact of innovative, internationally relevant learning abroad models
8. The design, execution and impact of industry-integrated learning abroad experiences, including the outcomes for students and for employers.

THE VALUE OF SHORT-TERM LEARNING ABROAD PROGRAMS

As demand for learning abroad has grown over the last decade, short-term programs have emerged as a popular option for increasing student participation and diversifying target audiences. Short-term programs have also made some destinations more accessible for students. In particular, the growth of Asia as a learning abroad destination for Australian students has been heavily dependent on short-term programs (Olsen, 2014). However, there is ongoing debate in academic, policy and practitioner networks about the value of short-term programs, and the comparability of outcomes against traditional semester exchange programs. This debate is not unique to Australia – the US international education community has been discussing this topic for around two decades, while in Europe, the ERASMUS program has never supported study programs of under three months in duration (though internships have a minimum duration of two months).

Around 62 per cent of learning abroad participants in the US undertake short-term programs (Institute for International Education, 2015). In comparison, around 55 per cent of Australian learning abroad participants undertake programs of less than 10 weeks duration (AUIDF, 2015). Research on this topic from the US can be summed up with two basic conclusions:

1. A well designed short-term program can have a significant lasting impact upon participants (Dwyer, 2004b; Shiveley & Misco, 2015)
2. More is better, but some is better than none (Dwyer, 2004b).

A short review of research findings and a case study provide a more detailed understanding of current knowledge in this area.

- The National Survey of Student Engagement has found that learning abroad is moderately related to three deep-learning subscales which include personal-social development, integrative and reflective learning, and self-reported gains in general education. The amount of time spent overseas did not make a difference to the frequency with which students used deep learning after returning to their campus (NSSE, 2007, p. 17).
- Across the areas of general development, academic attainment, personal growth, career impact and intercultural development, although stronger results were reported by participants of full-year programs, respondents who participated in short-term programs reported significant and lasting effects of learning abroad up to 50 years after their experience. The largest differences were reported in the area of career impact. However, in some categories, short-term participants reported stronger effects than semester-length program participants. The author concluded: One explanation is that well-planned, intensive summer programs of at least six weeks duration can have a significant impact on student growth across a variety of important outcomes (Dwyer, 2004b, p. 161).
- In a study of the acquisition of global awareness – defined as intercultural awareness, personal growth and development, awareness of global interdependence, and functional knowledge of world geography and language (Chieffo and Griffiths, 2004) – found that the perceived impact on short-term programs on the intellectual and personal lives of students was significant, even for programs as short as one month in duration.
- Up to 12 years following a short-term pre-service teaching program, respondents reported impacts of their learning abroad experience to include greater appreciation for multiple perspectives in the classroom, more reflection about in their teaching practice, higher self-confidence and a greater sense of self-sufficiency (Shiveley & Misco, 2015).
- In their study of personality development, Zimmerman and Neyer (2013) found that changes to personality were independent of the time spent abroad.

“It appears that the amount of time one is abroad is not as important as whether a student has such an experience. This suggests that there is value in increasing the number of short-term cross-cultural or ‘study away’ opportunities for students who for some reason cannot be away from their home institution for an extended period of time.”

National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007

CASE STUDY:

MYANMAR – POLITICAL ECONOMY COURSE

Australian National university

The Political Economy of Myanmar course involved a two week visit to Myanmar in mid-2015. Prior to the study tour students were required to complete pre-reading and attend a one day seminar on contemporary political, social and economic issues in Myanmar.

The visit took the form of a series of meetings with individuals and organisations involved with different aspects of Myanmar's political economy. In Yangon, the former capital and largest city, the group's meetings included a senior opposition figure from one of Myanmar's ethnic minority parties; the editor of the *Myanmar Times*; an international relations think tank; an NGO-run IT incubator; and international development agencies.

Students found it particularly valuable to meet with fellow students, both at the University of Yangon and at an NGO providing education for young people from ethnic minority areas. In the second week of the visit, the group travelled to the national capital, Naypyitaw. They visited the national parliament and met with the speaker of the upper-house. Discussions were also held with the national election commission and with the Minister for Defence.

During the visit student's learning experiences were very diverse. All of them were strongly encouraged to develop focused and informed questions to pose to participants during the various meetings. Over the course of the tour, initial hesitancy dissolved and students were able to present frank and probing questions, even to senior figures such as the Minister for Defence (flanked by an array of silent generals). Such direct questioning, in a country with a long-standing reputation for political repression, was an empowering educational experience for the students.

Informal interactions were also very important. Meeting with fellow students from Myanmar, and exploring their views on democracy, ethnicity, human rights and education, was a deeply rewarding experience. A day spent socialising with University of Yangon students was a highlight of the tour. During the tour the participants were required to share their experiences and discoveries on a shared Facebook page. Following the tour, the students were required to submit a 3,000 word research essay on one aspect of Myanmar's political economy addressed during the tour. All students came away with a greatly enhanced understanding of contemporary Myanmar and a number commented that it was their most rewarding educational experience at university.

The study tour format ensured students benefited from the extensive networks that ANU has in Myanmar. As a result of the university's long-term research engagement and growing body of students from Myanmar, ANU has the ability to provide students with excellent access to politicians, development organisations and universities.

This direct engagement gave students an appreciation of the reality of a country in transition that would have been impossible to match with an on-campus course. It also encouraged some students to pursue further opportunities for engagement with Myanmar and the region.

The Political Economy of Myanmar at ANU is a New Colombo Plan Mobility Program.

This is what I came to university for: to learn and share from one another while having the opportunity to see one of the most interesting countries in the world.

Student participant

LEARNING ABROAD FOR STUDENTS IN PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

In early 2015, Universities Australia, in consultation with the Department of Education and Training, hosted a forum to discuss issues associated with the accreditation and professional recognition of learning abroad programs. The forum was attended by accreditation and professional recognition bodies as well as university representatives. In response to a request for more information on outcomes of learning abroad for students from professional disciplines, this short review of research findings aims to provide a starting point for future work in this area.

DISCIPLINE / PROFESSIONAL AREA	LOCATION AND DURATION	OUTCOMES
Teacher education Shiveley & Misco, 2015	US students in Europe, 3 weeks within embedded semester program	Up to 12 years following the experience, respondents reported that learning abroad positively impacted their open-mindedness, problem-solving, understanding of different cultures, understanding of different education systems, ability to see from different perspectives. It also led to greater interest in global teaching and student-centred approaches to teaching. In terms of personal impacts, learning abroad was attributed with developing confidence to discuss local and foreign education systems, seek perspectives of people from other countries and provide materials with a range of cultural perspectives.
Teacher education Campbell & Walta, 2015	Australian students in Malaysia, 4 weeks	With reference to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993), the students moved between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism, indicating that the process of developing intercultural sensitivity is not linear. However, development was evidenced. Development could be further facilitated through preparation sessions, interaction with cultural others, immersion and cultural challenges, and reflection.
Teacher education Medina, Hathaway & Pilonieta, 2015	US students in Germany, 8 weeks within embedded semester program	Study of the change in perception of future teachers of English language learners. Participants developed their empathy of "other", their capacity for support and advocacy of their students, their self-efficacy regarding effective instruction and their knowledge of the process of learning a second language. Many also modified their preconceptions of language and intelligence, and the difficulty of being part of a language minority.
Social work Fairchild, Pillai & Noble, 2006	US students in Australia, 2 weeks	Participants reported strong positive changes in their attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of multiculturalism. Learning abroad provided a viable method of teaching about the impact of multiculturalism.
Nursing Edmonds, 2010	US students in England and Dominica, 2 weeks	Learning abroad provided the opportunity to foster self-efficacy, global nursing perspective and intercultural competence. Learning abroad is an engaged learning opportunity that tested participants' critical thinking and problem-solving skills in an unfamiliar environment. The development of self-awareness of own biases can promote good habits for future nursing practice.

DISCIPLINE / PROFESSIONAL AREA	LOCATION AND DURATION	OUTCOMES
Nursing Wagner & Christensen, 2015	20 US students, 1 week in Jamaica	American Association of College of Nursing challenges educators to provide students with experiences that address the development of cultural competence. Participants believe the short-term course had a positive impact on their personal knowing as experienced through empirical, ethical, sociopolitical and aesthetic knowing (p.297). Learning abroad allowed them to experience a different health care system, and provided the opportunity to reflect on social justice issues. ¹
Engineering DiBiasio & Mello, 2004	US students, 2 months on-campus plus 2 months off-campus, multiple sites including UK, Thailand, Italy, Costa Rica, Germany, Australia, Denmark, Hong Kong, Namibia, Switzerland	Engineering projects evaluated against ABET accreditation outcomes for "impact of engineering solutions in a global and societal context". Criteria 1: Exposure to global issues and/or foreign cultures Criteria 2: Impact of engineering solutions on society. Students undertaking offshore projects consistently outranked those done on campus, even though GPA was comparable for both groups. Assessment results have been used to improve experience and resource allocation for the on-campus projects.
Engineering Jiusto & DiBaisio, 2006	US students, 2 months on-campus plus 2 months off-campus, multiple sites including UK, Thailand, Italy, Costa Rica, Germany, Australia, Denmark, Hong Kong, Namibia, Switzerland	Research into impact of Global Studies Program on lifelong learning, an ABET requirement, and self-directed learning, conceptualised as the start of the lifelong learning process. Participants made significant progress in writing, critical thinking and research skills. Independently assessed final reports show learning abroad students demonstrated these skills at higher levels than on-campus students. Lifelong learning requirement met through learning abroad, while self-directed learning requirement was more variable. Authors note that it may take a longer time for impact of learning abroad to occur and be evidenced through assessment methods.
Business Marcotte, Desroches & Poupart, 2007	Canadian students in a variety of destinations, 4 weeks to 1 semester	Participation in overseas study experiences increased self-confidence, autonomy, sense of initiative, communication skills, cultural openness and sensitivity. Moderate effects were also found for obtaining a job, obtaining an international appointment, and leading to career advancement and professional accomplishment.

CASE STUDY:

INDIA INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STUDY TOUR

Swinburne University of Technology

Beginning January 2014, Swinburne University of Technology sent three teams of information technology students on a two-week study tour to Pal and its neighbouring villages in the Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh states of India. The students were studying Bachelor of Information Technology and Bachelor of Business Information Systems programs and enrolled in an accredited unit of study called 'IT for Social Impact' that aimed to provide students with the opportunity to engage in a group project to demonstrate and consolidate their IT skills, knowledge and professional behaviours in a real-world setting. A major objective of the project was to implement IT for positive social impact and equip students with a strong understanding of the nature and principles of social and community enterprise by partnering with innovative not-for-profit organisations.

In Pal, student groups had to work closely with representatives of CERES Environmental Park who have an ongoing project with Satpuda Vikas Mandal (SVM), a local community organisation devoted to working with tribal groups surrounding the village on broad community development initiatives, including women's empowerment, health issues and environmental projects. The first group of Swinburne IT students conducted technology audits of the schools in the region, fixing and installing computers and weather stations which were constructed to provide data to local farmers and monitor climate change.

In conjunction with SVM, the students investigated issues and solutions around connectivity, IT infrastructure and learning aids with an aim to develop a long-term implementation plan for the schools. Another project that students undertook in Pal included developing a tool to disseminate data from the weather station into an easily readable format for local farmers. This was especially empowering for farmers as, presently, insurance companies control weather data in the region and information is not accessible or transparent.

The IT for Social Impact unit, is not something you should just consider, it is something you have got to do.

Student participant

The second group of Swinburne IT students went to Pal in December 2014 and continued to complete a technology audit of the equipment used in the schools and surrounding villages, as well as fixing and recalibrating the weather stations. Students also undertook research to trial proof-of-concepts of mobile technological devices to test with the community partners in India. These included a wi-fi file distribution device to provide schools with access to learning resources and internet access in a region where there is none available. The students conducted hands-on workshops at the schools and gave introductory computer courses to children in the villages.

In December 2015, a third group of Swinburne IT students to Pal took a drone with them so that the community could look at the videos and photos of the changing infrastructure in Jamnya, a village near Pal, and examine the environmental impact of deforestation and land degradation. In each of the study tours, there were opportunities to engage with local cultural events, study Hindi language lessons, participate in Hindu festivals and meet with the Guru from the village temple.



These study tour projects have allowed Australian students to envision IT in a broader social, cultural and environmental context and develop strong links between themselves, academics and local Indian community organisations.”

These study tour projects have allowed Australian students to envision IT in a broader social, cultural and environmental context and develop strong links between themselves, academics and local Indian community organisations. Through the deployment of sophisticated research and technology, the student groups have been able to develop project management skills and deliver real IT solutions to the schools and local farmers operating in the Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh regions of India. As part of the projects, students worked closely with mentors from their sponsor organisation and, at the conclusion of each project, briefed the organisation on the project outcomes. The program has raised greater awareness and understanding of the links between Australia and India.

The students developed their own mission statement to guide what they hoped to achieve and the way they would go about their journey.

Their mission was to: “Apply IT knowledge to sustain existing IT implementations and identify opportunities for new IT solutions, in collaboration with the community, in order to sustainably promote and facilitate equality, empowerment and education.”

IT for Social Impact to India at Swinburne is a New Colombo Plan Mobility Program.

MAJOR STUDIES

ERASMUS impact study: Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions.

The European Commission has a long history of commissioning impact studies to assess the effectiveness of achieving the policy objectives of the ERASMUS program, which are primarily to boost skills and employability, and to modernise education, training and youth work (European Commission, 2016). In the period 2014–2020, the program aims to support two million youth to study and work abroad. This report is the latest evaluation study on the impact of the ERASMUS program.

The ERASMUS impact study (EIS) has a large sample size of around 40,000 mobile students, 4,000 non-mobile students and 14,000 alumni (though it is difficult to determine the exact sample size from the report). Learning abroad programs included ERASMUS semester and year programs, work placements, intensive programs, and other types of mobility including programs outside of Europe. Overall, 964 institutions from 25 countries were included. 652 employers also participated in the study.

EIS used a new psychometric instrument to measure, Memo, pre and post levels of constructs representing skills, knowledge and attitudes which may represent employability skills. They include:

EIS MEMO FACTOR	DEFINITION
Confidence	to gain in confidence and have a stronger conviction of my own abilities
Tolerance of ambiguity	to learn to be more tolerant towards other people's values and behaviour and to adapt to new situations
Vigour	to be better able to solve problems
Curiosity	to be more open and more curious about new challenges
Serenity	to be more aware of my own strengths and weaknesses
Decisiveness	to know better what I want and reach decisions more easily

Firstly, the study found statistically significant, positive baseline difference between mobile and non-mobile students. The largest differences were reported for the items Curiosity and Serenity. It is important to note as it means mobile and non-mobile students may be different across a range of skills, knowledge and attitudes. Post-mobility test scores confirmed significant and positive changes in all items. "In other words, being mobile changes ones, mind-set" (p. 81). The section concludes with a claim that after studying abroad, participants had an average Memo scores that was higher than 70 per cent of control group students.

In terms of skills development in categories more comparable to other study, ERASMUS exchange students reported that the top five skills most improved through learning abroad were:

1. Foreign language skills (96%)
2. Knowledge of the host country's culture, society and economy (96%)
3. Being able to work and interact with people from other backgrounds and cultures (94%)
4. Intercultural competence (94%)
5. To adapt and act in new situations (94%)

From the employer perspective, aspects important when recruiting graduates all increased in importance, which may signal a more competitive graduate employment market. A few changes were noted since the previous study. Work experience during study increased in importance from sixth position to third, while foreign language proficiency decreased dropping from third to fourth. Personality/soft skills remained the most important factor. This may show that although employability skills are still highly demanded by employers, foreign language skills have become more common (and therefore, demand has decreased), while work experience is now taking priority over other graduate skills and experiences.

GRADUATE ASPECT	IMPORTANCE IN RECRUITMENT OF GRADUATES
Personality/soft skills	92%
Field of study	82%
Work experience during study	76%
Main subject/specialisation	70%
Foreign language proficiency	70%
Experience abroad	61%

It should be noted that this study was undertaken during the economic crisis in Europe, so the impact of high youth unemployment rates in many countries should be considered. From the qualitative data, the authors report that students believed learning abroad gave them a competitive advantage in a difficult employment market. Employers also appear to have become more knowledgeable about learning abroad and the characteristics of these programs. For example, in the previous study, less

than 40 per cent of employers indicated that the reputation of the institution abroad was important. In the current study, almost 80 per cent of employers rated this aspect as important.

So it is possible, not only that learning abroad has become more important as part of the profile of a recent graduate, but the type of program matters more than before. This has interesting implications for the Australian graduate recruitment market and may forecast that:

1. Learning abroad is, or will become, a notable competitive advantage for recent graduates
2. As learning abroad participation rates increase, employers will increasingly demand learning abroad as part of prospective employee profiles
3. As employers become more familiar with learning abroad, and more participants move into the role of employers, the characteristics of learning abroad programs will become more important. That is, employers will develop preferences for certain types of learning abroad programs.

For more information

Brandenburg, U., Berghoff, S., Taboadela, O., Bischof, L., Gajowniczek, J., Gehlke, A., . . . Petrova, D. (2014). The ERASMUS impact study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions. Publications office of the European union, Luxembourg. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf>

UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY CAREER BENEFITS OF LEARNING ABROAD PROGRAMS

In the only multi-institutional study of graduates from Australian universities who participated in learning abroad programs, this study examined the perceived impact of learning abroad on early career outcomes. The sample consisted of 226 alumni of 11 Australian universities who had been working for 3–5 years at the time of the study. All respondents had participated in learning abroad programs during their undergraduate degree. Although short-term programs were represented in the sample, the majority of participants undertook programs of one or two semesters in duration in the traditional semester exchange model. Twenty-four percent studied abroad more than once.

In terms of their work situation, 18 per cent of respondents lived overseas at the time of the study, 42 per cent worked for an organisation with an international scope and 63 per cent had changed jobs at least once since graduation. With regard to graduate study, 45 per cent had already enrolled or were planning to enrol in graduate study. Although 64 per cent had considered working abroad, 24 per cent of respondents had actually sought work abroad since graduation, and 17 per cent had regular employment abroad.

In terms of international work tasks, 54 per cent reported that their organisation had frequent or very frequent contact with other countries, though less than 20 per cent reported that their work tasks involved use of their knowledge or language of their host country. 13 per cent had travelled to their host country professionally since graduation.

The most notable finding of the study was the contribution of learning abroad to the development of employability skills or soft skills. Although this study did not set out to test for the effect on employability skills, the items tested include four items of the Employability Skills Framework (DEST, 2002) – communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving skills and self-management skills (conceptualised as similar to maturity and personal development). Additionally, the item *New perspectives on home country* aligns with citizenship development goals that are frequently listed in graduate attribute statements (Rigby, 2009).

In my role it is important to be able to work with CaLD [culturally and linguistically diverse] clients – my study abroad experience assisted me with this, even though my host country, Canada, could be considered to have a very similar culture to Australia. While abroad, most of the friends I made were also exchange students, so I was able to get to know people from a wide variety of places.

Survey respondent

From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider your learning abroad experience worthwhile for the following:

BENEFIT OF LEARNING ABROAD	MODERATELY WORTHWHILE, WORTHWHILE OR VERY WORTHWHILE
Maturity and personal development	99%
Interpersonal and communication skills	99%
New perspectives of your home country	96%
Knowledge and understanding of my host country	94%
Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge	90%
Increasing your motivation and passion for your career direction	90%
Teamwork/ability to work with others	90%
Problem solving and analytical skills	88%
Career prospects	86%
Relevance to your job/occupation	76%
Foreign language proficiency	56%

In terms of direct employment impact, participants were very positive about the benefit of including a learning abroad program in their undergraduate study. Both short-term and long-term benefits were reported with only a small number reporting a negative impact.

CATEGORY OF EMPLOYMENT IMPACT	MODERATE, POSITIVE OR VERY POSITIVE IMPACT
Maturity and personal development	96%
Interpersonal and communication skills	95%
New perspectives of your home country	93%
Knowledge and understanding of my host country	91%

For more information

Potts, D. (2015). Understanding the early career benefits of learning abroad programs. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(5), 441-459. doi:10.1177/1028315315579241

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