

Goddard and Associates

Objective 1

1. Are there further reforms governments should consider that will improve the quality and integrity of the sector?

The contemporary rhetoric across international education is heavily weighted toward policy levers impacting the recruitment and retention of international fee-paying students, to study in Australia or at Australian off shore campuses.

However, in 2019 around 60,000 university students undertook a learning abroad experience as part of their Australian education. In the decade to 2019, over 370,000 university students undertook learning abroad: representing the Australian international education sector on the global stage.

Beyond student learning, the value of this sectoral pillar is underutilised. Learning abroad students influence the worlds view of our sector by the very nature of being Australian students out in the field; a national asset to any recruiter, agent or prospective international student.

Learning abroad is under reported and under captured, not set within the same legislative and policy settings as inbound international student cohorts. With incomplete data, and an institutional submission rate to the national opt in data survey sitting at around 85%, the rich picture is slowly building. Robust in parts and incomplete at best, the sectors data narrative presents a wonderful upside opportunity to define the value for Australia of our students learning abroad.

In the 2019 peak, it's reasonable to presume over 70,000 Australian students within primary, secondary and tertiary education were learning abroad. The academic, teaching and professional staff accompanying them also formed an enriched global cohort; ambassadors for the quality and integrity of our education system.

Australia punched above its weight in 2019, with almost a quarter (23.1%) of undergraduate students completing learning abroad (in contrast to the UK at 9.0% and U.S. at 16.1%). Covid border closures grounded this national asset, which is only now resurfacing. So, while celebrating the student experience is critical, there are broader stakeholders and agendas, all with financial, political, strategic and diplomatic skin in the game. This broader engagement in the learning abroad narrative requires elevation.

Why? Because learning abroad is not only transformative for students, it's transformational for the Australian knowledge economy, trade and investment, arts and culture and sports and science. Learning abroad is not simply a student investment, there is buy in from community, institutions, industry and government. Individual student knowledge and gain folds up into our national capability... an exercise in nation building.

A snapshot of those 60,000 university students then? Spending on average 5 weeks learning abroad (10,000 are away between 1 and 2 full semesters), they collectively represent 5,700 years or 73 average lifespans abroad; condensed into a year. Imagine the untapped potential of this cohort if it were harnessed, given the time spent in market.

Not surprisingly 11.5% of learning abroad is via the New Colombo Plan (NCP), with 49.2% of all learning abroad in the Asia-Pacific region, harnesses the value of learning abroad through regional alignment. International education creates connections between people and institutions, underpinning future

collaboration. Learning abroad students and institutions should be deeply embedded in these national conversations.

The Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040 stated, "Australia's education sector is a national asset in our engagement ... integral to building enduring relationships and economic prosperity with the region." So, the student experience is not simply educational, they underpin industry partnerships, business ventures and creative collaborations... as a means to further ends. Enlightened initiatives of Government will recognise this impact beyond the student's education.

Government reforms to unlock the value of learning abroad and enhance the quality and integrity of the sector;

1. Capture the asset and data

Develop a national framework to capture the rich learning abroad data across primary, secondary and tertiary education.

2. Drive priorities and lead the agenda

Align learning abroad funding and support to areas of national priority sitting across government, community and industry stakeholder interests.

3. Define the national remit

Build a national program for learning abroad students to enhance their role as education ambassadors. Enable their capability to represent and promote Australia overseas.

4. Cultivate the community

Reinvigorate a DFAT Global Alumni Strategy. Promulgate a purposeful network with value aligned to priority areas of expertise and regions of national interest.

Note: With thanks and attribute to the Australian Universities International Directors Forum for data obtained via their national learning abroad survey.

2. What more can providers do to improve the integrity of the international education sector?

Objective 2

1. What factors should inform government's approach to allocating international student enrolments across sectors, providers, and locations in Australia?

2. What considerations for government should inform the overall level of international students in Australia?

3. How will this approach to managing the system affect individual providers?

4. Should sectors other than higher education and vocational education and training, such as schools, ELICOS and non-award be included in approaches to manage the system for sustainable growth?

5. How should government determine which courses are best aligned to Australia's skills needs?

6. How should government implement a link between the number of international students and an increased supply of student housing?

7. What transition arrangements would support the implementation of a new approach?

Objective 3

- 1. What are the barriers to growth in offshore and transnational delivery of Australian education and training?**
- 2. Where can government direct effort to support transnational education?**