EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE EARLY CAREER VALUE OF STUDY ABROAD FOR BACHELOR DEGREE GRADUATES OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

By

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ABSTRACT

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European and U.S. institutions have promoted the value of a study abroad experience for many years. As Australian higher education institutions have adopted policies and strategies to increase participation in education abroad, with employability as a central argument, it is important to study this claim. This dissertation examined the links between a study abroad experience and early career outcomes for recent graduates from Australian higher education, with a particular focus on the impact of the following factors: country of study, duration, program type and foreign language acquisition. While the study is set within the Australian higher education and graduate employment context, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the value of study abroad to participants, educational institutions, employers and society in general.

Becker's (1993) human capital theory and McMahon and Oketch's (2013) expanded concepts of the private and social benefits of higher education provide the conceptual framework for the study, informed by thinking on connections between higher education and the world of work (Brennon, Kogan & Teichler, 1996). A survey of alumni perceptions was based on the European Graduate Surveys (see Teichler, 2011; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Personal background, study and employment information provided important contextual frames through which the data were analyzed.

After working for an average of three years, respondents (*N*=226), the majority of whom had studied abroad for a semester or more, perceived that study abroad was relevant and beneficial to their early career experience. While respondents rated personal and developmental benefits more highly, important career-related benefits including career direction, securing their first job and long-term career prospects, were also identified. General international skills and knowledge as a benefit of study abroad outweighed country or region-specific knowledge or skills.

In terms of program parameters, respondents reported higher career benefits for studying abroad in another language, studying abroad multiple times, and undertaking study abroad as a compulsory component of a bachelor degree. This study revealed previously unexplored patterns of international experience prior to university, indicating that a small group of respondents had already developed significant international career capital (Inkson & Arthur, 2001) through multiple international experiences. This finding is of particular interest for policy discussions that prioritize career outcomes.

The findings of this paper have implications for policy and practice in the development of employability skills, the education of employers on the benefits of study abroad, access to study abroad, catering for students with diverse needs in terms of study abroad programs and career goals, and balancing specific geographic policy priorities against general participation goals. This study contributes to our understanding of study abroad outcomes for Australian students and highlights the need for further research in this area.

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For Tony

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Higher education systems around the world are becoming progressively more international in nature as cross-border mobility of students is driven by economic growth and increasing levels of international trade (British Council, 2012). The number of students studying internationally has more than doubled since 2000 and was estimated to be around 4.3 million in 2011 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). This total represents students enrolled for both an entire degree program, and short-term study abroad students, those undertaking a component of their degree while remaining enrolled at their home institution. The number of internationally mobile students is likely to continue to grow as a result of demographic and economic drivers (British Council, 2012).

This dissertation focuses on the case of Australia, a small country that is highly dependent on international trade to support the domestic economy. The internationalization of the Australian higher education system has been underway since the 1950s, when international students first enrolled at Australian universities under the Colombo Plan (Meadows, 2011). One of the latest focuses of internationalization strategies is the participation of Australian students in study abroad programs. Although Australian universities have operated international exchange programs since the 1990s, only in recent years have these programs become an important part of institutional strategy, attracting significant resources and support from university leadership (Adams, Banks & Olsen, 2011; Molony, 2012). Participation has grown rapidly and institutions are introducing new study abroad programs to further stimulate demand. Study abroad

programs are widely supported for their capacity to develop career-relevant international skills (Adams, Banks & Olsen, 2011) and promoted to students as "exciting, life changing experiences that….can also give you the competitive edge you need in landing that dream job" (RMIT University, 2012). However, such rhetoric is challenged by research. A recent study of employer perspectives on Australian graduates with a study abroad experience found that although overseas study experience is viewed positively by potential employers, it is considered to be unimportant against other skills, attributes and experiences when evaluating graduate candidates (Prospect Marketing, 2006). Further contributions to our knowledge base in this area are urgently needed as policy-makers commit to increasing funding allocations and implementing new programs at both national and institutional levels.

This dissertation outlines a project that examined the connections between study abroad experiences and the subsequent employment of graduates from Australian universities from the perspective of the graduates themselves. In this chapter I will provide an overview of the research problem, outline the literature that informed the study, set the context and rationale for the study within the Australian higher education system, before providing a short overview of the project, identifying the research questions and defining of key terms.

Relationship to Existing Literature

This study was based on educational literature on the benefits of study abroad programs for participants in the areas of personal, social, intercultural, academic and career development (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009; Carlson, Burns, Useem & Yackimowicz, 1991; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dolby, 2008; Dwyer, 2004; Edmonds,

2010; Engle & Engle, 2004; Forsey, Broomhall & Davis, 2011; Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow & Nam, 2009; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Lou & Bosley, 2008; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008; Nunan, 2006; Paige, Cohen & Shively, 2004; Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josi & Jon, 2009; Rundstrom, 2005; Sutton & Rubin, 2010; Thomas & McMahon, 1998; Vande Berg, Connor-Litton & Paige, 2009). Also important is the literature exploring the connections between study abroad experiences and employment and career outcomes for graduates (Bracht, Engel, Janson, Over, Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2000; Jahr & Teichler, 2007; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 2011; Teichler, 2012; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Studies in this area generally focus on the perception of the former study abroad participant with regard to the transition to work, employment conditions and career directions. A small body of literature has addressed the perception of employers of study abroad programs and how international exposure may benefit graduates in the workplace (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Prospect Marketing, 2006; Teichler, 2011). Several studies also explore long-term life benefits from the perspective of participants in study abroad programs (Carlson, Burns, Useem & Yackimowicz, 1991; Dwyer, 2004; Nunan, 2006; Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josi & Jon, 2009). This topic – alumni perspectives of the benefits of study abroad – is an area of increasing interest for educators and policy-makers as the number of internationally mobile students grows.

Rationale for the Study

Through a combination of government policy and institutional support, participation in study abroad programs expanded quickly and has now reached 13% of the graduating undergraduate class[1], a number comparable to study abroad participation in the

[1]measured by the number of undergraduates participating in international experiences in a given year as a proportion of the total undergraduate graduating class for that year) (Olsen, 2013)

United States (Institute for International Education, 2013). From 2007 to 2010, university and federal government funding for study abroad scholarships increased 70% to $28.1 million (Olsen, 2011). Additional institutional and national resources support the operation of study abroad offices under the assumption that such investments deliver returns in the form of graduates who are better equipped to support Australia's position in an increasingly competitive global economy (Adams, Banks & Olsen, 2011; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007). In addition to the extensive public funding commitment in this area, participation in study abroad requires private resources in the form of money, time and energy, usually invested by students and their families.

The phenomenon is attracting high-level policy attention. In 2012, the Australian Government launched a new scholarship program called Asiabound, in response to the Asian Century White Paper (Office of the Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, 2012), which called for investment in the development of skills and knowledge of Asia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). Previously Australian Government scholarships in this area had been expanded from a targeted Asia and the Pacific focus to a global program supporting study in seventy-seven countries (DEEWR, 2011). A change of government in 2013 brought another major shift in funding for study in Asia, with the promise of $AUD100 million over five years (Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2013), up from $AUD7.9 million in 2012 (Olsen, 2013).

The federal policy focus on study abroad was preceded by an institutional focus. As an example, many universities have set mobility targets for their student populations, such as 25% participation at the University of Queensland (University of Queensland,

2011). Study abroad programs at Australian institutions focus on professional and academic development, promoting the benefits of participation in terms of career outcomes and knowledge of other countries that may help professionally in the future (Adams, Olsen & Banks, 2011). This focus is influenced by the structure and curriculum of the national higher education system. The Australian undergraduate degree is utilitarian in focus, and universities express their role primarily in terms of human capital development for the economic sector (Sidhu, 2006). With the exception of some Arts degrees and the newly introduced Melbourne Model at the University of Melbourne, courses are focused on professional preparation, and students commence their major in their first semester (Australian Education International, 2008).

Although institutional policy-makers appear to have the best intentions when they design study abroad programs, the assumptions that that such student experiences lead to globally-minded graduates who are better prepared to manage modern workplace demands while making a contribution to the international strategies of their organizations are largely untested. Very little research explores study abroad outcomes in Australia, and although extensive research exists in Europe, along with a growing body of knowledge on the connections between higher education and work, it may not reflect the experiences of Australian graduates because graduate outcomes in the labor market are likely to be highly context-specific (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Messer & Wolter, 2007; Saarikallio-Trop & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010; Wiers-Jenssen; 2008). In fact, very little is known about outcomes of study abroad for Australian students and alumni.

The intended audience for this research is policy-makers at a national and institutional level. By understanding the types of international experiences that are

perceived to make a difference to the early careers of graduates, policy-makers can make better decisions about the development of study abroad programs, which will ultimately benefit future generations of students through the alignment of graduate skills with an increasingly international workplace environment in Australia. The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of the benefits of participation in a study abroad program in relation to the early career stage of graduates of Australian bachelor degree programs. As a new area for empirical research in Australia, this study aims to develop recommendations for future research on factors that may be important in enhancing the benefits of study abroad programs to their participants, their employers, and their educational institutions. The variables identified in this study may be used to create a model that could be examined more fully in future research.

In this section I have situated the study within the Australian higher education context and demonstrated that: (1) participation of Australian students in study abroad programs is growing; (2) the area is a current policy focus, and as such, is attracting an increasing amount of funding at both the institutional and national levels; (3) the general rationale for undergraduate education and study abroad in Australia focuses on workplace demands and Australia's position in the global economy; and (4) very little is known about actual outcomes of study abroad for Australian students and further research is urgently needed. I will now outline the project and discuss the theoretical frames that will guide the study.

The Research Project

Through a survey of graduate perspectives, this project investigated links between a study abroad experience and early career outcomes, with a particular focus on

understanding how certain conditions of study abroad, such as country, duration, program type and foreign language acquisition, were beneficial. A descriptive analysis of current working positions and environments contextualize our understanding of employment outcomes for this group. The respondents of the study were recent graduates who participated in a study abroad program during their undergraduate degree. They had been working for around three years at the time of the study. It was primarily a quantitative investigation.

The research conceptualization and design was informed by extensive research undertaken in Europe on the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS), which explored the professional value of international study for European graduates (see Bracht, et.al., 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2000; Janson, Schomburg & Teichler, 2009; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Teichler & Maiworm, 1994; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996). Although the context of the European Union and the ERASMUS program are unique to that region, the framework of the European graduate survey provided a model that assisted in developing a study relevant to the Australian context.

Conceptual Framework

Two conceptual perspectives informed this dissertation project: firstly, *human capital theory* (Becker, 1964; Becker,1993) frames the relationship between higher education and work through a return on investment perspective. National investment in education stimulates economic growth by increasing knowledge and productivity (Becker, 1993). Human capital also contributes social benefits such as democratization, civil rights, political stability, reduced crime and lower welfare costs (McMahon & Oketch, 2013). Study abroad is one component of higher education and therefore can be considered as a

component of human capital. Secondly, from a *manpower requirements perspective*, the function of higher education is to prepare young people for employment. This utilitarian approach to education focuses on structural and quantitative aspects that may impact upon employment (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). As a co-curricular element of higher education, study abroad has been found to foster skills and knowledge that are valued by both graduates and employers in Europe (Bracht, et. al., 2006). This conceptual framework will be further elaborated in Chapter 2. The final section of this chapter outlines two key components of the study: the research questions and the definitions of key terms.

Research Questions

This study addressed the primary question: *What are the benefits, as perceived by graduates, of a study abroad experience during a bachelor degree for their early career experiences?*

Two sub-questions were addressed:

a) *What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduate?*

b) *What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context, and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?*

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, a study abroad program is an educational experience where a student spends a period of time undertaking an academic activity in another country while remaining formally enrolled in an academic program in the home country. It is usually recognized as part of the home degree, either through transfer credit or through a formal program requirement (for example, as part of a research project). It may vary from a traditional one to two semester student exchange involving regular coursework at a foreign university to an internship, volunteer experience, or research project. Study abroad may also involve participation in an international leadership event or competition. In Australia, the terms traditionally used are *education abroad* or *outbound mobility* while in the U.S. it is called *study abroad*.

The term *graduate* will be used in this dissertation to signify one who has completed a bachelor degree program at an Australian university. The term *alumni* may also be used. Traditionally the Australian bachelor degree is undertaken directly following high school. However, a small number of graduates may have entered through non-traditional pathways, such as via a college of vocational education and training.

Employment refers to a job role, including scope, structure and responsibility of a graduate in the workforce (Brennan, Hogan & Teichler, 1996), while the term *career* means the aggregate of employment positions or "the sequence of employment and work tasks within the occupational lifespan" (Brennan, Hogan & Teichler, 1996, p. 6). Early career refers to the initial years of employment following graduation.

Organization of this Dissertation

The second chapter of this dissertation reviews the existing literature on study abroad outcomes for Australian students, and for study abroad participants in other countries. As little research exists on the Australian context, research from other countries informed the current study. A detailed conceptual framework will also be presented. The third chapter describes the research methodology including a description of the sample and data collection strategy, the survey instrument, and the analytical strategy. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results of the study, with detailed descriptive information providing important contextual information to support the findings presented through the main research questions. Further statistical analysis provides a framework for understanding the results. In the final chapter, the results are discussed and the five-most important policy-related findings are presented. This section includes implications for research, policy and practice. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a brief note on the methodology and limitations of the research project.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter will focus on how study abroad has been found to benefit participants. I will also explore the connections between study abroad, employment and careers, as presented by the literature in the area. In this chapter I will (1) review the knowledge in the area of study abroad from the Australian context; (2) attempt to fill some of the knowledge gaps with literature from the Unites States and Europe; and (3) outline the conceptual framework that guided this study.

Study Abroad Literature From Australia

In seeking to understand the current state of knowledge in Australia, I surveyed the relevant literature and will provide a short summary of the very few published studies. The majority of papers provide an overview of participation statistics (Australian Education International, 2011; Daly, 2011; Olsen, 2007; Olsen, 2008; Olsen, 2011; Olsen, 2012; Olsen, 2013). From this data, we can ascertain that the typical Australian participant in a study abroad program is a Caucasian female, 20-21 years of age (Daly, 2011), enrolled in a bachelor degree in Society and Culture, Management and Commerce, or Health (Olsen, 2011). Almost 60% of participants went to Europe or the Americas, approximately 38% spent at least one semester abroad, and 27% undertook an internship or research project abroad (Olsen, 2011). Many Australian participants have traveled abroad previously and were motivated to go abroad to experience a different culture, to meet other people and to broaden the mind (Forsey, Broomhall & Davis, 2011). In 2010, 34% of participants were classified as coming from neighborhoods representing the lower 50% of socio-economic status households (Olsen, 2011).

Personal and social development. Australian participants in a study on motivations for participation and subsequent outcomes were found to become more self-confident, particularly in communicating with other people, and to report a sense of intellectual connection with the world (Forsey, Broomhall & Davis, 2011). In a study comparing the Australian student experience to their American peers, Dolby (2008) found Australian students abroad to be less restricted by issues of national identity and identity exploration, which allows them to adapt easily to multiple contexts and to make more authentic human connections along the way.

Career development. An alumni survey from the University of Melbourne documented the impacts of study abroad 10 to 15 years after graduation (Nunan, 2006). Although the strongest results in this study support the development of personal and social aspects such as self-confidence, independence, world-view and cultural awareness, positive support was also found in the area of career development. Eight-seven percent of participants agreed that study abroad enhanced their overall employability, 73% agreed that study abroad helped them develop a skill set that influenced their career path, and 61% said that study abroad had contributed directly to current or past employment. Forty-five percent reported that study abroad influenced them to work overseas and 19% formed relationships that became professional contacts (Nunan, 2006). Although it is only one study, it is important for the insight it provides for the current study. The majority participants from the population of interest support a connection between study abroad and their careers, and generally agreed that study abroad was beneficial to their personal, social and career development.

Employer perspectives on study abroad. The final area of study abroad literature from Australia has attempted to measure employer perspectives on graduates who participated in a study abroad program (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Prospect Marketing, 2006). Against other recruitment criteria such as a specialized degree, work experiences and extracurricular activities, Australian employers rank study abroad as a low priority. This partly reflects the desire not to disadvantage those who may not have been able to study abroad (Prospect Marketing, 2006). Employers expressed a strong desire to hire well-rounded employees, and when asked directly about how overseas study was viewed on a resume, 61% indicated that it was viewed positively. The result was even higher, almost 70%, for multinational firms. In response to the question "Do you think that graduates with overseas studying or internship experience bring extra skills to a company?" (Prospect Marketing, 2006 p. 25), 81% of respondents agreed. Employers consider that study abroad enhanced well roundedness and was particularly attractive when graduates could link their experiences to the operations and strategy of the company. Foreign language skills were a highly salient graduate attribute, particularly Chinese and South-East Asian languages. Results were strongest in the Mining and Finance industries.

Another Australian study found similar positive results; employers considered graduates with a study abroad experience as highly desirable in an increasingly global work environment (Crossman & Clarke, 2009). International experiences were seen as contributing towards a candidate's career capital, particularly with regards to the acquisition of soft skills including cultural intelligence and intercultural communication. Certain *ways of thinking* were highlighted as important for international business projects,

and study abroad experiences were perceived by employers to promote this aspect of student development (Crossman & Clarke, 2009).

Prospect Marketing (2006) identified a group of companies that the researchers labeled *new generation employers*, typically multinational companies, which sought out graduates with study abroad experiences. Such organizations also had systems in place to ensure that they could capitalize on the knowledge and experience of the graduates. According to the researchers, government agencies that have traditionally targeted the population of interest reported increased competition for the internationally experienced talent pool over the last ten years (Prospect Marketing, 2006).

Graduate employment. The competitive nature of the graduate employment market is also supported by Australian graduate employment statistics. A survey of graduate recruiters in Australia indicated that although 8.6% of graduates were still seeking full-time employment four months after graduation (Graduate Careers Australia, 2010), graduate recruiters stated that their biggest concern was the recruitment of the right graduates in a competitive market. Forty-two percent of employers indicated that they had difficulty sourcing graduates, particularly in the fields of information technology and engineering (Graduate Careers Australia, 2011). However, almost 27% of computer science graduates and 23% of electrical/computer engineering graduates remained unemployed four months after graduation (Graduate Careers Australia, 2010). An apparent mismatch between supply and demand produced a very complex picture of the local graduate recruitment market, indicating that while the economy was improving and jobs were available, employers remained selective in their hiring practices, and a bachelor's degree did not guarantee satisfactory full-time employment.

The small but insightful literature pool from Australia provides some promising knowledge to inform the current study. From this review I have established four important points: (1) study abroad has a positive impact upon personal and social developmental factors for Australian participants; (2) according to alumni participants, study abroad positively supports career development and employability; (3) although study abroad is not a recruitment criteria, it is viewed positively by Australian employers, particularly when the characteristics of the experience relate directly to the needs of the organization; and (4) there is competition for talent in the Australian graduate employment market and this includes increasing competition for graduates with international skills and knowledge.

However, there are notable weaknesses in the existing literature. Several of the studies relied on a sample from a single institution (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Forsey, Broomhall & Davis, 2011; Nunan, 2006), which may limit the applicability of the results to other institutional contexts. Although two studies address career-related topics, the data for these studies were taken from samples of employers (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Prospect Marketing, 2006) rather than from participants or graduates. Only one study provides some insight on the phenomenon of interest from the population of interest; Nunan (2006) included four questions in a total of 47 on career-related outcomes. A clear gap remains in our understanding of early career experiences from the perspective of Australian alumni. This topic – alumni perspectives of the benefits of study abroad – has been explored in other countries and the next section will review current knowledge from the United States and Europe.

Study Abroad Literature From Other Regions and Countries

Research from the United States. The normative concept in study abroad research in the U.S. is to identify change or difference in participants. Study abroad may be conceptualized as an educational intervention that produces change or growth in certain directions, which are usually measured against program goals or broader educational objectives, such as graduate attributes or general education requirements. The impact of study abroad on participants has been measured across a variety of domains including personal, social, intercultural and academic development.

Personal and social development. Some of the most significant results have been found in the area of personal and social development (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009; Carlson, Burn, Useem and Yachimowicz, 1991; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Edmonds, 2010). Such studies report change in skills, knowledge and attitude related to travel, cultures, communications, awareness of own and other values, tolerance, patience and understanding (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004). Even programs of only a few weeks in length can produce significant results in the personal and social domains (Chaison, 2008; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Edmonds, 2010).

Intercultural competence. Another area of research in the United States focuses on the development of intercultural competence, which is often measured through the use of pretest-intervention-post test design (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2009). Intercultural competence has been found to improve in students in general study abroad programs (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Lou & Bosley, 2008; Vande Berg, Connor-Litton & Paige, 2009; Rundstrom, 2005), and in those undertaking a foreign language study abroad program (Paige, Cohen & Shively, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg, Connor-

Litton & Paige, 2009). Long-term programs have been shown to produce more significant results (Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg, Connor-Litton & Paige, 2009).

Academic development. When considering academic outcomes, participants in a study abroad experience have been found to be more likely to graduate in the standard degree period (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008; Sutton & Rubin, 2010), although the studies did not control for important background characteristics such as socio-economic status. Given that study abroad is a high-cost exercise, socio-economic status may influence participation (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2009), as well as time to graduation (Terenzini, Cabrera & Bernal, 2001). Grade Point Average (GPA) has also been used as a proxy for academic success, and although several studies have found that participants graduate with a higher GPA than non-participants (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008; Sutton & Rubin, 2010; Thomas & McMahon, 1998), it is difficult to attribute this difference to study abroad in isolation. There is also evidence that academic development may differ depending on the destination and duration of international study (Sutton & Rubin, 2010), and may be especially beneficial for academically at-risk students, increasing their predicted probability of graduation (Barclay Hamir, 2011).

Long-term impacts. Educational choices, occupational choices, lifestyles, perspectives, behaviors, and personal and social skills are listed among the long-term impacts of study abroad participation (Fry, et. al., 2009). Another study considered the dimensions of civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship and voluntary simplicity, and found that study abroad was perceived to have influenced over 50% of reported participant involvement in global engagement

activities following graduation. Additionally, 35.2% of respondents attributed study abroad as helping their career to a large degree (Paige, et. al., 2009). Dwyer (2004) found that the impact of study abroad may be sustained up to 50 years after graduation. Alumni in this study indicated that study abroad had a significant long-term effect on their world-view. Additionally 77% reported that study abroad assisted them in acquiring a skill set that influenced their career path.

Research from Europe: Employment outcomes. Compared to U.S. study abroad research, European research tends to be more aligned with the current study, focusing less on student development and more on employment-related outcomes. Twenty years of graduate surveys based on the ERASMUS program have demonstrated significant support for both the benefits of participation in study abroad and the connections to subsequent employment and careers (Teichler & Janson, 2007; Teichler, 2012). Former ERASMUS participants were convinced that their international study experience helped them secure their first job (Teichler, 2012; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Seventy-one percent of participants in the earliest study (Maiworm & Teichler, 1996) and 54% of participants in a later study (Bracht, et. al., 2006) supported this claim. The researchers suggested that ERASMUS seemed to have become a positive signal for employers during the job search process (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Teichler, 2012).

Another area assessed concerns the perception of the graduates on the criteria used by their employer when hiring them. The results remained relatively consistent over the years with field of study (73%) and personality (78%) being rated as the most important criteria. Experience abroad (51%) and foreign language proficiency (55%) were rated as the fourth and fifth (of eleven options) in terms of the important and very important criteria

(Jahr & Teichler, 2000). One study linked the strength of this result to the host country, with the U.K., Ireland and Germany providing the strongest result. This may have reflected the strength of demand for English-speakers in the workplace. The researchers linked the finding regarding Germany to the number of respondents who were subsequently employed in Germany (Maiworm & Teichler, 1996), demonstrating a strong link between study abroad and early career employment.

Former ERASMUS participants were more likely to work in the private sector compared with non-mobile graduates (Jahr & Teichler, 2000; Jahr & Teichler, 2007). This may have partially accounted for the reported salary premium of 18% for internationally mobile graduates. The overall income premium was also partially the result of higher reported salaries for graduates working abroad (Jahr & Teichler, 2007). There was some indication that more ERASMUS participants were employed in managerial roles (Jahr & Teichler, 2000) and were employed in large organizations (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Teichler, 2012). Respondents also reported that their work was "embedded into an international context" (Bracht, et. al., 2006, p. 72). Termed as *visible international competencies*, international work skills have become more important to ERASMUS graduates over time (Teichler, 2012). Results varied by discipline of study, with science and engineering graduates reporting less professional importance of international competencies than humanities and social science graduates (Bracht, et. al., 2006).

One of the strongest outcomes of the ERASMUS program was the international mobility of ERASMUS participants after graduation. Eighteen to twenty percent of ERASMUS participants were employed in a different country to the country of graduation for some time after graduation (Teichler & Janson, 2007). The researchers quoted a

comparison figure of 3% for highly qualified Europeans who were employed in another country (Teichler & Janson, 2007). Additionally, almost half of ERASMUS graduates considered working abroad after graduation (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Jahr &Teichler, 2000).

Teichler (2011) notes the importance of considering background characteristics in study abroad research; in fact, participants in study abroad programs were more likely to have at least one parent with a higher education degree. The ERASMUS research revealed a multiplier effect in terms of international experiences. ERASMUS participants were more likely to have spent time abroad before commencing university (for example, living abroad with their family or with a high school exchange program), and participation in ERASMUS meant that graduates were 2.7 times more likely to work abroad following graduation (Jahr & Teichler, 2007). The finding supports Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) theory of mobility capital, which stated that international experience or intensive exposure to diverse cultures could positively predispose young people for international experiences in the future.

Employer perceptions. Employer perceptions research in Europe has tended to confirm the results of the student surveys. In comparison to the Australian results previously reported, employers in Europe were more likely to consider study or work abroad to be very important in their recruitment criteria (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Teichler, 2011), and to actively seek graduates with international education experiences for all roles, not just internationally focused positions (Molony, Sowter & Potts, 2011). Foreign language competence was a very important factor (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Molony, Sowter & Potts, 2011). In terms of other graduate competencies, employers ranked those with an international study experience higher on the 19 areas assessed. While a higher rating on

international-related competencies such as foreign language acquisition and cross-cultural skills was expected, substantial differences have also been found on a range of generic skills, for example, adaptability (81% compared with 57%), initiative (79% compared with 62%), assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence (70% compared with 50%) and written communication skills (70% compared with 59%) (Bracht, et. al., 2006).

Employer research has confirmed that the work assignments of ERASMUS graduates were more engaged with international dimensions (Teichler & Janson, 2007). In an attempt to clarify the question of a perceived salary differential, employers noted that while there was not likely to be a difference upon hiring, within five years of employment, study abroad participants could have expected a salary differential of around 27% over non-participants. The authors noted that a study abroad experience could not be attributed as the predominant reason for the differences between participants and non-participants. Rather, other characteristics were likely to be important variables. In conclusion they stated, "ERASMUS mobility was not viewed as a frequent access route to high-flying careers but rather as a 'door-opener' into the labor market." (Bracht, et. al., 2006, p. xix).

Implications For the Current Study

Although the research from the United States and Europe may not be fully applicable in the Australian context, many of the findings in this section support the small pool of literature from Australia and highlight important gaps in our knowledge. Compared with the U.S., we have very little understanding of the personal, social, intercultural and academic developmental factors and how study abroad affects these domains in Australian students. This is one area where further research is needed. Turning to the research from Europe, it is clear that although we have some understanding

of how Australian employers perceive study abroad, we know little about the graduate experience in early career employment. This is the knowledge gap addressed by the current study.

The research from Australia, the U.S. and Europe has indicated that certain variables were important to consider in the current study because they have been found to influence the experiences of participants. From Australia these included foreign language skills and industry of employment; from the U.S. important variables included duration of study abroad, foreign language skills, destination of study and socio-economic background; from Europe important variables included destination, foreign language skills, major, job role, organizational characteristics and background variables including parental education and previous international mobility. The next section synthesizes this knowledge as part of the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Research on the relationship between higher education and work has traditionally been framed around the economic perspective of the return on investment for expenditure on education (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 2009). Through human capital theory, economists have demonstrated that national investment in education has a causal relationship with economic growth (Barro, 1991; Becker, 1993). Human capital affects economic conditions by stimulating the expansion of knowledge to raise the productivity of labor and other inputs (Becker, 1993). In other words, by investing in knowledge creation, countries are sustaining economic growth in the future. Support for this structural connection between education and work in Australia is demonstrated through the coupling of these portfolios within one government department, namely the Department of

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, prior to the change of government in late 2013.

On a microeconomic level, human capital theory concerns the return of investment in education to an individual. This is the income premium obtained as a result of acquiring education (Becker, 1964; Becker, 1993). There is general consensus, supported by research, that investment in higher education in Australia is beneficial to the individual (Corliss, Lewis & Daly, 2013). Although through taxation there are also societal benefits from earning a higher income level, McMahon & Oketch (2013) state that the private rate of return from investment in education is only relevant to private decision-making. So, while the market return of education is important to individuals when making education investment decisions, there is also a set of non-market returns that are highly relevant to public policy (McMahon & Oketch, 2013).

More recent work on human capital has studied the non-market outcomes, or social benefits of education (Grossman, 2005; McMahon, 2001; McMahon, 2009; McMahon & Oketch, 2013). According to the authors of this body of work, the social benefits of education include better health, greater longevity, reduced infant mortality, reduced fertility rates, increased democratization, greater respect for human rights, political stability, environmental quality, and the reduction of poverty, inequality and crime (McMahon, 2001). Increased human capital can also contribute to household efficiency, asset management and happiness (McMahon & Oketch, 2013).

While the original human capital theory (Becker, 1964) was applied to the employment sector, the characteristics of human capital are embodied in the individual and therefore also apply to non-work household and community activities (McMahon, 2009).

Similar to the expected increase in workplace productivity, human capital affects the use of time outside of work, making both household and social activities more productive and efficient. These non-market benefits and the social rate of return should be of interest to public policy makers (McMahon & Oketch, 2013). This perspective is relevant to the current study because of the difficulty in measuring direct return on investment from study abroad and the nature of public policy in the area. It could be hypothesized that although it may be difficult to detect an income premium from investment in study abroad (or a market benefit), it may be possible to find evidence of non-market benefits of both a social and private nature. Human capital development may be enhanced through study abroad, leading to public and private benefits, including benefits during the early career period. Similar to higher education in general, failure to recognize the full range of benefits may cause a lack of information (McMahon & Oketch, 2013) and lead to decreased support for, and participation in, study abroad programs.

A complementary perspective on the relationship between higher education and work is the manpower requirements approach, which is concerned with the quantitative and structural elements of the connection between higher education and work (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Teichler, 2007). The quantitative dimension refers to the demand and supply of graduates in order to meet the needs of the economy. While this relates to the topic of graduate employment in terms of the employment rates, it is not the main focus of this project.

The structural elements of higher education have become increasingly relevant to employment, and in trying to identify differences in employment prospects, researchers have examined such factors as type of institution, type of degree program, fields of study,

student achievement and areas of specialization (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996). Structural elements can also have important qualitative dimensions that may impact on employment, such as curricular approaches (for example, theoretical verses vocational), co-curricular options (for example, work practicums, study abroad) and extra-curricular activities (for example, student associations, sports clubs). A large body of research concerns the *match* between graduate attributes and employment roles (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). As evidenced by the literature, in recent years there has been extensive research in Europe on the role of study abroad, as one co-curricular component of the degree, in early career experiences of graduates (Jahr & Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 2011). In Australia, as part of the government funding requirements, universities must address employability skills as a generic graduate attribute (Precision Consulting, 2007).

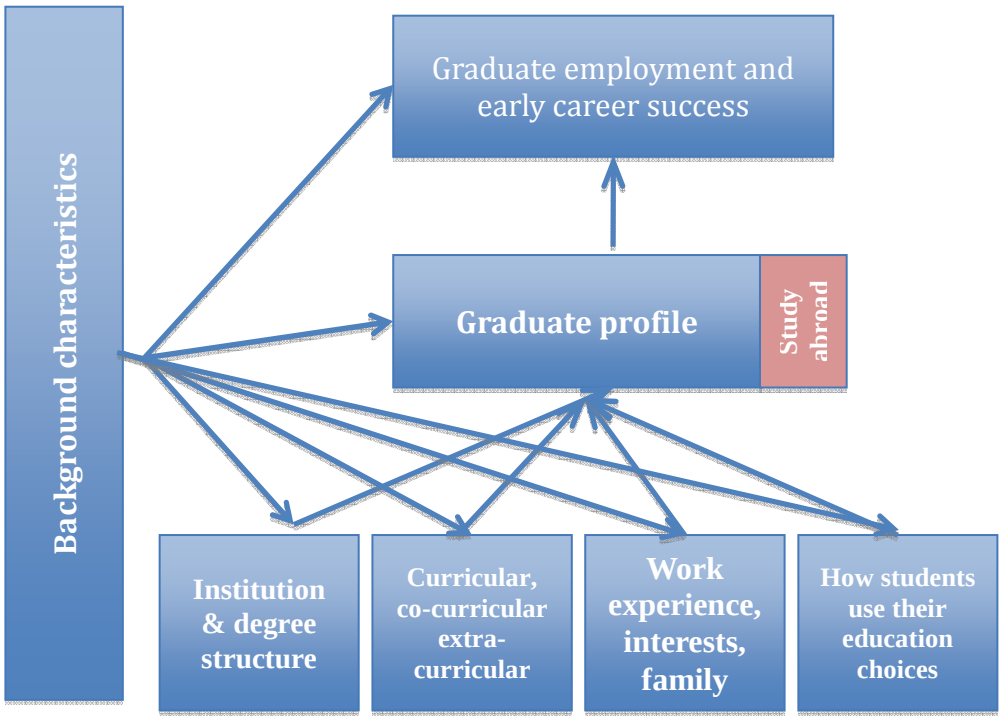
In seeking to fully understand the links between higher education and work, a complex picture emerges. In addition to structural and qualitative elements of the institution and the degree already identified, we must also consider the life of a student outside of their studies, and such activities might include employment experiences, interests and family care (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). In addition, educational and post-graduation employment success may be associated with background characteristics such as socio-economic status and ability (Ott, 2011; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Teichler, 2007; Useem & Karabel, 1986).

The final area of consideration, and perhaps the most difficult to measure, is how students use educational opportunities to enhance their subsequent professional success (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). The

broader impact of college on students has been widely studied in the U.S., though it is not well understood in other parts of the world. In the U.S., the impact of college on students has been found to relate to where students live, with whom they are friends, how much they study, and what learning experiences they are involved in (Astin, 1993). Many of these factors depend upon the choices made by students during their college lives, and how these choices are connected to their professional direction. Even though institutions offer a wide range of activities, each student develops an individual profile through their choices. Study abroad may be one of these choices. In summing up the complex question of the impact of college on careers, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) concluded "the influence of college on career probably dovetails into a broad matrix of indirect but enduring impacts on the quality of life" (p. 495). This is consistent with McMahon's (2009) expanded conception of the benefits of human capital. Figure 2.1 illustrates the general framework outlined in this section.

Figure 2.1

Elements contributing to a graduate profile and ultimately to employment and early career success.



The phenomenon of interest in this study is narrowly defined as the study abroad experience, and informed by the literature, it is considered against a variety of background and institutional characteristics. This is not to say that the study abroad experience is the most important or even the most popular co-curricular choice a student can make, or that it makes the greatest contribution to the graduate profile. It has been chosen for this study

because of the lack of existing knowledge of the phenomenon in the Australian context, and relevance to the current policy debate.

Turning now to the connection between human capital theory, the manpower perspective and study abroad, we find a highly topical conceptual link to globalization. As trade networks grow and economies converge, higher education institutions are under pressure to prepare graduates for future roles in the global society (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Jahr & Teichler, 2007; Norris & Gillespie, 2007; van der Wende, 2007; Wildavsky, 2010). By exposing students to other countries and cultures, study abroad is the most direct way to engage students in active learning about the world (Brockington & Wiedenhoeft, 2009; Nolan, 2009). In an international work environment, graduates may be expected to communicate in foreign languages and to work with people from different cultures (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Hudzik, 2011), and study abroad is one co-curricular inclusion aimed at better preparing students for international careers (Adams, Banks& Olsen, 2011; Teichler, 2011).

There are three key factors that support this connection. Firstly, through studying in another country, students develop skills and knowledge (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Carlson, et. al., 1991; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004). Although there may be ways of obtaining similar skills and knowledge without travelling abroad (Jones, 2013), study abroad is generally acknowledged for fostering a first-hand understanding of other countries. Secondly, international competencies have become more relevant to the graduate workplace over time. European research provides a longitudinal picture of this phenomenon (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006; Teichler, 2012), and it is likely to be true in many developed societies. Finally, more organizations are competing for graduates with

international experience in Australia. Prospect Marketing (2006) found that while ten years ago, government departments were the main recruiters of graduates with study abroad experience and international competencies, increasingly they are competing for this talent amongst a growing group of multinational organizations.

Study abroad is also directly connected to human capital development perspectives in the European Union. The ERASMUS program is framed around the European Union's innovation agenda, which seeks to attain global competitiveness through research and innovation, in order to create jobs and drive growth (European Commission, 2012). Supported by an annual budget of over €450m (European Commission, 2012), ERASMUS has been called the most successful policy initiative across the European Union (Jahr & Teichler, 2007). A valuable aspect of human capital development in Europe is the mobility of highly-skilled professionals and research has shown study abroad to be an effective way to encourage professional mobility (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 2011; Teichler & Janson, 2007).

While there is extensive support for this perspective in the literature, it is important to acknowledge that there are objections to the human capital and manpower approaches to higher education that also relate to the purpose of study abroad. Some may say that the purpose of higher education is to develop citizens with a broad understanding of society and the capacity for critical analysis (Nussbaum, 2010). Similarly, study abroad may be valued for its contribution to the personal, social and identity development of young people (Brockington & Wiedenhoeft, 2009). The purpose of this study was not to discredit these perspectives, but rather to examine one phenomenon through a utilitarian approach that matched the policy context in which it was embedded. Broader issues of social, personal

and citizenship development will be considered alongside career development and employment benefits.

In this chapter I have summarized the main findings of the literature from Australia, the United States and Europe, illustrating empirical results that show how study abroad benefits participants, and how study abroad experiences are connected to employment and career outcomes. I have also outlined the conceptual framework that guided this study. In the next chapter I will explain the research methodology used in this project.

CHAPTER 3

Study Methodology

This research project used an exploratory approach to examine the early career experiences of graduates in the workforce, and how they perceived the benefit from participation in study abroad at one specific stage in their work lives. A post-positivist lens was applied to the study, which used cross-sectional survey design to draw a detailed descriptive picture of phenomenon of interest. The most substantial components of the study were based on the perceptions of the participants, and as such, these perceptions were used to explore patterns and create a more comprehensive understanding of how study abroad and early careers of graduates are linked through the experiences and work profiles of participants. This study provides important, empirically grounded information to policy-makers on study abroad models, which may more successfully achieve policy objectives in the future.

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approach to the study. Firstly, I will recap the research questions and conceptual framework. Second, the sampling and data collection strategy will be presented. Third, an outline of the survey instrument is presented. Fourth, the analytical strategy will be summarized. Finally, the limitations of the study will be discussed.

Research Questions

To recap, this study addressed the primary question, *what are the benefits, as perceived by graduates, of a study abroad experience during a bachelor degree for their early career experiences?*

Two sub-questions were addressed:

a) What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduate?

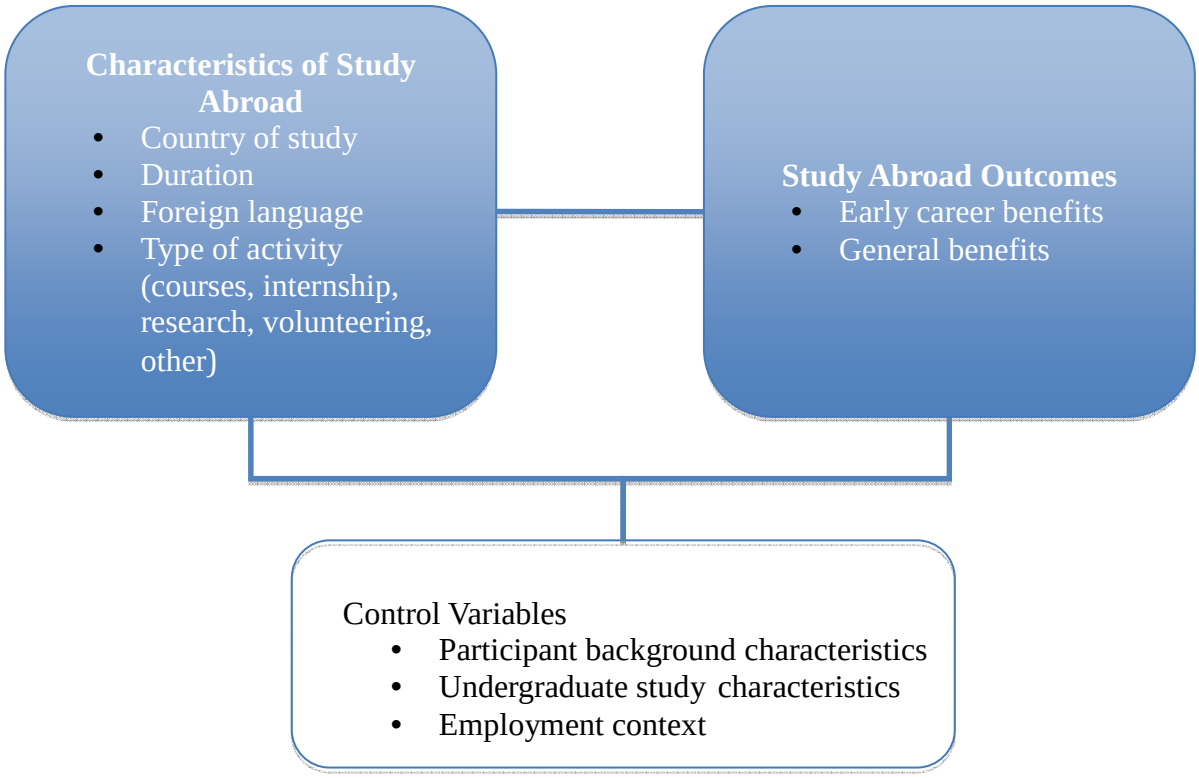
b) What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?

Conceptual framework

As outlined in Chapter 2, the perspectives I used in this study were human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Becker, 1993; McMahon & Oketch, 2013) and a manpower approach to the connection between higher education and work (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Teichler, 2007). Human capital theory concerns the market and non-market return on investment to higher education. According to the manpower requirements perspective, higher education fulfills a utilitarian function of preparing graduates for future employment. Although there are many factors that contribute to the development of a graduate, this study focused on study abroad as one co-curricular option of higher education that may provide benefits in the early career stages, as well as general benefits to their lives and to society. As shown in Figure 3.1, this study also considered the influence of background characteristics, employment context and study characteristics on the links between study abroad and early career outcomes. As defined in the literature, characteristics of study abroad programs that may be important are country of study, duration of study, foreign language acquisition and type of study abroad program.

Figure 3.1

Conceptual representation of factors considered in this study



Population and Sample Selection

The population of interest for the study was bachelor degree graduates of Australian universities who participated in a study abroad experience between 2007 and 2009. Solid data on study abroad participation in Australia has not been a national priority in the past and data collection is problematic. In part for the period of interest (specifically 2008) there was no national data collection on participation in study abroad, so it is not possible to obtain the exact size of the population. However, I will attempt to deduce an estimate. In 2007, 37 universities reported 10,718 study abroad participants (Olsen, 2007) and in 2009, 36 universities reported 15,058 participants (Olsen, 2010). The breakdown

was not available for undergraduate students, but in 2013, undergraduates represented 65% of the total known study abroad population (Olsen, 2013). Given the known population of 25,776 for 2007 and 2009, the estimated total population was around 38,000, and the estimated undergraduate population was around 24,800.

The choice of the 2007-2009 study abroad participant cohort stems from the temporal nature of the study. Participants would have been in the workforce for around three years, aligning it with the timing of the European studies (see Teichler, 2011; Teichler & Janson, 2007). After working for several years, it was anticipated that the participants would have had enough time to critically reflect on their early career activities, while also retaining recent memory of their college years and their study abroad experience.

No national database of study abroad participation was available, so a form of cluster sampling was used and participants were identified and contacted through their institution of study. All Australian universities were invited to participate through an email call from a professional association, the Australian Universities International Directors Forum. Eleven universities agreed to participate, representing all 5 states (but omitting the two territories). The sample can be considered as broadly representative of a national sample.

Data Collection

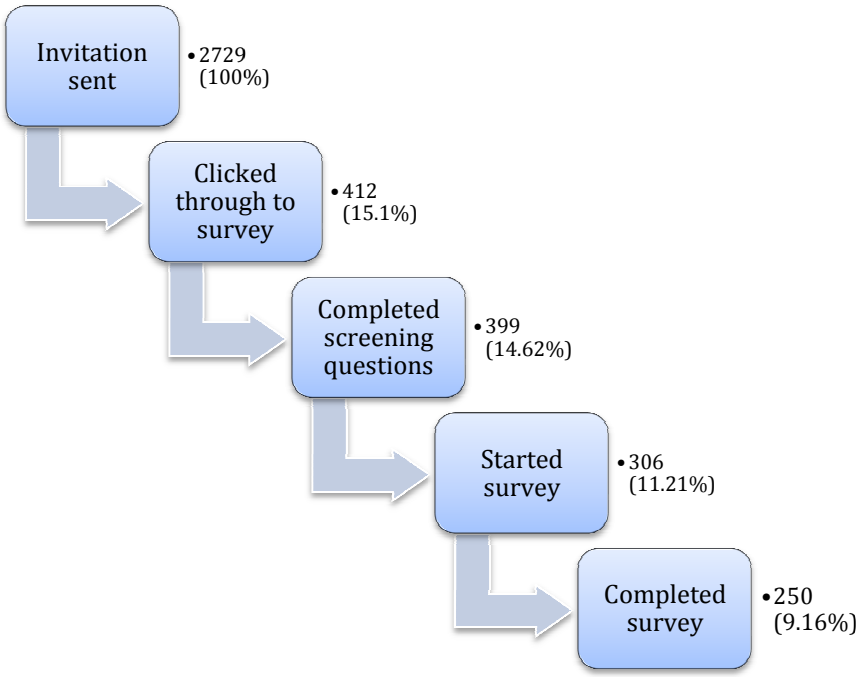
In June 2013, institutions were asked to send the *invitation to participate* email (see Appendix C) to participants of all types of study abroad programs between 2007 and 2009. Either the Study Abroad or Alumni Office carried this out. Institutions reported a range of issues in identifying the population of interest including limited records of participation

(for example, the study abroad office only retained records for centrally administered programs, not faculty administered programs) and limited accurate alumni contact information. Some institutions sent the email to their entire participant group with an email record on file (regardless of the age of the record), while some were able to match study abroad records with current alumni contact information. Finally it was reported that the invitation was sent to 2729 email addresses.

All of these factors make it difficult to report the response rate as it is unknown how many emails were delivered to current email addresses. From the data provided by the institutions, I estimate that 15.1% of potential respondents clicked through, 11.2% met the screening criteria and 9.2% completed the survey. Figure 3.2 outlines the sampling process and summarizes the response rate by stage of the survey reached.

Figure 3.2

Stages of the sampling process and related response rate at each stage



The response rate by institution is difficult to compare as some institutions had low rates of participation in study abroad programs, some sent the invitation to all participants on file, while others (with access to more sophisticated databases) pre-screened invitations for graduation status, current email addresses and alumni communication preferences (for example, some alumni databases contained an *opt out of communication* option). Final institutional samples range from five to seventy as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Number of respondents by institution

Institution alias	Sent	Screening	Completed	Rate (sent: screening)
Institution 1	274	41	20	15%
Institution 2	502	65	36	13%
Institution 3	25	7	5	28%
Institution 4	79	10	9	13%
Institution 5	240	37	27	15%
Institution 6	148	38	18	26%
Institution 7	328	22	14	7%
Institution 8	387	15	12	4%
Institution 9	284	36	24	13%
Institution 10	386	106	70	27%
Institution 11	76	22	15	29%
Total	2729	399	250	15%

A screening mechanism in the survey instrument was designed to capture responses from potential participants who met three conditions: 1. Participated in a study abroad program, 2. Graduated from a bachelor degree, 3. Primary activity at the time of the survey

was employment. Therefore respondents were screened out if they had not participated in a study abroad program (*n*=5), had not graduated (*n*=8), were not currently working at least part-time (*n*=82, 53 of which were studying full-time), or had not completed their bachelor degree before 2012 (*n*=15). A particular issue was identifiable in the number of respondents studying full-time, and I believe this was connected to the use of university email addresses as the primary contact address – prospective participants may have graduated from their bachelor degree and have commenced full-time graduate studies, making them ineligible for participation. This was particularly likely to have applied to international students who must enroll in full-time study as a visa requirement.

Final Data Set

Twenty-four respondents were subsequently screened from the data set as they graduated in 2012. As the main focus of the study is the early employment outcomes, 2012 graduates may only have been in the workplace for around six months, possibly a time period too short to develop a good understanding of their new position and future career prospects. The final data set was made up of 226 responses. Having provided an overview of the sampling strategy and final sample size, I will now describe the instrument, before presenting the analytical strategy.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was designed based on the European Graduate Surveys (International Centre for Higher Education Research-Kassel, University of Kassel, Germany), with permission from the lead researcher, Prof. Teichler (see Appendix B). This survey, with minor modifications, has been used as the primary instrument for almost 20 years of ERASMAS evaluation studies (see Teichler, 2011; Teichler & Janson, 2007).

Eight key questions were taken directly from the European model. One question (Question 8) was amended to delete one item, *income or salary level* (considered inconsistent with the developmental focus of other items), and include additional items taken from the literature on desired employment characteristics as defined by employers. These items included *problem solving and analytical skills* (Bracht, et. al., 2006; Gardner, Gross & Steglitz, 2008; Graduate Careers Australia, 2011) (stated in the original survey as *new ways of thinking*), *teamwork/ability to work with others* (Gardner, Gross & Steglitz, 2008; Graduate Careers Australia, 2011; Prospect Marketing, 2006), *interpersonal and communication skills* (Graduate Careers Australia, 2011; Prospect Marketing, 2006), and *motivation and passion for chosen career direction* (Dwyer, 2004; Norris & Gillespie, 2007; Nunan, 2006). One question was been added (Question 9) to rank the items listed in the previous question, in order to improve the interpretation of the data for the primary research question.

I supplemented the European Graduate Survey questions with employment, study and background information, guided by the original survey but tailored for the Australian case and modeled on survey data routinely collected in Australia. The sources of these questions were the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Graduate Careers Australia (the organization that conducts annual graduate surveys). The socio-economic status questions were informed by a discussion paper on SES measurement for higher education (DEEWR, 2009) and were appropriate to the Australian context. The themes of the survey instrument are outlined in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.2

Themes of the survey instrument

Socio-biographic background	Age, gender, citizenship, mobility prior to post-secondary study, socio-economic indicators (parental education, funding for study, high school), foreign languages spoken	
Course of study	**Bachelor degree** (Institution, major, mode of study, financing, academic performance)	**International study experience (s)** (Host country, duration, program type, foreign language acquisition)
Transition	Major activity after graduation, job search criteria, perception of recruitment criteria	
Current employment, work, other	**Employment** (Position, income, sector, industry, career prospects)	**International Dimensions of work** (Scope of organization, types of assignments, perception of utilization of knowledge and skills, international mobility, perception of career value of mobility)

Note: Adapted from Bracht, et al. (2006, p. 51).

The final survey instrument was comprised of 36 questions and was divided into five sections, as outlined in Figure 3.3, with the addition of screening questions (listed in the previous section). Most of the background, study and work information questions were categorical, presented with drop-down menus. The early-career questions were measured on a 5-point rating scale of importance, frequency, or value, along with one dichotomous question (yes/no) and one ranked data question. While the survey was primarily quantitative in design, free text boxes were provided for additional feedback or clarification.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken in order to test and refine the instrument. Two particular areas of concern were how the instrument would function within the limitations of the software, and allow for complex data collection from diverse groups (for example, international students). Two institutions participated in the pilot study, sending the draft instrument to 30 prospective participants each. No major issues with the instrument were reported, but one change was made – to move the *institution of study* question to the screening question set – so I was able to track response rates by institution and report back to institutional contacts. The sample responses were retained and used in the final data set.

Following a low response rate from one institution in the pilot, I decided to introduce a prize draw to encourage responses during the main data collection period. This incentive was included in a revised submission to the Institutional Review Board. Invitation emails were also adjusted with feedback from the pilot institutions (see Appendix C for examples).

Analysis

As an exploratory study, the descriptive results were an important element as it was the first time many of these variables had been systematically examined. Initial descriptive analysis resulted in some variables being transformed to provide more substantive sample sizes for analysis. For example, destination countries of study were categorized by region and recoded. A full list of variables is provided in the Appendix D. The descriptive analysis formed the first component of the results and provided a detailed framework for understanding the findings. I also used Chi-square tests, to detect significant connections

between variables and further expand the complex picture created through the descriptive analysis.

In deriving answers to the sub-questions, ANOVA and independent t-tests were used to identify variations from the mean on key variables of interest. Finally, an exploratory logistic regression was performed to test selected variables and inform future research. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, and Stata 13 was used to undertake the logistic regression.

The core concept of the research question, *Benefit*, was central to the analytical strategy, and this was the main outcome used in the study. Benefits or perceived impacts were operationalized through specific questions, primarily Questions 7, 8 and 9, where participants were asked to rate the benefit or perceived impact on a scale. A benefit or impact was evidenced by a very high or high response on issues around employment, careers and broad developmental aspects. As a general principle, where participants rated an item highly, it was accepted on face value of indicating support in a positive direction. Participants were also asked to rank the top three benefits from their perspective (Question 9), to provide a weighting to the list and guide interpretation of the scaled results.

Primary research question. To answer this research question, descriptive analysis of the 9 main survey questions was used. The most direct findings were derived from Questions 7 to 9, which were the summative questions asking directly about career benefits and comparing these benefits with more general developmental benefits. Data from remaining six main survey questions were used to support the direct findings. Several themes were identified in the direct findings from Questions 7 to 9, which were confirmed and reinforced through the other questions.

Research sub-questions. As the first step in the analysis, in order to use statistical analysis to identify specific relationships between benefits and independent variables, it was necessary to reduce the number of outcome variables. To do this, I used a Principle Component Analysis (PCA) of items in Question 8, using oblique rotation due to correlation between the variables. The resulting 3 factors (Employability skills, Career-related benefits, Host-country aspects) conceptually grouped the perceived benefits identified by the participants.

Employing ANOVAs and independent t-tests, I tested the significance of group mean differences in the three *benefit* factor scores. The null hypothesis for each test was that the means of the subgroups were equal. The alternative hypothesis for each test was that the means of the subgroups were significantly different using a 95% confidence interval. All relevant variables from the study abroad program characteristics (sub-question 1) and background, student and employment context sections of the survey (sub-question 2) were analyzed using the test appropriate to the variable type. Table 3.2 provides a visual representation of the variables used in the analysis.

Table 3.3

Variables used in statistical analysis for sub-questions 2 and 3

Outcome variables (Benefits)	Independent variables
Factor 1: Employability skills	Country of study abroad
Factor 2: Career-related benefits	Duration
Factor 3: Host-country aspects	Language of activity
	Activity (of study abroad)
	Background characteristics
	Study characteristics
	Employment characteristics

To take the results one step further, multi-variable analysis was used to assess to what extent, if any, variables in the model predicted a proposed policy outcome. Based on a review of the literature and the conceptual framework of the study, the proposed policy outcome chosen was working for an international organization (this proposed policy outcome is discussed further in Chapter 5). Logistic regression was an appropriate method of analysis because the outcome variable was dichotomous (1=works for an international organization, 0=otherwise).

Six possible predictor variables selected from programmatic, background and study variables completed the exploratory regression model (see Table 3.3 for a list and description of the variables). Two programmatic variables, multiple study abroad experiences and studying abroad in a foreign language were chosen as the most influential programmatic variables identified through other statistical tests. Another possible variable in this category, compulsory study abroad, had a low sample size (n=13) and was therefore omitted from the regression. Study in Asia was also included in the programmatic variables because of the link to current policy directions. Gender represented a basic personal characteristic that returned a significant result in other tests, and the individual measure related to socio-economic status, first-generation university graduate, was included to consider some degree of socio-economic influence in the model. Finally, type of major, professional or other, was included to account for possible differences in educational training and career path.

In order to account for concerns about failure to meet regression assumptions, I estimated the standard errors using the Huber-White sandwich estimators (*robust* standard errors). The data were heteroscedastic on some variables, and the limited sample size on

subgroups of the variables may have caused problems with assumptions of normality. Since the failure to meet these assumptions can lead to biased estimates of the standard errors, a robust regression was used to increase the accuracy of the results.

Table 3.4

Description of variables used in the exploratory multi-variable regression model

	Description	Scale
Outcome variable		
International Organization	Respondent identified as working for an organization with an international scope	0 = does not work for an organization with an international scope 1 = works for an organization with an international scope
Predictor variables		
Programmatic variables		
Study abroad multiple	Respondent studied abroad multiple times	0 = Did not study abroad multiple times 1 = studied abroad multiple times
Study abroad foreign language	Respondent studied abroad in a language other than English	0 = Did not study abroad in a language other than English 1 = Studied abroad in a language other than English
Study abroad Asia	Respondent studied abroad in Asia	0 = Did not study abroad in Asia 1 = Studied abroad in Asia
Background variables		

Table 3.4 (cont'd)

Gender	Gender of the respondent	0 = Male 1 = Female
First-generation	Respondent was a first-generation university graduate	0 = Not a first-generation university graduate 1 = First-generation university graduate
Study variable		
Professional major	Respondent studied a professional major at university (including architecture, engineering, education, health, management & commerce)	0 = Did not study a professional major 1 = studied a professional major

Limitations of the study

The final section of this chapter concerns limitations. It is important to clarify what this study was designed to measure and what was beyond the scope. There are six limitations that will be noted in this section. First, there was no comparison group. This means that the results cannot be generalized to compare the population that participate in study abroad programs against that which does not; the results will be specific to the participant population. Although comparison group methodology is preferred by some, Astin (1993) notes that the passage of time brings changes to all groups, and so a non-participant may also have changed in unidentifiable ways, further confounding the results.

Second, in a related limitation, the current research study may have a self-selection bias. This is a traditional weakness of study abroad research (Twombley, Salisbury, Tumanut & Klut, 2012). Given the sample size and the quest for meaningful sub-group

data, random selection was impractical. This means that the results should be interpreted as a positive picture of the outcomes, which may omit the perspectives of graduates who had a less positive outlook on their study abroad experience and therefore declined participation.

Third, this was a perception study. The results are not objective measures and this necessarily frames the outcomes. Although self-assessment type measures in higher education are sometimes criticized, they should also be acknowledged for the value they provide in understanding how participants perceive experiences. Objective data can lead to inappropriate interpretation of graduate employment statistics, such as the use of income as a proxy for success (Teichler, 2009).

The fourth limitation concerns sample size. Although adequate overall, samples in some categories were too small to yield a meaningful statistical analysis. In some cases, it was possible to group variables, in order to provide some analysis of areas of interest. In other areas, it will be necessary to undertake further research to fill the gaps, such as career benefits of international internships or short-term study abroad, or study abroad outcomes concerning world regions not covered in this study.

As a fifth limitation, the timing of this study may not be ideal for identifying the phenomenon of interest, that is, the connection between study abroad and careers. It is foreseeable that a worker may not be tasked with international strategic work or an overseas posting until later in their employment experience. Although it is unfortunate and it may dampen the results, there are other reasons for choosing the early career stages of the career, related to the proximity of the university experience to the employment

experience (Teichler, 2009). Until further longitudinal research is undertaken, we will not fully understand this phenomenon.

Finally, this study did not account for latent variables that may be important when discussing education and career outcomes. Other researchers have identified personality as a variable in the decision to employ or not to employ a graduate (Messer & Wolter, 2007). At the same time, the personality of the interviewers may influence whether a graduate accepts a position at firm A or firm B. Motivation, intelligence and savvy should also be added to this list, and there are possibly other variables that prove difficult to capture in data or compensate for through method. This means that research may never fully isolate the value of study abroad to a student or graduate.

CHAPTER 4

Sample Profile

One of the purposes of this study was to provide a better understanding of the Australian participants of study abroad programs, their background and their early career choices. As an exploratory study, an extensive amount of descriptive data were collected. This chapter presents these descriptive results and attempts to draw together key pieces of respondent profiles in order to assist in framing the answers to the research questions. Profile information presented in this chapter includes personal background information, an overview of current employment, university study patterns, international study program information, and international experiences prior to higher education.

Profile of the Respondents: Background Information

Age, Gender, Indigenous Identity

The age range of participants was 22 to 39 years. The average was 26 years and the mode was 25 years (results are provided in Table E.1 in the Appendices). Consistent with national participation data on gender for both higher education (DEEWR, 2008) and study abroad (Olsen, 2010), there were more female respondents than male. Females represented 66.5% (149) of respondents (see Table 4.1), slightly higher than the corresponding national figure of 59% for 2009 (Olsen, 2010). No participants in the study identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Indigenous enrolment at Australian universities represented 0.9% at around this time (DEEWR, 2008).

Table 4.1

Gender of study respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	75	33.5
Female	149	66.5
Total	224	100%

Country of Residence, Citizenship, High School, Languages Spoken

As a result of the multicultural nature of the Australian population and the high enrolment levels of international students in higher education, there was a notable level of diversity across the sample. Eighteen percent of respondents lived abroad (at the time of the survey) in 15 different countries (see Table 4.2). Although similar in total, this group did not completely overlap with citizenship, indicating that some Australian citizens were residing abroad. Overall, 93.9% of respondents held Australian citizenship, and 23% of respondents (*n*=52) held dual citizenship, including Australian citizenship in every case. Twenty-six percent of Australian citizens held dual citizenship. Overall, respondents in the sample held citizenship in 23 countries (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.2

Country of current residence of study respondents

Country	Frequency	Percent
Australia	185	81.9
Japan	6	2.7
UK	6	2.7
USA	6	2.7
Canada	4	1.8
Singapore	3	1.3
China	2	0.9
Germany	2	0.9
South Korea	2	0.9
Vietnam	2	0.9
Colombia	1	0.4
France	1	0.4
Italy	1	0.4
Norway	1	0.4
Taiwan	1	0.4
Tanzania	1	0.4
Total	224	100%

Table 4.3

Countries of citizenship represented in the sample

Australia	France	Italy	Singapore	USA
Brazil	Germany	Malaysia	Sweden	Zimbabwe
Canada	Hong Kong	New Zealand	Switzerland	Venezuela
China	India	Pakistan	Taiwan	
Czech Republic	Indonesia	Peru	UK	

n=214, *n*=54(dual citizenship)

Respondents were asked where they completed high school. Ninety-three percent completed high school in Australia while 6.7% completed high school abroad. Eleven countries were represented in this group, which was similar, though not identical, to the citizenship of respondents (see Table 4.4). Of particular relevance to this study, 52% of respondents identified as speaking a language other than English and four respondents identified as speaking four languages other than English (see Table 4.5). The main languages represented were French, Japanese, Spanish, Mandarin, German and Italian (see Table 4.6)

Table 4.4

Country where high school education was completed by respondents

Australia (208)	Hong Kong	Norway
Brazil	Indonesia	Singapore (4)
China (2)	South Korea	Taiwan
France	Malaysia	Zimbabwe

n=223

Table 4.5

Number of languages spoken by respondents

Languages spoken	Frequency	Percent
Only English	108	48.4%
Two language	115	51.6%
Three languages	35	15.5%
Four languages	13	5.8%
Five Languages	4	1.8%

n=223

Table 4.6

Languages spoken by respondents in the sample

Arabic	Greek	Malay	Serbian	Urdu
Cantonese	Hungarian	Mandarin	Shona	Vietnamese
Danish	Indonesian	Marathi	Spanish	
Dutch	Italian	Norwegian	Swedish	
French	Japanese	Persian	Telugu	
German	Korean	Portuguese	Thai	

n=223 (26 Languages)

Socio-economic Background

To ascertain the socioeconomic background of the respondents, two indicators were collected. Firstly, respondents were asked to report the level of education attained by their mother and father. Educational attainment is a generally accepted indicator of social background (Centre for the Study of Higher Education, 2008; James, 2002). Taken together, results indicated that 34% of respondents were first-generation university graduates. Table 4.7 displays the results by education level.

Table 4.7

Highest education of mother, father of respondents

Level of Education	Mother frequency	Mother percent	Father frequency	Father percent
10 years or less	33	15.1	43	19.8
11-12 years (Senior Secondary)	78	35.8	51	23.5
Bachelor degree	78	35.8	81	37.3
Graduate degree	29	13.3	42	19.4
Total	218	100%	217	100%

Second, the department responsible for tertiary education in Australia (DIISRTE) uses an SES index to measure the enrolment of low SES students in Australian

universities. The index uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Index of Occupation and Education (IOE) as well as the number of students receiving government income support to classify postcodes by low, medium and high SES. The low and high categories represent the 25% most disadvantaged and advantaged neighborhoods respectively (DIISRTE, 2013a). For this project, the index based on the 2006 census data was used.

It was not feasible to ask respondents for their home address during high school, or parental address, as used by the Australian Government. As a proxy high school data were collected and matched to postcodes, and the corresponding SES designation was assigned based on the DIISRTE classification. Although this is not precisely the same method used by the Australian Government, it is a reasonable estimate for understanding the socioeconomic position of a school when individual data are not available (Marks, McMillan, Jones &Ainsley, 2000). Accordingly, 11.7% of respondents were classified as low, and 88.3% were classified as medium or high (see Table 4.8), in terms of the high school they attended. Against the national statistics, students from low SES high schools are underrepresented in this study. Low SES enrolment in Australian universities has remained steady at around 15% for the last two decades (DEEWR, 2009).

Table 4.8

SES category of high school of respondents

SES Category	Frequency	Percent
Low	22	11.7
Medium	69	36.7
High	97	51.6
Total	188^	100

^ International high schools were not included

To summarize, the sample group was around 26 years of age and more female than male. Although there were no indigenous respondents, there was a notable amount of international diversity represented. Respondents held multiple citizenships, went to school in other countries and worked abroad at the time of data collection. More than half of the sample identified as speaking a language other than English, consistent with language study during education and a high migrant population in Australia: 27% of 18-34 year old Australians were born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Socioeconomic indicators suggested that respondents from medium and high socioeconomic groups were over-represented. This is consistent with study abroad research in other countries, and considering the cost of international study, this is not a surprising result. In the next section, I will provide an overview of the employment profile of the respondents.

Profile of the Respondents: Current Employment

The survey asked a series of questions about current employment. The most typical study pattern for Australian students is to complete study at the end of the calendar year (late November or early December). However, students may also finish studies in June. On average, the respondents in the sample had been in the workplace for three years (M=3.03). The range was between 5.5 and 1.5 years, depending on the semester of graduation. Table 4.9 provides a breakdown of the sample by graduation year.

Table 4.9

Year of graduation of respondents

Year	Frequency	Percent
2007	11	4.9
2008	35	15.5
2009	62	27.4
2010	74	32.7
2011	44	19.5
Total	226	100%

The sample displayed a high degree of turnover in employment positions, considering the average time in the workplace. As shown in Table 4.10, 63.3% changed jobs at least once since graduation.

Table 4.10

Number of employers of respondents since graduation

Number	Frequency	Percent
One employer	83	36.7
Two employers	78	34.5
Three employers	45	20.0
Four employers	8	3.5
Five or more employers	12	5.3
Total	226	100%

As part of the screening process, respondents were asked their current activity. Respondents who did not include at least part-time employment were screened out. Therefore most of the sample, 89.8% (n =203) worked full-time or were self-employed. Table 4.11 provides the sample breakdown.

Table 4.11

Current work mode of respondents

Work mode	Frequency	Percent
Full-time employed	189	83.6
Self-employed	14	6.2
Part-time employed	23	10.2
Total	226	100%

Country of Work

Thirty-eight respondents (16.9%) worked overseas (at the time of the survey) in 16 countries (data is presented in Table E.2 the Appendices). This list was similar to the country of residence but not identical. A few respondents appeared to be posted overseas on a temporary basis while retaining residence in Australia. Three international students had returned home, while one worked in Australia and one worked in a third country. Fourteen of these 38 respondents (37%) were working in a country in which they previously studied abroad. Japan was the country with the highest number of returnees (n=3).

Type of Position Held

The type of position was classified according the categories used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The typical position held by respondents in the sample was *Professional* (70.8%). As shown in Table 4.12, few respondents identified as community or personal services workers or technician and trade workers.

Table 4.12

Type of position held by respondents

Position	Frequency	Percent
Professional	160	70.8
Other type of position	26	11.5
Manager	20	8.8
Clerical or administrative	11	4.9
Community or personal services	5	2.2
Technician or trade	4	1.8
Total	226	100%

As shown in Table 4.13, the service sector was the largest area of employment for respondents (32.9%). This was followed by *Education and training* (24.1%) and *Healthcare and social assistance* (7.5%). No respondents indicated employment in the following areas:

- Agriculture, forestry & fishing
- Electricity, gas, water supply
- Wholesale trade
- Accommodation & food services
- Transport, postal & warehousing
- Rental, hiring & real estate services

Table 4.13

Industry of employment of respondents

Industry	Frequency	Percent
Other services	70	32.8
Education & training	30	14.1
Healthcare & social assistance	16	7.5
Public administration & safety	14	6.6
Mining	13	6.1
Information, media & telecommunications	13	6.1
Financial & insurance services	13	6.1
Arts & recreation services	13	6.1
Manufacturing	11	5.2
Construction	10	4.7
Retail trade	10	4.7
Total	213	100

About Their Organizations

The majority of respondents (61.5%) worked in the private sector, and the largest group of respondents worked for an organization with an international scope (41.6%). In terms of organization size, respondents were more likely to work for an organization with more than 101 employees (61.5%). These statistics broadly reflected the profile of graduate employment in Australia (Graduate Careers Australia, 2010) though national data did not capture organization scope. The breakdowns are shown in tables 4.14, 4.15 and 4.16.

Table 4.14

Type of organizations employing respondents in the sample

Sector	Frequency	Percent
Private	139	61.5
Public	65	28.8
Non-profit	22	9.7
Total	226	100%

Table 4.15

Scope of organizations employing respondents in the sample

Category	Frequency	Percent
Local	32	14.2
Regional	51	22.5
National	49	21.7
International	94	41.6
Total	226	100%

Table 4.16

Size of organizations employing respondents in the sample

Number of employees	Frequency	Percent
1-19	53	23.5
20-100	34	15.0
101-500	44	19.5
More than 500	95	42.0
Total	226	100%

To summarize, the average respondent had been working for around three years, had more than one employer during this time, and held a full-time role as a professional in Australia. Most respondents worked for a large, private-sector organization with an international scope. The top three sectors of employment were *Other services*, *Education*

and training and *Healthcare and social assistance*. The profile of study for the respondents will be outlined in the next section.

Background of the Respondents: Study Information

Institution of Enrolment

As mentioned in the description of the sample in the previous chapter, 11 institutions were represented in the study. All 11 were research universities, but the institutions represented a variety of institutional contexts including metropolitan, regional, traditional, technological and newer institutions[2], though metropolitan universities may be over-represented. Participating universities were located in five states (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia), spanning the largest population centers in the country. The adjusted sample size per institution (removing 2012 graduates) is shown in Table 4.17.

[2] 1 Group of Eight, 4 Australian Technology Network, 4 1960s-70s universities and 2 post 1988.

Table 4.17

Sample by institution represented in the sample

Institution alias	Frequency	Percent
Institution 1	15	6.6
Institution 2	35	15.5
Institution 3	5	2.2
Institution 4	8	3.6
Institution 5	24	10.6
Institution 6	15	6.6
Institution 7	13	5.8
Institution 8	12	5.3
Institution 9	21	9.3
Institution 10	67	29.6
Institution 11	11	4.9
Total	226	100%

Mode of Study & Residency Status

During their bachelor degree, most of the respondents in the sample studied full-time. Only 1.8% (*n*=4) indicated that they studied part-time, while 6.7% (*n*=15) studied a combination of full-time and part-time. Only 11 (4.9%) respondents were international students, however this may have been a sampling issue. As mentioned previously, respondents who indicated that they are currently studying full-time were screened out of the survey, which may have inadvertently reduced the number of international students participating. Part-time and international students may be under-represented in the sample. In 2008, 22.1% of undergraduate students were enrolled part-time and international students made up 23.7% of the undergraduate university population (DIISRTE, 2013b).

Major and Academic Achievement

All majors, as classified in the Australian higher education statistics, were captured in the sample except for *Agriculture, Environment and Related Studies*. Consistent with national statistics (DEEWR, 2008; Olsen, 2010), *Management and Commerce* and *Society and Culture* were the most popular majors for undergraduate enrolment and for study abroad participants. However, unlike national trends that list *Health* as the third most common major for study abroad (Olsen, 2010), *Creative Arts* was the third-most represented major in this study (see Table 4.18). *Management and Commerce* majors were proportional to overall enrollment trends. *Creative Arts* majors were over-represented while all other majors may be under-represented (DEEWR, 2008).

Many Australian students study more than one major, often through the completion of two concurrent bachelor degrees. Fifty respondents indicated that they had more than one major concentration, though whether these were double degrees is unknown. The most popular majors for those undertaking more than one major were *Society and Culture* (*n*=34), *Management and Commerce* (*n*=22), *Engineering* (*n*=14), *Creative Arts* (*n*=14) and *Natural Science* (*n*=12).

Respondents were asked to rate their own academic achievement during their degree. More than half of respondents rated their academic achievement as "very good" (data are presented in Table E.3 in the Appendices). These data were negatively skewed and this was likely to reflect an academic requirement to participate in a study abroad program rather than the general student population.

Table 4.18

Academic major of respondents

Major	Frequency	Percent
More than one major	50	22.7
Management & commerce	50	22.7
Society & culture	42	19.1
Creative arts	23	10.5
Engineering	16	7.3
Natural and physical sciences	13	5.9
Architecture & building	11	5.0
Health	8	3.6
Education	4	1.8
Information Technology	3	1.4
Total	220	100%

Tuition Financing

The most common method of financing a bachelor degree in Australia is through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) deferred payment system, which allows students to defer payment of tuition until they are earning over a set income threshold. Seventy-one percent (*n*=159) of respondents indicated that their major form of tuition finance was HECS deferred. At the other end of the spectrum, 17 (7.6%) participants indicated that they were Australian full fee-paying students. Only three institutions were represented in this group, and the figure was much higher than the population statistic of 2.1% (DEEWR, 2008), even though this mode of tuition financing was phased out in 2009. Table 4.19 provides a breakdown of tuition financing methods.

Table 4.19

Tuition financing for bachelor degree of respondents

Method of finance	Frequency	Percent
HECS deferred	159	71.3
HECS upfront	30	13.5
International fee-paying	10	4.5
Australian fee-paying	17	7.6
Scholarship/other	7	3.1
Total	223	100%

Graduate Study

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were interested in graduate study. Almost half, 44.6% (*n*=98) were either already enrolled or planning to enroll in a graduate program (data is presented in Table E.4 in the Appendices). This proportion may not be representative of the larger population because several institutions reported using university email addresses to contact potential participants. Those who are not studying are less likely to maintain a university email address, so they may be under-represented in the sample.

To summarize, the study profile can be characterized as mostly Australian domestic students who were undertaking bachelor degrees at Australian research universities between 2005 and 2011. International and part-time students may be under-represented in the sample. The respondents perceived themselves to be high academic achievers who were most likely to have completed degrees in Management and Commerce, Society and Culture or Creative Arts. Almost 23% completed a double major or a double degree. Tuition data confirmed that students from a high SES group may be over-represented in

the sample. Almost half of the respondents had commenced or were planning to undertake graduate study.

Profile of the Study Abroad Experience

Central to this study is the international study experience and the parameters surrounding this. In this section, I will provide an overview of the descriptive statistics of respondents in this area, and will also identify some patterns and connections within the data.

Requirement to Study Abroad & Financing

First, as study abroad is a degree requirement for some bachelor degrees, respondents were asked if this condition applied to them. As reported in Table 4.20, for the majority of respondents, study abroad was not a degree requirement.

Table 4.20
Number of respondents with an international study component as a requirement of their degree

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes – requirement	14	8.1
No	159	91.9
Total	173	100%

Study abroad can be an expensive undertaking, and so respondents were asked to give an indication of the methods of financing used in order to go abroad. As shown in Table 4.21, most respondents used personal funds or savings. More than half were recipients of funding from their institution, and almost 16% received Australian government funding. Thirty-four percent financed some of their expenses by taking on debt in the form of OS-HELP, a government higher education loan, or a bank loan. In the

Other category, respondents listed the Australian Government youth allowance, JASSO (Japanese Government) scholarships, receiving institution scholarships and home institution loans.

Against national statistics, more respondents in this sample received an Australian Government scholarship (15.9% compared to 6%) or took an OS HELP loan (27.4% compared with 21%). Slightly less received institutional funding (56.6% against 61%) (Olsen, 2011).

Table 4.21
Methods used to finance international study by respondents (more than one option permitted)

Method of finance	Frequency	Percent (N=226)
Personal funds/savings	180	79.6
Institutional grant or scholarship	128	56.6
Family support	92	40.7
OS Help	62	27.4
Australian Government Scholarship	36	15.9
Bank loan	15	6.6
Foundation grant or scholarship	14	6.2
Other	25	11.1

About the Study Abroad Experiences

Respondents were able to provide information on up to three study abroad experiences. Fifty-four (23.9%) respondents studied abroad more than once. The proportion of respondents with one, two and three study abroad experiences is shown in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22

Number of times respondents studied abroad (maximum 3 reported)

Number of times abroad	Frequency	Percent
Only once	172	76.1
Twice	41	18.1
Three times	13	5.8

Primary Study Abroad Experience

For the purpose of analysis, countries were coded into six world regions, with UK and Ireland coded separately from Europe, as shown in Table 4.23. This recognizes Australia's traditional connections to the UK and allowed for a clearer analysis of student mobility to Continental Europe, which often includes a language component. Put together, 48% of students studied in UK, Ireland and Continental Europe, consistent with national data that lists Europe as the number one study destination for Australian students (Olsen, 2010, 2012). Nationally, 32% of students went to Asia in 2009 (Olsen, 2010), which means that Asia may be under-represented in this sample.

Table 4.23

Region of study abroad (primary experience)

Region	Frequency	Percent
Asia	44	19.6
Continental Europe	67	29.8
North America	68	30.2
UK & Ireland	41	18.2
South America	4	1.8
Eastern Europe	1	0.4
Total	225	100%

Overall, 27 countries were represented in the sample and the top five study destinations were UK (*n*=44), USA (*n*=40), Canada (*n*=20), Japan (*n*=18), and China (*n*=13). No respondents studied abroad in Africa or the Middle East. The full list of destination countries is shown in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Country of study abroad (primary experience)

Country	Frequency	Percent
Argentina	1	0.4
Austria	6	2.7
Canada	20	8.9
Chile	1	0.4
China	13	5.8
Denmark	9	4.0
Ecuador	2	0.9
France	9	4.0
Germany	9	4.0
Hong Kong	2	0.9
India	1	0.4
Italy	10	4.4
Japan	18	8.0
Korea, South	1	0.4
Malaysia	3	1.3
Malta	1	0.4
Mexico	5	2.2
The Netherlands	4	1.8
Norway	2	0.9
The Philippines	2	0.9
Singapore	4	1.8
Slovenia	1	0.4
Spain	5	2.2
Sweden	11	4.9
Switzerland	1	0.4
UK	40	17.9
USA	44	19.7
Total	225	100%

Duration, Study Mode and Language

As shown in Table 4.25, the majority of respondents, 92.9% (*n*=209), studied overseas for more than four months. Short-term programs for Australian students were a relatively new phenomenon and so this may explain the dominance of semester and yearlong study abroad programs in this sample. However, it is likely that they were under-represented with 2009 national data indicating that 29.5% of study abroad experiences at all levels (undergraduate and graduate) were short-term (Olsen, 2010).

Table 4.25

Duration of study abroad (primary experience)

Duration	Frequency	Percent
One month or less	3	1.3
2-3 months	13	5.8
4-6 months	135	60.0
7-12 months	68	30.2
More than 12 months	6	2.7
Total	225	100%

The main activity abroad also reflected the tradition of semester and year exchange programs at Australian universities, where students enroll directly in a foreign partner university for one or two semesters. Only 8% (*n*=18) of participants did not undertake a traditional exchange program. The breakdown is provided in Table 4.26. Again, national data indicate that non-traditional programs were significantly under-represented in the sample. Olsen (2010) reported that in 2009, around 67% of international study experiences were non-traditional programs such as short-term programs, placements or practical training, and research. This is likely to be a sampling issue as centralized study abroad

offices were less likely to collect participant data on programs managed by academic departments.

Table 4.26

Main activity in study abroad program (primary experience)

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Academic courses taught at an overseas institution	207	91.6
Study tour facilitated or led by home institution	7	3.1
Internship, practicum, clinical placement	7	3.1
Double/joint degree	3	1.3
Other	2	0.9
Total	226	100%

Almost three quarters of participants used English as the main language or language of instruction during their study abroad program (though they may have been studying in a country where English is not the dominant language). Participants (*n*=61) studied in 11 languages other than English (see Table 4.27).

Table 4.27

Main language of the study abroad activity (primary experience)

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	164	72.9
Japanese	14	6.2
Mandarin	11	4.9
Spanish	11	4.9
French	9	4.0
Germany	5	2.3
Italian	5	2.3
Swedish	2	0.9
Dutch	1	0.4
Hindi	1	0.4
Korean	1	0.4
Norwegian	1	0.4
Total	225	100%

Subsequent Experiences Abroad

As mentioned previously, almost 24% (*n*=54) of respondents studied abroad more than once. The trends for the second experience were different from the first. For the second time abroad, participants were more likely to undertake study modes different from the traditional exchange model. They were also more likely to go to Asia, were more likely to study for a short duration, and were more likely to study in a language other than English. Tables 4.28, 4.29, 4.30 and 4.31 provide the breakdown of region, duration, study mode and language for the second study abroad experience.

Table 4.28

Region of study (experience 2)

Region	Frequency	Percent
Asia	20	37.0
Continental Europe	12	22.2
North America	7	13.0
UK & Ireland	11	20.4
South America	2	3.7
Eastern Europe	2	3.7
Total	54	100%

Table 4.29

Mode of study (experience 2)

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Academic courses taught at an overseas institution	30	55.6
Study tour facilitated or led by home institution	11	20.4
Internship, practicum, clinical placement	6	11
Volunteering/community service	3	5.6
Research	2	3.7
Other	2	3.7
Total	54	100%

Table 4.30

Duration of study (experience 2)

Duration	Frequency	Percent
One month or less	16	32.0
2-3 months	6	12.0
4-6 months	17	34.0
7-12 months	8	16.0
More than 12 months	3	6.0
Total	50	100%

Table 4.31

Language of study (experience 2)

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	30	63.8
Spanish	4	8.5
German	3	6.4
Japanese	3	6.4
French	2	4.3
Korean	2	4.3
Italian	1	2.1
Mandarin	1	2.1
Thai	1	2.1
Total	47	100%

For experience three (*n*=13), respondents were much more likely to be undertaking international study experiences different from the first experience (data tables are presented in Appendix D). They were most likely to be studying in Asia (61.5%), for a short time (58.3%), undertaking an internship, study tour, or volunteering (66.7%). They were likely to be using English as their main language.

Trends and Connections

While the tables of descriptive data are informative, they do not tell the full story of this sample. In this section I will draw together some trends across the variables and connect variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the international experiences of this group.

Firstly, there were some notable trends around study in Asia. The reported study experiences in Asia were more likely to be short-term (1-3 months) than study in any other region (see Figure 4.1). Twenty-three percent of experiences in Asia (for the primary study experience) were short-term, compared to 5% in Continental Europe, the next highest region for short-term study. The trend continued for experience two and three. As shown in Table 4.32, Asia was also much more likely to be chosen as a destination for the second or third experience abroad.

Table 4.32

Region of experience 1 and duration (number of participants)

		Duration experience 1			Total
		Short	Medium	Long	
Region of experience 1	Asia	10	17	17	44
	Cont. Europe	4	36	27	67
	North America	2	46	20	68
	South America	0	3	1	4
	UK & Ireland	0	32	9	41
	Eastern Europe	0	1	0	1
Total		16	135	74	225

Table 4.33

Percentage of participants by region of study for experiences 1, 2 & 3

Region	Primary experience (%)	Experience 2 (%)	Experience 3 (%)
Asia	19.6	37.0	61.5
Continental Europe	29.8	22.2	15.4
North America	30.2	13.0	15.4
UK & Ireland	18.2	20.4	7.7
South America	1.8	3.7	0
Eastern Europe	0.4	3.7	0
	n=223	*n*=54	*n*=13

Slightly more students who chose to study in Asia for the first experience studied abroad again compared to those who chose to study in other regions for the first experience (see Figure 4.2). Thirty-six percent of those who studied in Asia in their primary experience studied abroad multiple times compared with 29% for Continental Europe. Whether this relates to the short-term nature of the average Asia experience, Asia as a destination or other factors is unknown.

Table 4.34

Region of primary experience and number of study abroad experiences (number of participants)

		Number of times studied abroad			Total
		Once	twice	three times	
Region of experience 1	Asia	28	12	4	44
	Cont. Europe	47	13	7	67
	North America	60	8	0	68
	South America	2	1	0	3
	UK & Ireland	34	5	2	41
Total		171	39	13	223

International study experiences undertaken the second or third time were more likely to be in modes other than traditional academic classes at a foreign university, that is, study tours, internships, practicums, volunteering, community service or research (data are presented in Tables F.1, F.2 and F.3 in the Appendices). As such, experiences in Asia were also more likely to be undertaken in a non-traditional mode. Even for the first experience, almost 23% of Asia participants, compared with 7.5% of Continental Europe participants studied in a non-traditional mode (data are presented in Table F.1 in the Appendices). By experience three, most students were undertaking non-traditional study in Asia. Accordingly, study experiences in Asian countries may have been substantially different from experiences in other regions/countries, beyond national and cultural differences.

Second, across all regions, the second and third experiences were more likely to be short-term, compared with the primary experience (data is presented in Tables F.4 and F.5 in the Appendices). The use of a language other than English for the activity abroad was associated with the region/country of study (this will be discussed further in the analysis section). The second experience was slightly more likely to be in a language other than English. Following the connection to destination, English-speaking destinations (North America, UK& Ireland) dropped in popularity after the first experience. Across all three experiences, 30% of respondents (n=68) studied in a language other than English (data are presented in Table E.9 the Appendices).

Third, institutional factors may also have been acting upon study patterns. More than 50% of the sample group at one institution studied abroad more than once. At the other end of the spectrum, the entire sample for one institution only studied abroad once.

There are also notable patterns in study duration based on the destination country. Study in China (for the primary experience) was more likely to be short-term, while study in Canada, UK or USA was likely to be medium-term (4-6 months). Long-term study destinations included Japan, Spain and France. Italy was the only study destination that was dispersed almost evenly across the short, medium and long-term study categories (see Table F.6 in the Appendices for the country/duration breakdown).

Finally, 16 of 54 (30%) respondents who studied abroad more than once returned to the same destination for the second experience. For the third experience, 6 of 13 (46%) respondents had previously studied in that destination. Only one respondent chose the same destination for three experiences. The UK (*n*=5) attracted the most repeat participants, followed by Japan (*n*=3), USA (*n*=2) and China (*n*=2). These patterns, illustrated in Figure 4.3, will be expanded in the next section.

Table 4.35

Patterns across regions for first and second experiences (number of participants)

		Region of experience 2					
		Asia	Cont. Europe	North America	South America	UK & Ireland	Eastern Europe
Region of experience 1	Asia	10	4	1	0	0	1
	Cont. Europe	6	6	3	1	3	1
	North America	3	1	2	0	2	0
	South America	1	0	0	1	0	0
	UK & Ireland	0	1	1	0	5	0
	Eastern Europe	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total		20	12	7	2	11	2

International Experiences Prior to Higher Education

Respondents were asked about previous experiences studying, living and working abroad. Thirty-one percent of respondents (*n*=69) reported an affirmative response to this question. Forty-one (21%) studied abroad before university and 23 (10%) worked abroad. While 41 also responded to living abroad, in many cases this appears to be the same experience as either the study or work experience so those categories are the focus of this analysis. In the free-text box, a few respondents reported more experiences than captured by the survey questions, demonstrating complex patterns of living, working and studying abroad in some cases. Experiences included multiple school trips, interning, volunteering, working as a camp counselor (USA), and as an au pair.

In connecting prior international experiences to study abroad during university, more patterns emerged. Nineteen of 41 (46%) respondents who studied abroad before higher education returned to their earlier study destination while at university. An additional three respondents were international students who studied in Australia before university, returned to Australia for their bachelor degree and subsequently studied abroad in another country. In connecting university study abroad to prior study abroad, Japan was the most popular return destination (*n*=4), followed by France (*n*=2), Germany (*n*=2) and USA (*n*=2).

Further Analysis of the Connections

To investigate the connections further and assist with answering the research questions in the next chapter, chi-square analysis was used to demonstrate the relationships between certain background variables. Firstly, study in a foreign language was significantly associated with region of study for all major regions (see Table 4.33),

meaning that the probability of choosing a certain region was not the same for a student who studied in a foreign language and those who did not.

Table 4.36

Chi square results: Region of study, study in a language other than English

Region	x^2	d.f.	p_value
Asia	25.36	1	.000
Central Europe	13.875	1	.000
North America	17.102	1	.000
UK & Ireland	11.139	1	.000

The association between Asian study in the first experience and short-term duration was significant ($x^2(1) = 15.369,\ p < .000$). A student studying in Asia was 6.63 times more likely to be studying short-term than studying medium-long term (OR = 6.63). There was a significant association between studying abroad multiple times and studying in a language other than English ($x^2(1) = 18.334,\ p < .000$). The odds of studying in another language were 3.90 times higher if the respondent studied abroad multiple times. Individuals who studied abroad before university tended to study abroad multiple times during undergraduate education ($x^2(1) = 21.318,\ p < .000$, OR =5.35).

There were important connections between SES and international study. A significant association was found between study abroad before university and high socioeconomic status ($x^2(1) = 4.298,\ p < .038$, OR =2.29). Students from a high SES high school were at least two times more likely to study abroad before university than those from medium-or-low- SES groups. While there also appeared to be a connection between studying abroad in a foreign language and SES (see Figure 4.4), the sample size in the low SES group who studied in a foreign language was too low for analysis. The same

applied to the number of times a respondent studied abroad (see Figure 4.5); while there appeared to be a trend, the data were insufficient to provide a meaningful statistical analysis.

Table 4.37

SES and study in a language other than English (number and percentage of respondents)

			Studied in a language other than English		Total
			Yes	No	
High school SES	Low	Count	3	19	22
		% within High school SES	13.6%	86.4%	100.0%
	Medium	Count	27	41	68
		% within High school SES	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%
	High	Count	29	68	97
		% within High school SES	29.9%	70.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	59	128	187
		% within High school SES	31.6%	68.4%	100.0%

Table 4.38

SES and studied abroad multiple times (number and percentage of respondents)

			Studied abroad more than once		Total
			Yes	No	
High school SES	Low	Count	2	20	22
		% within High school SES	9.1%	90.9%	100.0%
	Medium	Count	17	52	69
		% within High school SES	24.6%	75.4%	100.0%
	High	Count	27	70	97
		% within High school SES	27.8%	72.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	46	142	188
		% within High school SES	24.5%	75.5%	100.0%

There may also have been some interesting variation across SES groups for destination of study. As shown in Figure 4.6, medium and high SES students preferred

Continental Europe and North America, while low SES students preferred UK & Ireland, North America and Asia.

Table 4.39

SES and destination of study (primary experience) (number and percentage of respondents)

			Region of study experience 1				
			Asia	Cont. Europe	North America	South America	UK & Ireland
High school SES	Low	Count	5	4	6	0	7
		% within High school SES	22.7%	18.2%	27.3%	0.0%	31.8%
	Medium	Count	15	24	24	0	6
		% within High school SES	21.7%	34.8%	34.8%	0.0%	8.7%
	High	Count	17	29	26	2	22
		% within High school SES	17.5%	29.9%	26.8%	2.1%	22.7%
Total		Count	37	57	56	2	35
		% within High school SES	19.7%	30.3%	29.8%	1.1%	18.6%

In terms of employment, working for an organization with an international scope was not independent of one's SES. High SES participants were 1.92 times more likely to work for an international organization ($x^2(1) = 4.737,\ p < .030$,OR=1.92). There was also a significant association between studying abroad in a foreign language and working for an international organization ($x^2(1) = 3.838,\ p < .05$,OR = 1.77). Being required to undertake study abroad as part of the bachelor degree was also significantly associated with working for an organization with an international scope ($x^2(1) = 8.439,\ p < .004, OR = 5.83$). Therefore, there was a 5.83 times greater likelihood of a graduate working for an international organization if they chose a bachelor degree with a compulsory study abroad requirement.

As presented in previous sections, study abroad appeared to have a *sticky* effect (Parey & Waldinger, 2008); not only were those who studied abroad before university more likely to study abroad again, but they were likely to return to the same destination for study, or they were likely to work in their study abroad destination after graduation. Forty-seven percent of those who studied abroad before university returned to their host country for study abroad while at university. Additionally, 38% of those working abroad at the time of the survey were working in a country in which they studied abroad. In the sample, Japan and UK appeared to be the *stickiest* countries for Australian students.

Overall, the sample was a very well-travelled group of young people. Across the respondent group, 30.9% lived abroad before university, 23.9% studied abroad more than once and 16.8% worked abroad at the time of the survey. Of the 82 respondents who fell into one or more of these categories, 34 had multiple experiences with the same country, indicating that they were developing a strong relationship with that country. The next chapter will explore the research questions and connect these respondent profiles to the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the answers to the research questions posed in this study: *What are the benefits, as perceived by graduates, of a study abroad experience during a bachelor degree for their early career experiences?*

a) *What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?*
b) *What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context, and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?*

Firstly, to explore the early career benefits, as perceived and reported by the respondents, the analysis will be divided into three key components: 1) recruitment, 2) work experiences and job tasks, and 3) overall impact on work and life.

Recruitment

Two survey questions addressed the topic of recruitment. First, respondents were asked their criteria when seeking employment. Second, respondents were asked their perception of the recruitment criteria used by their employer when they were hired. Both questions interrogated areas connected to the international study experience, and in the case of the second question, asked directly about the relevance of study abroad.

For the criteria of the respondents, compared to other criteria including personal development, life balance and professional status, the internationally focused criteria such

as working abroad and using foreign language skills were ranked at the bottom of the list. Overall the group appeared to be concerned with self-development and fulfillment ahead of the type of organization or scope of the position. As shown in Table 5.1, just over 46% of respondents considered working for an international organization important or very important, but at the same time, it was not important to almost one third of the sample. In fact, 41.6% of the sample reported working for an organization with an international scope or their organization, while classified as local, regional or national, has some dealings beyond national borders, indicating that some respondents were unable to meet this criterion with their current position.

Working abroad and using foreign language skills were a very high priority for only a small segment of the sample. The low result for the foreign language criterion may relate to the low proportion of the sample that studied in a foreign language while abroad. However with more than half of the sample identifying as having foreign language skills, further use of these skills appeared not to form a major part of their early career goals.

Table 5.1

Q1. What criteria were important to you when seeking employment? (Percent)

Criteria	Unimportant/ Of little importance	Moderately important	Very important/ Important
Possibility of personal development	0.9	7.5	91.6
Accomplishing worthwhile professional activities	1.3	8.0	90.7
Enough spare time for other activities (life balance)	6.2	19.9	73.9
Applying knowledge and skills acquired while studying	6.2	20.8	73
Possibility to explore own ideas	7.1	23.0	69.9
Well recognized professional status	7.5	25.7	66.8
High employment security	16.4	28.0	55.6
High income	12.8	40.7	46.5
Working for an organization with an international scope	**32.9**	**20.9**	**46.2**
Working in a foreign country	**40.4**	**26.2**	**33.4**
Applying foreign language skills	**69.0**	**12.9**	**18.1**

According to the respondents, their personality was definitively the most important aspect in recruitment for their employer. As reported in Table 5.2, less than 1% of the group disagreed on this. Field of study, references and work experience were also perceived as important to more than half of the sample. Their study abroad experience was noted as important or very important by almost 44% of respondents. However, similar to the previous question, just over a quarter of the sample reported their study abroad experience as of little importance or unimportant to their employer. The specific country or region of their experience and foreign language skills were at the bottom of the list, with

less than one quarter of respondents indicating that their country or region of study was important to their employer when they were recruited.

Table 5.2

Q2. How important, according to you, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you? (Percent)

Aspects	Unimportant/ Of little importance	Moderately important	Very important/ Important
Your personality	0.9	8.5	90.6
Field of study	9.0	16.6	74.4
References or recommendations	14.7	24.0	61.3
Work experience acquired during course of study	16.5	26.8	56.7
Your experience/s abroad	**25.4**	**30.8**	**43.8**
Grades	27.1	29.8	43.1
Reputation of the Australian university you attended	37.3	33.8	28.9
Country/region of experience/s abroad	**49.1**	**26.3**	**24.6**
Foreign language proficiency	**73.7**	**12.0**	**14.3**

To summarize, for 43% of respondents, having an international experience was perceived as important to their future employer, however in only a small number of cases, this related to the country/region of the study abroad experience or the foreign languages spoken. Although 46% of respondents reported it was important or very important to work for an international organization, other criteria relating to their personal and professional development were more important when the respondents were looking for their first job. Foreign language usage and proficiency were considered of low importance for most respondents and their employers. So while the general study abroad experience was

considered at least moderately important for employers in around 74% of cases, specific country and language skills were perceived to be much less salient.

Work Experiences and Job Tasks

Turning now to what the respondents were actually doing in their professional roles and how this connected to international skills and experience, respondents were asked about seeking employment abroad or actually working abroad since graduation. Although a majority of the sample (63.7%) had considered working abroad, only around one quarter followed through to actually seeking a job abroad (see Table 5.3). Most of this group, almost 75%, had been successful in securing a job in another country, and all except one appeared to have accepted that job. A further 11.5% of the sample had traveled abroad for work since graduation. In total, around 29% of respondents had been engaged in work tasks across physical borders since completing their bachelor degree studies.

Table 5.3

Q3. Have you had a professional international mobility experience since graduation (multiple responses permitted)

Category	Frequency	Percent
I have considered working abroad	144	63.7
I have sought employment abroad	55	24.3
I have actually received an offer to work abroad	41	18.1
I have actually had regular employment abroad since graduation	40	17.7
I have actually been sent abroad by my employer on work assignments	26	11.5

In the previous section, I reported that although 46.2% of respondents rated it important to work for an organization with an international scope, only 41.6% of

respondents reported working for an international organization. In response to the next question, a higher proportion of the sample, 54 %, indicated that their organization had contact with other countries (refer to Table 5.4). In less than half of these cases, the respondents' organizations were in contact with, or doing business with, the country in which the respondent studied. Slightly more employing organizations worked with the destination region. Overall, the employing organizations of more than half of the respondents in the study had no contact with, or business with, the countries or regions in which these employees studied.

Table 5.4

Q4. To what extent does the organization, institution or company with which you are associated do business or have contact with other countries? (Percent)

Contact with other countries	Rarely/ Not at all	Occasionally	Frequently/ Very frequently
With other countries in general	27.0	19.0	54.0
With the host region of your study abroad	50.7	18.2	31.1
With the host country of your study abroad	52.2	21.9	25.9

The respondents were next asked about their perception of the importance of certain internationally related competencies for their current work. As reported in Table 5.5, it is clear that most respondents perceived that the skills to *Work with people from different cultural backgrounds* were professionally important. Only around 6% regarded this competency of low importance. More than half of respondents also rated as important or very important *Knowledge of differences in culture and society*. Similar to previous questions, perceptions of specific country knowledge and foreign language abilities were

rated lower, with only 21% of the sample rating *Communication in foreign languages* as important or very important.

Table 5.5

Q5. How important do you consider the following competencies for doing your current work? (Percent)

Competency	Unimportant/ Of little importance	Moderately important	Important/ Very important
Working with people from different cultural backgrounds	6.6	19.1	74.3
Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behavior in culture and society, lifestyle etc.	20.4	27.8	51.8
Knowledge of other countries (E.g. Economy, society, legal knowledge)	31.9	29.6	38.5
Communicating in foreign languages	64.2	14.6	21.2

A high standard deviation on the result for *Communicating in foreign languages* (SD=1.336, see Table E.14 in the Appendices) suggested wide variation across the sample. In the last chapter I reported that 30% of the sample studied in a language other than English for at least one experience. Splitting the responses into two groups by language of study, English and not English, yielded a different result. Figure 5.1 shows that those who studied in a language other than English perceived communicating in a foreign language to be more important than those who studied in English. Thirty percent (compared with 16.6%) of the non-English language group rated it as important or very important, 22% (compared with 9.6%) rated it as moderately important, and 42.6% (compared with 73.7%) rated it as unimportant/of little importance. Clearly, having studied in another language

while abroad was related to the perception of the importance of foreign language skills in the workplace.

Table 5.6

Results of Q5 competency communicating in foreign languages for respondents divided by language of study abroad program (Not English/English) (number of responses)

		Communicating in foreign languages					Total
		Unimportant	Of little importance	Moderately important	Important	Very important	
Studied in a language other than English	Yes	12	17	18	9	12	68
	No	67	48	15	14	12	156
Total		79	65	33	23	24	224

The final aspects of work experiences and job tasks explored were the tasks that were actually being performed by respondents as part of their daily responsibilities. As shown in Table 5.6, at this point in their careers, less than 20% of respondents were frequently using direct knowledge, of a general or a professional nature, of their host country in their work responsibilities. More than 60% of the sample used direct country knowledge rarely or not at all. Just over 15% used their language skills (reading, writing and speaking) at work. Finally, almost 18% of respondents had occasionally, frequently or very frequently travelled to the host country of their international study experience as part of their work tasks.

Table 5.7

Q6. To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following (Percent):

Work tasks	Not at all/ rarely	Occasionally	Frequently/ Very frequently
Using firsthand general knowledge of my host country culture/society	61.9	19.5	18.6
Using firsthand professional knowledge of my host country	63.1	18.5	18.4
Using the language of my host country in reading and writing (where language is not English)	78.4	5.8	15.7
Using the language of my host country orally (where language is not English)	78.2	5.9	15.9
Professional travel to my host country	82.4	4.3	13.3

Similar to the previous question, the *Using the language of my host country* results changed when the group was divided by the language of study while abroad. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show that more than 20% of the respondents who studied abroad in a foreign language were using that language frequently or very frequently, for reading and writing, and orally. At the other end of the spectrum, around two thirds of the language group reported that they used their foreign language skills rarely or not at all.

Table 5.8

Language (reading and writing) divided by language of study abroad program (Percent)

		Using the language of my host country in reading and writing (where language is not English)					Total
		Not At All	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently	
Studied in a language other than English	Yes	42.9%	25.4%	6.3%	7.9%	17.5%	100.0%
	No	70.6%	13.5%	4.8%	6.3%	4.8%	100.0%
Total		61.4%	17.5%	5.3%	6.9%	9.0%	100.0%

Table 5.9

Language (orally) divided by language of study abroad program (Percent)

		Using the language of my host country orally (where language is not English)					Total
		Not At All	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently	
Studied in a language other than English	Yes	41.9%	24.2%	11.3%	4.8%	17.7%	100.0%
	No	72.0%	12.8%	3.2%	7.2%	4.8%	100.0%
Total		62.0%	16.6%	5.9%	6.4%	9.1%	100.0%

To summarize benefits to work experiences and job tasks, the pattern that emerged in the recruitment section was reinforced. That is, although it was perceived as at least moderately important by 83% of the sample that they had the skills to work with people from different cultural backgrounds, and they were using general knowledge of other countries in their work, specific skills and knowledge relating to their country of study were being utilized much less frequently. And while more than half of the sample that studied abroad in a language other than English perceived communicating in foreign languages as important, few had frequent use of their language skills in the workplace.

The work of 54% of the sample spanned national borders on a daily basis, and most of those who actively looked for work abroad were successful in attaining a position. Additionally, the multicultural environment of the Australian workplace possibly explains the importance placed by most of the respondents on the competencies needed to work with people from different cultural backgrounds. It can be concluded that their study abroad experience has been beneficial to the graduates for these work aspects, however, in terms of specific country and language skills and knowledge, the benefits are much more muted.

Overall Impact on Work and Life

The final section of the survey focused more directly on the perception of benefit held by the young graduates. Firstly the impact on employment was rated. Many respondents reported both a short-term and a long-term benefit. Two thirds indicated that their study abroad experience had a positive or very positive impact on *Obtaining their first job*. As reported in Table 5.7, only a small number reported a negative impact on this category. A majority of respondents, 63.3%, also believed that that their study abroad experience had positively or very positively impacted their *Long-term career prospects*.

Reinforcing data from the previous section, only 35% of respondents perceived a positive impact on *Type of work tasks*. Conversely, only 7% believe that their study abroad experience had a negative impact on work tasks. Almost 60% indicated a moderate impact. When asked about *Income level,* 80% of the sample reported moderate, neutral or negative impact. On the positive side, just over 20% of respondents believed that studying abroad had a positive impact on their income level. Most respondents sat in the middle on this issue, suggesting either a small-perceived benefit or a neutral impression.

Table 5.10

Q7. What impact do you feel that your education abroad experience has had with regard to your employment? (Percent)

Category	Very negative impact/ Somewhat negative impact	Moderate impact	Positive impact/ Very positive impact
Obtaining your first job	4.4	29.6	66.0
Long-term career prospects	5.3	31.4	63.3
Type of work tasks	7.1	58.0	34.9
Income level	8.8	69.9	21.3

Turning now to a more general view of the benefits of international study, respondents were asked their opinion on the impact on 11 areas of personal development, knowledge, skills and career value. The results are presented in Table 5.8. Overall, the responses were positive indicating that most participants believed their study abroad experience was worthwhile across most areas. Almost all respondents (98.7%) rated the areas of *Maturity and personal development* and *Interpersonal and communication skills* to be worthwhile or very worthwhile.

Career-related aspects rate slightly lower and around 70% rated the impact on such aspects as *Career prospects*, *Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge* and *Increasing motivation and passion for your career direction* as worthwhile or very worthwhile. Around three quarters of the sample indicated that in terms of relevance to their job, study abroad was at least moderately worthwhile.

Consistent with results presented above, many participants indicated that they did not find studying abroad worthwhile for their foreign language skills. However, 125 respondents (55.8%) rated it as moderately worthwhile, worthwhile or very worthwhile, a

much greater number than those who reported to have studied in a foreign language while abroad (*n* =68). So, while foreign language proficiency was rated lowest against the other categories, it could be viewed as a positive result considering the context of the background characteristics of the respondents and their international study experiences.

Table 5.11

Q8. From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile with regard to the following (Percent):

Category	Not worthwhile/ Somewhat worthwhile	Moderately worthwhile	Worthwhile / Very worthwhile
Maturity and personal development	1.3	4.5	94.2
Interpersonal & communication skills	1.3	12.0	86.7
New perspectives of your home country	4.4	15.0	80.6
Knowledge and understanding of my host country	6.2	13.4	80.4
Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge	10.2	15.0	74.8
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	10.2	21.2	68.6
Teamwork/ability to work with others	9.7	22.6	67.7
Career prospects	14.2	18.1	67.7
Problem solving & analytical skills	12.0	24.4	63.6
Relevance to your job/occupation	24.0	24.4	51.6
Foreign language proficiency	44.2	16.5	39.3

The final survey question asked respondents to rank the top three areas of benefit of their study abroad experience. Consistent with the previous responses, almost 78% (*n*

=174) rated *Maturity and personal development* as a top-three benefit. *Interpersonal and communications skills* came in a distant second, but it consistently appeared as a top-three preference (reported in Table 5.10). *Increasing motivation and passion for your career direction*, the only career-related aspect in the top 3, was first-ranked by a small group of respondents. As presented in Table 5.9, *New perspectives on home country* was the final benefit ranked in the top 3. *Foreign language proficiency*, although not ranked in the top 3, ranked 6 overall for the number of top-three votes (see Table 5.10). Twenty-two respondents ranked *Foreign language proficiency* as their most important benefit.

Table 5.12

Q9. Top three perceived benefits of study abroad as ranked by respondents

Rank 1	*n*	Rank 2	*n*	Rank 3	*n*
Maturity & personal development	91	Interpersonal & communication skills	44	Maturity & personal development	41
Interpersonal & communication skills	36	Maturity & personal development	42	Interpersonal & communication skills	34
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	30	New perspectives on home country	25	New perspectives on home country	34

Table 5.13

Q9. Perceived benefits of study abroad ranked by number of times selected by respondents

Rank	Benefit	Top-three votes
1	Maturity and personal development	174
2	Interpersonal & communication skills	114
3	Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	76
4	New perspectives of your home country	63
5	Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge	49
6	Foreign language proficiency	45
7	Knowledge and understanding of my host country	42
=8	Problem solving & analytical skills	33
=8	Career prospects	33
10	Teamwork/ability to work with others	29
11	Relevance to your job/occupation	20

In this section we have seen that the sample group perceived their study abroad experience to have been worthwhile, more strongly for general skills and development factors, but also for their professional experience. Reinforcing the results of the earlier questions, respondents perceived moderate to low benefits in terms of direct work tasks. Additionally, only a small group reported an impact on their income level. However, they perceived a benefit when they competed for their first job, and for their long-term career. They also believed that their international experience increased their motivation and passion for their career direction, a more indirect, but still a very important career-related benefit. The next section will summarize the results presented in this chapter so far.

Summary of the Research Question

In response to the questions, *What are the benefits, as perceived by graduates, of a study abroad experience during a bachelor degree for their early career experiences?*, this study has found that the participants held a positive view of the benefits of their study abroad experience on their lives. With the exception of foreign language proficiency, which was relevant for a small proportion of the group, only a low number of respondents rated the study abroad experience as somewhat worthwhile or not worthwhile at all on any criteria. However, from the final section of the survey, it was clear that the general skills, knowledge and personal development benefits were more strongly regarded than the early career benefits, from the perspective of this group.

Although the statistics in the previous chapter tell us that 41.6% of respondents worked for an international organization, 54% reported that their daily tasks frequently included working with other countries. Most respondents perceived their international study experience to have benefited them in terms of their interpersonal and communication skills, their teamwork and ability to work with others, and their problem solving and analytical skills, all areas that supported the ability to work with diverse others across a range of different environments. Even in cases where respondents were working in more local roles, it was likely that they were able to utilize these skills within the multicultural Australian workplace.

The results indicated that at this point in their careers, most of the sample were not frequently drawing on the skills and knowledge specific to their study abroad destination country. But while very few were using these skills at work, they valued the benefit provided by their time abroad to learn about their host country and to improve their

language skills, where this was applicable. While foreign language skills were rated as a low benefit overall, these skills appeared to be highly valued by those who had the opportunity to live in a foreign language environment.

Many respondents perceived that study abroad was beneficial to them in securing their first job. The fact that this result doesn't quite match with the perception of the employer criteria when they were hired indicated that the perceived benefit may be less direct, perhaps relating to their gains in maturity and personal development and their improved interpersonal and communication skills. A similar gap existed in the area of future career prospects. Although many respondents were not actually using their international competencies or engaged in international work, they had a positive perception of the benefits that their international study experience would bring in the long-term. The next section will explore these results further as they relate to the structure of their study abroad programs, their background characteristics and their employment profiles.

Sub-question One: Study Abroad Program Characteristics

This section will answer the first sub-question of the study, *What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduate?*

To answer this question, I focused on the final section of the survey reported above, specifically the data provided in the summative survey Question 8, as it provided the most specific answers to the research question. The first step of the analysis was to reduce the eleven items listed in the question into more manageable thematic categories. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted using oblique rotation (oblimin) because of

correlation between the variables. An analysis of the missing data (*n*=219) indicated that missing data would not be a problem in the analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .864, and eight KMO values for individual items were > .5, which is the normal acceptable limit (Field, 2009). Three items ranged between .45 and .5 (*Problem solving and analytical skills*, *Teamwork/ability to work with others*, *Career prospects*) but the decision was made to retain them in the analysis because of the overall high value of the KMO and the exploratory nature of the study. Bartlett's test of sphericity $x^2\ (55) = 973.635, p < .000$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA.

An initial component analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Three components resulted, all with eigenvalues over the criterion of 0.9 and in combination explained 65.25% of the variance. Visual inspection of the scree plot showed that three components were appropriate and provided for clear interpretation of the model. Table 5.11 shows the factor loadings after rotation. All items had a value >.5 and were retained.

The items loaded on the components suggested that the first component, which represented personal and developmental aspects, was labeled *Employability skills, because it aligned with the* Australian Government's Employability Skills Framework (Department of Education Science and Training, 2002). Four of the items making up component one (communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills and maturity and personal development, which is conceptually similar to self-management skills) were listed as part of the eight components defined in the Employability Skills Framework (DEST, 2002). The remaining component item, *New perspectives on home country*, can be aligned with

citizenship development, a goal that is often listed in university graduate attribute statements (Rigby et al., 2009) (a detailed theoretical and conceptual analysis of employability skills will be presented in the next chapter).

Component two was labeled *Career-related aspects*, and included career relevance, knowledge and motivation, and component three, which included host country knowledge and language, was labeled *Host country aspects.* The structure matrix illustrating the relationships between the factors is provided in Table G.1 in the Appendices.

Table 5.14

Principle Component Analysis pattern matrix Question 8

Item	Related factor loading		
	Employability skills	Career-related aspects	Host country aspects
New perspectives on your home country	**.803**		
Maturity & personal development	**.831**		
Problem solving & analytical skills	**.724**		
Teamwork/ability to work with others	**.687**		
Interpersonal & communication skills	**.628**		
Relevance to your job/occupation		**.859**	
Career prospects		**.813**	
Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge		**.664**	
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction		**.786**	
Knowledge & understanding of host country			**.550**
Foreign language proficiency			**.929**
Eigenvalues	4.871	1.327	.980
Percentage of variance	44.279%	12.064%	8.910%

The second step in the analysis was to test for mean differences on these three factors, or benefits, against destination of study, duration, mode of study and language.

Destination of Study

ANOVA on destination region was the first analysis undertaken. The two small regions (Latin America and Eastern Europe) were removed from the analysis to comply with the requirement of a minimum sample size of five for ANOVA. All remaining regions produced significant mean differences on the benefit variable *Host country aspects* ($F\ (3, 209) = 23.237, p = .000$), with Asia being high, North America and Continental Europe in the middle and UK/Ireland low. Respondents who studied in Asia reported a significantly higher level of benefits in terms of host country aspects, while respondents who studied in UK/Ireland reported a significantly lower level of benefits. Respondents who studied in North America and Continental Europe, while reporting a different level of benefit for host country aspects, were placed in the middle of the sample. The results of the ANOVA post-hoc test are shown in Figure 5.4.

Table 5.15

Post-hoc test comparison of mean Host country aspects by Destination region

Tukey HSD

(I) Region of study experience 1	(J) Region of study experience 1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Asia	Cont. Europe	.4931*	.1704	.022	.0518	.9344
	North America	.9326*	.1725	.000	.4859	1.3794
	UK & Ireland	1.5015*	.1916	.000	1.0054	1.9976
Cont. Europe	Asia	-.4931*	.1704	.022	-.9344	-.0518
	North America	.4395*	.1530	.023	.0431	.8358
	UK & Ireland	1.0084*	.1742	.000	.5571	1.4597
North America	Asia	-.9326*	.1725	.000	-1.3794	-.4859
	Cont. Europe	-.4395*	.1530	.023	-.8358	-.0431
	UK & Ireland	.5689*	.1763	.008	.1123	1.0255
UK & Ireland	Asia	-1.5015*	.1916	.000	-1.9976	-1.0054
	Cont. Europe	-1.0084*	.1742	.000	-1.4597	-.5571
	North America	-.5689*	.1763	.008	-1.0255	-.1123

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Due to the policy significances of region of study, particularly in the current Australian policy environment, I also tested each region against the entire sample using independent t-tests. Variables were recoded into dichotomous variables representing whether a respondent studied in a particular region or not, across all three experiences (e.g., 1=Asia, 0=otherwise). Independent t-tests were comparing whether each benefit outcome differed between graduates who studied in a respective region versus graduates who studied in all other regions.

Asia and UK/Ireland produced significant mean differences on some of the benefit variables (see Table 5.12, full results are shown in Table G.2 in the Appendices). Respondents who studied in Asia reported a significantly higher level of benefit on

Career-related aspects ($t(217) = 2.653, p = .009$) and *Host country aspects* ($t(217) = 4.991, p = .000$) (consistent with the result of the ANOVA). On the other hand, respondents who studied in the UK reported a significantly lower level of benefit on both *Employability skills* ($t(215) = -2.178, p = .030$) and *Host country aspects* ($t(80.157) = -6.361, p = .000$). The conclusion is that programs in this region are perceived to provide less overall benefits than programs in other destinations. The other two regions tested, North America and Continental Europe, did not produce significantly different mean scores at $p < .05$ in either of these areas.

Table 5.16

Independent sample t-test mean scores for benefit variables and Asia and UK/Ireland

Benefit	Asia	Not Asia	UK/Ireland	Not UK/Ireland
Employability skills	-	-	-.291 (SD=1.016)	.072 (SD=.987)
Career-related aspects	.278 (SD=.851)	-.093 (SD=1.030)	-	-
Host country aspects	.553 (SD=.853)	-.185 (SD=.979)	-.715 (SD=.809)	.184 (SD=.967)

Duration

The duration variable tested in this category was recoded to short (3 months or less), medium (4-6 months) and long (7 months or more) values. One-way ANOVA showed a significant mean difference in one area, *Host country aspects*, between medium study abroad programs and long duration programs ($F\ (2, 215) = 10.403, p = .000$). Although the mean for short experiences was higher than for medium programs, indicating that participants of short duration programs also indicated a higher degree of benefit for *Host country aspects*, the result was not significant. The small sample size (*n* =16) may

have affected the significance of the result (results of the post hoc test are shown in Figure 5.5). From this we can conclude that respondents who participated in study abroad programs of a duration of seven months or more perceived a significantly greater benefit in terms of *Host country aspects* than participants of programs of shorter duration.

Table 5.17

Post-hoc test comparison of mean Host country aspects by Duration

Tukey HSD

(I) Duration exp 1	(J) Duration exp 1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Short	Medium	.5382	.2547	.090	-.0629	1.1394
	Long	-.0804	.2657	.951	-.7075	.5467
Medium	Short	-.5382	.2547	.090	-1.1394	.0629
	Long	-.6187*	.1412	.000	-.9520	-.2853
Long	Short	.0804	.2657	.951	-.5467	.7075
	Medium	.6187*	.1412	.000	.2853	.9520

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Mode of Study

Independent t-tests confirmed that at the . 05 level, there were no significant mean differences based on whether the respondents participated in traditional academic classes at a local institution or other activities such as a study tour, internship, practicum or research placement. As the sample was heavily dominated by the traditional mode of study, this result may relate to sample sizes (*n* =18 for Other study modes).

Language of Study

Independent t-tests were used to test for mean differences based on the language of instruction while abroad (Not English, English, as shown in Table 5.12). Significant

differences were found in two areas, *Career-related aspects* ($t(145.409) = 2.150, p = .033$) and *Host country aspects* ($t(156.592) = 8.790, p = .000$). Studying abroad in a language other than English resulted in a perception of a higher level of benefit towards the careers of respondents. It also led to a perceived benefit in acquiring host country skills and knowledge compared to those who studied in English. Given that foreign language proficiency made up half of the host country factor, this result was not unexpected.

Table 5.18

Independent sample t-test mean scores for Career-related aspects and Host country aspects and Language of instruction while abroad

	Language	
	Foreign language	English
Career-related aspects	.207 (SD=.896)	-.091 (SD=1.04)
Host country aspects	.725 (SD=.748)	-.322 (SD=.935)

Multiple times abroad

The final area tested in this section was whether or not respondents had participated in more than one study abroad program. Firstly, studying abroad multiple times made a positive contribution to the perception of *Career-related aspects* ($t(217) = 2.993, p = .003$). This may have been connected to other program characteristics associated with the second and third study abroad experiences such as the greater likelihood that the program was taught in a foreign language, and that the program was located in Asia. It may also have been due to a selection bias, with students who believed study abroad would help them in their careers choosing to participate in additional study abroad programs. In any case, studying abroad more than once was perceived by participants to provide additional

career-related benefits.

Host country aspects were also perceived at a higher level of benefit by those who studied abroad more than once ($t(217) = 2.593, p = .010$). This may be related to patterns of return of those who participated in multiple international study programs and increasing knowledge and confidence levels which possibly result from greater familiarity with a country. Where foreign language was concerned, increased exposure to the target language in-country was likely to result in a higher level of proficiency. Table 5.14 summarizes the significant results of t-tests in this area.

Table 5.19
Independent sample t-test mean scores for Career-related aspects, Host country aspects and Multiple study abroad programs

	Multiple study abroad	
	Multiple	Not multiple
Career-related aspects	.356 SD=.941	-.111 SD=.994
Host country	.310 SD=.912	-.097 SD=1.010

Summary of Sub-question 1

To review the results presented in this section, in answering the first sub-question, *What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduate?,* differences in the study abroad program structure affected the perception of the benefits reported by the respondents during their early career stage. Firstly, Asia was perceived to

provide stronger benefits in the career and host country domains than other world regions. On the other hand, participants of programs in the UK and Ireland perceived lower benefits connected to their study abroad experience, in both the employability skills area and in host country benefits. Long-term study abroad, programs of more than seven months, were perceived to provide greater benefits to respondents in the area of host country skills and knowledge. Studying in a language other than English while abroad was perceived to be very beneficial to career aspects and host country skills and knowledge. Finally, studying abroad more than once was reported to provide significantly higher benefit to participants, specifically in the areas of career-related benefits and host country aspects. This result may have been associated with program characteristics related to the second and third study abroad experiences, such as foreign language and Asia as a study destination indicating that a variety of international study experiences were perceived to provide a compounding benefit to the early career experience across multiple dimensions. These associations were not causal, however, and may be related to factors considered in the next section, or outside of the scope of this study. In the next section, I will present the results of the second sub-question and consider how the perceived benefits may be connected to background characteristic, study characteristics and current employment context.

Sub-question Two: Background Characteristics, Study Characteristics and Context of Current Employment

This section will answer the second sub-question of the study, *What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context, and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?* Consistent with the

previous research question, the three factors obtained through PCA of Question 8 were used again in this section.

Background Characteristics

The survey captured a broad range of background characteristics in order to understand factors that may be influential in the education, international exposure and the early career period. Variables tested in this section are summarized in Table 5.15. Test results for all independent t-tests are provided in the Appendix G.

Table 5.20

Background characteristic variables tested for significant differences from the mean in each category

Variable	Statistical test	Result*
Gender	Independent t-test	Significant
Age	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Speaks a language other than English	Independent t-test	Significant
Holding more than one citizenship	Independent t-test	Not significant
Lived abroad before higher education	Independent t-test	Significant
First-generation university graduate	Independent t-test	Not significant
High school SES	One-way ANOVA	Not significant

*Indicates significance at the p <.05 level

Independent t-tests for gender found significant difference between the responses for females and males on the factor *Employability skills* ($t(215) = 2.293, p = .023$). In this area, the mean for females (*M*=.103 *SD*=.942) was significantly higher than males (*M*=-.227 *SD*=1.090) indicating that females perceived a greater benefit from studying

abroad in such areas as maturity and personal development, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, teamwork skills and knowledge of home country.

Speaking a language other than English was significant for the item *Host country aspects* on the independent t-test ($t(213.473) = 5.929, p = .000$). As shown in Table 5.16, respondents who identified as speaking more than one language reported greater perceived benefits from studying abroad to their skills and knowledge of the host country than respondents who did not speak a second language. This reflects the result reported in the previous section for undertaking a study abroad program in a foreign language and is likely to be highly correlated. The survey did not establish if respondents were able to speak a second language before university so it is highly likely that study abroad assisted the further development of their existing language skills, or in learning an additional language, adding to the perception of benefit to host country aspects.

Table 5.21
Independent sample t-test mean scores for Host country aspects and Speaks a language other than English

	Speaks a language other than English	
	Yes	No
Host country aspects	.357	-.396
	SD=.962	SD=.904

An independent t-test also found significance for *Living abroad before higher education* and *Host country aspects* ($t(214) = 3.395, p = .001$) (see Table 5.17). Respondents who had previous experience living, studying or working abroad perceived that their study abroad experience benefited the development of their host country skills and knowledge more than those who had not lived abroad before higher education. Many

of the respondents in this category studied abroad while in high school, and as presented in the previous chapter, showed a tendency to study abroad again in the same host country. The high result in this area may be the result of increased familiarity with the same home country and host language.

Table 5.22

Independent sample t-test mean scores for Host country aspects and Lived abroad before higher education

	Lived abroad before higher education	
	Yes	No
Host country aspects	.336	-.153
	SD=.991	SD=.979

Study Characteristics

For this area, all study variables were tested against the benefits variables from Question 8 for significant mean differences using one-way ANOVA or independent t-tests. The tests undertaken are summarized in Table 5.18.

Table 5.23

Study characteristic variables tested for significant difference from the mean in each category

Variable	Statistical test	Result*
Institution	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Institution	Independent t-test	Significant
Academic major	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Academic achievement	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Postgraduate study	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Year of graduation	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Compulsory study abroad	Independent t-test	Significant

*Indicates significance at the p <.05 level

As stated in Table 5.18, the result of the institutional ANOVA was not significant. In order to retest for possible institutional differences and to compensate for an unbalanced representation of respondents from each institution, I created a dichotomous variable for each institution with a sample size greater than 10, the threshold for independent t-tests (Agresti & Finlay, 2004), and used this variable in an independent t-test to look for institutional mean difference against the group mean. With the use of repeated independent t-tests, it is necessary to be mindful of the increased likelihood of Type I errors (Shavelson, 1996).

The t-test revealed some institutional variation, indicating that there were some differences in respondent perceptions of the benefits of study abroad based on institutional factors (see Table 5.19 for a summary of the significant results). This result may be meaningful for institutional policy, where a significant result has been identified. For example, the respondents of *Institution 6* indicated that they perceive there to be a strong career benefit from study abroad with a significantly higher mean than the rest of the sample ($t(217) = 2.008, p = .037$) on this item. This raises the question of whether Institution 6 has more career-oriented study abroad programs, more career-oriented degree programs, or more career-oriented students. The small sample size for this institution (n=13) indicates that this result should be confirmed with further research.

In the case of *Institution 10* (n =46), its respondents perceived lower benefits in the employability skills domain than the rest of the sample ($t(217) = -2.084, p = .038$). Again, this result may be associated with a variety of institutional and individual factors. The remaining significant institutional mean difference, *Institution 2* (n =24), was in the area of host country aspects, indicating that respondents from this institution report a

higher perceived benefit from study abroad in the development of their foreign language skills and host country knowledge ($t(217) = 2.012, p = .045$). A range of factors could have influenced this result including the nature of their study abroad programs, links to curriculum and the backgrounds of participants.

Table 5.24

Independent t-test results for institutional variable and benefit variables

Variable	Institution	Mean, SD
Career-related aspects	Institution 6	Inst.6 M=.536 SD=.807
		Group M=-.034 SD=1.003
Employability skills	Institution 10	Inst.10 M=-.217 SD=.990
		Group M=.090 SD=.993
Host country aspects	Institution 2	Inst.2 M=.320 SD=.952
		Group M=-.057 SD=.999

The final variable tested in study characteristics was *Compulsory study abroad*. An independent t-test was conducted with the benefit variables and significance was found in two areas, *Career-related aspects* ($t(217) = 2.993, p = .003$) and *Host country aspects* ($t(217) = 2.593, p = .010$). Respondents who were required to study abroad as part of their bachelor degree (M=.356 SD=.941) perceived a higher level of career benefit from their study abroad experience than those who were not required to study abroad (M=-.111 SD=994). At the same time, respondents who were required to study abroad (M=.310 SD=.912) perceived a higher level of benefit in terms of host country skills and knowledge than those who were not required to study abroad (M=-.097 SD=1.009).

It was likely that compulsory study abroad experiences were somewhat integrated into the academic program of the students, possibly involving a foreign language requirement. The perceived benefit, then, may also be related to structural factors such as

duration, destination and studying in a foreign language. It may also indicate that such respondents were more positively predisposed to an international study experience from the outset. In any case, it is an important result as it indicates that graduates of academic programs with a compulsory study abroad requirement perceived higher early career and host country benefits from their study abroad experience.

Context of Current Employment

The final area of analysis for this research question concerns the current employment context of the respondents. Once again, all variables in this section of the survey were tested for significant mean differences against the benefit variables. The variables and tests are summarized in Table 5.20.

Table 5.25

Employment characteristic variables tested for significant difference from the mean in each category

Variable	Statistical test	Result*
Type of organization	One-way ANOVA	Significant
Industry	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Size of organization	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Scope of organization	One-way ANOVA	Not significant
Works for an international organization	Independent t-test	Significant
Works for a national organization	Independent t-test	Not significant
Works for a regional organization	Independent t-test	Not significant
Works for a local organization	Independent t-test	Not significant
Currently works abroad	Independent t-test	Not significant

First, the type of organization (categorized as private, public or non-profit) was tested. Results from the one-way ANOVA ($f\ (2, 216) = 4.309, p = .015$) indicated that respondents who worked for a non-profit organization (M=.012 SD=.956) considered a higher level of benefit from study abroad in the area of *Employability skills* than respondents who worked for public organizations (M=-.198 SD=1.087) (see Figure 5.6 for the results of the post hoc test). This is an interesting result as one may expect a greater difference in the work lives of those who work in the private sector compared to the non-profit sector, or a contrast between public and private. In any case, respondents who worked in non-profit organizations perceived that study abroad contributed significantly to the development of their personal maturity and other soft skills, compared to their public sector peers.

Table 5.26

Post-hoc test comparison of mean Employability skills and Organization type

Tukey HSD

(I) What type of organization do you currently work for?	(J) What type of organization do you currently work for?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Private sector	Public sector	.2098	.1497	.342	-.1434	.5631
	Non-profit	-.5153	.2312	.069	-1.0610	.0303
Public sector	Private sector	-.2098	.1497	.342	-.5631	.1434
	Non-profit	-.7251*	.2478	.011	-1.3099	-.1405
Non-profit	Private sector	.5154	.2312	.069	-.0303	1.0610
	Public sector	.7252*	.2478	.011	.1405	1.3099

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

An unbalanced representation in the sample across the variable *Organization scope* and unequal variances resulted in a Levine's test showing a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances. Therefore I created a dichotomous variable for each category of data (for example, international organization, not international organization; national organization, not national organization) and used the new variables in independent t-tests. Highly significant differences in the areas of *Career related aspects* ($t(214.319) = 4.207, p = .000$) and *Host country aspects* ($t(216) = 2.994, p = .003$) were found for those who worked in an organization with an international scope. As shown in Table 5.21, respondents who did not work for an organization with an international scope had significantly lower means on these benefits than those who worked for an international organization. As presented in Chapter 4, working for an international organization was significantly associated with being from a high SES background, foreign language study while abroad and undertaking a degree with a compulsory study abroad component. So while this result is important, the interpretation is complex.

Table 5.27

Independent t-test results for Organization with an international scope and benefit variables

	Organization – international scope	
	Yes	No
Career-related aspects	.310 SD=.814	-.225 SD=1.062
Host country aspects	.241 SD=.967	-.163 SD=.994

Summary of Sub-question 2

In answering this research question, *What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context, and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?,* connections were made between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment of respondents and the benefits they perceived from studying abroad. First, in the area of background characteristics, females perceived greater benefit in the employability skills area than males. Those who lived abroad before higher education perceived at a higher level that study abroad provided a benefit in terms of host country skills and knowledge. In the area of career-related benefits, respondents who identified as speaking a second language perceived a higher level of benefit from study abroad than those respondents who only spoke English.

Second, in the area of study characteristics, very few significant connections were found. Respondents from three institutions were found to have significantly different mean results in various areas including employability skills, career-related benefits, and host country aspects. This may be the result of a range of institutional policy factors, differences in curriculum focus, or individual differences in participating students. Requiring study abroad as part of the undergraduate degree made a difference in terms of the perceived career-related benefit of study abroad. Respondents who were required to study abroad reported significantly higher levels of career-related benefit than those who participated in study abroad as an elective part of their undergraduate education. They also reported a higher perceived level of benefit in the area of host country skills and knowledge.

Third, some employment characteristics resulted in different perceived benefits.

Compared to respondents who worked in the public sector, those who worked for non-profit organizations reported a significantly higher level of benefit from study abroad in relation to their employability skills. Respondents who worked in an international organization perceived significantly greater benefits connected to study abroad in the areas of career-related aspects and host country aspects. This result may have been related to elements of the study abroad program, such as language of study or region of study, or personal background characteristics such as SES background or previous experiences living abroad.

Exploratory regression model

The results presented in this chapter demonstrate the complexity of the questions examined in this study and the difficulty of establishing a connection between study abroad experiences and perceived career benefits. In order to build on the results so far and inform future research studies, I undertook an exploratory regression analysis to test key variables in an alternative model.

Firstly, I redefined the outcome variable as *working for an organization with an international scope* (Current employment, Question 6). When considering policy goals around study abroad, working for an international organization is frequently stated or assumed to demonstrate success. Information provided to support the New Colombo Plan states that international internships have the "aim of ensuring students are work ready, have professional connections in the region and can link their study experience directly to career opportunities" (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014). Deakin University's Undergraduate Course Guide states that "*studying overseas will help you prepare for the global employment market*" (Deakin University, 2014, p. 2). At RMIT,

future students are told that "*You could undertake study exchange to over 31 countries. RMIT ensures graduates are globally employable. RMIT graduates are employed in more than 100 countries around the world*" (RMIT, 2014, p. 2).

Given the focus of this dissertation on the programmatic elements that affect career benefits and the focus of Australian Government study abroad policy on Asia, three study abroad program variables were tested in the model: (a) studying abroad multiple times; (b) studying abroad in a foreign language; and (c) studying abroad in Asia. Finally, three background variables were used as control variables: (a) gender; (b) first-generation status; and (c) major (professional or other). Note that the first-generation variable was used in this model as an individual indicator of educational advantage/disadvantage, because the SES variable collected was a geographic indicator, not an individual indicator.

The results of this analysis, presented in Table 5.22, showed that studying abroad multiple times was a positive predictor of working for an organization with an international scope after graduation, holding constant gender, first-generation status and type of major (professional/other) (see Table 5.22). The results indicate that when other factors were held constant, the predicted probability of working for an organization with an international scope for a participant of multiple study abroad programs increased 17.14%. Considering the effects in relation to background variables, females were 14.54% less likely to work for an organization with an international scope, while first-generation university students were 20% less likely. The marginal effect of studying abroad in Asia was very small and non-significant. Study abroad in a foreign language had a larger marginal effect, but was also not statistically significant.

Table. 5.28

Logistic regression results of exploratory model

Variable	Odds ratio	Robust Std. Err.	z	P	95% CI
Study abroad multiple	2.18	0.77	2.21	0.027	[1.09, 4.37]
Study abroad foreign language	1.74	0.60	1.62	0.106	[0.89, 3.41]
Study abroad Asia	1.05	0.38	0.15	0.884	[0.52, 2.16]
Gender (female)	0.41	0.14	-2.70	0.007	[0.21, 0.78]
First-generation	0.515	0.16	-2.14	0.032	[0.28, 0.94]
Professional major	1.52	0.48	1.34	0.181	[0.82, 2.81]
Constant	0.89	0.30	-0.33	0.738	[0.46, 1.72]

Model χ^2= 19.12 (p=0.004)

Pseudo R^2 = 0.08

N=213

Having presented the results of the study in detail, in the next chapter, I will recap the study rationale, context, methodology and results, discuss the outcomes and implications for policy and practice, comment on methodological issues and limitations, and conclude this dissertation with suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion and Implication

This dissertation was designed to explore the early career outcomes for participants of study abroad programs in the Australian context. In particular, the project aimed to provide an understanding of how graduates perceived the benefits of international study in relation to their current jobs and the early development of their careers. The purpose of this chapter is to present:

1. The context for the study;
2. An outline of the study, including the research questions and a synopsis of the sample;
3. An overview of the findings;
4. A discussion of the five key contributions of this study;
5. Implications for policy and practice;
6. Methodological considerations that may inform future research design; and
7. Recommendations for further research.

Context of the Study

This is the first time a project of this nature has been undertaken in Australia, and as such, the project was conceptualized to be deeply descriptive, exploring the backgrounds of respondents, study patterns, current employment profiles, and patterns of international mobility before, during and after attainment of their bachelor degree. The project assessed the benefits, as perceived by the graduates, through a quantitative survey exploring their early employment experiences. Although the focus of the study was on

employment, careers and the utility of the study abroad experience in this context, some aspects of personal development were included. Personal development and life aspects, such as self-learning and maturity, have been highlighted in the literature as key learning outcomes of participants in study abroad (Dwyer, 2004; Nunan, 2006).

Although participation in study abroad programs for Australian students in 2012 reached 13% of the graduating undergraduate class (Olsen, 2013), a number comparable to the study abroad participation rate in the United States (Institute for International Education, 2013), very little is known about this population beyond macro-level statistics which have only recently been reported on an annual basis. In terms of outcomes from study abroad programs for Australian students, this is a new area of research, and one that is urgently needed to inform national policy, institutional policy and practice, as well as the individual decisions of students and their families.

Compared to the US and Europe, where research on study abroad has played an increasingly important role in informing policy and practice over the last twenty years, the body of knowledge on study abroad in Australia consists of only a few studies, which mostly focused on participation data and analysis. One area of research has explored employer perceptions of study abroad (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Prospect Marketing, 2006), and established that although study abroad was rarely a recruitment criteria, Australian employers viewed it positively, particularly when characteristics of the experience related directly to the employment context (Prospect Marketing, 2006). These research studies informed the current project, which further develops a foundation of knowledge on the connections between a study abroad experience during bachelor degree studies and graduate employment outcomes.

As the project was being conducted, the policy direction in Australia changed and study abroad emerged as an important part of the new Federal Government's public diplomacy program in Asia. Under the New Colombo Plan, one hundred million AUD ($95m USD) over five years was allocated to support study abroad in Asia with the goal of creating an Asia-literate future workforce (Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2013). Little research underpinned this policy and although the focus of this dissertation was not Asia as a study destination, the project resulted in some policy-relevant data. However it is necessary to acknowledge at the outset that this project was exploratory in nature, not focused on any particular geographic destinations, and further research is needed in order to make fully informed policy decisions focusing on specific destinations in the future.

Overview of the Project

The aim of this study was to make a contribution towards the empirical knowledge base on study abroad outcomes in Australia through one primary research question and two sub-questions:

What are the benefits, as perceived by graduates, of a study abroad experience during a bachelor degree for their early career experiences?

- *What are the relationships between various characteristics of the program (i.e., country/region of study; duration of international experience; type of international experience; language of experience) and the benefits as perceived by the graduate?*
- *What are the relationships between background characteristics, study characteristics and current employment context, and the benefits as perceived by the graduates?*

The primary audience for this study is institutional policy-makers, although the results may be useful to a broad range of stakeholders including government, faculty, program administrators, program providers, sponsors, employers, parents and students. While the main intention was to inform institutional decision-makers in the areas of funding and program design, the descriptive nature of the results makes the outcomes accessible to a more general audience including prospective participants themselves, who may make better informed study abroad program choices as a result of this project.

As outlined in Chapter 2, this study was informed by a conceptual framework developed from human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Becker, 1993; McMahon & Oketch, 2013) and the manpower requirements perspective concerning the connection between higher education and work (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Teichler, 2007). At the macroeconomic level, higher education is connected to economic growth (Barro, 1991; Becker, 1993) through the expansion of knowledge and the increased productivity of labor (Becker, 1993). Using public policy and investment in knowledge creation, countries support future economic growth. Small investment in the development of cognitive skills in the labor force can positively impact future well-being (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2010). There are also important non-market, social benefits from higher education such as better health, greater longevity, reduced infant mortality, reduced fertility rates, increased democratization, greater respect for human rights, political stability, environmental quality, and the reduction of poverty, inequality and crime (McMahon, 2001).

At an individual level, higher education provides an income premium as a return on investment (Becker, 1964; Becker, 1993). The return on investment also has a non-market

element as the human capital benefits are embodied in the individual and generally impact upon non-work, leisure and household hours as well as work hours (McMahon & Oketch, 2013). Study abroad, through the enhancement of human capital, may increase the private and social benefits of higher education.

The manpower requirements approach is concerned with the quantitative and structural elements of the connection between higher education and work such as type of institution, field of study, curricular approaches and co-curricular options. Extensive research in Europe has considered the match between graduate attributes, including study abroad experiences, and employment roles (Brennan, Kogan & Teichler, 1996; de Weert, 1996; Teichler, 2007). Study abroad, as one component of higher education, was central to the current study, and both human capital theory and the manpower requirements perspective framed the design of the project.

Before proceeding, here is a brief outline of how the data were collected (a full description can be found in Chapter 3). The study was conducted through an on-line survey, based on the European Graduate Survey (International Centre for Higher Education Research-Kassel, University of Kassel, Germany), an instrument that has been used extensively in Europe to evaluate the success of the ERASMUS exchange program (for a summary, see Jahr and Teichler, 2007). The survey contained nine employment and career-related questions from the European survey that were adjusted for the Australian audience. Three additional sections of the survey covered respondent background information, study information, and current employment details (a copy of the instrument is provided in Appendix A). The survey was administered through 11 participating Australian universities, located in all 5 states (but omitting the 2 territories), meaning that

it can be considered a national study. All university types were represented in the respondent group, though urban universities may be overrepresented. The next section will provide an overview of the sample including key descriptive information that will frame the findings of this study.

Synopsis of the Sample

On average, respondents (*N*=226) were 26 years old and had been working for three years. Sixty-seven percent were female, reflecting the national trend towards higher female participation in study abroad programs (Olsen, 2010). At the time of the survey, 18% of respondents lived abroad in 15 countries. Ninety-four percent held Australian citizenship, and 23% held dual citizenship. Approximately seven percent of respondents completed high school abroad, and 31% had lived abroad before university. A further demonstration of the diverse profile of this group is that more than half of respondents, 52%, identified as speaking at least one other language.

Two measures of socio-economic status were collected in the data so it was possible to determine that 34% of respondents were first-generation university graduates. According to the Australian Department of Education SES index, 88% attended a high school with a medium or high SES classification. It is therefore highly likely that graduates from medium and high SES backgrounds were overrepresented in the sample. This possibly reflects the high cost (actual or perceived) of international travel and participating in a study abroad program.

In terms of their employment profile, at the time of the study the respondent group broadly reflected the national profile of graduate employment in Australia (Graduate Careers Australia, 2010). Just over 70% of respondents held a professional position and

33% were engaged in the service sector. A further 24% worked in education and training, 16% in healthcare, 14% in public administration, and the remainder worked across a range of other industries. Almost 62% worked in the private sector, and overall they were highly likely (62%) to work for an organization with more than 101 employees. Forty-two percent reported working for an international organization, though from other survey information provided it is evident that a higher percentage had international connections in their work. A majority of respondents, 84%, worked full-time, and 64% had changed jobs at least once since graduation.

Most of the sample studied full-time while undertaking their bachelor degree. Only five percent were international students, and there were no indigenous students in the sample. These groups were underrepresented and in the case of international students, this was likely to be a sampling issue. The most common majors in the sample were Management and Commerce, Society and Culture and Creative Arts. Almost 45% of respondents were either already enrolled or planning to enroll in graduate study.

Around 72% of respondents paid tuition through the HECS deferred system (the Australian higher education loan scheme), while almost eight percent were Australian full fee-paying students, meaning that the latter group were overrepresented in the sample, and providing further evidence that the respondent group reflected a higher socio-economic population. However, these respondents came from only three institutions, indicating some variation in the student populations at the participating universities.

Outline of study abroad experiences. Central to the research questions, data were collected in order to profile the kinds of study abroad experiences undertaken by the sample. Participants of traditional semester and year exchange programs dominated the

group (93%). This meant that data on other durations and modes of study (for example short-term study tours, internships, research projects) was very small. Although more recent data show that Australian students are now choosing programs of greater diversity in terms of duration, destination and mode of study, and this is an area of policy interest, it is most accurate to portray this study as representative of the traditional exchange model of study abroad, where a student enrolls in a regular semester or year of classes at a host university. Only eight percent of respondents in this study participated in other types of programs.

In terms of host regions, around 30% studied in North America, and the same proportion studied in Continental Europe. Around 20% studied in Asia, 18% in UK and Ireland, and only 2% studied in South America or Eastern Europe. Africa and the Middle East were not represented in the sample. Almost three quarters of respondents used English as the main language of instruction.

Highlights of the sample profile. A surprising finding of the study was that around 24% of the sample studied abroad more than once. This statistic has never been collected in Australia, and is somewhat contrary to the traditional belief that Australian students do not consider study abroad favorably (McInnis, Coates, Jensz, Hooper & Vu, 2004). An alternative interpretation is that among those who do choose to study abroad, some find it very useful and choose to study abroad again, or some were positively predisposed to gaining international experiences, and this may have influenced both study abroad participation and career decisions. Although this study does not address career goals at the start of the higher education process, career outcomes will be considered in the results section of this chapter.

Trends for the second and third experience were different from the first. For the second time abroad (*n*=54), participants were more likely to undertake study modes different from the traditional exchange model. They were also more likely to go to Asia, were more likely to study for a short duration, and were more likely to study in a language other than English. For the third experience (*n*=13), respondents were most likely to have studied in Asia, for a short time, undertaking an internship, study tour, research or volunteering. They were likely to have been using English as their main language (more details on the study abroad program characteristics of the respondents is provided in Chapter 4).

The patterns and connections between overseas study experiences is also a unique finding of this study. Forty-six percent of those who studied abroad before university (for example, while at high school) returned to their former host country. Fifteen percent of respondents had multiple experiences with the same country, including work experience after graduation, indicating that a small group had already established higher level skills, knowledge and networks centered on their host country. Foreign language was significantly connected to destination region. Asia as a study destination was significantly connected to short-term study abroad. There was also a significant association between studying abroad multiple times and studying in a language other than English. Respondents who studied abroad before university were more likely to study abroad multiple times during their bachelor's degree, and were also more likely to have attended a high school with a high SES designation. All associations were confirmed through Chi-square tests (see Chapter 4 for the full results).

Overview of the Findings

Benefits Perceived by the Respondents

The focus of the primary research question was the perception of the benefits of study abroad from the perspective of the graduates. The final three questions of the survey explored these benefits, firstly rating only career-related benefits (Question 7), then comparing career-related benefits to other possible benefits (Questions 8 and 9). In these findings I will highlight five benefits that best demonstrate the perspectives of the respondents in relation to the research question, and use respondent comments to illustrate individual examples. Four findings are taken directly from the survey questions, while the fifth finding is the major theme that emerged across the survey questions. Table 6.1 provides a summary of the benefits that will be presented in this section.

Table 6.1
Summary of benefits as perceived by the respondents.

Benefit	Agreement (high and very high)
1. General personal and developmental benefits (Question 8)	80-94%
2. Career direction (Question 8)	69%
3. Obtaining first job (Question 7)	66%
4. Long-term career prospects (Question 7)	63%
5. General rather than country-specific international benefits	Multiple measures

1. General personal and developmental benefits

"As a means of personal development (maturity) and honing problem solving and communication skills I found that my study abroad has greatly improved these aspects of my self."

Survey respondent

When comparing career benefits with general personal and developmental benefits, the respondents placed the highest value on the *Maturity and personal development*, and the *Interpersonal and communication skills* benefits they received through studying abroad. Only one percent of respondents disagreed with this assessment in both cases, and these two items were preferred in the ranking of benefits, setting them apart from other aspects assessed. *New perspectives on home country* also featured in the top three benefits identified (Question 9), with 81% rating study abroad as worthwhile or very worthwhile on this item.

Career benefits appeared lower in the list with 69% of respondents reporting that study abroad was worthwhile or very worthwhile for *Increasing motivation and passion for their chosen career direction*. On other career aspects, 68% and 52% of respondents rated study abroad worthwhile or very worthwhile for their *Career prospects* and *Relevance to their job* respectively. These career-related results are not unimportant; only 10%, 14% and 24% respectively disagreed (the full results are presented in Chapter 5). However it is a notable finding of this study that personal developmental aspects were rated more beneficial in connection to study abroad. This finding is similar to those described by Nunan (2006): although participants connected study abroad to their overall employability, the strongest results were reported in the areas of personal and social development. However, it should be noted in these findings that overall, respondents were very positive about the benefits of study abroad.

2. Career direction

"Whilst I would someday love to work abroad, either as an employee of an organization based abroad or as a locally employed person who has been sent abroad on assignment, I am, at this stage in my career, focused on building up my experience, skill set, contacts and have no intention of working abroad in the short term."

Survey respondent

Against all other benefits, the only career-related benefit ranked in the top three was increasing motivation and passion for their chosen career direction (see survey Question 9 in Chapter 5). The most obvious interpretation of this result is that respondents who were considering an international career were able to clarify this career direction through their experience abroad. In this way, study abroad may be providing students with a space to experiment with opportunities not available at home. However it may also relate to other research findings, which indicate that study abroad participants become more focused upon their return (Hadis, 2005; Teichler & Jahr, 2001), motivating them to pursue new or existing career directions with renewed energy.

This finding is important because, according to Bridgestock (2009), career management skills are not sufficiently addressed at most Australian universities, and the uncertainty related to career outcomes may affect university attrition rates and employment outcomes. The possible contribution of study abroad to career development and career management skills, as indicated by the findings of this study, suggest that a new line of enquiry should be explored to investigate how study abroad contributes to career development for Australian students. If, as Bridgestock (2009) suggests, career management skills can lead to greater economic benefits for society, then there may be even stronger rationale to support national policy promoting study abroad participation by a greater proportion of the student population.

3. Obtaining their first job

"I have received very positive comments about my completing an exchange program from employers (both before and after completing my degree)."

Survey respondent

When assessing only career-related benefits, the most highly rated benefit connected to study abroad reported by respondents was *Obtaining their first job* (see survey Question 7 in Chapter 5). Sixty-six percent of respondents indicated that studying abroad had a positive or very positive impact on the graduate recruitment process. This finding supports the assertions being made by universities in this area, that is, studying abroad may make graduates more competitive in the job search arena. Once again, I want to reiterate that this is not an objective fact; it is the perception of the respondents. However, I believe it shows a level of confidence from the respondents that demonstrates a direct career benefit in their view.

Although Prospect Marketing (2006) found that Australian employers do not include study abroad as a recruitment criterion, the findings of the current study may show a more indirect influence of study abroad on the recruitment process. For example, improved communication and interpersonal skills and increased maturity of graduates who studied internationally may lead them to perform better in a job interview. Further research could explore this relationship to establish how the graduates know that there was a connection between their study abroad experience and being hired.

4. Long-term career prospects

"With an Australian manufacturing company I work with, lots of work is sourced from China and Asia. I think my culture knowledge towards this area from studying abroad in Malaysia would differently help in more senior management positions but not in my technical position."

Survey respondent

This study has found that a majority of respondents (63%) believed that their international study experience had a positive or very positive impact on their *Long-term career prospects* (see survey Question 7 in Chapter 5). With this response, the graduates in this study may be indicating that, although their study aboard experience was only having a moderate impact on their current work tasks (as reported by 58% of the sample), in the long run, study abroad was expected to have a greater impact.

Previous research has indicated that skills developed through studying abroad, when applied to highly competitive business environments, may lead to faster career progression (Prospect Marketing, 2006). Although the researchers in this study were not able to confirm a direct connection to long-term career prospects, Crossman and Clarke (2009) also found that international experience may be beneficial to promotional opportunities. The current study adds further evidence to the connection between study abroad and long-term career benefits. From this finding, it is clear that more research is needed to overcome some of the temporal limitations of this study and examine the long-term impacts of study abroad in the Australian context. Further research directions will be discussed later in this chapter.

5. General rather than country-specific international benefits

"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

"…the environment which I work in is multi-cultural so having that experience abroad gives me a better insight in understanding and communicating with fellow work colleagues."

Survey respondent

The survey explored a range of areas related to obtaining a graduate position, the early work experiences and the perceptions of the relevance of their study abroad experience to the participants' careers so far and in the future. Across all areas, a consistent theme was presented: respondents perceived greater benefits related to general international aspects compared with a specific focus on their country or region of study. In this section I will highlight some of the supporting data and present my analysis.

Respondents were asked about the criteria used by their employer when they were hired. Seventy-four percent ranked their experience abroad as at least moderately important. The country of study and foreign language proficiency (at 51% and 26% respectively) were perceived to be the least-important factors when they were chosen for their jobs.

When asked about competencies important to their work, respondents reported higher importance of general international competencies rather than country-specific knowledge and skills. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds was important or very important to 74% of the sample. Fifty-two percent rated general knowledge and understanding of international differences as important or very important, while only 38% and 21% respectively rated knowledge of other countries and communicating in foreign languages as important or very important.

Considering the actual work tasks of the respondents, this trend was reinforced. Furthermore, 54% of respondents reported that their organization had frequent contact with other countries in general, while only 26% reported frequent contact with the host country of their study abroad. Across a range of indicators including *Using general and professional knowledge of my host country*, and *Using language in reading, writing and speaking*, the frequent use of these skills and knowledge was reported to be low, ranging from 16% to 19%. Only 13% of respondents had undertaken frequent professional travel to their host country.

In interpreting these results, temporal factors should be considered. On average, the respondents had been working for only three years. This was a short time period to be reporting on, compared to the expected length of their future careers. It may be the case that as junior employees, they will have increasingly international work roles in the future, and may even travel to their study abroad host country, further developing their skills and expertise in a specific national context. However at the early career stage it can be concluded that general international skills and knowledge were perceived to be of higher benefit to the respondents than skills and knowledge specific to their host country.

Summary of perceived benefits. From the perspective of graduates, study abroad was relevant and beneficial to their early career experiences on both direct and indirect measures. While personal and developmental benefits were rated more highly by respondents, important career-related benefits including career direction, securing their first job and long-term career prospects were found in this study. A consistent theme across the results indicated that the respondents perceived greater benefits related to

general international skills and knowledge rather than aspects specifically connected to their country or region of study.

In relation to the conceptual framework, the results support the finding that study abroad may provide additional human capital benefits of both an individual and societal nature. A small number of participants, 21.3%, reported a perceived direct income benefit, which they attributed to study abroad. Additionally, the impact of support for obtaining their first job may have resulted in a monetary benefit from a reduced job-search time period. While it is difficult to quantify the actual financial or market gains of providing career direction or enhancing long-term career prospects, it is possible to connect such factors to both non-market private and social benefits, as proposed by McMahon & Oketch (2013). For example, it is foreseeable that more clarity in the areas of career direction and career prospects may lead to enhanced job satisfaction and job performance, both on a short-term (early career) and long-term basis. The benefit of possessing general international skills and knowledge may contribute towards such social benefits as citizenship, democracy and human rights. It may also enhance general life satisfaction for the individual through a greater enjoyment of travel or involvement in international affairs, such as cultural activities in the community.

Without a comparison group of graduates who did not study abroad, it is not possible to conclusively state that study abroad enhances the relevance of a bachelor's degree to employment. However, from the perspective of participants in this study, there appears to be positive and relevant benefits, which they have applied to their early career experiences, including enhanced personal skills, career direction, and general international skills and knowledge. It is also reasonable to speculate that such benefits contributed to

positive early employment outcomes for their employing organizations. Further connections to the conceptual framework of this study will be explored in the discussion section of this chapter. In the next section I will present the findings related to the two research sub-questions addressing the structural elements of study abroad and background characteristics.

Benefits and Study Abroad Program Structure

One goal of this study was to identify specific elements of study abroad programs that made a difference to the reported career benefits of graduates. This was done through statistical analysis, and in this area I considered the variables that can be influenced through policy settings: destination (region of study), duration, program mode (academic classes, internship, study tour, research, volunteering) and language of the activity (foreign language or English), against benefit variables derived through Principle Component Analysis on benefits rated in Question 8 of the survey. They were subsequently categorized as Employability skills, Career-related aspects and Host country aspects (see Chapter 5 for a description of this process). Compulsory study abroad and participation in multiple study abroad programs were also considered as structural elements, though they were not included in the original conceptual framework of the study.

The most important variables in the overall statistical analysis (ANOVA, independent t-tests and chi square) were language, compulsory study abroad and multiple study abroad programs. These variables were significant across both career-related aspects and host country aspects and were the only variables (with the exception of studying abroad in Asia, which will be discussed in greater detail) significant in the career benefits category (see Chapter 5 for a full presentation of this analysis). Other significant

background variables, such as studying abroad before university and speaking more than one language were connected to these core variables, so these three variables can be considered as the most significant programmatic findings of the study. To summarize this finding, a higher level of reported career benefit associated with study abroad was related to *studying abroad in another language*, *studying abroad multiple times*, and undertaking *study abroad as a compulsory component of a bachelor degree*.

Other programmatic findings of significant variables are important, but further research should be undertaken to clarify and confirm these results. Asia as a destination provided both career-related benefits and host-country benefits at a higher level than other destination regions. It is conceivable that this result was connected to both study in a foreign language and participation in multiple study abroad programs because of the patterns observed around Asian study abroad. On the other hand, study in UK and Ireland returned a negative outcome on employability skills and host country aspects (see Chapter 5). Once again, this may have been related to the importance of foreign language study and multiple study abroad programs as significant variables in the overall model, and the fact that programs in the UK and Ireland were unlikely to fall into either of these categories.

Analysis of the duration of study should also be retested on a sample with a larger variety of program durations represented. In this study, participants of programs of medium duration, that is, programs of four to six months, reported lower perceived benefits on host country aspects than those who undertook short or long programs (see Chapter 5). This was likely to relate to the region of study and patterns in this regard, as the UK and Ireland, and North America, represented 60% of participants of medium-length

programs. Neither of these destination regions was likely to have a foreign language component, nor were they likely to be chosen as a second or third study destination (the descriptive analysis in Chapter 4 provides a full breakdown of statistics relating to the programmatic variables). Alternatively, programs of medium duration may have had different objectives to programs of shorter or longer duration. Again, further research is needed to provide clarity in this area.

Benefits and the Role of Background, Study and Employment Variables

A range of background, study and employment variables were included in the instrument in order to consider the impact of other factors on the primary variables of interest. The inclusion of these variables was also important in order to consider models for testing in the future. However, few variables returned significant results. One issue may have been sample size, which although adequate overall, broke down into groups too small to provide meaningful analysis in some categories. A study with a larger overall number of respondents may mitigate this problem and provide more meaningful results. Having noted this limitation, I will present the most important findings.

Firstly, women reported a significantly higher level of benefit in the area of employability skills, compared with men. This is a difficult result to interpret and I can only speculate that the female respondents may have been more self-aware of such variables as maturity and personal development and problem solving skills. Alternatively they may have been more likely to report development in these areas than their male peers. Research on Australian senior high school students' aspirations for higher education found important differences between females and males. Female students were more interested in doing well at school, learning about the world and contributing to society. Male

students were more instrumental in their approach to education, seeking direct connections to employment and earning money (James, 2000). How such findings can apply to study abroad is a topic for further research.

Research in the US has suggested that gender differences in study abroad may relate to how young people are socialized before higher education with regard to expectations of educational activities that will enhance the academic experience (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2009). In particular, a major study found that Asian American men were less likely to intend to study abroad. While it is unclear how these findings relate to the Australian context, they indicate that differences in participation and outcomes across genders may need to be considered in policy settings and at a practical level.

Speaking multiple languages and living abroad before attending university (including study abroad before high school) returned a significant result for host-country factors. This was likely to be connected to foreign language proficiency and patterns of return, with those who studied abroad before university being likely to return to the same country for study abroad while at university. Repeated exposure to the same country is likely to increase knowledge and skills related to the local language and culture, so this outcome is somewhat logical as a result of increasing levels of expertise. Patterns of return will be discussed further in the next section.

Finally, respondents who worked for an international organization reported significantly higher benefits on both career-related benefits and host country aspects. This result appeared to be a rational connection between international study experience and career outcomes, particularly with regard to the application of country-specific skills in the

workplace. The same variables were significant for studying abroad in a foreign language and studying abroad multiple times, suggesting that the accumulation of international competencies was beneficial in securing a position with an organization with an international scope.

However a confounding consideration was the significant association between high SES and working for an international organization. This association raises the question as to whether respondents from an educationally advantaged background would have successfully pursued employment in an international organization regardless of whether or not they studied abroad. Did study abroad actually play a mediating role in these cases, or was it an enjoyable co-curricular activity with only loose connections to career outcomes? Or did the parents of respondents from educationally and/or financially advantaged backgrounds encourage participation in study abroad more than parents of respondents from other educational and financial backgrounds? The answer is likely to be somewhat more nuanced, but remains unresolved from the findings of this study. The results also suggested connections between SES and language study, and SES and region of study that may be fully investigated in future research.

Bringing all of these factors together, exploratory logistic regression results confirmed that studying abroad multiple times was a positive predictor of working for an organization with an international scope, holding constant gender, first-generation status and type academic major of the bachelor degree (professional or other). Holding other factors constant, the predicted probability of working for an organization with an international scope for a participant of multiple study abroad programs increased 17.14%. The results also confirmed that first-generation university students and females

respectively were 19.17% and 14.54% less likely to work for an international organization. Non-significant variables included study abroad in a language other than English, study in Asia, and major of study (professional or other).

As an exploratory study, the model used in this analysis was informed primarily by data from this study and should be tested through additional research. In any case, it provides a basis for further considering the implications of the results within the context of this study sample. If working for an organization with an international scope is an implicit or explicit signal of success for graduates who participated in study abroad programs, then studying abroad multiple times may be a more effective strategy to achieve this outcome. The negative result for first-generation university students, along with other indicators that SES may play a role in the type of organization graduates work for, may suggest that social disadvantage carried into the higher education system continues into the graduate employment market, even with the addition of an international study experience to the graduate profile.

Recent research on gender-based salary differentials in Australia indicates that some graduate employment differences between men and women relate to the discipline of study, with higher percentages of women choosing disciplines with lower graduate salary outcomes. Even within the same broad occupational categories, young women may be undertaking different roles as compared to young men (Lindsay, 2014). It is difficult to speculate how these indicators connect to the finding that females are less likely to work for an international organization, except to say that there appear to be some unexplored gender-based variations in graduate employment outcomes. Multiple international experiences may assist females and economically and educationally disadvantaged

students to catch up to their male peers and/or those from more advantaged backgrounds, in terms of their likely success in obtaining a position with an international organization. Some of the implications of these findings will be further explored in the next section.

Summary of sub-question findings. An important purpose of this study was to identify program, background and employment characteristics that influenced early career outcomes of study abroad programs. Two approaches were used to explore this complex issue. Firstly, in terms of perceived career benefits, studying abroad in a foreign language, compulsory study abroad and participation in multiple study abroad programs were significant variables. Participants who studied in Asia reported a higher level of career benefit and host country benefits than those who studied in other regions. Those who went abroad for long periods perceived higher host country benefits from their study experience abroad than those who studied abroad for a medium duration. Women reported higher perceived benefits in the area of employability skills, and speaking multiple languages or living abroad before higher education returned significant results for host country factors. Finally, respondents who were working for an international organization reported higher perceived benefits on both career-related benefits and host country aspects.

To clarify these results, an exploratory analysis was undertaken using employment in an organization with an international scope as the outcome variable. Although this was not the original focus of the study, the tested outcome reflects policy goals in study abroad and can potentially provide a more objective measure of success than graduate perceptions of benefits. Through logistic regression, the results showed studying abroad multiple times as the only significant programmatic variable, increasing the likelihood of working for an international organization by 17%. Two background variables decreased the likelihood of

working for an international organization: being female, and being a first-generation university graduate. These results should be considered as a very preliminary model, which should be further investigated in the future.

The graduates surveyed for this study perceived that study abroad benefited their early career, with some variation on the type of benefit across programmatic, background and employment characteristics. For those who studied abroad multiple times, as the most distinctive variable in the data set, it is possible that the market and non-market return on investment was higher than for those who studied abroad once. The negative result for females and first-generation university graduates is difficult to explain without reference to a control group of graduates who did not study abroad. For full consideration of long-term access and equity issues, more research is urgently needed. The implications of these findings will be further explored in the next section.

Discussion of Key Findings

As an exploratory study, this project has many findings, each of which could be explored in more detail. The purpose of this section is to outline what I view as the five most important contributions of this study and discuss some implications for policy and practice. These areas include:

- Study abroad as a tool for the development of employability skills;
- Policy related to structural elements of study abroad including study destination;
- Access to study abroad;
- Patterns of return and the development of host country expertise; and
- Segmentation of the prospective Australian study abroad audience.

Study Abroad as a Tool for the Development of Employability Skills

For more than 15 years, the Australian Government, as part of its funding package for higher education institutions, has required each institution to develop and publish a set of generic graduate attributes that every graduate should have upon graduation. This stems from a 1992 quality review stating that Australia should have a "description of the attributes that graduates should acquire if exposed to a high quality education system" (Higher Education Council, 1992, p.19). As part of its support for the sector, research was undertaken and an Employability Skills Framework was developed by the Australian Government to provide guidance to institutions on the graduate attributes most desired by the employment sector (DEST, 2002). Employability skills were defined as:

- Communication skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
- Teamwork skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes;
- Problem solving skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
- Self-management skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth;
- Planning and organizing skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning;
- Technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks;
- Life-long learning skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and
- Initiative and enterprise skills that contribute to innovative outcomes (DEST,

2002).

A 2007 review of university policy statements on graduate attributes, also called *employability skills and generic skills*, stated that "most of the eight employability skills are implicitly or explicitly addressed by each university's graduate attributes." (Precision Consulting, 2007, p. 12). The graduate attribute statements of many universities include additional items such as global citizenship, social justice and an appreciation for cultural diversity (Precision Consulting, 2007).

Although it was not the intention of this project to map study abroad outcomes against defined employability skills, one of the most important findings of this study is the potential capacity of study abroad to contribute to the mission of the higher education sector to develop high-level employability skills in all graduates. It is helpful to consider the original intention in the development of core generic skills (as the term used in the first policy statement). "These are skills, personal attributes, and values which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. In other words, they should represent the central achievements of higher education as a process" (Higher Education Council, 1992). A key finding in this study is that, from the perspective of former participants, study abroad contributes to the development of at least four areas included in the employability skills framework, (i.e., communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills and self-management skills, conceptualized in this study as similar to maturity and personal development). This finding indicates that study abroad may play a broader role in the graduate outcomes landscape than is currently recognized at most universities. An additional area for consideration in this respect is that respondents

reported *New perspectives on home country*, an aspect that may be aligned with citizenship development goals that often appear in graduate attributes statements (Rigby et al., 2009).

This finding may take the utility of study abroad beyond the generally accepted outcome of the development of intercultural competence (Daly & Barker, 2010) and global citizenship (though this is also very important and is included in some graduate attribute statements). Furthermore, the connection between employability skills and study abroad has been identified in previous studies. Crossman and Clarke (2009) noted the general contribution of study abroad towards employability. Prospect Marketing (2006) also found that Australian employers recognized the potential for overseas study to enhance soft skills, but emphasized that candidates needed to draw attention to these skills sets during the interview process.

According to recent research, although generic skills have been a requirement in the higher education system for many years, the development of generic skills remains a contested area, with different conceptions of what is meant by generic skills across campuses, and a lack of shared understanding on how generic skills can be integrated within disciplinary contexts (Barrie, 2012; Green, Hammer & Star, 2009; Rigby et al., 2009). Although recently some progress has been achieved in the development and application of a shared understanding of generic skills at some campuses (see Barrie, 2012), the measurement and achievement of generic skills goals remain a challenge at many institutions.

With the findings of the current study, the opportunity exists to further explore the connection between generic skills, or employability skills, and study abroad. Recognition that study abroad may make a positive contribution to specific skills acquisition in this

problematic and contested area, and ultimately a contribution to graduate outcomes, may lead to more institutional support, including funding, to promote study abroad programs across the full spectrum of disciplines on Australian university campuses. This is not to say that study abroad is the only tool available to promote employability skills; however study abroad is currently not framed in this manner, and subsequently may not be receiving the support needed to make it accessible to a broader audience on campuses.

Policy Related to Structural Elements of Study Abroad

The role of program structural elements, including duration, destination, activity and foreign language, in study abroad is the focus of policy initiatives internationally. Four specific examples demonstrate the nature of policy, practice and research in this area. First, the European Union, through its ERASMUS program, does not fund programs of less than three-months duration. Second, in the US, the rising popularity of short-term programs has prompted a series of research studies to test the value of short-term study abroad against longer programs (for example see Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004). Third, the US government recently launched policy initiatives aimed at increasing the numbers of students studying in China and Latin America. Finally, the Australian Government, under the umbrella of the *New Colombo Plan* announced an ambitious policy initiative to send more Australian students to Asian countries.

This study set out to test specific program elements against career benefits as reported by former participants with a view to using this information to inform policy development at both an institutional and national level. However, it is important to note the limitation of the data at the outset, that is, the lack of diversity in terms of duration and program type, and the absence of respondents who studied abroad in Africa and the Middle

East. Respondents who studied in Latin America and Eastern Europe, although present, were too low in numbers to provide a meaningful analysis. Any further research in this area should work towards obtaining a more balanced sample.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, studying in a foreign language, studying abroad multiple times, and study abroad as a compulsory component of the bachelor's degree were identified as potentially significant structural variables across all benefit categories. There were also linkages between the variables, indicating, for example, that if a respondent studied abroad multiple times, there was a high likelihood that one experience was undertaken in a foreign language. The nature and structure of programs with compulsory study abroad programs generally means that foreign language is also a requirement. The international nature of the curriculum in these degree programs indicates that participants are possibly already predisposed to an international career, and likely to be more receptive to additional opportunities to go abroad. The finding that these three variables were tightly connected to perceived positive career benefits and working in international organizations also indicates that such programs appear to be achieving their intended graduate outcomes.

The findings of this study lead me to recommend that institutional policy-makers consider how their course offerings and structures support students in studying a foreign language and studying abroad more than once. A well-structured program that supports both foreign language study and multiple study abroad experiences appears to be best practice when considering perceived career benefits for participants and an employment outcome of working for an international organization. Ideally, such programs could consider how multiple study abroad opportunities might be required or strongly

encouraged, particularly for those students who were not able to study abroad before higher education, and for those students who aspire to a career in an international organization.

In terms of specific country or regional focuses in study abroad policy, the findings indicate some support for claims that exposure to Asia is perceived to provide a career benefit. However, conflicting results from the regression analysis should also be considered. The regression results indicated only a small, non-significant effect for Asia as a study destination and this creates some uncertainty in the results. The reported shift towards a global work environment and a focus on brain circulation (Wildavsky, 2010) may mean that a variety of experiences in different countries is more important for young graduates than deep experience with one country. This topic needs to be explored through further research in order to understand the dynamics impacting upon the perceived career benefits and outcomes of graduates, particularly in relation to region or country of study. Qualitative methodology would better serve this purpose. At the same time, the finding indicates that practitioners, faculty and policy leaders may benefit students by rethinking their rhetoric around destinations of study. These findings strongly suggest that all students regardless of their destination of study perceived general career benefits and that specific country benefits may be limited to a much smaller group of participants. The recommendation from this study is that country-specific policies to support study abroad should be balanced against recognition of the general benefits that are likely to be gained regardless of study destination.

Access to Study Abroad

This study provides the first comprehensive Australian data set on the backgrounds of study abroad participants. Central to this study was the inclusion of socio-economic and first-generation university graduate indicators. A limitation that needs to be recognized is that the high school indicator used to allocate students to an SES category is a geographic indicator and not an individual measure. However, it is a valid way of understanding the general patterns of participation in this study (Marks, McMillan, Jones & Ainsley, 2000), and is reinforced by other data such as first-generation status, tuition-fee payment information and the history of travel prior to higher education. Many of the respondents in this study represented an educationally and economically advantaged group and this is not a surprising finding. While access to higher education has been the focus of government policy in recent years (see Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008), it has not been a topic of discussion around study abroad policy.

The results of this study challenge accepted policies and practices that do not consider socio-economic background when promoting programs and awarding funding. It is a difficult area to address, but the finding that 51% of respondents come from the top 25% of high schools, in terms of their SES designation, indicates that there may be serious access issues related to study abroad for Australian students. These access issues may continue into the graduate employment market, if working for an international organization is a valid indication of early career success. The result that first-generation university graduates in this study were around 20% less likely to work for an international organization is both puzzling and alarming.

Further research is needed to understand all of the factors in this complex picture. Research in Europe on access to the ERASMUS program indicates that the solution is not as straightforward as providing scholarships (see Vossensteyn et al., 2010), and this may be informative to the Australian sector. Practice in the US informed by a growing body of knowledge on *diversity and study abroad* (see Stallman, Woodruff, Kasravi & Comp, 2010) may also be instructive in broadening access in Australia. The application of student choice models to the study abroad decision process is an interesting research area in the US that may assist in framing future research studies in Australia (see Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2009; Salisbury, Paulsen & Pascarella, 2011). Cost is not the only barrier to study abroad in many countries where this has been studied. Cultural and social capital of students and their families can also be important variables to consider when addressing study abroad access issues (Jahr & Teichler, 2007). This is particularly relevant for policies and practices around first-generation university students.

Finally, this study raises some additional questions regarding access to language study prior to higher education, the impact this has upon studying abroad in a foreign language, choice of destination, and the subsequent career outcomes. It may be that a lack of access to foreign language in the non-private school system is the starting point for some access issues in study abroad that cannot be resolved by the higher education system. Where these resourcing and policy implications spill over into ongoing disadvantage in the employment sector, this issue should be a concern to a broader section of the Australian community, and certainly to policy-makers at a national and state level.

Patterns of Return and the Development of Host Country Expertise

I have already noted that this is the first time patterns of international mobility have been examined in the Australian context. Not only was it a surprise to note that almost one quarter of respondents had studied abroad more than once, it was unexpected that 21% had studied abroad before university. Patterns of international study during high school are virtually unknown in Australia on a national level, so it has not been possible to connect high school study abroad with university study abroad in the past.

This study extends the pattern one step further to consider post-graduation international work experience for this sample. Seventeen percent worked abroad at the time of the study, a figure consistent with results from studies of European graduates (Teichler & Janson, 2007). Also consistent with research on European students (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002), it appears that experiences of living and studying overseas prior to higher education positively predispose young Australians to international experiences in the future.

When considering patterns of return to a country in which respondents had previous studied, familiarity is a significant pull-factor, particularly for students who went to Japan and the UK. Table 6.2 presents the data.

Table 6.2

Analysis of patterns of international experiences from high school to university to work following graduation

Studied abroad before university	Studied abroad multiple times at university	Now work abroad
21% (*n*=41) 46% (*n*=19) returned to host country	24% (*n*=54) Second experience: 30% (*n*=16) returned to host country Third experience: 46% (*n*=6) returned to host country	17% (*n*=38) 37% (*n*=14) returned to host country
Popular countries of return: Japan, France, Germany, USA	Popular countries of return: UK, Japan, USA, China	Popular countries of return: Japan, UK, Italy

These findings show that a small group of respondents have developed significant skills and knowledge connected with one country. Whether the individuals at the outset planned this is unknown, but it can be concluded that this group, especially the 14 who, at the time of the study, were working in a country in which they previously studied abroad, have accumulated important international career capital (Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Inkson & Myers, 2005). The prevalence of Japan in the *countries of return* suggests that if the Australian Government wants to achieve successful policy outcomes in developing graduates with expertise in Asia, further examination of policies and programs between Australia and Japan could be very beneficial. Australia's study abroad partnership with Japan and the long-term connections for respondents are notable in this study.

It is unknown if any more of the respondents will work abroad in the future, but we should consider Table 6.2 to be an incomplete picture, as it is likely that more respondents will work abroad at some time. This research study, therefore, provides a foundation for further research that tracks the career progression of graduates at a national and international level and the subsequent contribution of this career development to both private and social aspects of human capital. A longitudinal tracer study is needed to extend our understanding of this phenomenon, and also to better understand the career benefits and broader personal and social outcomes following participation in a study abroad program. Research of this nature has been attempted in the US (see Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josi & Jon, 2009) but the final report on the qualitative component of the study has not been completed. Research in Europe, through the European Graduate Surveys, tracks outcomes of cohorts of graduates over time, but each temporal period reports on a new group of graduates (see Teichler & Janson, 2007).

Another area of future research could look at the decision processes of students as they are making their destination choices. Of particular interest would be those who have studied abroad in the past and their rationale for choosing a familiar country over a different country or vice versa. A policy-related research question could consider how career-related decisions are made and supported by Australian universities. In a time of increased competition in the domestic student recruitment market, what influence do study abroad opportunities have when prospective students are choosing their universities? And do the same conditions apply in the competitive international student market? The next section will attempt to summarize the findings presented so far into a coherent model.

Segmentation of the Prospective Australian Study Abroad Audience

Throughout this analysis, I've examined at some length those respondents with multiple experiences abroad. The findings steered me in that direction, and some important discoveries have been discussed. In this last section, I will present a proposed model for understanding the broad landscape of study abroad in Australia considering both the respondent profiles and the career outcomes, with the goal of further enhancing the human capital development and employment success of Australian graduates.

The sample can be viewed as representing two basic groups: Those who had undertaken their first significant international experience through a study abroad program, and those who had been abroad before university and were seeking an additional international experience through study abroad. We know from the analysis that the second group was more likely to represent a high socio-economic group. This fact does not mean that the first group was not from a high SES group, but indicates that it was likely to be a mix of respondents from a range of backgrounds. It probably means, however, that the two groups had different needs when they started the process of deciding, then applying, then actually leaving Australia.

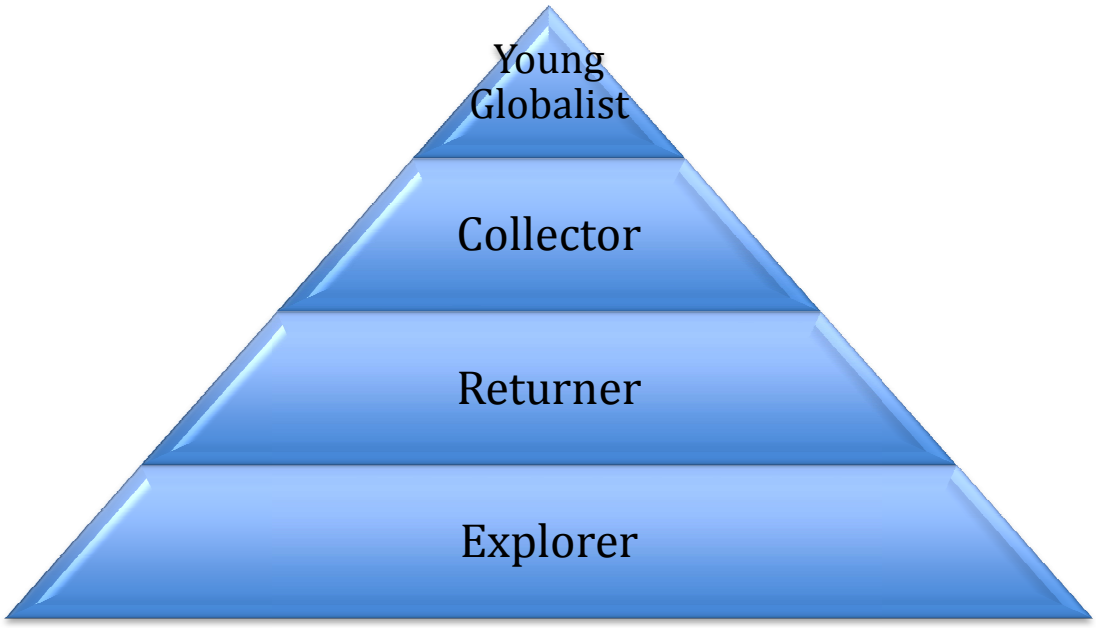
A little later in their higher education, a third group entered the mix, and this group represented those who had already studied abroad during their bachelor degree. This group was familiar with the process of looking for options and submitting an application, but probably brought another set of needs into the picture. While these patterns can all be viewed from the practitioner perspective, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, this framework can also provide a conceptual understanding of how international skills and knowledge, as a subset of human capital, accumulate through study abroad experiences. At the entry level,

there are the *Explorers*, who are using their study abroad program to undertake their first academically-focused and (likely) extended time period overseas. For some, the Explorer phase happens before higher education and they are entering this picture as *Returners*, who bring with them to university an existing set of international skills and experiences (basic international human capital). At the next level, there are *Collectors*, students who undertake multiple study abroad experiences with a view to building their international skills and knowledge and possibly shaping their profile to work in an international role in the future.

The final group, which I have called *Young Globalists*, have had multiple experiences abroad and are developing a significant international skills and knowledge portfolio, either with specialization in one country, or with a variety of experiences which they perceive will support their long-term career prospects. It is likely that this group has acquired language skills along the way to supplement their employment profile. *Young Globalists* are focused and strategic about their choices in relation to their education and career profile, and their human capital development, and are likely to spend substantial time abroad at a professional level in the future.

Figure 6.1

Conceptual model of Australian study abroad participants and the development of international human capital



It is important to note that not all prospective students will continue along the international experience pyramid. Many will be satisfied with one experience to begin their exploration of the world. The findings of this study indicate that important career benefits can be attained from one experience abroad and many students will use their acquired skills, knowledge and experiences in whatever job they move into following graduation. A smaller and more international-career focused group will go to university seeking multiple levels of international opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and experiences to support their career development in the future.

For institutions, this means study abroad programs need to cater to a range of student profiles with different motivations and varying career goals. Universities need the educational pathways, program models and financial assistance to support a segmented

student body, while facilitating access to study abroad for all students. It is likely that this space, specifically providing access to international experiences for Explorers, Returners and Collectors, and the development of future Young Globalists, will become increasingly competitive as Australian universities look for points of differentiation in a crowded higher education market.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Although I have already discussed many of the implications of this study, in this section I will draw together and summarize the main implications to ensure that they are readily accessible to the reader. Table 6.3 provides a summary of the implications discussed in this chapter.

Table 6.3

Implications for policy and practice

Implication
1. **Connect study abroad with employability skills and graduate outcomes**: Universities should recognize the utility of study abroad in the development of employability skills, as an important goal of higher education, and therefore the potential of study abroad to improve graduate outcomes.
2. **Educate graduate employers on study abroad benefits**: Universities and the Australian Government should play an active role in raising awareness amongst employers about the employability benefits of study abroad participation, as identified in the results of this dissertation.
3. **Increase opportunities for foreign language study and studying abroad multiple times**: Universities should examine how policies and practices encourage (or mandate) foreign language study and multiple study abroad participation for all students, as the most salient factors for high-level career benefits.
4. **Balance goals relating to specific geographic locations against general participation goals:** Study abroad policy and practice should recognize the general career benefits of study abroad participation for all participants, regardless of the destination country chosen. Balance between policy priorities is important to cater to the needs and career goals of different students.
5. **Cater for students with diverse needs**: Universities should develop a segmented approach to study abroad program promotion, development, financing and delivery, and offer opportunities for international experiences at different stages of the degree path.
6. **Address issues around access to study abroad:** Access to study abroad may change career outcomes. Universities and the Australian Government should work together to address access issues in study abroad, to ensure all students can compete for the most desirable, international jobs.
7. **Use Japan as a unique case study on how to expand study abroad in Asia**: The Australian Government should use the case of Japan-Australia education

Table 6.3 (cont'd)

partnerships to better understand how to expand study abroad in Asia and develop more Asia-literate graduates.

Research Methodology and Limitations

Before outlining my recommendations for further research and concluding the presentation of this research project, I will draw together the main limitations and discuss the topic of research methodology as it relates to this study, its weaknesses and the potential for further research on this subject area.

The major challenge of this study was the complexity of the topic and the difficulty of studying a unique set of outcomes in isolation from the previous influences and the environment in which the phenomenon occurs. Study abroad is just one piece of the education process, which has been happening for at least twelve years before an individual reaches university, and is influenced by a wide range of background variables and personal characteristics. Universities provide different education environments. In addition, the graduate employment sector is diverse. All of these factors create research challenges, and when added to the wide range of international study experiences, the process of investigation and interpreting results becomes overwhelming. The final interpretation was guided by my professional knowledge of the answers that are most urgently needed for policy development, but there are many more questions and answers left to be explored. Complex issues of cause and effect may never be fully understood.

A significant constraint on this study was sample size, which reflected the logistical complications in finding and contacting prospective respondents. Australian universities do not have a long history of fostering alumni relations, nor do they have good systems (in

general) to identify study abroad participants in the central student records systems. Additionally, decentralized institutional structures revealed weaknesses in identifying particular groups of study abroad program participants, such as those who went abroad under faculty-sponsored programs like study tours and internships. The lack of diversity in the data is a weakness in the current study that can be rectified in the future with the adoption of centralized record systems that connect through to alumni databases. A few institutions seem to have good systems in place. Given the challenges presented, the sample gathered for this study was a very good starting point.

Being a quantitative study, sample size was important and in some areas the data did not allow for full analysis of important aspects of the study. While disappointing, this result may support the case for using qualitative methodologies in the future for further exploration of this topic. The Australian international higher education sector is highly oriented towards quantitative data, and this is another reason the current study was designed to utilize quantitative analysis. However, in building complex life cases, such as those identified through this study, much richness and a greater understanding could be developed through in-depth and constructivist research methodologies. In terms of unbundling many of the issues identified in this study, I believe this is the direction that should be taken to further contribute to our knowledge of study abroad outcomes in the Australian context.

The other major methodological issue identified through this study was the temporal nature of the data. Although this study was designed as a snapshot of the early career period, and successfully achieved this goal, this choice also reflected the availability of data and the logistics of a national study. Study abroad in the Australian context is not a

new phenomenon, but it has only recently caught the attention of policy-makers as an interesting and worthwhile educational activity. Participation has grown rapidly in recent years and this should facilitate future research projects with larger and more representative data sets.

Recommendations for Further Research

I have identified six areas of research that should follow this study to continue to expand our knowledge of study abroad outcomes for Australian students:

1. Longitudinal tracer studies, tracking graduates as they progress further in their careers and their lives, and the long-term private and social impacts of study abroad;
2. The contribution of study abroad to career-management skills, and the support provided in Australian universities for international career development;
3. The role of education advantage (SES and parental education) in study abroad access, destination choice and language acquisition;
4. The role of social and cultural capital of students and their families in the decision to study abroad;
5. The role of individual characteristics and predispositions influencing travel, study abroad and a general interest in gaining international knowledge and experiences;
6. The implications of the increasing diversity in program types, durations and destinations, as recently reported in Australia, for study abroad outcomes.

Although the short-term nature of policy-making in the Australian higher education system may work against an ambition to understand the long-term implications of study abroad participation, several institutions could come together to sponsor a meaningful long-term research project which examines outcomes beyond the early career period considered in this study. The international mobility of young people through education is a growing trend and research is urgently needed to encourage informed policy and funding decisions. For the young people themselves, a better understanding of the long-term benefits is likely to encourage investment in study abroad, along with more purposeful choices.

The area of career development and study abroad is closely related to the current focus on employability at Australian universities. However, we understand little about how students are conceiving study abroad in the career-development context, and what support they are receiving to design experiences that will allow them to explore possible international career directions. In this area, Australian researchers and practitioners could benefit from recent discussion in the US on this topic. This area of research could also include a closer examination of connections between study abroad and employability skills.

For policy-makers and practitioners, a deeper understanding of access issues including the role of SES, parental education and social and cultural capital is likely to change approaches to study abroad policy setting and implementation. In this area, the unintended consequences of policy, such as elite access to scholarship programs and language requirements for overseas study should be examined. Additionally, a better understanding of individual predispositions that may influence study abroad participation

could support educators in expanding participation of different student groups. Finally, with the emergence of new and diverse program models, and the expansion of enrolments in these activities, research is needed to consider these variables against planned and actual outcomes.

Concluding Thoughts

This research study was conceptualized to provide a foundation of knowledge in the area of study abroad and career outcomes in Australia, and it has successfully achieved this goal. Through this study, and the small knowledge base from which it was informed, we now understand much more than ever before about the early career experiences of former participants in study abroad programs, and the international mobility patterns of a segment of the university undergraduate population. Although this study was based on the Australian context, my hope is that some of the general findings and implications will make a contribution to the understanding of study abroad outcomes and future research in other countries. The current study is, however, only another step in the discovery process, which relies on future researchers to make additional contributions to our understanding of study abroad outcomes. By better understanding the implications of study abroad policy and practice, we can support future generations in becoming more internationally attuned and better prepared to face the challenges imposed by an increasingly interconnected world.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Early Career Value of International Study for Australian University Graduates

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study that seeks to better understand the perceived benefits of international education for the early career of graduates of Australian universities. This study is being conducted in cooperation with the Australian Universities International Directors Forum (AUIDF) and involves participants from a range of Australian universities. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study from the records of the Education Abroad Office of your university. From this study, the researchers hope to learn about what aspects of your international study experience have been most beneficial to you in the process of finding employment and starting your career.

Your participation in this study will take about twenty minutes. You are asked to complete a survey made up of nine questions about the benefits to your career of international study. The remaining questions are about your work, your university study, your study abroad experience and your personal background.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits at any time during the study. You are free to not answer certain questions without penalty or loss of benefits.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. Additionally, there are no costs or compensation for participating in this study. The potential benefits are

(1). Reflection of your experiences in applying for jobs and starting work as a graduate of an Australian university,
(2). Reflection on how your international experience may benefit your career in the future, and
(3). Help inform future research on international study and career outcomes for graduates.

No personal identifiers are attached to the survey (IP addresses will not be recorded). This means that neither the researchers nor anyone else has any way of linking individuals with completed surveys. All survey responses will be kept confidential and only shared

among members of the research team. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous.

To enter the prize draw, you will be linked to a different survey system, that is not connected to the main survey. Entering your details into the prize draw will not, in any way, compromise the anonymity of your survey responses.

For the period of the project, the data will be stored on the Qualtrics system. This data is not used by the survey administrators under the Qualtrics privacy policy.

If you would like further information about this research, please contact:

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If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Clicking the "I agree" button below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Please print this information for your records.

Figure A1
Screening Questions

Screening Questions

1. **Did you participate in an education abroad program, student exchange, study tour or other international activity recognized by your university during your bachelor degree studies?**
    a. Yes
    b. No – survey terminates

2. **Have you graduated from your bachelor degree?**
    a. Yes
    b. No – survey terminates

3. **Institution** [drop down menu list of participating institutions]

4. **What is your current major activity?**
    a. Full-time employed (35 hours or more per week)
    b. Self-employed
    c. Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week)
    d. Unemployed (seeking employment) – survey terminates
    e. Further full-time study – survey terminates
    f. Family care – survey terminates
    g. Other – survey terminates

Main Survey Instrument

Current employment situation

1. **How many employers have you had since graduation?**
    a. One employer
    b. Two employers
    c. Three employers
    d. Four employers
    e. Five or more employers
    f. Other

2. **What type of organization do you currently work with?**
    a. Public
    b. Private
    c. Non-profit

3. **What type of position do you currently hold?**
    a. Managers
    b. Professionals
    c. Technicians and trade workers
    d. Community and personal service workers
    e. Clerical and administrative workers
    f. Other occupations

4. **In which industry are you employed?**
    a. Agriculture, forestry & fishing
    b. Mining
    c. Manufacturing
    d. Electricity, gas, water supply
    e. Construction
    f. Wholesale trade
    g. Retail trade
    h. Accommodation and food services
    i. Transport, postal and warehousing
    j. Information media and telecommunications
    k. Financial and insurance services
    l. Rental, hiring and real estate services
    m. Professional, scientific and technical services
    n. Administrative and support services
    o. Public administration and safety
    p. Education and training
    q. Healthcare and social assistance
    r. Arts and recreation services
    s. Other services

5. **Approximately many employees are employed by your organization?**
    a. 1-19
    b. 20-100
    c. 100-500

d. More than 500

6. What is the scope of operation of your organization?

a. Local
b. Regional
c. National
d. International

Employment & Career Impact Questions

1. What criteria were important to you when seeking employment? (scale 1= not at all important, 5 = very important)

a. Applying knowledge and skills acquired while studying
b. High income
c. Accomplishing worthwhile professional activities
d. Enough spare time for other activities (life balance)
e. Possibility of personal development
f. Possibility to explore own ideas
g. Well recognized professional status
h. High employment security
i. Applying foreign language skills
j. Working in a foreign country
k. Working in an organization with an international scope

2. How important, according to you, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you for potential employment after graduation, if applicable? (Scale 1=,not at all, 5 = very high extent)

a. Field of study
b. Grades
c. Work experience acquired during course of study
d. Reputation of the university you attended (Australian university)
e. Your experience/s abroad
f. Country/region of your experience/s abroad
g. Foreign language proficiency
h. References or recommendations
i. Personality

3. Have you had a professional international mobility experience since graduation? (yes/no, multiple responses possible)

a. I considered working abroad
b. I sought employment abroad
c. I have actually received an offer to work abroad
d. I have actually had regular employment abroad since graduation
e. I have actually been sent abroad by my employer on work assignments
f. None of the above

Free text box for comments

4. To what extent does the organization, institution or company with which you are associated do business or have contact with other countries? (scale 1 = not at all important, 5= very high extent)

a. With other countries in general
b. With the host country of your study abroad
c. With host region of your study abroad

5. How important do you consider the following competencies for doing your current work? (scale 1= not at all important, 5 = very important)

a. Knowledge of other countries (eg. economical, sociological, legal knowledge)
b. Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour in culture and society, lifestyles etc
c. Working with people from different cultural backgrounds
d. Communicating in foreign languages

6. To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following: (Scale 1= not at all, 5 = very high extent)

a. Using firsthand professional knowledge of the host country
b. Using firsthand general knowledge of host country culture/society
c. Professional travel to host country
d. Using the language of the host country orally (where language other than English)
e. Using the language of the host country in reading and writing (where language other than English)

Free text box for comments

7. What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment? (scale 1= very negative impact, 5= very positive impact)

a. Obtaining first job
b. Type of work task involved
c. Income level
d. Long-term career prospects

8. From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider your study abroad worthwhile with regard to the following? (scale 1= not at all worthwhile to 5 = very worthwhile)

a. Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge
b. Relevance to your job/occupation
c. Interpersonal and communications skills
d. Career prospects
e. Increasing your motivation and passion for your career direction
f. Foreign language proficiency
g. Teamwork/ability to work with others
h. New perspectives on your home country
i. Problem solving and analytical skills
j. Knowledge and understanding of the host country
k. Maturity and personal development

9. Of the areas rated in the previous question, in which areas do you believe your study abroad experience has provided you with the greatest benefits? Please rank your top three (1=greatest benefit).

a. Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge
b. Relevance to your job/occupation
c. Interpersonal and communications skills
d. Career prospects
e. Increasing your motivation and passion for your career direction
f. Foreign language proficiency
g. Teamwork/ability to work with others
h. New perspectives on your home country
i. Problem solving and analytical skills
j. Knowledge and understanding of the host country
k. Maturity and personal development

Free text box for comments

Education information

1. **Please select your major areas of study in your undergraduate degree**
    a. Natural and physical sciences
    b. Information technology
    c. Engineering and related technologies
    d. Architecture and building
    e. Health
    f. Education
    g. Management and commerce
    h. Society and culture
    i. Creative arts

2. **Did you study**
    a. Full-time
    b. Part-time
    c. Combination

3. **In which year did you graduate?**
    a. 2008
    b. 2009
    c. 2010
    d. Other [free text]

4. **How do you rate your academic achievement during your bachelor degree?** (Scale 1= very poor, 5 = very good)

5. **Please provide further details of your international study experience/s (list up to 3)**
    a. Country (Populated from ABS country list)
    b. Duration (1 month or less; 2-3 months; 4-6 months; 7-12 months; more than 12 months)
    c. Activity (academic courses taught at an overseas institution; study tour facilitated or led by home institution; internship, practicum, or clinical placement; volunteering; research; double/joint degree; conference; other)
    d. Language of activity (English; host country language; combination)

6. **Was international study a compulsory component of your degree?**
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. **How did you finance your tuition? (if multiple, indicate the major form)**
    a. HECS upfront
    b. HECS deferred
    c. International fee-paying
    d. Australian fee-paying
    e. Other scholarship/funding [free text]

8. **How did you finance your international experience? (may select multiple)**
    a. OS-Help
    b. Australian government scholarship (Endeavour, UMAP, EU/AU)
    c. Institutional grant or scholarship
    d. Foundation grant or scholarship
    e. Bank loan
    f. Personal funds
    g. Family support
    h. Other [free text]

9. **Are you planning to undertake further study?**
    a. I am currently enrolled in a postgraduate program
    b. I am planning to enroll in a postgraduate program
    c. Don't know

Background Information

1. **Gender**
    a. Male
    b. Female

2. **Year of birth** [drop down menu]

3. **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Don't know

4. **Citizenship**
    a. Country where completed secondary education (Populated from ABS country list)
    b. Current country of employment/work
    c. Current country of residence (where you live now)
    d. Country of citizenship

5. **Prior to your first enrolment in higher education, have you been employed abroad, have you received any education abroad or have you lived abroad? (list up to three in each category. Do not include tourism travel).**

    a. Yes (continue with question)
    b. No (skip to next question)

        i. *Studied abroad* [Years months country]

        ii. *Worked abroad* [Years months country]

        iii. *Lived abroad* [Years months country]

6. **Which languages do you speak?**
    a. Up to 5 options (populated from ABS list)

7. **What is the highest level of education attained by your parents?**

a. Mother	Father
i. 10 years or less	10 years or less
ii. 11-12 years (senior secondary education)	11-12 years (senior secondary education)
iii. University bachelor degree	University bachelor degree
iv. Postgraduate degree (Masters, PhD)	Postgraduate degree (Masters, PhD)
v. Don't know/not applicable	Don't know/not applicable

8. **Which high school did you attend?**
    a. Name
    b. State (if Australia) or County (if not Australia)

Is there anything else you'd like to add?
Free text box for comments

SURVEY COMPLETION TEXT

Thank you for completing this survey. To enter the prize draw to win an iPad or STA travel voucher (valued at $539), please follow the link below. In order to maintain the confidentiality of your survey response, this link will take you out of this survey into a different web site. Your survey will remain anonymous and cannot be linked to your entry into the prize draw.

This competition is being conducted in compliance with the competition laws of all states participating in the survey. For the purpose of Victorian state regulations, the competition is being conducted through Swinburne University of Technology, declared community or charitable organization number 46359. The winner will be notified by email within two days of the prize draw, to be conducted on July 31 2013.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LHLS6GW

Competition entry text (operated in a different database program)

Competition registration - international education and careers research

This competition is being conducted in compliance with the competition laws of all states participating in the survey. For the purpose of Victorian state regulations, the competition is being conducted through Swinburne University of Technology, declared community or charitable organization number 46359.

The winner will be notified by email within two days of the prize draw, to be conducted on July 31 2013.

All data from the survey remains confidential - competition entries cannot be linked to your survey answers.

***1. Please enter your name and email address so you can be contacted if you win the prize draw**

Name: **Email Address:**

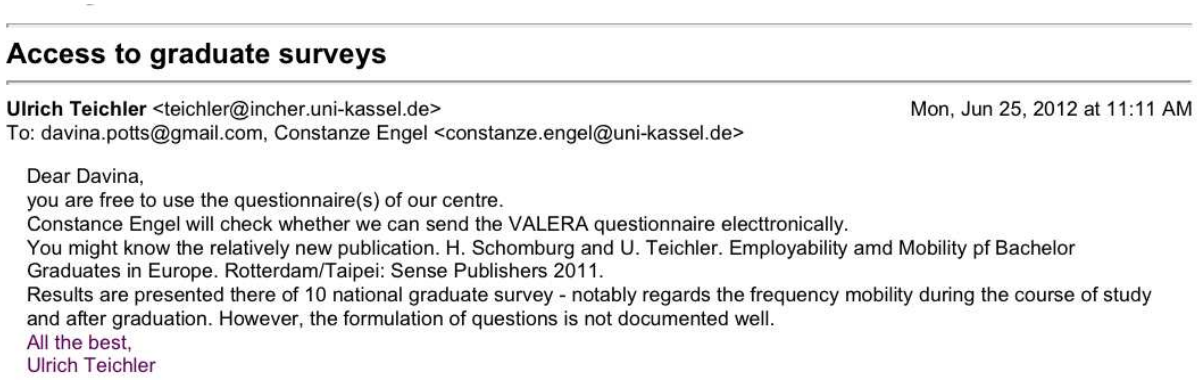
Thank you for participating. If you have any questions, please contact Davina Potts, PhD Candidate, pottsda1@msu.edu

Appendix B

Permission to Use Survey Instrument

Figure B1

Permission to use survey instrument



Access to graduate surveys

Ulrich Teichler <teichler@incher.uni-kassel.de> Mon, Jun 25, 2012 at 11:11 AM
To: davina.potts@gmail.com, Constanze Engel <constanze.engel@uni-kassel.de>

Dear Davina,
you are free to use the questionnaire(s) of our centre.
Constance Engel will check whether we can send the VALERA questionnaire electtronically.
You might know the relatively new publication. H. Schomburg and U. Teichler. Employability amd Mobility pf Bachelor Graduates in Europe. Rotterdam/Taipei: Sense Publishers 2011.
Results are presented there of 10 national graduate survey - notably regards the frequency mobility during the course of study and after graduation. However, the formulation of questions is not documented well.
All the best,
Ulrich Teichler

Appendix C

Instructions To Institutions

AUIDF research study: Graduate perceptions of the early career value of international learning mobility
Project overview

This project has been designed as an exploratory study considering the early career benefits of participation in outbound education abroad programs. It is based on similar work in Europe which has been undertaken over the last 20 years. The main survey questions have been taken from the European Graduate Survey and modified for the Australian audience. They address such issues as perceived benefits of an international study experience during recruitment, in obtaining a job, and in supporting the day-to-day work tasks of graduates. The focus is on specific international competencies such as the use language and knowledge of their host country. It also briefly explores benefits beyond the workplace in terms of personal and social development.

The research will also provide valuable insight into the profiles of participants of mobility programs. This information will assist us in understanding who participates (and who doesn't), and how to better target program promotions and scholarships to encourage participation of underrepresented groups.

11 institutions are participating, representing a diverse range of institutions profiles.

The data collection will happen in June 2013. Results will be presented at the AIEC conference in October, and it is anticipated that institutional reports will be available by the end of 2013.

The project has been classified as exempt by the MSU Institutional Review Board (ethics committee). It is still subject to such inclusions as a participation consent form. Individuals will not be identifiable in the results and there are no harmful consequences from participation. An incentive for participation is being offered – an iPad or STA travel voucher. In order to enter the prize draw, respondents will exit the main survey and enter a new system to enter their contact details.

The survey is being distributed through a program called Qualtrics, similar to Survey Monkey.

Design of the study
I am providing you with all of the tools you need to facilitate data collection. This includes the project overview (above), target group, email templates for three email invitations and a timeline. I will connect with you in person (at NAFSA) or by Skype to answer any other questions that arise at your institution. I will be available throughout the study period to assist you.

Study targets: Who to send the invitation to participate to

The targets of the study are graduates who have been working for around three years. Recognizing that there are limitations on graduate records at some institutions, a broader criteria has been set (and can be sorted in the analysis). The criteria for your data set is students who:

1. Have studied abroad
2. Participated in a study abroad program during 2007-2009
3. Was an undergraduate student when they participated in study abroad

Other criteria will be screened during the initial questions (you don't need to worry about these things):

- Has graduated
- Graduated between 2007 and 2012
- Is currently full or part-time employed

As there are screening mechanisms in place, don't worry if your data is not 100% accurate. The survey program will take care of this.

Timeline for data collection

Week of May 20	Study information distributed by email
May 20 to June 7	Davina will check in with institutions by Skype or in person at NAFSA
Week of June 10	Email invitation 1
Week of June 17	Email invitation 2
Week of June 24	Email invitation 3

You are requested to send the invitation to participate to the target group three times over a period of three weeks – one per week for three weeks. The exact day for sending the email is flexible and can be determined by the institution.

I anticipate checking in with each institution between email 2 and 3 to update you on response rates and discuss any issues that may have arisen.

Survey closes July 5.

Preliminary results presented: Week of October 7 (AIEC conference)

Contact Details

Davina Potts
Pottsda1@msu.edu or davina.potts@gmail.com
Skype: davinapotts
Ph: +39 340 605 9798

Email templates
Please use the following templates for each email. Note that you'll need to insert the institution name and contact, and you may also tailor the email with the program name used by your institution (for example, the Griffith University Exchange Program). Let me know if you have any questions.

Email 1 (send week of June 10)
Re: Important study on education abroad for graduates of Australian universities
Dear [insert institution name] Alumni,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on the career outcomes for graduates of Australian universities who participated in an international study experience during their undergraduate degree. As a participant in the [insert institution name] education abroad program, we are contacting you.

The study involves recent graduates from around Australia, and the results will help universities to improve international study opportunities particularly as they support or enhance the career opportunities of graduates. Results of the study will also be made available to the Australian Government.

All respondents who complete the survey will be eligible to enter a prize draw to win an iPad or an STA travel voucher (valued at $539).

To complete the anonymous survey, go to the following link:

https://msucoe.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cUTN9pY4e5Q7Pql

If you have any questions about the project you can contact the Australian Universities International Directors Forum at eo@auidf.org .

Yours sincerely,
[institutional contact name/office]

Email 2 (send week of June 17)

Re: Share your opinion on your career experiences
Dear [insert institution name] Alumni,

Many recent graduates have already responded to this opportunity to tell us how your international study experience relates to your career experiences so far. If you haven't already competed the survey, click the link below.
All respondents who complete the survey will be eligible to enter a prize draw to win an iPad or an STA travel voucher (valued at $539).

The study involves recent graduates from around Australia, and the results will help universities to improve international study opportunities particularly as they support or enhance the career

opportunities of graduates. Results of the study will also be made available to the Australian Government.

To complete the anonymous survey, go to the following link:

https://msucoe.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cUTN9pY4e5Q7Pql

If you have any questions about the project you can contact the Australian Universities International Directors Forum at eo@auidf.org .

Thank you for being part of this important study.
[institutional contact/office signature]

Email 3 (send week of June 24)

Re: Final chance to participate
Attention [institution name] alumni,
You could win an iPad or an STA travel voucher (valued at $539) by completing a survey about your graduate employment experiences.

Many recent graduates have already responded to this opportunity to tell us how your international study experience relates to your career experiences so far.
To complete the anonymous survey, go to the following link:

https://msucoe.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cUTN9pY4e5Q7Pql

The study involves recent graduates from around Australia, and the results will help universities to improve international study opportunities particularly as they support or enhance the career opportunities of graduates. Results of the study will also be made available to the Australian Government.

Good luck in the prize draw! Thank you for participating.

[institutional contact/office signature]

AUIDF Career Outcomes Project Checklist

- ❑ Collect data needed for the target group or liaise with another office on campus. Prepare list for distribution of the email invitation.

- ❑ Check in by Davina on your institution and the study

- ❑ Send first email invitation – week of June 10

- ❑ Notify Davina of the total number of alumni invited to participate

- ❑ Send second email invitation – week of June 17

- ❑ Davina checks in on participation so far, discusses questions or concerns

- ❑ Send third email invitation – week of June 24

  * Survey closes July 5

- ❑ If you are able to collect data on email hits and misses (bounce backs or non-deliveries, for example), please send to Davina

- ❑ Final response rates sent by Davina (FYI only)

Appendix D

List of Variables

Table D.1
List of variables

	Description	Scale
Dependent variables		
Factor 1	Scale variable of factor score for Employability Skills factor	Range -4.32600 – 1.34912
Factor 2	Scale variable of factor score for Career-related aspects	Range -2.62662 – 1.49316
Factor 3	Scale variable of factor score for Host country aspects	Range -2.66982 – 1.67834
Independent variables		
Study Abroad Program variables		
Country of study abroad 1	Categorical variable country of study abroad 1	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Region study abroad 1 (recoded from country list)	Categorical variable region of study abroad 1	1=Asia 2=Continental Europe 3=North America 4=South America 5=UK and Ireland 6=Eastern Europe
Duration of study abroad 1	Categorical variable duration of study abroad 1	1=1 month or less 2=2-3 months 3=4-6 months 4=7-12 months 5=More than 12 months
Duration study abroad 1 (recoded)	Categorical variable duration of study abroad 1 grouped into three categories	1=Short (3 months or less) 2=Medium (4-6 months) 3=Long (7-12 months or more)
Activity of study abroad 1	Categorical variable activity of study abroad 1	1=Academic courses taught at an overseas institution 2=Study tour facilitated or led by home institution 3=Internship, practicum, clinical placement 4=Volunteering/community service 5=Research 6=Double/joint degree 7=Conference 8=Other
Activity study abroad 1 (recoded)	Dichotomous variable activity of study abroad 1 grouped into two categories	1= Academic courses taught at an overseas institution 2=Other (internship, volunteering, research, study tour, double/joint degree, other)
Language study abroad 1	Categorical variable language of	List taken from Australian

Table D.1 (cont'd)

	study abroad 1	standard classification of languages
Country of study abroad 2	Categorical variable country of study abroad 2	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Region study abroad 2 (recoded)	Categorical variable region of study abroad 2	1=Asia 2=Continental Europe 3=North America 4=South America 5=UK and Ireland 6=Eastern Europe
Duration study abroad 2	Categorical variable duration of study abroad 2	1=1 month or less 2=2-3 months 3=4-6 months 4=7-12 months 5=More than 12 months
Activity study abroad 2	Categorical variable activity of study abroad 2	1=Academic courses taught at an overseas institution 2=Study tour facilitated or led by home institution 3=Internship, practicum, clinical placement 4=Volunteering/community service 5=Research 6=Double/joint degree 7=Conference 8=Other
Language study abroad 2	Categorical variable language of study abroad 2	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Country of study abroad 3	Categorical variable country of study abroad 3	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Region study abroad 3 (recoded)	Categorical variable region of study abroad 3	1=Asia 2=Continental Europe 3=North America 4=South America 5=UK and Ireland 6=Eastern Europe
Duration study abroad 3	Categorical variable duration of study abroad 3	1=1 month or less 2=2-3 months 3=4-6 months 4=7-12 months 5=More than 12 months
Activity study abroad 3	Categorical variable activity of study abroad 3	1=Academic courses taught at an overseas institution 2=Study tour facilitated or led by home institution 3=Internship, practicum, clinical placement 4=Volunteering/community service 5=Research 6=Double/joint degree 7=Conference 8=Other

Table D.1 (cont'd)

Language study abroad 3	Categorical variable language of study abroad 3	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Studied abroad in another language	Dichotomous variable language of study abroad all experiences	1=English 0=Not English
Went to same destination twice	Dichotomous variable studied abroad at the same destination twice	1=Yes 0=No
Asia study	Dichotomous variable study in Asia or not (experience 1, 2 or 3)	1=Yes 0=No
Euro study	Dichotomous variable study in Continental Europe or not (experience 1, 2 or 3)	1=Yes 0=No
NA study	Dichotomous variable study in North America or not (experience 1, 2 or 3)	1=Yes 0=No
UK study	Dichotomous variable study in UK and Ireland or not (experience 1, 2 or 3)	1=Yes 0=No
Number of times studied abroad	Categorical variable number of times studied abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three
Studied abroad multiple times	Categorical variable studied abroad multiple times	1=Yes 0=No

Background variables		
Individual characteristics		
Gender	Dichotomous variable gender	1=Female 0=Male
Age	Continuous variable current age	Range 21-30, Other
Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander	Categorical variable representing indigenous background	0=No 1=Yes 2=Don't know
Currently work overseas	Dichotomous variable indicating that respondent works overseas	1=Yes 0=No
Country current employment	Categorical variable country in which the respondent is currently working	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Country current residence	Categorical variable country in which the respondent is currently a resident	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Holds more than one citizenship	Dichotomous variable indicating if respondent has multiple citizenship	1=Yes 0=No
Country of citizenship 1	Categorical variable indicating country of citizenship 1	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Country of citizenship 2	Categorical variable indicating country of citizenship 2	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Country secondary education	Categorical variable country in which secondary education was completed	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Name of high school attended	String variable – high school	Free text box
State/Country of high school	String variable – high school state/country	Free text box
Previous international	Dichotomous variable indicating	1=Yes

Table D.1 (cont'd)

experience	whether the participant has studied, worked or lived abroad in the past	0=No
Previous international study	Dichotomous variable indicating previous international study	1=Yes 0=No
Country previous international study	Categorical variable country in which the respondent previously studied	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Duration previous international study	Categorical variable length of time studying abroad previously	Range 1-12 months, 2–10 or more years
Previous international work	Dichotomous variable indicating previous international work	1=Yes 0=No
Country previous international work	Categorical variable country in which the respondent previously worked	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Duration previous international work	Categorical variable length of time working abroad previously	Range 1-12 months, 2–10 or more years
Previous international residence abroad	Dichotomous variable indicating previous international residence	1=Yes 0=No
Country previous international residence	Categorical variable country in which the respondent previously lived	List taken from Australian standard classification of countries
Duration previous international residence	Categorical variable length of time living abroad previously	Range 1-12 months, 2–10 or more years
Additional information previous experience abroad	String variable – additional information on previous experiences abroad	Free text box
Do you speak a language other than English?	Dichotomous variable indicating that respondents speak another language	1=Yes 0=No
Language 1	Categorical variable language 1	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Language 2	Categorical variable language 2	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Language 3	Categorical variable language 3	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Language 4	Categorical variable language 4	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Language 5	Categorical variable language 5	List taken from Australian standard classification of languages
Mother education	Categorical variable highest level of education of mother	1=10 years or less 2=11-12 years (senior secondary) 3=University bachelor degree 4=Postgraduate degree (Masters, PhD) 5=Don't know/Not applicable
Father education	Categorical variable highest level of education of father	1=10 years or less 2=11-12 years (senior secondary) 3=University bachelor degree 4=Postgraduate degree (Masters,

Table D.1 (cont'd)

		PhD) 5=Don't know/Not applicable
First-generation	Dichotomous variable indicating that respondent is first-generation university graduate	1=Yes 0=No
High school SES	Categorical variable SES classification of high school	1=Low 2=Medium 3=High
High school SES LOW	Dichotomous variable representing if respondent HS is in low SES category	1=Yes 0=No
High school SES MEDIUM	Dichotomous variable representing if respondent HS is in medium SES category	1=Yes 0=No
High school SES HIGH	Dichotomous variable representing if respondent HS is in high SES category	1=Yes 0=No
Final comments	String variable for any other comments to add	Free text box
Education		
Institution	Categorical variable institution attended	1=Institution 1 2=Institution 2 3=Institution 3 4=Institution 4 5=Institution 5 6=Institution 6 7=Institution 7 8=Institution 8 9=Institution 9 10=Institution 10 11=Institution 11
Institution dichotomous 1	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 2	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 3	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 4	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 5	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 6	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 7	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 8	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 9	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 10	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Institution dichotomous 11	Dichotomous variable of institution of enrolment (or not)	1=Yes 0=No
Academic major	Categorical variable major area of	1=Natural and physical sciences

Table D.1 (cont'd)

	study	2=Information technology 3=Engineering and related technologies 4=Architecture and building 5=Health 6=Education 7=Management and commerce 8=Society and culture 9=Creative arts 10=More than one major
Year of completion of undergraduate degree	Categorical variable year of completion of bachelor degree	1=2007 2=2008 3=2009 4=2010 5=2011 6=2012 7=Other
Academic performance	Categorical variable self-assessment of academic performance during bachelor degree	1=Very good 2=Good 3=Fair 4=Poor 5=Very poor
Study mode	Categorical variable of mode of study	1=Full-time 2=Part-time 3=Combination
Study abroad was a compulsory component of degree	Dichotomous variable compulsory study abroad	1=Yes 0=No
How did you finance your tuition (indicate the major form)	Categorical variable type of tuition finance	1=HECS deferred 2=HECS upfront 3=International fee-paying 4=Australian fee-paying 5=Other scholarship/funding
Finance tuition additional information	String variable- additional information	Free text box
Finance study abroad OS Help	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Australian Government scholarship	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Institutional grant/scholarship	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Foundation grant/scholarship	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Bank loan	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Personal funds/savings	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No
Finance study abroad Family support	Dichotomous variable type of study abroad finance (multiple choices possible)	1=Yes 0=No

Table D.1 (cont'd)

Finance study abroad Other	String variable	Free text box
Further study	Categorical variable indicating current enrolment or intention to enroll in a postgraduate program	1=Don't know 2=I am already enrolled in a postgraduate program 3=I am planning to enroll in a postgraduate program
Employment Context		
Current major activity	Categorical variable current major activity (four other options terminate survey)	1=Full-time employed (35 hours per week or more) 2=Self-employed 3=Part-time employed (less than 35 hours per week) 4=Unemployed 5=Full-time study 6=Family care 7=Other
Number of employers since graduation	Categorical variable number of employers since graduation	1=One employer 2=Two employers 3=Three employers 4=Four employers 5=Five or more employers
Organization type	Categorical variable current organization type	1=Private sector 2=Public sector 3=Non-profit
Industry of employment	Categorical variable current industry of employment	1=Agriculture, forestry & fishing 2=Mining 3=Manufacturing 4=Electricity, gas, water supply 5=Construction 6=Wholesale trade 7=Retail trade 8=Accommodation and food services 9=Transport, postal and warehousing 10=Information media and telecommunications 11=Financial and insurance services 12=Rental, hiring and real estate services 13=Administrative and support services 14=Public administration and safety 15=Education and training 16=Healthcare and social assistance 17=Arts and recreation services 18=Other services
Organization size	Categorical variable size of current employment organization	1=1-19 2=20-100 3=101-500 4=More than 500

Table D.1 (cont'd)

Organization scope	Categorical variable scope of current employment organization	1=Local 2=Regional 3=National 4=International
Organization scope international	Dichotomous variable of international organization or not	1=Yes 0=No
Type of position	Categorical variable type of employment position	1=Manager 2=Professional 3=Technician and trade worker 4=Community and personal services worker 5=Clerical and administrative worker 6=Other type of position

Table D.2

Questionnaire items

Main questions		
Q1. What criteria were important to you when seeking your first job?		
Applying knowledge and skills acquired while studying	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
High Income	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Accomplishing worthwhile professional activities	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Enough spare time for other activities (life balance)	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Possibility of personal development	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Possibility to explore own ideas	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Well recognized professional status	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance

Table D.2 (cont'd)

	employment	3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
High employment security	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Applying foreign language skills	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Working in a foreign country	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Working in an organization with an international scope	Ordinal variable of the factors important when seeking employment	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Q2. How important, according to you, were the following aspects for your employer when recruiting you?		
Field of study	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Grades	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Work experience acquired during course of study	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Reputation of the Australian university you attended	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Your experience/s abroad	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Country/region of your experience/s abroad	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance

Table D.2 (cont'd)

		3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Your foreign language proficiency	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Your references	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Your personality	Ordinal variable of the employer recruitment criteria	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Q3. Have you had a professional international mobility experience since graduation?		
I have considered working abroad	Dichotomous variable of international professional mobility since graduation	1=Yes 0=No
I have sought employment abroad	Dichotomous variable of international professional mobility since graduation	1=Yes 0=No
I have actually received an offer to work abroad	Dichotomous variable of international professional mobility since graduation	1=Yes 0=No
I have actually had regular employment abroad since graduation	Dichotomous variable of international professional mobility since graduation	1=Yes 0=No
I have actually been sent abroad by my employer on work assignments	Dichotomous variable of international professional mobility since graduation	1=Yes 0=No
Comments section 1	String variable	Free text box
Q4. To what extent does the organization, institution or company with which you are associated do business or have contact with other countries?		
With other countries in general	Ordinal variable of international contact of organization	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3-Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently
With the host country of study abroad	Ordinal variable of specific international contact with country of study abroad	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3-Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently

Table D.2 (cont'd)

With host region of study abroad	Ordinal variable of specific international contact with region of study abroad	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3-Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently
Q5. How important do you consider the following competencies for doing your current work?		
Knowledge of other countries (eg. economical, sociological, legal knowledge)	Ordinal variable of perceived importance of competencies for current work	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour in culture and society, lifestyles etc	Ordinal variable of perceived importance of competencies for current work	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Working with people from different cultural backgrounds	Ordinal variable of perceived importance of competencies for current work	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Communicating in foreign languages	Ordinal variable of perceived importance of competencies for current work	1=Unimportant 2=Of little importance 3=Moderately important 4=Important 5=Very important
Q6. To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following		
Using firsthand professional knowledge of the host country	Ordinal variable of use of international skills & knowledge	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently 6=Not applicable
Using firsthand general knowledge of host country culture/society	Ordinal variable of use of international skills & knowledge	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently 6=Not applicable
Professional travel to host country	Ordinal variable of use of international skills & knowledge	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently 6=Not applicable
Using the language of the host country orally (where language	Ordinal variable of use of international skills & knowledge	1=Not at all 2=Rarely

Table D.2 (cont'd)

other than English)		3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently 6=Not applicable
Using the language of the host country in reading and writing (where language other than English)	Ordinal variable of use of international skills & knowledge	1=Not at all 2=Rarely 3=Occasionally 4=Frequently 5=Very frequently 6=Not applicable
Comments section 2	String variable	Free text box
Q7. What impact do you feel that your study abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?		
Obtaining first job	Ordinal variable of impact of study abroad on employment	1=Very negative impact 2=Somewhat negative impact 3=Moderate impact 4=Positive impact 5=Very positive impact
Type of work tasks involved	Ordinal variable of impact of study abroad on employment	1=Very negative impact 2=Somewhat negative impact 3=Moderate impact 4=Positive impact 5=Very positive impact
Income level	Ordinal variable of impact of study abroad on employment	1=Very negative impact 2=Somewhat negative impact 3=Moderate impact 4=Positive impact 5=Very positive impact
Long-term career prospects	Ordinal variable of impact of study abroad on employment	1=Very negative impact 2=Somewhat negative impact 3=Moderate impact 4=Positive impact 5=Very positive impact
Q8. From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider your study abroad worthwhile with regard to the following?		
Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Relevance to your job/ occupation	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Interpersonal and communications skills	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile

Table D.2 (cont'd)

		4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Career prospects	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Increasing your motivation and passion for your career direction	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Foreign language proficiency	Ordinal variable of perception of personal value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Teamwork/ability to work with others	Ordinal variable of perception of general value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
New perspectives on your home country	Ordinal variable of perception of personal value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Problem solving and analytical skills	Ordinal variable of perception of personal value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Knowledge and understanding of the host country	Ordinal variable of perception of personal value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Maturity and personal development	Ordinal variable of perception of personal value of study abroad	1=Not worthwhile at all 2=Somewhat worthwhile 3=Moderately worthwhile 4=Worthwhile 5=Very worthwhile
Q9. Of the areas rated in the previous question, in which areas do you believe your education abroad experience has provided you with the greatest benefit? Please rank your top 3		
Enhancement of academic and professional knowledge	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Relevance to your job/	Categorical variable of general	1=One

Table D.2 (cont'd)

occupation	value of study abroad	2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Interpersonal and communications skills	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Career prospects	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Increasing your motivation and passion for your career direction	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Foreign language proficiency	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Teamwork/ability to work with others	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
New perspectives on your home country	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Problem solving and analytical skills	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Knowledge and understanding of the host country	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Maturity and personal development	Categorical variable of general value of study abroad	1=One 2=Two 3=Three 0=No ranking
Comments section 3	String variable	Free text box

Appendix E

Descriptive Statistics

Table E.1

Age of participants

Age	Frequency	Percent
23	14	6.2
24	39	17.3
25	45	19.9
26	44	19.5
27	28	12.4
28	25	11.1
29	8	3.5
30	7	3.1
31	7	3.1
Other	7	3.1
Total	224	100%

Table E.2

Country of current employment

Country	Frequency	Percent
Australia	186	83.0
Japan	6	2.7
UK	6	2.7
USA	5	2.2
Canada	3	1.3
Singapore	3	1.3
China	2	0.9
Italy	2	0.9
South Korea	2	0.9
Vietnam	2	0.9
Colombia	1	0.4
France	1	0.4
Germany	1	0.4
New Caledonia	1	0.4
Norway	1	0.4
Taiwan	1	0.4
Tanzania	1	0.4
Total	224	100%

Table E.3

Self-rated academic achievement

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very good	114	51.1
Good	93	41.7
Fair	14	6.3
Poor	2	.9
Total	223	100%

Table E.4

Interest in further study

Response	Frequency	Percent
Don’t know	122	55.5
I am already enrolled	47	21.3
I am planning to enroll	51	23.2
Total	220	100%

Table E.5

Region of study (experience 3)

Region	Frequency	Percent
Asia	8	61.5
Continental Europe	2	15.4
North America	2	15.4
UK & Ireland	1	7.7
Total	13	100%

Table E.6

Mode of study (experience 3)

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Academic courses taught at an overseas institution	3	25.0
Study tour facilitated or led by home institution	3	25.0
Internship, practicum, clinical placement	2	16.7
Volunteering/community service	3	25.0
Research	1	8.3
Total	12	100%

Table E.7

Duration of study (experience 3)

Duration	Frequency	Percent
One month or less	4	33.3
2-3 months	3	25.0
4-6 months	3	25.0
7-12 months	1	8.3
More than 12 months	1	8.3
Total	12	100%

Table E.8

Language of study (experience 3)

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	8	66.7
Mandarin	2	16.7
German	1	8.3
Other Eastern Asian Language	1	8.3
Total	12	100%

Table E.9

Studied in a language other than English (all experiences)

Language	Frequency	Percent
Yes	68	30.4
No	156	69.6
Total	224	100%

Table E.10

Descriptive statistics all variables

Study Abroad Program variables					
	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Country of study abroad 1	225	9	232	137.46	79.731
Duration of study abroad 1	225	1	5	3.27	.670
Activity of study abroad 1	225	1	8	1.19	.820
Language study abroad 1	225	1	21	4.21	5.829
Country of study abroad 2	54	9	237	131.33	74.841
Duration study abroad 2	50	1	5	2.52	1.266
Activity study abroad 2	54	1	8	2.13	1.802
Language study abroad 2	47	1	5	5.38	6.694
Country of study abroad 3	13	34	232	130.85	71.055
Duration study abroad 3	12	1	5	2.33	1.303
Activity study abroad 3	12	1	5	2.67	1.371
Language study abroad 3	12	1	138	15.42	39.035
Studied abroad in another language	68				
Asia study	56				
Euro study	73				
NA study	75				
UK study	47				

Individual characteristics					
	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender	224	1	2	1.33	.473
Age	224	2	11	6.04	2.077
Aboriginal or Torres Straight Islander	223	2	2	2.00	.000
Currently work overseas	225				
Country current employment	224	1	241	25.78	63.058
Country current residence	224	1	241	26.19	63.892

Table E.10 (cont'd)

Holds more than one citizenship	215				
Country of citizenship 1	214	1	248	9.44	36.769
Country of citizenship 2	52	11	240	173.31	74.367
Country secondary education	223	1	248	10.24	38.986
Previous international experience	69	1	2	1.69	.463
Previous international study	41	1	2		
Previous international work	24				
Previous international residence abroad	41				
Do you speak a language other than English?	223	1	2	1.48	.501
Language 1	115				
Language 2	35				
Language 3	13				
Language 4	4				
Language 5	0				
Mother education	218	1	4	2.47	.907
Father education	217	1	4	2.56	1.017
First-generation	219	1	2		
High school SES	188	1	3		
High school SES LOW	22				
High school SES MEDIUM	69				
High school SES HIGH	97				

Education					
	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Institution	226	1	11	6.19	3.035
Academic major	220				
Year of completion of undergraduate degree	226	1	5	3.46	1.116
Academic performance	223	1	3	1.56	.626

Table E.10 (cont'd)

Study mode	223	1	3	1.15	.515
Study abroad required component of degree	173	1	2	1.92	.274
How did you finance your tuition (indicate the major form)	223	1	5	1.57	1.063
Finance study abroad OS Help	62				
Finance study abroad Australian Government scholarship	36				
Finance study abroad Institutional grant/scholarship	128				
Finance study abroad Foundation grant/scholarship	14				
Finance study abroad Bank loan	15				
Finance study abroad Personal funds/savings	180				
Finance study abroad Family support	135				
Finance study abroad Other	25				
Further study	220	1	3	1.68	.828

Employment Context					
	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Current major activity	226	1	3	1.27	.633
Number of employers since graduation	226	1	5	2.06	1.090
Organization type	226	1	3	1.48	.668
Industry of employment	213	2	18	13.31	5.345
Organization size	226	1	4	2.80	1.215
Organization scope	226	1	4	2.91	1.098
Type of position	226	1	6	2.58	1.465

Table E.10 (cont'd)

Dependent variables					
	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Employability skills	219	-4.32600	1.34912	.0000	1.0000
Career-related aspects	219	-2.62662	1.49316	.0000	1.0000
Host country aspects	219	-2.66982	1.67834	.0000	1.0000

Descriptive Statistics Main Survey Questions

Table E.11

Q1. What criteria were important to you when seeking employment?

Criteria	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Possibility of personal development	226	2	5	4.42	.670
Accomplishing worthwhile professional activities	226	2	5	4.37	.688
Enough spare time for other activities (life balance)	226	1	5	4.00	.909
Applying knowledge and skills acquired while studying	226	1	5	3.94	.867
Possibility to explore own ideas	226	2	5	3.89	.875
Well recognized professional status	226	1	5	3.79	.947
High employment security	225	1	5	3.60	1.061
High income	226	1	5	3.40	.890
Working for an organization with an international scope	225	1	5	3.24	1.319
Working in a foreign country	225	1	5	2.91	1.277
Applying foreign language skills	226	1	5	2.15	1.275

Table E.12

Q2. How important, according to you, were the following aspects for your employer in recruiting you?

Aspect	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Your personality	224	2	5	4.45	.688
Field of study	223	1	5	4.05	1.043
References or recommendations	225	1	5	3.68	1.034
Work experience acquired during course of study	224	1	5	3.58	1.122
Your experience/s abroad	224	1	5	3.26	1.110
Grades	225	1	5	3.20	1.161
Reputation of the Australian university you attended	225	1	5	2.84	1.126
Country/region of experience/s abroad	224	1	5	2.69	1.141
Foreign language proficiency	224	1	5	2.00	1.181

Table E.13

Q4. To what extent does the organization, institution or company with which you are associated do business or have contact with other countries?

Contact with other countries	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
With other countries in general	226	1	5	3.42	1.422
With the host region of your study abroad	225	1	5	2.67	1.505
With the host country of your study abroad	224	1	5	2.54	1.439

Table E.14

Q5. How important do you consider the following competencies for doing your current work?

Competency	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Working with people from different cultural backgrounds	226	1	5	4.08	.993
Knowledge/understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behavior in culture and society, lifestyle etc.	226	1	5	3.50	1.193
Knowledge of other countries (E.g. Economy, society, legal knowledge)	226	1	5	3.08	1.214
Communicating in foreign languages	226	1	5	2.32	1.336

Table E.15

Q6. To what extent do the responsibilities of your work involve the following:

Work tasks	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Using firsthand general knowledge of my host country culture/society	215	1	5	2.33	1.292
Using firsthand professional knowledge of my host country	217	1	5	2.27	1.270
Using the language of my host country in reading and writing (where language is not English)	190	1	5	1.85	1.317
Using the language of my host country orally (where language is not English)	188	1	5	1.85	1.324
Professional travel to my host country	210	1	5	1.73	1.220

Table E.16

Q7. What impact do you feel that your education abroad experience has had with regard to your employment?

Category	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Obtaining your first job	226	1	5	3.88	.887
Long-term career prospects	226	1	5	3.36	.766
Type of work tasks	226	1	5	3.14	.645
Income level	226	1	5	3.77	.864

Table E.17

Q8. From your point of view today, to what extent do you consider your education abroad experience worthwhile with regard to the following:

Category	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Maturity and personal development	224	1	5	4.66	.651
Interpersonal & communication skills	226	2	5	4.42	.752
New perspectives of your home country	226	1	5	4.20	.914
Knowledge and understanding of my host country	225	1	5	4.19	.937
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	226	1	5	3.98	1.037
Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge	226	1	5	3.95	.985
Teamwork/ability to work with others	226	1	5	3.85	.986
Career prospects	226	1	5	3.82	1.078
Problem solving & analytical skills	225	1	5	3.75	1.005
Relevance to your job/occupation	225	1	5	3.44	1.160
Foreign language proficiency	224	1	5	2.94	1.535

Table E.18

Q9. Of the areas rated in the previous question, in which areas do you believe your education abroad experience has provided you with the greatest benefit? Please rank your top 3

Category	*n*	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Maturity and personal development	174	1	3	1.713	.825
Interpersonal & communication skills	114	1	3	1.983	.787
New perspectives of your home country	63	1	3	2.476	.618
Knowledge and understanding of my host country	42	1	3	2.143	.751
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	76	1	3	2.000	.894
Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge	49	1	3	2.204	.841
Teamwork/ability to work with others	29	1	3	2.207	.675
Career prospects	33	1	3	1.939	.788
Problem solving & analytical skills	33	1	3	2.364	.603
Relevance to your job/occupation	20	1	3	2.150	.745
Foreign language proficiency	45	1	3	1.733	.809

Appendix F

Crosstabs

Table F.1

Region of experience 1 and activity

		For this international experience, what was the main activity?				
		Academic courses	Study tour	Internship, practicum, clinical placement	Double/ joint degree	Other
Region of experience 1	Asia	34	4	3	2	1
	Cont. Europe	62	3	2	0	0
	North America	65	0	2	1	0
	South America	3	0	0	0	0
	UK & Ireland	41	0	0	0	0
Total		205	7	7	3	1

Table F.2

Region experience 2 and activity

		For experience 2, what was the main activity?					
		Academic courses	Study tour	Internship, practicum, clinical placement	Volunteer/ community service	Research	Other
Region of experience 2	Asia	9	6	2	1	1	1
	Cont. Europe	8	1	2	0	1	0
	North America	5	1	0	0	0	0
	South America	0	0	0	1	0	1
	UK & Ireland	6	2	2	0	0	0
	Eastern Europe	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total		29	11	6	2	2	2

Table F.3

Region experience 3 and activity

		For experience 3, what was the main activity?					Total
		Academic courses	Study tour	Internship, practicum, clinical placement	Volunteer/ community service	Research	
Region of experience 3	Asia	1	2	0	3	1	7
	Cont. Europe	0	1	1	0	0	2
	North America	1	0	1	0	0	2
	UK & Ireland	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		3	3	2	3	1	12

Table F.4

Region of experience 2 and duration

		Experience 2 Duration			Total
		Short	Medium	Long	
Region of study experience 2	Asia	12	3	4	19
	Cont. Europe	3	5	3	11
	North America	0	5	1	6
	South America	0	0	2	2
	UK & Ireland	6	3	1	10
	Eastern Europe	1	1	0	2
Total		22	17	11	50

Table F.5

Region of experience 3 and duration

		Experience 3 Duration			Total
		Short	Medium	Long	
Region of study experience 3	Asia	5	1	1	7
	Cont. Europe	1	1	0	2
	North America	1	1	0	2
	UK & Ireland	0	0	1	1
Total		7	3	2	12

Table F.6

Duration of experience by country of study – Experience 1

		Duration experience 1			Total
		Short	Medium	Long	
Experience 1 Country	Argentina	0	1	0	1
	Austria	0	3	3	6
	Canada	0	17	3	20
	Chile	0	1	0	1
	China	7	4	2	13
	Denmark	0	5	4	9
	Ecuador	0	1	1	2
	France	0	4	5	9
	Germany	0	6	3	9
	Hong Kong	0	2	0	2
	India	0	1	0	1
	Italy	3	4	3	10
	Japan	0	5	13	18
	Korea, South	0	0	1	1
	Malaysia	0	2	1	3
	Malta	0	1	0	1
	Mexico	0	3	2	5
	Netherlands	0	2	2	4
	Norway	0	2	0	2
	Philippines	0	2	0	2
	Singapore	3	1	0	4
	Slovenia	0	1	0	1
	Spain	0	2	3	5
	Sweden	0	7	4	11
	Switzerland	1	0	0	1
	UK	0	31	9	40
	USA	2	27	15	44
Total		16	135	74	225

Appendix G

Analysis of Data–PCA and Independent T-test Results

Table G.1

Structure Matrix – PCA Question 8

Item	Employability skills (1)	Career-related aspects (2)	Host country aspects (3)
New perspectives on your home country	.793		
Maturity & personal development	.757		
Problem solving & analytical skills	.799	.490	
Teamwork/ability to work with others	.757	.458	
Interpersonal & communication skills	.727	.500	
Relevance to your job/occupation		.831	
Career prospects	.449	.846	
Enhancement of academic & professional knowledge		.754	.473
Increasing your motivation & passion for your career direction	.441	.788	
Knowledge & understanding of host country	.512	.441	.675
Foreign language proficiency			.916

Table G.2

Independent t-test results for program characteristics and benefit factors

Study Abroad Program Characteristics					
Employability skills	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Destination – Asia/ other	.176	217	.860	.028	.156
Destination - Continental Europe/ other	1.634	214	.104	.235	.144
Destination - North America/ other	.999	167.622	.319	.134	.134
Destination – UK & Ireland/ other	-2.178	215	.030*	-.362	.166
Mode of study – academic classes or year/ other	.067	217	.947	.016	.247
Language – Foreign language/ English	1.169	215	.244	.172	.147
Abroad multiple times	1.760	217	.080	.278	.158
Career-related aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Destination – Asia/ other	2.653	111.347	.009*	.372	.140
Destination - Continental Europe/ other	.435	214	.664	.063	.144
Destination - North America/ other	.400	214	.689	.058	.146
Destination – UK & Ireland/ other	-1.869	215	.063	-.312	.167
Mode of study – academic classes/ other	-.304	217	.762	-.075	.247
Language – Foreign language/ English	2.150	145.409	.033*	.298	.138
Abroad multiple times	2.993	217	.003*	.467	.156
Host country aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Destination – Asia/ other	4.991	217	.000*	.738	.138
Destination - Continental Europe/ other	1.892	214	.060	.271	.143

Table G.2 (cont'd)

Destination - North America/ other	-1.637	214	.103	-.237	.145
Destination – UK & Ireland/ other	-6.361	80.157	.000*	-.899	.141
Mode of study – academic classes/ other	-.970	217	.333	-.239	.246
Language – Foreign language/ English	8.790	156.592	.000*	1.047	.119
Abroad multiple times	2.593	217	.010*	.407	.157

* denotes significance $p < .05$

Table G.3

Independent t-test results for background characteristics and benefit factors

Background characteristics					
Employability skills	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Gender	2.293	215	.023*	.330	.144
Speaks a language other than English	.711	214	.478	.097	.137
Holds more than one citizenship	.586	206	.558	.095	.162
Lived abroad before HE	1.232	214	.219	.181	.147
First-generation university student	1.211	210	.227	.175	.145
Career-related aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Gender	-.172	215	.864	-.025	.146
Speaks a language other than English	.807	197.431	.420	.111	.138
Holds more than one citizenship	1.095	206	.275	.176	.161
Lived abroad before HE	.833	214	.406	.122	.147
First-generation university student	-1.441	210	.151	-.209	.145
Host country aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Gender	-1.856	215	.065	-.269	.145
Speaks a language other than English	5.909	214	.000*	.753	.128
Holds more than one citizenship	.010	206	.992	.002	.160
Lived abroad before HE	3.395	214	.001*	.489	.143
First-generation university student	.577	210	.564	.084	.146

* denotes significance p <.05

Table G.4

Independent t-test results for study characteristics and benefit factors

Study characteristics					
Employability skills	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Institution 1	.455	213	.649	.142	.311
Institution 2	-.685	217	.494	-.130	.189
Institution 5	-.273	217	.785	-.059	.217
Institution 6	.559	217	.577	.150	.268
Institution 7	-.079	217	.937	-.023	.287
Institution 8	1.086	217	.278	.352	.324
Institution 9	1.739	217	.083	.397	.228
Institution 10	-2.084	217	.038*	-.307	.147
Institution 11	1.163	10.883	.270	.393	.338
Compulsory study abroad	1.470	166	.143	.389	.265
Career-related aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Institution 1	1.624	213	.106	.504	.310
Institution 2	-.057	217	.954	-.011	.189
Institution 5	-.723	217	.470	-1.57	.217
Institution 6	1.673	217	.716	.098	.268
Institution 7	2.008	217	.046*	.570	.284
Institution 8	.120	217	.905	.039	.324
Institution 9	-.269	217	.788	-.062	.230
Institution 10	-1.675	217	.095	-.247	.148
Institution 11	.594	217	.553	.184	.310
Compulsory study abroad	2.607	20.287	.017*	.473	.275
Host country aspects	*t*	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Institution 1	.376	213	.707	.117	.311
Institution 2	2.012	217	.045*	.377	.188
Institution 5	.143	217	.887	.031	.217
Institution 6	.365	217	.716	.098	.268

Table G.4 (cont'd)

Institution 7	-.979	217	.329	-.280	.286
Institution 8	.860	217	.391	.279	.324
Institution 9	.614	217	.540	.141	.230
Institution 10	-564	217	.574	-.083	.149
Institution 11	-.611	217	.542	-.189	.310
Compulsory study abroad	.108	1.978	.050*	.550	.278

* denotes significance p <.05

Table G.5

Independent t-test results for current employment context and benefit factors

Employment context					
Employability skills	t	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Works for an international organization	1.284	216	.201	.177	.138
Works for a national organization	.875	217	.382	.143	.163
Works for a regional organization	-.745	217	.457	-.120	.161
Works for a local organization	-1.954	217	.052	-.376	.193
Currently works abroad	-.515	216	.607	-.092	.179
Career-related aspects	t	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Works for an international organization	4.207	214.319	.000*	.535	.127
Works for a national organization	-.823	217	.412	-.134	.163
Works for a regional organization	-2.434	217	0.16*	-.387	.159
Works for a local organization	-1.541	217	.125	-.298	.193
Currently works abroad	1.623	216	.106	.289	.178
Host country aspects	t	df	Sig.	Mean diff.	SE of diff.
Works for an international organization	2.994	216	.003*	.405	.135
Works for a national organization	-.536	217	.592	-.088	.164
Works for a regional organization	-1.497	217	.136	-.240	.160
Works for a local organization	-1.787	217	.075	-.345	.193
Currently works abroad	1.845	216	.066	.328	.178

* denotes significance p <.05

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