

ROUTLEDGE FOCUS

Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific Through the New Colombo Plan

Impacts, Challenges, and
Regional Engagement

LY THI TRAN, HUYEN BUI,
AND DIEP THI BICH NGUYEN



Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific Through the New Colombo Plan

This book focuses on Australian students' engagement and learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan (NCP), the Australian Government's flagship initiative for student mobility and public diplomacy.

By analysing the experiences, tensions, and both individual and societal impacts of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific, the book responds to the pressing need for more nuanced understandings of the short- and long-term effects of such study-abroad programs. It also discusses critical issues including geopolitics, access and equity, structural imbalances in Global North–South partnerships, and tensions shaped by neoliberal, postcolonial, and consumerist forces in study-abroad contexts. Drawing on a robust theoretical framework and a large-scale, multi-dimensional, and longitudinal research project, the book offers practical recommendations to strengthen study-abroad student engagement and learning in the Indo-Pacific. The research foregrounds diverse perspectives from students, alumni, host communities, academics, mobility professionals and government representatives.

By examining mobility from the Global North to the Global South, this book makes a distinctive contribution to the field of international education, highlighting the intersection of education and public diplomacy through the lens of student mobility. It will be of interest to practitioners and administrators, policy-makers, and researchers in international education, public diplomacy, and intercultural development.

Ly Thi Tran is Professor in the School of Education and Research for Educational Impact (REDI) Centre, Deakin University, Australia.

Huyen Bui is Transnational Education (TNE) Manager for Deakin University, Australia.

Diep Thi Bich Nguyen is Lecturer in the School of Education, Deakin University, Australia.

Routledge Research in International and Comparative Education

This is a series that offers a global platform to engage scholars in continuous academic debate on key challenges and the latest thinking on issues in the fast-growing field of International and Comparative Education.

Titles in the series include:

Scrutinising the Nordic Dimension in Education

Myths, Realities, and Integration Efforts in Europe's Nordic Region

Edited by John Benedicto Krejsler

Learning for Livelihoods in the Global South

Theoretical and Methodological Lenses on Skills and the Informal Sector

Edited by Lesley Powell, Adam Cooper, Trent Brown and Simon McGrath

Transnational Education

Bridging Borders, Transforming Futures

Edited by Rozilini Mary Fernandez-Chung and Ranjit Singh Gill

International(-ised) Students in East and Southeast Asia

Towards a New Conceptualisation

Edited by Aneta Hayes and Sihui Wang

Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific Through the New Colombo Plan

Impacts, Challenges, and Regional Engagement

Ly Thi Tran, Huyen Bui, and Diep Thi Bich Nguyen

For more information about this series, please visit: <https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Research-in-International-and-Comparative-Education/book-series/RRICE>

Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific Through the New Colombo Plan

**Impacts, Challenges, and Regional
Engagement**

**Ly Thi Tran, Huyen Bui, and
Diep Thi Bich Nguyen**



ROUTLEDGE



Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2026
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2026 Ly Thi Tran, Huyen Bui, and Diep Thi Bich Nguyen

The right of Ly Thi Tran, Huyen Bui, and Diep Thi Bich Nguyen to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 International license.

Any third party material in this book is not included in the OA Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

ISBN: 978-1-032-98199-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-02455-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-61179-0 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003611790

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Authors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>x</i>
1 Study-abroad trends and Australian students' mobility to the Indo-Pacific	1
2 Key issues in study abroad	24
3 The diversity of Australian students' motivations in study abroad in the Indo-Pacific	44
4 Understanding the diverse challenges faced by Australian students studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific	63
5 Study abroad in the Indo-Pacific: Student development and community impacts from the perspectives of students, academics, and professional staff from home and host countries	84
6 Challenges and tensions in study-abroad programs for Australian students in the Indo-Pacific: Insights from academics, practitioners, and host communities	109

vi *Contents*

7	Rethinking outbound student mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Pathways, policy, and practice implications and future directions	129
---	---	-----

	<i>Glossary</i>	145
--	-----------------	-----

	<i>Index</i>	148
--	--------------	-----

Tables

3.1	Demographics of respondents	48
3.2	EFA factor loadings (standardised estimates) for study abroad motivation	51
3.3	KMO and Bartlett's test	51
3.4	Comparison of means on personal development and employability motivation	52
3.5	Comparison of means of personal development items	53
3.6	Comparison of means of motivation on academic interest and foreign language skills	54
3.7	ANOVA analysis results	55
3.8	Tukey post hoc test results	55
4.1	ANOVA analysis results	70
4.2	Tukey post hoc test results	72
4.3	Summary of statistically significant differences between the groups	74

Figures

1.1	Survey participants' disciplines	16
3.1	Students' motivations for NCP participation ($n = 1,131$)	50
3.2	Motivation mean score for Indo-Pacific studying abroad ($n = 1,131$)	50
4.1	Challenges in studying abroad	68
4.2	Mean score of perceived challenges for Indo-Pacific study abroad	69
5.1	Impacts on students' personal and intercultural development	86
5.2	Translation of the Indo-Pacific experiences into action	86
5.3	Increase of participating students' interest in the Indo-Pacific ($n = 1,181$)	96

Authors

Ly Thi Tran (PhD) is Professor in the School of Education and Research for Educational Impact (REDI) Centre, Deakin University, Australia. Her research focuses on international education, student mobilities, graduate employability, and the education-work-migration nexus. Her latest books include *East and Southeast perspectives Asian on the internationalisation of higher education* and *Internationalisation of the Curriculum: A Comparative Perspective across Australian and Vietnamese Universities*. Ly was named as one of Australia and ASEAN 'Top 50' voices on international education 2023 by the PIENews. She received the Inaugural Melbourne Asia Game Changer Award and the Inaugural Shining Star in Research Award in the Noam Chomsky Global Connections Awards.

Huyen Bui (PhD) is currently Transnational Education (TNE) Manager, Deakin University, Australia. Huyen holds a PhD in business and a Master's of Marketing. Huyen's career has developed at the intersection of academic and industry expertise in international education with over 15 years of experience working in international education in Australia and overseas. Her research interests include student mobility, international marketing in higher education, international student acculturation, university support services for international students, international graduate employability, and transnational education.

Diep Thi Bich Nguyen (PhD) is Lecturer in the School of Education, Deakin University, Australia. She has extensive teaching and research experience in Australian and Vietnamese universities. Her PhD focuses on capacity building for academic staff in international education. She has contributed to various research projects funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Aus4skills, the Australian Research Council, and the City of Melbourne. Her areas of research include international education, international student support, student mobility, graduate employability, teacher and academic staff capacity building, digital transformation in higher education, and geopolitics of international education.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the participants from Australia and the Indo-Pacific for their willingness to contribute to this research project and share their valuable insights. These help us build the evidence-based recommendations to inform and strengthen policies and practices that facilitate Australian students' study abroad in the Indo-Pacific. We also extend our deep thanks to Trevor Goddard, Huong Phan, Alam Ikhlas, Mark Rahimi, Truc Le and Cuong Hoang for their assistance with the project. We appreciate the assistance and support of Kirsty Hardwick, Maddie Gray, Stuti Das and Sathyasri Kalyanasundaram throughout the editorial process of this book.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our families, friends, and colleagues in Australia and across the Indo-Pacific for their ongoing support and encouragement during the decade research on the New Colombo Plan and the writing of this book.

We dedicate this book to our children – Chi Nguyen, Nhan Nguyen, Nick Vo, Daniel Vo, Khoi Dang and Trang Dang – and to the young generation of Australians who are eager to learn beyond borders and expand their horizons across the Indo-Pacific. We hope you embrace every opportunity to study, live and engage in this vibrant and diverse region. These experiences can be life-changing, fostering human-to-human, culture-to-culture, and country-to-country connections that strengthen understanding and collaboration between Australia and its Indo-Pacific neighbours. Your Indo-Pacific learning and engagement can help shape a more empathetic, inclusive, connected and peaceful future.

We wish to acknowledge the funding provided by the Australian Research Council through the Future Fellowship scheme (Grant No. FT170100101), which made this research possible.

1 Study-abroad trends and Australian students' mobility to the Indo-Pacific

Introduction

Universities worldwide use study abroad as a key element in their internationalisation agenda that aims to help students enhance academic, professional and personal growth, global outlooks, intercultural understandings, and employability. At the institutional level, study abroad is adopted as a vehicle to complement and strengthen transnational education and partnerships, curriculum internationalisation, student recruitment, and institutional profile in target countries. Government has also increasingly regarded study abroad as a tool for regional engagement and public diplomacy. Study abroad often refers to a form of outbound mobility in which students gain international experience as part of their study program while remaining enrolled in their home institution. It can also be referred to as intra-degree mobility, non-degree seeking mobility, learning abroad, or education abroad. Study-abroad opportunities may include credit or non-credit mobility programs, study tours, exchanges, internships, practicums, language training, volunteer work, summer schools, research, or mentorships.

Outbound student mobility to the Indo-Pacific has been adopted by the Australian government as a strategic mechanism to engage with and maintain long-lasting ties with the region. Public diplomacy goals embedded in Australian students' study abroad – particularly in the Indo-Pacific – have become priorities of the Australian government. Australia is undergoing a reform in outbound mobility, driven by strong government priority and growing efforts from universities to use outbound mobility as a key tool for internationalisation. However, concerns are emerging regarding issues of access and equity related to the types and length of mobility being promoted. If issues of underrepresentation and unequal access are not addressed, study abroad will exacerbate existing societal inequalities, failing to fulfil the vision of internationalisation as a means for individual, institutional and social development, and for a more equitable society, and greater regional engagement.

Australia's future is increasingly connected with the Indo-Pacific. About 80% of Australia's trade and a majority of its largest services export of over \$51 billion (Department of Education, 2024), international education, are with

2 *Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific*

this region. Preparing young Australians to learn about the people, cultures, and societies as well as professional practices of the Indo-Pacific is critical to Australia's economy and relationships with the region. Study abroad in the region has been identified in a range of government policies as a mechanism to lift young Australians' Indo-Pacific capabilities and enhance their experiences related to the region (Australian Government, 2017, 2021a, n.d.). Against this backdrop, the Australian government introduced the New Colombo Plan in 2014 as a signature initiative aimed to strengthen knowledge about the Indo-Pacific among Australian youth and deepen Australia's connection with the region.

The New Colombo Plan serves as a prime example of North-to-South outbound mobility, or reverse mobility, where students from a developed country in the Global North are given the opportunity to study, undertake internships, and experience life in the Indo-Pacific region, which is regarded as part of the Global South, with many former colonised countries. The NCP marked the shift in Australia's student mobility agenda from traditional Anglophone destinations to Indo-Pacific countries (Tran & Do, 2024). In the past, study-abroad programs for students from more economically developed countries to less developed ones typically took the form of gap years, exchanges, service learning, and volunteering. However, Australia has significantly scaled up this trend, making it a national priority and formalising the nexus of outbound student mobility and public diplomacy. Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific can be seen as a form of de-colonisation mobility. However, this de-colonisation mobility trend needs to be discussed taking into account critical issues such as commodification, neoliberalism, postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, and environmental sustainability (see further discussion in chapters 2 & 7).

This book focuses on the New Colombo Plan and highlights the interplay of human development, institutional internationalisation, and public diplomacy in study abroad. The book is unique compared to the majority of studies on student mobility, which primarily focus on South-to-North student flows, such as students from Indo-Pacific countries like China, India, Vietnam, and Indonesia, who move to Anglophone destinations like Australia, the UK, the US, and Canada. It also stands apart from existing literature by examining the impacts of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region, not only on individual students but also on institutions, as well as the broader community and society.

The book reports the findings from a multi-method longitudinal project on Australian students' learning in and engagement with the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. The book draws on multiple data sources from a research project involving in-country fieldwork and observations, policy analysis, a national survey of 1,371 students and alumni and 298 interviews with students and alumni, academic program leaders, mobility practitioners, host communities, third party providers, and government representatives in Australia and host Indo-Pacific countries (Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021).

The book provides evidence about the potential benefits of study abroad in the Indo-Pacific to students' academic, intercultural, professional, and personal development; to institutional relationships; and to home and host communities. These impacts challenge traditional assumptions about student mobility, which have typically been dominated by flows from the Global South to the Global North. Within this frame, Western knowledge is often viewed as superior and universal, while Western experiences are considered elite and a symbol of distinction. The book also explores the nexus between Australian students' international experiences in the Indo-Pacific and their employability and career directions. It identifies motivations, needs, and challenges of host organisations in the region. The perspectives and experiences of professional and academic staff from Australian universities who are involved in these programs are also reported. The book underlines the challenges and tensions facing both the home and host communities and makes recommendations for policy and practice to enhance the students' study-abroad experiences, equity, and access and strengthen the relationships involved (Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021; Tran & Vu, 2018).

This chapter first provides an overview of the key developments and trends in study abroad and discusses major study abroad schemes in the world. It then introduces the New Colombo Plan, a signature program of outbound student mobility and public diplomacy of the Australian government. The chapter also provides a description of the design and methodology of the research on which this book is based. The chapter concludes with an outline of the book.

Study-abroad trends and schemes

The traditional destinations for study-abroad students are mainly Euro-Anglophone countries but the Indo-Pacific, especially China, is becoming an increasing popular destination, especially for Australian students (e.g. AUIDF, 2020; Go International, 2015). The Australian University International Directors Forum (AUIDF) 2020 report shows that China, the US, UK, Indonesia, and Japan were the top five destinations for Australian students in 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, accounting for 15%, 9%, 8%, and equally 4% respectively. This is followed by Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Canada (3% each). More Indo-Pacific countries have become the key study-abroad destinations for Australian students in 2019, compared to 2013, prior to the introduction of the NCP, when four out of the top five destinations for Australian students were Euro-Anglophone countries: the US, the UK, Canada, and Germany. For outbound US students, the top five destinations for the academic year 2022–2023 were all Euro-Anglophone countries: Italy (14.9%), the UK (12.5%), Spain (11.6%), France (6.1%), and Ireland (3.50%) (Open Doors, 2024). Around 7,750 (70%) UK outbound students went to Europe with France, Spain, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands as the top five European

4 *Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific*

destinations. Between 2012 and 2013 (Go International, 2015), the US, Australia, Canada, and China have become the four biggest non-European destinations for the UK's mobile students. The top destinations for Canadian outbound students in 2023 were the US, the UK, Australia, and France (Government of Canada, 2024). This analysis shows that the NCP has played a significant role in shifting the major study-abroad destinations for Australian students from the Global North to the Global South over the past decade while Global North countries are still the dominant destinations for outbound students from Canada, the US, and the UK.

Research evidence suggests that students from Anglophone countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the US, and the UK tend to prefer English-speaking and European destinations due to language accessibility, cultural familiarity, and institutional ranking and prestige (Fukada, 2019; Russell, 2013). New Zealand outbound students' preference of English-speaking countries is driven by the comfort of studying in a similar cultural and language environment (Russell, 2013). Traditionally, Australian students favour English speaking countries as their study-abroad destinations because of their limited foreign language competence (Baldauf & White, 2010). However, Global North students' increasing participation in study-abroad programs in the Global South, moving beyond the dominant Global North destinations, has been driven by a range of factors, including changing geopolitical policies and national strategies, associated investment in funding to support study-abroad in targeted regions, Global South countries' more active effort to attract study-abroad and international students, and increased awareness of the benefits of international experiences in the Global South. Over the past two decades, the Australian, NZ, and US governments have tried to introduce a range of initiatives to encourage students to undertake mobility programs in the Global South, including the Indo-Pacific, Africa, or South America (Tran & Rahimi, 2018). These align with these countries' strategies to strengthen national engagement and ties with these regions. Providing scholarships and financial support for students studying in the Indo-Pacific via the New Colombo Plan since 2014 has been a flagship initiative of the Australian government, which has enabled nearly half of Australian undergraduates' international experiences to take place in this region at its peak of outbound mobility in 2019.

Outbound mobility schemes

Outbound mobility has become a crucial component in the comprehensive internationalisation of universities and a tool of public diplomacy for nation states. As discussed below, a range of outbound mobility schemes have been introduced in specific countries or regions to help institutions and countries realise various internationalisation and diplomacy visions.

In the Indo-Pacific region, some initiatives such as the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS), the University Mobility in Asia and the

Pacific (UMAP), and the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS Asia) have been established to promote regional student mobility, collaboration, integration, and harmonisation (Chao, 2023). The South-East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) was founded in 1965 among governments of Southeast Asian countries to facilitate regional cooperation in education, science, and culture (SEAMEO, 2025). One of SEAMEO's four key priorities for higher education harmonisation within the South-East Asian region is to boost intra-regional student mobility (Gribble & Tran, 2016). The ASEAN University Network (AUN) has introduced regional quality assurance and credit transfer systems to facilitate student mobility (Soejatminah, 2018). These initiatives have accelerated internationalisation and cooperation in transnational education, student, and staff mobility within the region and contributed towards the aspiration of an integrated ASEAN/Asian community. However, barriers remain, including disparity in government regulations, economic status and funding support, lack of infrastructure, facilities and human resources, credit transfer implementation, and diversity in higher education institutions among participating countries (Hou et al., 2017; Reyes & Leon, 2023; Sujatanond, 2014). While intra-Asian student mobility remains low compared to Asia to Euro-Anglophone mobility, favourable targeted government policies, more investment in grants and scholarships to support mobility within the region, improving regionally recognised quality assurance systems, and awareness raising could potentially boost growth in student mobility within the region. Additionally, more coordinated approaches and comprehensive mobility schemes could help address the existing challenges and encourage more intra-Asian student mobility (Chao, 2023; Atherton et al., 2021).

Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS)

As a regional multilateral student mobility program, the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) has played a key role in promoting student mobility, institutional cooperation, and internationalisation of universities in Southeast Asia (Umemiya et al., 2024). The SEAMEO Regional Center for Higher Education Development launched AIMS in 2010 with three pilot countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. By 2015, AIMS was extended to include seven member countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan (Gribble & Tran, 2016). Today, AIMS has become a consortium of ten member countries with 87 member universities across Southeast Asia, supporting more than 6,000 students in intra-regional semester exchange programs (Umemiya et al., 2024). Research suggests that participation in intra-regional mobility supported by AIMS has strengthened students' regional knowledge and identity (Yahya et al., 2020; Nordin et al., 2020). AIMS is also seen to have broader institutional and national impacts through boosting outbound student mobility and internationalisation for

participating universities, supporting capability building for internationalisation, mutual exchanges of experiences, and good practices and deepening intra-regional harmonisation (Umemiya et al., 2024; Yahya & Abdullah, 2020). AIMS' distinctive strength lies in its development of a strong network and government-led approach, compared to other regional mobility initiatives like UMAP and Campus Asia (Hou et al., 2017).

University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)

University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), established in 1991, is a consortium of universities that aims to facilitate study-abroad opportunities across the Asia Pacific region. UMAP includes a range of short- and long-term in-person and virtual exchange programs, including Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (UMAP, 2024). Like other Indo-Pacific mobility programs such as AIMS and Campus Asia, UMAP has drawn on student mobility as a mechanism to promote regional understandings, cooperation and integration. UMAP has also started serving as a hub for short-term programs offered by universities in its member countries (Gribble & Tran, 2016). However, challenges persist in relation to the implementation of credit transfer schemes and coordination of participating members (Hou et al., 2017). Overall, the benefits of UMAP as well as other intra-regional mobility schemes in Asia towards enhancing regionalisation remains limited due to their small scale (Hou et al., 2017).

Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS Asia)

Established in 2010, CAMPUS Asia is a regional mobility program to facilitate student and academic exchange and cooperation among universities in East Asia with three founding members: South Korea, China, and Japan. Campus Asia's main goal is to develop capability for future Asian leaders, create a higher education network in the participating countries, and strengthen the region's competitiveness (Ifuku & Takenaka, 2022; Matross Helms et al., 2015). Over the past 15 years, the program has evolved considerably in its scope and function. CAMPUS Asia has expanded to include 20 consortia, comprising universities from Japan, China, and South Korea as the founding members and ASEAN countries such as Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand (Campus Asia, 2024). Later phases of Campus Asia have placed a strong emphasis on joint curriculum development, including the establishment of double degree programs. Quality assurance practices, mobility type diversification, and institutional collaborations have also been promoted (Kim, 2017; Hou et al., 2017). Research suggests that impacts of student mobility facilitated through Campus Asia include enhancing internationalisation, strengthening regional identity and

global citizenship, reciprocal understanding, and skills development (Umemiya et al., 2024; Kim & Cho, 2024; Hanada & Horie, 2021). Factors impeding the program effectiveness include disparity in the program's limited scale, national regulations, and credit transfer implementation (Hou et al., 2017). Rethinking the current student mobility policy design such as investing more resources to reinforcing students' capability of global mobility is needed. In addition, given its limited reach, primarily involving a modest number of students from a few elite universities, Campus Asia is better described as a 'regional initiative' than as a process of 'regionalisation,' as its impact on fostering broader regional integration remains constrained.

Korea's K-Move

The K-Move program was introduced by the Korean government in 2013 to provide young Koreans, especially students and recent graduates, the opportunity to engage in international internships, volunteering, startups, and employment. This mobility scheme administered by several ministries responds to the ongoing youth unemployment in Korea and the growing demand to build Korean youth's international work experiences and support their overseas advancement (Yoo & Om, 2021). It also aligns with the Korean government's vision to increase its international presence and status. The government primarily considers K-Move as a vehicle to build a workforce with global capability and cross-cultural and professional exposure who will have the potential to contribute to both national growth and global talent (Chang et al., 2020). In light of the K-Move's vision 'Korean youth move the world' (Chang et al., 2020), the program actively builds partnerships with overseas businesses and organisations and connects young Koreans with overseas employers. K-Move supports young Koreans through a range of channels such as career counselling, job mentoring, overseas job information, and job placement services. However, K-Move has faced challenges in fostering global talent and leadership due to foreign language barriers and its focus on targeted fields of employment in response to specific foreign countries' skills needs.

Japan's mobility initiatives

Japan has seen a significant growth in the number of students participating in study-abroad, especially short-term mobility, over the past decade due to the introduction of strategic policies and programs, including the 2013 Japan Revitalisation Strategy, 'Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan' (Go abroad! Study Overseas, Japan), and the Tobitate Young Ambassador Program. These outbound mobility initiatives were introduced as a mechanism for the government to 'revitalise the economy' through developing a globally minded workforce with international exposure, cross-cultural understandings and global outlook. They

also responded to Japanese students' tendency to hesitate to take up opportunities to study abroad in the past. A large-scale survey of students from 87 Japanese universities found that up to 67% are hesitant to study abroad because of concerns about the need for university duration extension, while 48% cited financial barrier (Mie, 2014). The Japan Revitalisation Strategy, a major national policy initiative to tackle economic and social challenges launched in 2013, identifies the importance of study abroad to the national economy and sets the target to double the number of students studying abroad to 120,000 by 2020 (Japanese Government, 2013). Introduced in 2014 by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), the 'Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan' (Go Abroad! Study Overseas, Japan) program aims to promote international experiences and foster a more outward-looking youth population. One of its key promotional strategies is to organise a range of events featuring prominent business leaders, sports stars, and artists who shared the value of studying abroad to their personal and professional advancement (Gribble & Tran, 2016). The Tobitate! Young Ambassador Program (Leap for Tomorrow) is part of the government's commitment to encourage young Japanese people to study abroad and develop capabilities to become 'global leaders' (Tobitate-MEXT, n.d.). In partnership with business and industry, the program arranges mentorship for students, who engage in study abroad and internships.

The government investment in these initiatives has led to a significant increase in Japanese student' participation short-term study abroad programs, particularly 'super-short-term' programs of up to one month (Ota & Shimmi, 2019). Statistics from the Japan Student Services Organisation shows Japan reached an outbound mobility student population of more than 100,000 Japanese students in 2017 for the first time, an increase by 430%, compared to 2010 (Crace, 2019). While all durations of study increased, apart from programs over a year in length, experiences under a month in duration maintained its lion's share of both total growth and students, improving by 6,500 and representing 64% of all experiences for the year. Short-term mobility experiences lasting less than a month continued to make up the majority of both overall growth and student participation, with an increase of 6,500, accounting for 64% of all experiences for the year (ibid). Despite the positive outcomes in boosting participation and student development, a gap still exists between the government's emphasis on study abroad and the demand for graduates with international experience in the job market. A survey of 1,000 large companies found that less than 40% expressed interest in hiring Japanese graduates with overseas education (Ota & Shimmi, 2019).

Taiwan's Mobility+

The international mobility of Taiwanese students has become a significant focus in Taiwan's higher education, economic, and political policies, aimed at not only enhancing students' global and regional capability and national

competitiveness but also increasing Taiwan's international presence. A range of initiatives including the New Southbound Policy and particularly, New Southbound Talent Development Program, have been introduced to accelerate internationalisation processes and diversify Taiwan's international partnerships. Against this backdrop, Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) launched the Mobility+ program in 2015 that aimed to provide young Taiwanese students opportunities to undertake international experiences, internships, and cross-cultural exchanges. Mobility+ outlines 21 strategies, 115 actions to realise strategies, and five measures to build an international awareness and interests in the school sector and enhance global mobility for students in higher education (Chang et al., 2020). Research indicates that while the policy's implementation at the institutional level effectively achieves its intended outcomes, institutions face significant obstacles, including limited resource support, which may impact the overall effectiveness and outcomes of the Mobility+ program (ibid).

China's Going-Out approach

China's 'Going Out' policy launched in the late 1990s represents a significant shift in China's approach to global engagement. This strategic policy aims to enhance China's global influence (Shen & Mantzopoulos, 2013) by encouraging its citizens' international exposure and participation in international markets, education, and a variety forms of exchange. To promote the vision of China's 'Going Out', the China Scholarship Council (CSC) within the Ministry of Education is the government body in charge of inbound and outbound mobility scholarships. Additionally, the CSC also establishes joint Funding Programs with overseas universities to provide academic exchange, overseas internships, and research opportunities to Chinese students. The 'National Postgraduate Scholarships for Building High Level Universities', launched in 2007, supported both degree-seeking and non-award visiting PhD programs (CSC, 2016, cited by Gribble & Tran, 2016). In 2012, CSC introduced a scheme to support undergraduate outbound programs with the duration of 3–12 months between Chinese universities and their overseas partners (Gribble & Tran, 2016).

Erasmus

In Europe, the Erasmus Program was launched in 1987 by the European Union to support intra-European student mobility and institutional cooperation. As one of the largest student mobility programs in the world, the Erasmus has supported over 15 million people up to date (European Commission, 2025a). The ERASMUS+, an expanded program of the Erasmus, was launched in 2014, with a budget of €26.2 billion for 2021–2027. The Erasmus+ aims to support transnational cooperation and mobility for students, staff, and institutions across Europe studies, training, work experience, and volunteer opportunities

abroad (European Commission, 2024). The Erasmus and the Erasmus+ are primary initiatives to support the goals of the Bologna Declaration signed by 45 members of the Council of Europe, comprising of all the European Union (EU) member countries and 20 non-EU member countries (Bilecen, 2014; National Unions of Students in Europe, 2007). The Bologna Declaration plays a key role in facilitating intra-European student mobility through the removal of barriers to intra-European mobility and creation of coherence to higher education systems across European countries (Bilecen, 2014; European Commission, 2025b). The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a crucial tool to facilitate the mobility of students in Europe as it provides a mechanism for universities within the European Higher Education Area to have their mobility students' academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised (European Commission, 2025c).

The US's programs

In the United States, study abroad has been a key element of university internationalisation, supported by a variety of renowned programs such as the Fulbright Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, 100,000 Strong in China, 100,000 Strong in the Americas, and Generation Study Abroad. The importance of international experience for students is emphasised in policy documents such as Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Act, 2006 aiming to send one million students abroad annually (Mukherjee, 2012). The Fulbright program established in 1946 is one of the pillars of the US government's mobility policy. As the largest education exchange program in the history, the Fulbright program facilitated more than 400,000 participants up to date (Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, 2024). At present, the program supports approximately 8,000 students, scholars, teachers, artists, and professionals each year from the United States and over 160 countries to study, research, and teach overseas.

Among the primary initiatives to boost international study experiences among US students is Generation Study Abroad launched in 2014 by the Institute of International Education (IIE) mobilising over 800 higher education institutions, study abroad organisations, education associations, and country partners who are committed to widening participation in study abroad (Institute of International Education, 2024). This is a five-year initiative to mobilise resources and seek support from different stakeholders including employers, governments, associations, and industries with the goal to create and extend mobility opportunities and double the number of US students participating in study abroad by 2020 (Institute of International Education, 2015). However, the Trump administration's funding freeze in early 2025 has severely impacted over 10,000 students and professionals from the US and other countries across several major exchange and scholarships programs including the Fulbright program, the Gilman program, and the Critical Language Scholarship program (ICEF Monitor, 2025).

A report by the Institute of International Education, 'Generation Study Abroad Year One Impact', indicates that 91% of US institutions are creating or expanding credit mobility programs. This report also highlights that 64% of the US institutions are committed to increasing academic programs that require or offer an international study component (2015). Another related report titled 'Generation Study Abroad Impact at a Glance' reveals that study-abroad participation has tripled for US partner institutions participating in the Generation Study Abroad program (Institute of International Education, 2025). Seventy-five percent of Generation Study Abroad partners, who are committed to improving diversity, reported an increase in study abroad participation among key groups, including students with financial need, first-generation students, Black/African American and Latino/Hispanic students, as well as STEM majors (Institute of International Education, 2025). Despite this, one of the most cited challenges to outbound mobility in the US is how to widen access to study abroad for minority groups.

The UK's programs

In the UK, study abroad has been regarded as a key internationalisation strategy for many decades. Introduced in 2013 by the British Council, the 'Generation UK' initiative aims to support UK students to gain international experiences in China and strengthen the ties between the UK and China to fulfil the vision of the broader 'Global Britain' strategy. Launched in 2017, the UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility is a major policy aimed to boost the proportion of domestic undertaking international experiences as part of their study (Universities UK International, 2017). This policy outlines six strategic objectives: promote the benefits of study and work abroad, monitor trends in student mobility, build capacity in UK higher education to facilitate outward mobility, share best practice in UK higher education, provide a collective voice for UK higher education, and influence government for UK higher education. The Erasmus+ program was a significant driver of UK outbound student mobility, especially for work placements (Deakin, 2014; Schueller & Keser, 2022). However, Brexit has significantly impacted UK students' outbound mobility with research reporting a 30–38% decrease in UK students studying abroad when the Erasmus program ceased in the UK at the end of the Brexit transition period by the end of 2020 (Davies & Specht, 2025). The UK government launched the Turing Scheme in 2020 to replace ERASMUS+, as UK students were no longer eligible for the latter due to Brexit. The Turing Scheme aims to promote UK students' international experiences and broaden participation in study abroad to align with the Global Britain strategy (UK Government, 2025). In 2022–2023, the Turing Scheme provided funding for 38,000 participants to engage in international experiences.

At the May 2025 EU-UK summit, the UK committed to rejoining Erasmus+ as part of broader efforts to renew post-Brexit UK-EU relations. A central element of this commitment is the proposed Youth Mobility Scheme between the UK and the EU, with negotiations ongoing to finalise the details (Erasmus

Student Network, 2025). In contrast, the Turing Scheme has been criticised for inadequate funding, complex application procedures, a lack of reciprocity, hindering UK universities from hosting European students and collaborating with European partners (Erasmus Student Network, 2025) and funding application and approval timelines misaligned with the academic calendar, creating challenges for planning and logistical arrangements (Brooks, cited in Lepkowska, 2025). Nevertheless, Turing's short-term mobility has broadened access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Brooks, cited in Lepkowska, 2025).

Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific and the New Colombo Plan

Around one in four (23%) Australian undergraduate students participated in study abroad prior to the pandemic in 2019, compared to 7.4% (UK) and 16% (US) in 2018–2019 and 11% (Canada) in 2017 (AUIDF, 2021; Universities UK, 2020; Open Doors, 2020 & Centre for International Policy Studies, 2017). Of the more than 58,000 student international mobility experiences from across 34 Australian universities, almost half (49%) undertaken by domestic undergraduates were in the Indo-Pacific (AUIDF, 2021).

The Indo-Pacific's geographic proximity and geopolitical connectivity with Australia crucially defines our relationship with the region. Immigrants from this region account for 41% of all Australian citizens born overseas (ABS, 2016). Approximately 80% of Australia's trade and a majority of its largest services export, international education (\$51 billion in 2023–2024; ABS, 2020), are within this region. With engagement across the Indo-Pacific being of strategic importance, the Australian government is committed to building knowledge of the Indo-Pacific for young Australians.

Building on the Colombo Plan, an inbound mobility program sponsoring Asian scholars studying in Commonwealth countries between 1951 and 1985, the New Colombo Plan was introduced in 2014 by Julie Bishop who was then the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs as the government's signature reciprocal student mobility initiative to the Indo-Pacific to enable multilateral relationship development. Through this initiative, outbound mobility has evolved from primarily an educational function to a tool of public diplomacy. The NCP redefines study abroad, expanding its impact beyond the student experience to enhance national capacity through strengthened regional engagement.

The New Colombo Plan aims to enhance Indo-Pacific knowledge for young Australians, providing them with the opportunity to live, study, and work in 40 different destinations¹ in the region. It aligns closely with the vision of

1 40 host locations include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, New

enhancing Asia capabilities and literacies for young Australians embedded in Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040 (Moore, 2023). Administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the NCP initially supported over 1,340 students during its pilot phase in 2014. Since then, more than 50,000 students have received support through scholarships and mobility grants.

The uptake and perceived value of study abroad are strongly influenced by previous global experiences across the school and tertiary education sectors. The initiatives in the lead up to the New Colombo Plan include: National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) introduced by the Rudd government in 2008 and AsiaBound introduced by Julia Gillard who was the Australian Prime Minister in 2012; the Prime Minister's Asia Awards; and Asia Capable and Globally Competent Building programs (Asia Education Foundation). The NCP is a vital element of Australia's foreign policy, as outlined in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper (Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021). NCP outbound mobility is explicitly recognised as a key component of the National Strategy for International Education 2025, particularly in advancing Goal 5 (strengthening partnerships abroad) and Goal 6 (enhancing mobility). NCP students play a crucial role in the Australian Global Alumni Strategy 2016–2020, contributing to the themes of Connect, Mobilise, and Celebrate. Against this backdrop, outbound student mobility is supported and facilitated by institutions' internationalisation agendas, aiming to strengthen the institution's holistic approach to internationalisation (Tran & Phan, 2024; Tran & Bui, 2021). Study abroad is considered essential for broadening students' global perspectives, enhancing intercultural understanding, fostering experiential learning, developing soft skills, and improving employability (Potts, 2015; Tran, Phan, et al., 2021; Tran, Stafford, et al., 2021).

In total, 58,058 international study experiences were undertaken by students from 34 Australian universities in 2019 (AUIDF, 2021). This is an increase of more than threefold from 15,058 in 2009 (Australian Government, 2014). This fast-growing trend identifies Australia as one of the countries with the highest study abroad participation rate in the world, with one in four Australian students learning abroad during their undergraduate study. Almost half of Australian undergraduate students' outbound mobility in 2019 was to the Indo-Pacific. Faculty-led study (22%) and internship and work-integrated learning (WIL) programs (20%) were the most popular types of Australian undergraduate students' learning abroad in 2019 (AUIDF, 2021). The New Colombo Plan is a reverse form of the original Colombo Plan, initiated by the Australian Government in 1951, which sponsored over 20,000 students and scholars from Asian countries to study in Commonwealth countries (Australian Government, 2021b) to enhance

Caledonia, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

14 *Australian Student Mobility to the Indo-Pacific*

their professional and cultural skills and understandings (Oakman, 2010; Rizvi, 2011). With the developmental aims at the core of the program, the Colombo Plan is one of the landmarks of the Global South to Global North student mobility flow and is often described as international education as aid. Building on the original Colombo Plan, the New Colombo Plan marked the re-orientation of student mobility from aid to public diplomacy.

Considered as the Australian Government's signature student outbound mobility program, the NCP represents two government intentions:

- First, it aims to increase the number and diversity of Australian undergraduates that are exposed to the Indo-Pacific region, thereby providing them with a 'rite of passage' to their future work and life (Australian Government, n.d.).
- Second, through the program, the government wants to deepen people-to-people and institutional links between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, and to strengthen the country's regional engagement.

Types of programs and funding

The NCP commits to supporting at least 10,000 students to study and undertake internships in the region each year. The NCP is well-funded by the government, with a consistent budget of around \$50 million p.a. from 2018–2019 to 2023–2024 (Australian Government, 2018, 2020) – a considerable increase from \$5,372,000 in its first year.

The NCP consists of a Scholarship Program (up to 19 months) and Mobility grants (between four weeks and two semesters) (Australian Government, 2025). Both programs provide undergraduate students with financial support for study, internships, mentorships, and language training in the Indo-Pacific. In the 2021 round, 125 scholarships were awarded to students from 38 universities to 26 destinations; the top five are Singapore, Japan, Fiji, Republic of Korea, and China (Australian Government, 2021c). Society and Culture topped the list of education fields, accounting for 50% of students under the Scholarship Program.

Within this book, short-term mobility students refer to those who undertake short-term study, summer school, mentorship, language training, research and/or an internship in the Indo-Pacific for less than a semester. Medium-term mobility students refer to those who undertake semester-based study abroad. Scholars are recipients of funding under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program to undertake study, language learning, internship and/or mentorship in the Indo-Pacific for up to 19 months. See the Glossary for definitions of key terms and further discussion about short-term mobility programs in Chapter 2.

The New Colombo Plan Research Project

This Australian Research Council-funded research aims to analyse the nature, circumstances, and impacts of Australian students' learning and engagement in

the Indo-Pacific region through the New Colombo Plan (see Tran et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2019; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran & Bui, 2023; Tran et al, 2022; Tran, Do & Bui, 2021; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2023; Tran, Phan & Belgrove, 2021; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021).

Data sources include:

- Policy documents.
- In-country fieldwork and observations.
- A national survey of 1,371 NCP students and alumni from 40 universities.
- 298 interviews with NCP students and alumni, academic program leaders, mobility practitioners, host communities, third party providers, and government representatives in Australia and Indo-Pacific host countries.

This research is funded by the Australian Research Council under the Future Fellowship scheme. Data collection commenced through a pilot study in 2015–2016, on which the main project (2017–2022) was built. It is a multi-method study capturing broad patterns across a robust sample of informants to provide essential micro-level insights into individual students' learning and engagement.

The survey includes scaled and open-ended questions to explore the nature, circumstances, and effects of student mobility to the Indo-Pacific on their learning, regional engagement, employability, career directions, life, and future. The survey was designed and managed using the Qualtrics secured online platform. The questions and items were developed based on a combination of initial interviews with NCP students, mobility practitioners, academics, hosts, and government representatives directly involved in the NCP programs, and on the adaptation of the ASR's NCP cumulative survey (2018). The survey was assessed multiple times by participants and stakeholders and was tested for readability, logic, and accuracy through a pilot test.

Australian students and graduates who participated in learning abroad programs funded by the New Colombo Plan since its launch in 2014 were invited to complete the survey. The survey responses were confidential and anonymous. Survey participants were recruited through a multiple communication strategy. This included an invitation via a newsletter delivered to NCP alumni by the NCP Secretariat from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), a survey invitation circulated through universities' Global Mobility/Learning Abroad Office and NCP academic program leaders, and posts to the NCP alumni LinkedIn Page via the project's LinkedIn account.

1,371 respondents commenced the survey. However, the number of responses to different questions varies in accordance with the survey flow, which specified different questions for different participant categories, and with the number of participants in each category.

For the qualitative dimension, the student participants from both scholarship and mobility programs were recruited for the interviews through an invitation circulated during their pre-departure programs or sent to the Learning Abroad/Global Mobility Offices of their institutions and academic leaders

of specific mobility programs. Those who agreed to participate were asked to attend four rounds of interviews over four critical stages of their learning abroad: pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and one-year post graduation. Most mobility student participants have been interviewed three times. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

With consent from the NCP students and their academic leaders, the researchers joined their study-abroad programs, taking part in pre-departure briefings and various student activities in the host countries. Participation in – and observation of – these in-country activities enabled the researchers to have deeper insights into the multiple dimensions of students’, academic program leaders’, and hosts’ experiences in the Indo-Pacific, some of which may otherwise be invisible through formal interviews.

In addition, interviews were conducted with stakeholders including academic leaders of short-term mobility programs, professional staff who are managers or staff members of learning abroad/global mobility offices from Australian universities, staff in host organisations, and buddies who are local students assigned with supporting NCP students in the host universities, directors/managers of host organisations in the Indo-Pacific, third party providers, and representatives of government and professional agencies engaged with the NCP in Australia and host countries. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, their names, home, and host institutions and organisations are kept anonymous.

Demographics of survey respondents

The survey was commenced by 1,371 participants:

- 63% female and 36% male, 1% self-identified as ‘other’.
- 77% aged between 18 and 25, 14% between 26 and 30.
- 33% graduates, 23% in year 4 and 24% in year 3.
- 90% were full-time students.

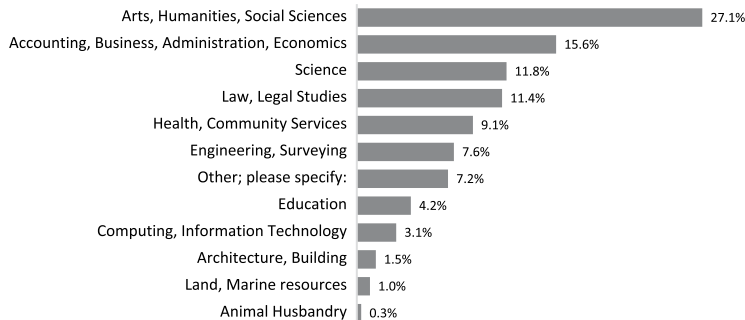


Figure 1.1 Survey participants’ disciplines

- 90% had previous overseas travel experience.
- Of those with previous overseas travel experience, 17% had travelled to their host countries, 41% to (an)other Indo-Pacific country(ies), and 42% to another part of the world.
- 66.8% undertook short-term mobility (52.5% short-term study program, 10% short-term internship, 4.3% summer school), 15.7% medium-term mobility (semester-based study), 17% NCP scholars, and others (0.5%).
- Survey participants studied in 33 locations.
- 75% of students were hosted by the top eight countries: Japan (14%), Indonesia (13%), China (12%), Vietnam (9%), Republic of Korea (8%), India (7%), Singapore (7%), and Malaysia (5%).

Structure of the book

This book is organised into seven chapters, beginning with this introductory chapter, which outlines key trends and schemes in study abroad and introduces the New Colombo Plan research project. Chapter 2 explores critical issues in study abroad, including equity, access, and barriers to participation, as well as broader themes such as public diplomacy, neoliberalism, postcolonialism, consumerism, and commodification. It also introduces the theoretical framework guiding the analysis, drawing on Sen's capability approach and Tran and Phan's conceptualisation of mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing. Chapters 3 and 4 focus respectively on the motivations of Australian students studying in the Indo-Pacific and the challenges they face. Chapter 5 analyses students' learning and engagement and the impacts of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific through the NCP. Chapter 6 discusses the tensions and challenges associated with study-abroad programs for Australian students in the Indo-Pacific from the perspectives of professional staff, academics, and host communities. Finally, Chapter 7 considers how the New Colombo Plan has reshaped Australia's approach to student mobility, internationalisation, and public diplomacy, and offers recommendations to better support Australian students studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific.

References

- ABS. (2016). *Census of population and housing*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- ABS. (2020). *International trade in goods and services*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- Atherton, G., Crosling, G., Shuib, M., & Azizan, S. N. (2021). International student mobility in ASEAN: An overview and way forward. *Higher Education Challenges in South-East Asia*, 18–34.
- AUIDF. (2021). *Australian universities learning abroad 2019*. Canberra: AUIDF.

- Australian Government. (2014). *Outgoing international mobility of Australian university students*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Australian Government. (2017). *Foreign policy white paper*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/4ca0813c-585e-4fe1-86eb-de665e65001a/fpwhitepaper/index.html>
- Australian government. (2018). *New Colombo Plan delivers on diversity*. Canberra: Australia.
- Australian Government. (2020). *New Colombo Plan scholarship program 2021 round guidelines*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/ncp-scholarship-program-guidelines-2021.pdf>.
- Australian Government. (2021a). *Australian strategy for international education 2021–2030*. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-strategy-international-education-2021–2030/resources/australian-strategy-international-education-2021–2030>
- Australian Government. (2021b). *The Colombo Plan*. Destination Australia.
- Australian Government. (2021c). *New Colombo Plan 2021 scholarships snapshot*. Canberra: DFAT.
- Australian Government. (2025). *2025 Mobility program guidelines*. Canberra: DFAT.
- Australian Government. (n.d.). *New Colombo Plan: Connect to Australia's future – study in the region*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan>
- Baldauf, R. B., Jr., & White, P. (2010). Participation and collaboration in tertiary language education in Australia. In A. J. Liddicoat & A. Scarino (Eds.), *Languages in Australian education* (pp. 41–69). Cambridge Scholars.
- Bilecen, B. (2014). *International student mobility and transnational friendships*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs. (2024). *Fulbright Program overview*. U.S. Department of State. <https://eca.state.gov/fulbright/about-fulbright/fulbright-program-overview>
- Campus Asia. (2024). *Objectives and background*. <https://qacampusasia.niad.ac.jp/en/objectives-background/information.html>
- Centre for International Policy Studies. (2017). *Report of the Study Group on Global Education: Global Education for Canadians Equipping Young Canadians to Succeed at Home & Abroad*. Canada: Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa, and Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto.
- Chang, A., Chang, D. F., & Zhu, W. S. (2020). Reviewing implementation of global mobility policy for youth from the perspectives of stakeholders. In *Educational policy forum* (Vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 1–34). National Chi Nan University, Department of Education Policy and Administration.
- Chao Jr, R. Y. (2023). Intra-ASEAN student mobility: overview, challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 15(5), 1736–1751. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-07-2019-0178>
- Crace, A. (2019). Japanese outbound short-term mobility continues growth. *The Pie News*.
- Davies, R. B., & Specht, L. S. (2025). Brexit and foreign students in gravity. *Review of International Economics*, 33(1), 290–333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/roic.12750>

- Deakin, H. (2014). How and why we should encourage undergraduate geography students to participate in the Erasmus programme. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 37(3), 466–475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2012.731043>
- Department of Education. (2024). *Education export income – Calendar year 2024*. Australian Government: Canberra. Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.au/international-education-data-and-research/education-export-income-calendar-year>
- Erasmus Student Network. (2025). *The UK Belongs with Erasmus+*. UK. Retrieved from <https://www.esn.org/news/uk-belongs-erasmus>
- European Commission. (2024). *Erasmus+ EU programme for education, training, youth and sport*. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/what-is-erasmus>
- European Commission. (2025a). *Erasmus to Erasmus+: history, funding and future*. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/about-erasmus/history-funding-and-future>
- European Commission. (2025b). *European Education Area Quality education and training for all*. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process>
- European Commission. (2025c). *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)* <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>
- Fukada, Y. (2019). Introduction. In *L2 learning during study abroad* (pp. 1–8). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7546-0_1
- Government of Canada (2024). *Study the world! Canada's advice on top destinations for students*. <https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/stories-histoires/2024/2024-07-22-study-world-decouvrez-monde.aspx?lang=eng>
- Gribble, C., & Tran, L. T. (2016). *International trends in learning abroad: Information and promotions campaign for student mobility*. Universities Australia & IEAA.
- Hanada, S., & Horie, M. (2021). Impact of the CAMPUS Asia initiative for developing Japanese students' attitude toward mutual understanding: A case study of the Japan–China–Korea trilateral exchange program. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 16(3), 276–294.
- Hou, C. A. Y., Hill, C., Chen, K. H. J., Tsai, S., & Chen, V. (2017). A comparative study of student mobility programs in SEAMEO-RIHED, UMAP, and Campus Asia: Regulation, challenges, and impacts on higher education regionalization. *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, 11(1), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HEED-08-2017-003>
- ICEF Monitor. (2025). *US funding freeze affecting both American and international exchange students and major US scholarship funders*. <https://monitor.icef.com/2025/03/us-funding-freeze-affecting-both-american-and-international-exchange-students-and-major-us-scholarship-funders/>
- Ifuku, R., & Takenaka, T. (2022). “Brain circulation”: The new multinational higher education partnership in East Asia—CAMPUS Asia, a

- Japan-China-Korea student exchange project. *Bildung und Erziehung*, 75(2), 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.13109/buer.2022.75.2.127>
- Institute of International Education. (2015). *Generation study abroad*. <http://www.iie.org/Programs/Generation-Study-Aboard/Join-Generation-Study-Aboard>
- Institute of International Education. (2024). *Generation study abroad impact*. <https://www.iie.org/programs/generation-study-abroad/about/impact/>
- Institute of International Education. (2025). *Generation study abroad impact at a glance*. <https://iie.widen.net/s/frtsfr2w8z/iie-gsa-impact>
- Japanese Government. (2013). *Japan revitalization strategy: Japan is back*. Retrieved December 19, 2016, from <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/keizaisaisei/pdf/honbunEN.pdf>
- Kim, S. J. (2017). Leveraging process evaluation for project development and sustainability: The case of the CAMPUS Asia program in Korea. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 21(4), 315–332.
- Kim, E. & Cho, E. (2024). The Impact of Cultural Affinity-based Program Participation Motivations on Pan-Asian Sense of Community, Mediated by Educational Satisfaction. *열린교육연구*, 32(3), 111–132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18230/tjye.2024.32.3.111>
- Lepkowska, D. (2025). Study reveals benefits, drawbacks of Turing mobility scheme. University World News.
- Matross Helms, R., Rumbley, L.E., Brajkovic, L. & Mihut, G. (2015). *Internationalizing Higher Education Worldwide: National Policies and Programs*. <https://www.acenet.edu/documents/national-policies-and-programs-part-1-global.pdf>
- Mie, A. (2014). Ministry official knocks down barriers to overseas study. Japan: Japan Times.
- Moore, N. (2023). *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia economic strategy to 2040*. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Mukherjee, M. (2012). US study abroad from the periphery to the center of the global curriculum in the information age. *Policy Futures in Education*, 10(1), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2012.10.1.81>
- National Unions of Students in Europe. (2007). *Promoting mobility: A study of the obstacles to student mobility*. Berlin Germany.
- Nordin, N. M., Saikim, F. H., Khalid, J., Ali, A. J., Isa, A. M., & Anwar, N. (2020). Study abroad benefits and graduates employability: Asian International Mobility for Students Programme (AIMS): Malaysia. *Akademika*, 90, 51–62. <https://ejournal.ukm.my/akademika/issue/view/1275>
- Oakman, D. (2010). *Facing Asia: A history of the Colombo Plan*. ANU E Press. <https://doi.org/10.22459/FA.10.2010>
- Open Doors. (2020). *U.S. Study Abroad for Academic Credit Trends*. US.
- Open Doors. (2024). *U.S. Study Abroad Survey*. <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/leading-destinations/>
- Ota, H., & Shimmi, Y. (2019). Recent trends in learning abroad in the context of a changing Japanese economy and higher education situation. In *Internationalization and employability in higher education* (pp. 78–91). Routledge.
- Potts, D. (2015). Understanding the early career benefits of learning abroad programs. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(5), 441–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315579241>

- Rizvi, F. (2011). Student mobility and the shifting dynamics of internationalisation. In D. Davis & B. Mackintosh (Eds.), *Making a difference: Australian international education*. UNSW Press.
- Russell, H. (2013). Understanding the popularity of English-speaking destinations for New Zealand exchange students. *eMatariki Undergraduate Research Journal*, 1(1).
- Schueller, J., & Keser, F. (2022). Transnational, multinational, binational? The role of international education in human capital development for graduate employability. In *The SAGE handbook of graduate employability* (pp. 393–413). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- SEAMEO. (2025). *Who we are and What we do*. Bangkok: The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization.
- Shen, R., & Mantzopoulos, V. (2013). China's "going out" policy: Inception, evolution, implication. *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 25(2), 121–136.
- Soejatminah, S. (2018). ASEAN university network in enhancing student mobility: A case of Indonesia. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, 7(1), 19–33. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jise.v7i1.1058>
- Sujatanond, C. (2014). *Foster researcher and student mobility in Southeast Asia: SEAMEO RIHED role and initiatives*. Retrieved March 1, 2016, from <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/International-network/Australia/policyupdates/Documents/APEC%20University%20Associations%20Cross-Border%20Education%20Cooperation%20Workshop/Dr%20Chantavit%20Presentation%2021%20May%202014.pdf>
- Reyes A. P. G., & De Leon, A. M. T. (2023). International student mobility and Covid-19 pandemic: Challenges and opportunities in Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Advanced Engineering, Management and Science*, 9(5), 061–067. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijaems.95.9>
- Tobitate-MEXT (n.d.). About Tobitate! (Leap for Tomorrow) Study Abroad Initiative. Retrieved from <https://tobitate-mext.jasso.go.jp/about/english.html>
- Tran, L. T. (2015). Mobility as 'becoming': A Bourdieuan analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(2), 195–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1044070>
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2021). Public diplomacy and social impact of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Host countries' perspectives on hosting New Colombo Plan students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315320984833>
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). "It's a few weeks I'll cherish forever": Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*.
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.

- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.2408385>
- Tran, L. T., Do, T. & Bui, H. (2021). ‘Employability in context’: The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers’ professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., & Phan, H. L. T. (2024). Conceptualising mobility as becoming, connecting and contributing: Australian New Colombo Plan scholars learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102429>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2021). ‘There’s a much bigger world of science than just Australia’: Australian students’ development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science Education*, 43(6), 888–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2021.1891322>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. T. L., & Belgrove, A. (2022). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students’ curriculum specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 1–18.
- Tran, L. T., & Rahimi, M. (2018). *New Colombo Plan: A review of research and implications for practice. Research digest* (Vol. 14). IEAA.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1737656>
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students’ career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. T. P. (2018). Beyond the ‘normal’ to the ‘new possibles’: Australian students’ experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 72(3), 194–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12166>
- UK Government. (2025). *Guidance: Overview of the Turing Scheme, 2024 to 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-study-and-work-placements/overview-of-the-turing-scheme>
- UMAP. (2024). *About UMAP*. <https://umap.org/>
- Umemiya, N., Sugimura, M., Kosaikanont, R., Nordin, N. M., & Ahmad, A. L. (2024). Impact of a consortium-based student mobility programme: The case of AIMS (Asian international mobility for students). *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 26(1), 49–66.

- Universities UK. (2020). *International facts and figures 2020*. UK.
- Universities UK International. (2017). *UK strategy for outward student mobility 2017–2020*. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/29116/1/UK-Strategy-for-outward-student-mobility-2017–2020.pdf>
- Yahya, Y., & Abdullah, D. (2020). The AIMS impact, 10 years on: Internationalisation at home of ASEAN higher education institutions. *Akademika*, 90(2), 151–162. <https://ejournals.ukm.edu.my/akademika/article/view/40243>
- Yahya, Y., Nordin, N. M., Ahmad, A. L., Boyak, R., Rasul, H., Rawlins, N. H., & Eee, O. C. (2020). Global mobility in ASEAN: Promoting multi cultural diversity and inclusivity through AIMS. *Akademika*, 90, 93–104.
- Yoo, J., & Om, K. (2021). Developing strategies for youth overseas employment through a survey of the overseas employed: focusing on the K-Move program. *Journal of Practical Engineering Education*, 13(2), 369–378.

2 Key issues in study abroad

Introduction

Outbound student mobility is a key tool for universities to enhance students' global outlooks, intercultural understandings, and employability and to internationalise the student experience. Study abroad also complements and supports other aspects of institutional internationalisation, such as international collaborations in teaching, learning, and research; transnational education; and inbound international student mobility. In recent years, governments have strategically leveraged outbound student mobility to strengthen their global standing and diplomatic relations. As Australia's future becomes more closely tied to the Indo-Pacific, outbound student mobility to the region plays a pivotal role in shaping its regional connection.

Recent literature on study abroad emphasises its potential for transformative learning experiences, the influence of geopolitical factors on outbound mobility trends, its role in public diplomacy, and the increasing prevalence of shorter program durations (Gribble & Tran, 2016; Tran & Bui, 2021). Considerable research in this field is concerned with understanding intercultural, professional, and personal growth among students participating in study-abroad programs (Goldstein, 2022; Tran & Bui, 2023; Tran & Phan, 2024). The benefits of study abroad to students' foreign language and cultural literacy and challenges to this development are also addressed (Tran & Bui, 2023). Recent research has increasingly explored students' curriculum-based learning and the development of discipline-specific knowledge through short-term mobility programs (Tran et al., 2021, 2022). Despite some research on the perspectives of the host communities, especially in developing countries (Kosman et al., 2024; Tran & Bui, 2021), the intersection of study abroad and public diplomacy (Tran & Vu, 2018), and the social impacts of study abroad remain largely unexplored. To delve into these issues, the theoretical framework of this research integrates Amartya Sen's capability approach with Tran and Phan's concept of 'mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing'. This integration enables an examination of how students engage with various conversion factors to achieve functionings and outcomes they value, for personal development or 'self' transformation or/and for contributing to the broader community and public good.

Despite its potential for transformative impact, study abroad faces critical issues and tensions, including equity and access, neoliberalism, postcolonialism, consumerism, and commodification. Structural challenges and inequality issues persist in both access to study abroad and partnerships between Global North participants and Global South host organisations (Tran & Goddard, 2024; Tiessen, 2017). A growing issue is the potential for study-abroad programs to perpetuate cultural tourism, colonialism, and the ‘othering’ of host cultures (Chakravarty et al., 2020; Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017). Tensions also exist regarding the neoliberal and consumerism principles possibly driving international travel associated with study abroad as a commodity or marker of distinction that adds symbolic value to a person’s profile or CV, rather than fostering meaningful developments, engagement, and empathy with the host communities, especially in developing countries. Studies highlight a gap between the rhetoric and actual experience of language and cultural literacy development, with some arguing that current study-abroad discourses perpetuate colonial paradigms (Trentman & Diao, 2017; Moreno, 2021). Therefore, there has been a call for the incorporation of critical, reflexive, and decolonising pedagogies (Moreno, 2021; Jackson, 2020; Tran & Bui, 2023).

This chapter discusses key issues in study abroad including equity, access, and barriers to participation. It also provides insights into the concerns raised about study-abroad programs in different parts of the world, including neoliberalism, postcolonialism, consumerism, and commodification in study abroad. It then discusses the nexus between study abroad and public diplomacy. The chapter concludes by delving into the theoretical framework used in this book, Sen’s capability approach and mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing.

Equity, access, and barriers to participation

Various studies worldwide indicate that access to study abroad is far from equitable (Doyle et al., 2010; Glass & Gesing, 2021; National Unions of Students in Europe, 2007; Tran, 2016; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021). Uptake of study abroad depends on a variety of factors, ranging from individual circumstances, institutional and structural environments, program structure and governance, and broader government policy. If inequity in participation and access to study abroad is exaggerated, it will lead to class reproduction and inequality in the society. Inequities in access to study abroad, coupled with the emphasis on global citizenship, Asian capabilities, and international experiences as key to success in a global knowledge economy can exacerbate social stratification. Privileged youth who can access these opportunities are able to leverage them for future success, while those without such access are left at a disadvantage. Kortegast and Leilani Kupo (2017) argue that ‘social class was tied not just to wealth but also to knowledge and experience with activities that would be considered ‘high culture’. (p.152). Access to study abroad can be seen as a marker of distinction, contributing to a privileged

social class and thereby, equity in study abroad is intimately linked to social justice and social equality.

Traditionally, the dominant groups of students engaged in outbound mobility programs were identified as white, with mid- to high socioeconomic status and professional parents, prior overseas travel experiences, private-school educated, and attending research universities (Di Pietro, 2020; Green et al., 2014; King et al., 2010; Tran et al., 2020). Meanwhile students from low SES backgrounds and students with disabilities are under-represented in outbound mobility programs. In Ireland, for example, less than 1% of students with disabilities participated in international study programs (Gallagher, 2013). In the UK, the study-abroad access rate for students from the black and minority ethnic group was 2.9% as compared with 4.8% of the white student cohort in 2012–2013 (Go International, 2015). A study on the obstacles to student mobility in Europe highlights that those who are disadvantaged in the education system of their home countries are ‘more likely to be excluded’ from mobility programs (National Unions of Students in Europe, 2007, p. 17). In Australia, prior to the New Colombo Plan, it has been observed that universities mainly used outbound mobility ‘as high-value offering to their top students or top potential students’ (DIISRTE, 2012, p. 5). Addressing access and equity issues is one of the key focuses of the NCP in its first ten years. Research on the NCP indicates that the short-term mobility programs from two weeks introduced by the NCP in its first phase between 2014–2024 has widened student participation, with nearly one in four Australian undergraduates gaining an international experience and up to 73% participating in programs of less than four weeks (AUIDF, 2021; Tran et al., 2021; Tran & Goddard, 2024). The NCP also addressed equity, especially for students from less privileged backgrounds with approximately one-third of mobility NCP students coming from regional and remote areas (Australian Government, 2018).

The participation rate of students with disability in the US was traditionally low but has increased significantly from 2.6% in 2006–2007 to 5.1% in 2012–2013 and doubled over the past decade to reach 10.8% in 2022–2023 (Open Doors, 2024). It is suggested that the two overriding factors inhibiting the participation of students with disability in international study are fear and lack of information (Gallagher, 2013). The author argues that the majority of this group hesitate to take a risk in participating in study abroad due to the uncertainty around whether their additional support needs are being catered for in the host country. A study by Adele Browne from EAIE’s *Access & Inclusion* (ACCESS) found around 75% of staff working in international offices in UK institutions had little or no experience of working with students with disabilities (cited in Gallagher, 2013).

There are multiple barriers to participation in outbound mobility programs. Research in Australia, Europe, and the US (e.g. Green et al., 2014; King et al., 2010; Schnepf et al., 2022; Van Mol, 2014; Tran & Bui, 2023; Tran et al., 2021) identified students’ habitus, cultural/linguistic capital and socio-economic

backgrounds, language issues, academic concerns, institutional environments, and policy as primary factors impacting study abroad participation. Related factors such as personal/family history of travel, international links, and social networks are also seen to influence access to study abroad (King et al., 2010). Souto-Otero et al. (2013, p. 72) grouped the barriers to students' participation in international study programs into five types/dimensions: financial barriers, barriers related to higher education system comparability, awareness and information barriers, personal background, and social background. Sweeney (2013) argued that 'while individual circumstances may impact participation, institutions must closely examine their practices and procedures to determine if and how they contribute to the underrepresentation' (p.3). Various studies across different countries in the world have consistently identified finance as a key disincentive to students participating in international study programs (British Council, 2015; Deviney et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2010; Stroud, 2010). Mulvey (2012) surveyed 100 students at an American public university and found that cost seemed to be the leading barrier to obtaining an international experience. Similarly, surveys of Australian and UK university students (e.g. Forsey et al., 2012; Sison & Brennan, 2012; Mellors-Bourne et al., 2015) indicated that financial and opportunity costs, for example, loss of part-time employment or loss of earning capacity while abroad, impeded students to consider an international study experience.

Similar obstacles to student mobility across Bologna countries were also discussed by the National Union of Student in Europe's (2007) study. In addition, this research specified the recognition of students' academic work while studying abroad, the availability of information related to mobility periods and programs, the suitability of a mobility period in the respective curriculum structure, and the field of study (National Union of Student in Europe, 2007). Echoing European studies, research on Australian and US students also highlighted the lack of recognition and inconsistency in transfer of the learning experience from mobility programs as one of the main obstacles (Sison & Brennan, 2012; Stroud, 2010). Research on Australian students' participation in the New Colombo Plan based on perspectives of students, academics, and mobility staff reveals that age restriction (between 18 and 28 years old in the early phase) was an important barrier to accessing to the program (Tran et al., 2016).

At the meso level, among the most pressing barriers are the insufficient and incoherent provision of information about mobility programs, institutional management of mobility programs, application process, course arrangements, lack of articulation of potential benefits, insufficient financial support as well as lack of involvement of academic and administrative staff (Cairns, 2019; Doyle et al., 2010; Nerlich, 2013; Granato & Schnepf, 2024; Mellors-Bourne et al., 2015; Tran et al., 2020). Students from less privileged backgrounds are more likely to attend institutions with fewer outbound mobilities opportunities (Schnepf et al., 2022). A study that looks into at which stage of the selection process in the Erasmus program disadvantaged students from an Italian university drop

out found that 90% of the socioeconomic disparities in Erasmus participation stem from the initial selection stage: the application process while the subsequent selection stages, including eligibility checks, ability assessments, and the final participation decision, have lesser impact (Granato & Schnepf, 2024). This study also revealed that the decline in the participation of disadvantaged students is consistent across all fields of study, but this gap is particularly large in natural sciences, ICT, mathematics, and statistics, while it remains relatively small for languages (ibid). Additionally, a barrier to study abroad participation can be due to a lack of awareness and understanding of benefits (Jones et al., 2016; Nerlich, 2013).

Neoliberalism, postcolonialism, consumerism, and commodification in study abroad

A growing body of the literature critically analyses study abroad programs through the lenses of neoliberalism, postcolonialism, consumerism, and commodification. A few scholars raise concerns about the neoliberal and postcolonial ideologies, linked with serving consumer capitalism and national interests, that underpin study abroad programs, especially in relation to global citizenship (Barbour, 2012; Collins, 2020; Moreno, 2021; Chakravarty et al., 2020). First, researchers critique the marketisation of global citizenship, arguing that there has been an overuse of this term with emptiness in university promotion of study abroad (Chapman et al., 2018). Second, scholars are concerned about the ways study-abroad programs reinforce neoliberal ideologies, encouraging the (mis)conception that study abroad automatically equates to increased global awareness and citizenship (Doerr, 2012; Zemach-Bersin, 2007; Tran & Rahimi, 2018). Third, study abroad in the U.S. is seen to be associated with neoliberal consumerism, driven by the normative neoliberal perspective that treats international travel as a commodity primarily valuable for boosting the worth of American personhood, rather than promoting authentic global citizenship (Barbour, 2012).

Fourth, study abroad programs in the US are criticised for focusing on developing students as ‘knowledge workers’ needed to serve a neoliberal agenda and maintain US dominance in the global economy (Collins, 2020; Mukherjee, 2012). In this context, study abroad is viewed as a hidden curriculum that serves the US’s national interests, with neoliberal ideologies framing its value as a means of enhancing knowledge of foreign languages and cultures to further these interests (Collins, 2020; Mukherjee, 2012). The study abroad literature in the US has faced criticism for not challenging the normative view that study abroad is primarily centred on US students, focusing mainly on student outcomes and program design (Collins, 2020). Similarly, in Australia, the majority of conversations at the policy and institutional levels are Australian-centric, predominantly about the outcomes and program design in relation to Australian students, universities, and national interests. Existing research on study

abroad in Australia is also geared towards this direction. Even though major study-abroad programs such as the New Colombo Plan and Asia Bound are designed to promote two-way international education between Australia and the Indo-Pacific/Asia, the perspectives and experiences of the host communities are largely ignored. It is therefore important to ask the question whether study-abroad policies and programs encourage intellectual and cultural justice and exchange, or they perpetuate an unequal relationship that entails othering of peoples and cultures outside the home country (Chakravarty et al., 2020).

A growing concern revolves around how study abroad can perpetuate consumerism, cultural tourism, coloniality, and the ‘othering’ of host cultures (Chakravarty et al., 2020; Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017). Critics argue that, when framed as a consumer product, study-abroad destinations were often marketed in US advertisements as exotic travel spots, often chosen for their appeal rather than their educational value (Lewin, 2009; Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017). In the US context, researchers question the nature of learning in study abroad, suggesting that it can reinforce colonialism and ‘othering’. This occurs through students’ engagement with host communities, which may reinforce US superiority, ignores cultural biases, and devalues the knowledge of cultural ‘others’ (Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017). In this context, Australia has made a positive step with the introduction of the New Colombo Plan, which, while serving Australian interests by deepening regional engagement, also represents an important effort in the decolonisation of study abroad. By promoting North-to-South student mobility and framing the Indo-Pacific as a site of learning rather than merely a travel destination, the NCP represents a symbolic shift in study-abroad practices. It challenges the normative privileging of ‘Western’ destinations, cultural experiences, and epistemologies. In this way, the NCP can be seen as a potential tool for decolonisation. However, true decolonisation requires more than a geographic reorientation. It demands the dismantling of enduring colonial legacies, the active challenging of Eurocentric worldviews, and the addressing of structural power imbalances. Only through these efforts can study abroad initiatives like the NCP foster genuinely reciprocal, equitable, and enduring people-to-people connections and partnerships between countries.

To tackle the challenges embedded in neoliberal, postcolonial, and consumerist ideologies influencing study-abroad policies and practices, researchers call for the need to adopt decolonisation approaches, social justice-oriented frameworks, and critical pedagogies to foster more diversity, equity, and inclusion in education abroad (Moreno, 2021; Goldoni, 2021; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021). There has been a call for a shift towards guided, critical, and intentional reflection on students’ study-abroad experiences and their own biases (Dockrill et al., 2016; Goldoni, 2021; Moreno, 2021; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021). It is also recommended to incorporate a more socially just approach to study abroad that emphasises humanistic over individualistic imperatives in student development (Goldoni, 2021).

Study abroad and public diplomacy

Public diplomacy has become a crucial element of a country's foreign policy, playing a key role in promoting its positive image and enhancing its global standing (Pamment, 2014). Public diplomacy is referred to as 'a government's process of communication with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation's ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies' (Tuch, 1990, p. 3). Public diplomacy encompasses three dimensions: daily communications, strategic communications, and relationship building (Leonard, 2002). While each of the three dimensions plays a different role in enhancing a country's profile internationally, building lasting relationships is often considered the most powerful tool in determining the success of a country's public diplomacy, which is referred to as soft power by Nye Jr. (2008).

International education is increasingly seen as a key tool for enhancing a country's public diplomacy, given its growing importance to building people-to-people connections and contributing to countries' prosperity and their regional and global engagement. Nye (2004) posits the cultural and academic exchanges between the US and Soviet Union starting from the 1950s contributed to enhancing the US's soft power. Various regional student mobility initiatives like the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS), the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), and the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS Asia) (see further discussion in Chapter 1) aim to foster intra-regional student mobility as part of efforts to deepen regional harmonisation and integration. Similarly, the K-Move and Taiwan+ programs are committed to enhancing their respective countries' global profiles and presence. Knight (2018, p. 8) describes international education as 'knowledge diplomacy', asserting that it is closely connected to fostering the exchange of students, faculty, culture, science, and knowledge. She emphasises that the primary goal of international education is to achieve mutual understanding and benefits, rather than a win-lose scenario. Both soft power and knowledge diplomacy share a common focus on fostering lasting relationships through exchange, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

The Foreign Policy White Paper specifically positions Australia as a 'regional power with global interests', emphasising a stronger alignment of the nation's strategic priorities with the Indo-Pacific region (Australian Government, 2017). Another initiative, the Australia Awards program, which succeeds the Colombo Plan and complements the New Colombo Plan, offers students from developing countries the opportunity to study in Australia, acting as an educational tool to promote regional integration and strengthen its influence within the Indo-Pacific (Australian Government, 2016). Prior to the introduction of the NCP, students who could afford study abroad or had choices were unlikely to choose the Indo-Pacific as their destination (Dall'Alba & Sidhu, 2015). This group of students often prioritised their accumulation of Euro-Anglophone

cultural capital while placing less emphasis on fostering human and regional engagement through building people-to-people and country-to-country connections via outbound mobility (Dall’Alba & Sidhu, 2015) as these public diplomacy goals were often not explicitly articulated within their mobility programs. In contrast, the NCP has emerged as an outbound mobility program that fosters multilevel connections and engagement, aligning with Australia’s economic, political, and public diplomacy priorities. The program’s vision of deepening Australia’s regional engagement with the Indo-Pacific has shaped its priorities, structure, funding schemes, and implementation.

Outbound student mobility to the Indo-Pacific has been adopted by the Australian government as a strategic mechanism to engage with and maintain long-lasting ties with the region. Public diplomacy goals embedded in Australian students’ learning abroad – particularly in the Indo-Pacific – have become priorities of the Australian government. These are demonstrated in national documents such as the Bradley Review of Higher Education, the Australia 2020 Summit Report, the Foreign Policy White Paper 2017, the National Strategy for International Education 2025, the Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy 2016–2020, Universities Australia’s World Class Strategy, and the New Colombo Plan. Within this broad public diplomacy agenda, sending students to the Indo-Pacific is articulated as a tool to enrich their understandings of the region and related capabilities.

The Australian government views student mobility through the New Colombo Plan as a key mechanism for public diplomacy and human capital development within the Indo-Pacific (see further discussion of the NCP and public diplomacy in Chapter 1). This approach reflects Australia’s strategic position in the region and global economy, with the goal of fostering enduring connections and strengthening economic, social, cultural, and political ties with Indo-Pacific nations. In today’s fast-paced world of global movements, exercising public diplomacy can no longer be confined to the profession of diplomats, instead various individuals, groups, and institutions who engage in international and intercultural communications can contribute to exercising a country’s public diplomacy and influence the political relationships between two or more countries (Antônio, 2007). Through the New Colombo Plan, Australian students are repositioned in the Australian’s government policy as more than learners; they become international partners of mutual exchange, actors of public diplomacy, and future regional leaders:

First, Australian students are considered in the policy as learners who undertake mobility programs to enhance Indo-Pacific knowledge and gain regional experiences.

Second, they are positioned as international partners in cultural and knowledge exchange with the host communities in the region.

Third, the policy explicitly articulates the role of students as actors of public diplomacy, who can help strengthen human-to-human relationships and

contribute to multilateral ties, institutional and business links between Australia and the region.

Fourth, upon their return, NCP alumni are expected to be future influential leaders with direct cultural and professional experiences and networks in the Indo-Pacific, who can be ‘a driving force in Australia’s future prosperity’ (Australian Government, 2020a).

Our research identifies how people-to-people experiences in the region can act as a catalyst for life-long relationships and regional connections (Tran & Bui, 2021; Tran & Phan, 2024). However, there are a range of challenges facing home universities, host organisations, students, and stakeholders involved in the NCP landscape. These include a need to better understand each other’s expectations, immediate, and long-term goals, as well as to co-design and optimise learning abroad programs in the Indo-Pacific so that they can better meet home and host needs.

Short-term mobility

Within this book, short-term mobility refers to short-term study, programs, study tours, summer school, mentorship, and/or an internship in the Indo-Pacific for less than a semester (up to 10 and 12 weeks – see Chapter 1 for more details). Short-term mobility, which is also referred to as express mobility, has gained popularity over the past decade due to a range of reasons. It has become high on universities’ agendas as a response to the quest for flexible, accessible, and comprehensive internationalisation of higher education. It has responded to the acute demand to strengthen access and equity in study abroad for less privileged students, especially those who cannot travel for a long duration due to employment, financial or health reasons, carer duty, or family commitments (Tran, 2021; Tran & Goddard, 2024). Short-term study abroad provides opportunities to engage in international experiences without disrupting their academic obligations at home universities. Short-term mobility is also more manageable for academic staff to organise and travel alongside their students given their busy workload.

The popularity of short-term mobility has reflected in growing research on short-term mobility programs (see Scharoun, 2016; Tran et al., 2019; 2021; Tran, Phan & Bellgrove, 2021; 2024). This body of research often explores the factors shaping students’ decisions to participate in short-term mobility programs, their benefits and challenges. Motivations for students’ participation in these programs are identified as opportunities to be exposed to a different culture and enhance employability (Tran et al., 2020; Tran, 2021) and involve personal and contextual antecedents (Roy et al., 2024). Most studies on the benefits of short-term mobility programs have concentrated on language learning, cross-cultural adaptability, and intercultural development (Watson & Wolfel, 2015; Sylwia et al., 2024). Research indicates positive

outcomes related to employment outcomes and employability (Tran et al., 2021; Tran & Bui, 2023). Research also identifies the workload within an intensive period of short-term mobility as one of the main challenges facing participating students and the host communities (Tran et al., 2022).

There has been unclarity regarding the potential broader and long-term benefits of short-term mobility. There has been a myth that short-term mobility programs are linked to leisure or tourism experiences, rather than for education purposes. Our study indicates there is no statistically significant difference in the impact of the Indo-Pacific experiences on students' learning outcomes and development between short-term and long-term programs (Tran et al., 2023). Short-term mobility programs such as study tours, international internships, and experiences, enable greater accessibility and opportunities for students from under-represented backgrounds and offer benefits (Waters, 2023; Tran & Goddard, 2024). However, the long-term benefits of these short-term programs, compared to those with longer durations, remain unclear. The benefits of short-term study abroad in terms of employment and employability require further investigation (Roy et al., 2019). Limited research on outbound mobility has explored the curriculum-specific benefits of study abroad (Nerlich, 2021; Tran et al., 2021, 2024; Tran & Bui, 2023). Additionally, there has been an acute lack of research on the broader societal impacts of study abroad (Chankseliani & Kwak, 2024; Tran & Phan, 2024) and in particular, short-term mobility programs.

Gaps in research on study abroad

Despite growing research on study abroad, several gaps remain. Research reveals inconsistencies in the outcomes and factors that influence mobility programs (Wang, 2010). To gain a more nuanced understanding of both short-term and long-term mobility programs, more rigorous and longitudinal studies are needed. These should incorporate multiple perspectives from key stakeholders, including students, alumni, academics, professional staff, administrators, government representatives, and both home and host communities. Researchers emphasise the importance of comprehensive, mixed-methods studies to assess long-term outcomes and address equity issues (Moorhead et al., 2022). There is a widespread call to diversify methodologies and participant samples in study abroad research, as many participant populations tend to be homogeneous (Edmonds, 2012). One critical research gap is understanding how factors like participant age, program duration, learning contexts, and social networks impact study abroad experiences (Borràs & Llanes, 2021). Another gap highlighted in the literature focuses on curriculum-specific or discipline-specific learning through mobility programs, especially short-term ones (Nerlich, 2021; Tran et al., 2023). Future studies should also examine how study abroad activities and goals intersect with human development, institutional internationalisation, and national public diplomacy. A notable gap lies in understanding how

geopolitical factors, as well as the social, political, and economic context, influence study-abroad trends, patterns, and experiences (Mok et al., 2021; Tran & Vu, 2018; Tran & Rahimi, 2018; Tran et al., 2024). Finally, recent literature has critiqued the concentration of research on individual experiences and outcomes while neglecting its potential impacts on the community and wider society. There is also a need for research that explores the broader societal impacts of mobility programs, moving beyond individual outcomes (Chankseliani & Kwak, 2024) and the factors that either enable or limit individual students' ability to convert the resources and opportunities available to them to achieve their desired outcomes, whether related to personal goals or the broader social good. The following section presents a theoretical framework to help researchers conceptualise the key aspects of study abroad.

Capability approach and mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing

The discussion of the data reported in this book broadly draws on capability approach (Sen, 1999) and conceptualisation of mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing (Tran, 2016; Tran & Phan, 2024). The capability approach was introduced and developed by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen who was awarded a Nobel prize in 1998 for 'his contributions to welfare economics'. Sen's capability approach emphasises key aspects, including capabilities, functionings, agency, and freedom. The capabilities of a person refer to the real opportunities or the substantive freedom 'to choose a life one has reason to value' (Sen, 1999, p. 285). Within Sen's capability approach, capabilities are not limited to an individual's abilities as we often refer to them in everyday practice but refer to the opportunities made available to them to help them work towards their valued goals (Robeyns, 2011). Functionings are defined as 'the various things a person may value doing or being' (Sen, 1999, p. 75). Functionings can be categorised into two aspects: valuable states (beings) and activities (doings), which are two core dimensions of life that people value (Robeyns, 2005). Agency is understood as a person's ability to make choices, take actions to transform one's 'valued goals' into real outcomes, and actively engage in shaping one's life (Conradie, 2024, p. 261; Gangas, 2016). Based on Sen's capability approach, Conradie (2024) posits 'well-being freedom would then be the opportunity for beings and doings, and agency freedom would be the opportunity for autonomy, connected to values and goals' (p.261). Whether a person can enact agency to achieve desired outcomes relies on conversion factors, linked to how real the person's capabilities are (Sen, 1999, p. 74). Conversion factors include three types: personal conversion factors, social conversion factors, and environmental conversion factors. Social and environmental conversion factors are additional elements that help explain how a person can transform resources into the doings and beings they value or what are the barriers that constrain their ability to do so (Conradie, 2024).

Within the context of student mobility, Tran (2016) introduces the concept of mobility as becoming to capture students' aspirations for cultural, educational, and professional growth and their potential self-transformation through mobility. In line with Sen's capability approach, mobility as becoming entails an individual's aspirations to become the person, the citizen, and the worker they wish to become and lead a life they consider worth pursuing through leveraging the opportunities that mobility brings to them. Within this conceptualisation, self-transformation is an evolving process resulting from students' engagement with people, places, and practices around them (Tran & Phan, 2024). Mobility is closely related to student agency, which refers to the sociocultural capacity of a person to act (Ahearn, 2001). Marginson links international education to self-formation, which denotes 'investment in the self as human capital, the economic attributes, and credentials acquired in education, which change what a person can do' (2014, p. 7). Transnational mobility is seen as providing the opportunities for their 'becoming' and self-formation tied to the development of qualities that enable them to live a life they regard as meaningful and worth living (Marginson, 2014; Tran, 2015). Mobility as becoming entails fluidity, evolving, and reflexivity tied to the past, future outcomes, and the engagement with the new possibles tied to the present (Tran & Vu, 2017a). Mobility as becoming is drawn upon the past as students' backgrounds, their past experiences, and their interactions with people, values, and the environment in the past contribute to shaping who they are and who they aspire to become. Tran's (2016) work delves into the interplay of the past-present-future in shaping a student's mobility as becoming and emphasises the future orientation linked to the new possibles created through mobility (Tran & Vu, 2018) in line with Sen's notion of capabilities, which is future directed towards the aspiration to choose the life we have reason to value and the goals one aspires to achieve (Walker, 2024).

Mobility as becoming is construed through the ways students accumulate different kinds of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and modify their habitus to transform the self. It goes beyond the investment in the self to the strategy for 'becoming' through navigation of mobility, based on aspirations for the future, accumulation of past resources, and acting on the possibles from the present. In Tran's (2016) research, mobility as becoming is displayed through such forms as personal growth, professional advancement, and desires for the future such as migration. Lo's (2019) research goes further by arguing that transnational mobility can be viewed by students as a vehicle to promote individual freedom. As such, mobility for becoming can embrace the aspiration for individual freedom. Other research shows that some students engage in transnational mobility not only as an investment and strategy for their own becoming or the 'self' transformation, but also for contributing and transforming of the community around them in the home or host countries (Tran & Vu, 2017a; Tran et al., 2023; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran & Phan, 2024).

In their latest publication, Tran and Phan (2024) extend the discussion of mobility as becoming to include mobility as connecting and mobility as contributing. They argue that these concepts are interrelated and complementary to each other. Mobility as connecting relates to the relationships with people and places formed through students' engagement in transnational spaces. While Sen attempts to tie agency to an individual's personal goals and their responsibilities to others, the capability approach has been critiqued for not adequately addressing the concept of interconnectedness between individuals (Conradie, 2024). Mobility as connecting enriches the capability approach by considering the role of human-to-human connections and human-to-place connections through mobility in enabling students to pursue whatever goals or values they regard as important. Mobility as contributing encompasses students' actual contributions or aspirations to contribute to the communities in home and host countries as a result of their transnational mobility (ibid). Therefore, mobility as becoming, as connecting, and as contributing can embrace different meanings of mobility, which may have an impact at the individual level as well as the broader level beyond the individual. Mobility as connecting and mobility as contributing emphasise the social interactions between individuals and the actions for the social good. This conceptualisation of mobility goes beyond students simply adjusting, assimilating, or adapting to the social and institutional norms of the host environment. It highlights their role as active participants who navigate and interact with the environment in a way that potentially fosters self-transformation, and social and professional development, while also having the potential to influence and transform the wider community around them.

While several studies highlight the possible transformative experiences resulting from international education (Lehmann & Trower, 2018; Soltani & Tran, 2023; Tran & Vu, 2018, 2017a, 2017b; Xu & Tran, 2022), some researchers point out the need to caution against the common assumption that transformation will be guaranteed during study abroad (Green et al., 2015; Tran & Rahimi, 2018). As such, mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing may not automatically occur but needs to be nurtured and enabled. The structural conditions including institutional support, policies, and environments in the home and host countries act as conversion factors in enabling or restricting students' capability for mobility as becoming. Mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing may be enacted differently by individual students as they interact with different transnational spaces and people. Furthermore, mobility as becoming can be multiple dynamically and divergently exercised because students can be self-forming agents with varying aspirations for a course of life that they see as worth living (Tran, 2016) and with different capabilities to realise their aspirations.

References

- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30(1), 109–137. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3069211>

- Antônio, F. D. L. (2007). The role of international educational exchanges in public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3(3), 234. doi:10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000066
- AUIDF. (2021). *Australian universities learning abroad 2019*. Canberra: AUIDF.
- Australian Government. (2016). *Australia awards global strategy*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/Australia-awards-global-strategy.pdf>
- Australian Government. (2017). *2017 Foreign policy white paper*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>
- Australian Government. (2018). *New Colombo Plan delivers on diversity*. Canberra: DFAT.
- Australian Government (2020a). *New Colombo Plan Mobility Program 2021 Round Guidelines*. Canberra: DFAT.
- Barbour, N. (2012). *Global citizen, global consumer: Study abroad, neoliberal convergence, and the eat, pray, love phenomenon* [Master's thesis, Oregon State University Scholars Archive].
- Borràs, J., & Llanes, À. (2021). Re-examining the impact of study abroad on L2 development: A critical overview. *The Language Learning Journal*, 49(5), 527–540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2019.1642941>
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood Press.
- British Council. (2015). *Broadening horizons: The value of the overseas experience*.
- Cairns, D. (2019). Researching social inclusion in student mobility: Methodological strategies in studying the Erasmus programme. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(2), 137–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2018.1446928>
- Chakravarty, D., Good, K., & Gasser, H. (2020). "Exploring your world, exploring other cultures:" How neocoloniality and neoliberalism inform US education abroad programs. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(1–2), 121–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1751009>
- Chankseliani, M., & Kwak, J. (2024). The Ripple Effect: Understanding the Societal Implications of International Student Mobility. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 102520.
- Chapman, D. D., Ruiz-Chapman, T., & Eglin, P. (2018). Global citizenship as neoliberal propaganda: A political-economic and postcolonial critique. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, 29, 142–166. <https://alternateroutes.ca/index.php/ar/article/view/22450>
- Collins, L. (2020). Becoming global knowledge workers: How US study abroad programs act in service to a hidden curriculum of consumer capitalism and national security. *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education*, 2(2), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.3726/ptihe022020.0001>
- Conradie, I. (2024). Enriching agency in the capability approach through social theory contributions. In F. Comim, P. B. Anand, & S. Fennell (Eds.), *Social choice, agency, inclusiveness and capabilities* (pp. 257–283). Cambridge University Press.
- Dall'alba, G. & Sidhu, R. (2015). Australian undergraduate students on the move: experiencing outbound mobility. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40: 721–744.

- Davies, R. B., & Specht, L. S. (2025). Brexit and foreign students in gravity. *Review of International Economics*, 33(1), 290–333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/roie.12750>
- Deviney, D., Vrba, T., Mills, L., & Ball, E. (2014). Why some students study abroad and others stay. *Research in Higher Education*.
- DIISRTE. (2012). *Outbound mobility best practice guide for Australian Universities*. Canberra, Australia.
- Di Pietro, G. (2020). Does an international academic environment promote study abroad? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 26(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315320913260>
- Dockrill, H., Rahatzad, J., & Phillion, J. (2016). The benefits and challenges of study abroad in teacher education in a neoliberal context. In J. A. Rhodes (Ed.), *Advancing teacher education and curriculum development through study abroad programmes* (pp. 290–305). IGI Global.
- Doerr, N. M. (2012). Study abroad as ‘adventure’: Globalist construction of host–home hierarchy and governed adventurer subjects. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9(3), 257–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2012.688211>
- Doyle, S., Gendall, P., Meyer, L. H., Hoek, J., Tait, C., McKenzie, L., & Loorparg, A. (2010). An investigation of factors associated with student participation in study abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14(5), 471–490.
- Edmonds, M. L. (2012). An integrative literature review of study abroad programs for nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 33(1), 30–34. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/be8e4f3fe725dc92461130379b009d1b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=25605>
- Forsey, M. G., Broomhall, S., & Davis, J. (2012). Broadening the mind? Australian student reflections on the experience of overseas study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 1028315311407511.
- Gallagher, L. (2013). *Why are students with disabilities missing out on an international experience?* EAIE. <http://www.eaie.org/blog/why-are-students-with-disabilities-missing-out-on-an-international-experience/>
- Gangas, S. (2016). From agency to capabilities: Sen and sociological theory. *Current Sociology*, 64(1), 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115602521>
- Glass, C., & Gesing, P. (Eds.). (2021). *Critical perspectives on equity and social mobility in study abroad: Interrogating issues of unequal access and outcomes*. Taylor & Francis.
- Goldoni, F. (2021). Study abroad, human capital development, language commodification, and social inequalities. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 14(5), 1283–1304.
- Goldstein, S. B. (2022). *Intercultural learning through study abroad*. Cambridge University Press.
- Granato, S., & Schnepf, S. V. (2024). Why are lower socioeconomic background students underrepresented in Erasmus? A focus on the selection into mobility and degree course organization. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2349963>
- Green, W., Gannaway, D., Sheppard, K., & Jamarani, M. (2014). What’s in their baggage? The cultural and social capital of Australian students preparing to study abroad. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(3), 513–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.973381>

- Green, W., Gannaway, D., Sheppard, K., & Jamarani, M. (2015). What's in their baggage? The cultural and social capital of Australian students preparing to study abroad. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(3), 513–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.973381>
- Gribble, C., & Tran, L. T. (2016). *International trends in learning abroad: Information and promotions campaign for student mobility*. Universities Australia & IEAA.
- Jackson, J. (2020). The language and intercultural dimension of education abroad. In *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (pp. 442–456). Routledge.
- Jones, B. T., Power, A., Gray, T., Downey, G., & Hall, T. (2016). If you build it, they may not come: Why Australian university students do not take part in outbound mobility experiences. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 13(3), 1–17.
- King, R., Findlay, A. & Ahrens, J. (2010). *International student mobility literature review*. Report to HEFCE.
- Knight, J. (2018). Knowledge diplomacy: A bridge linking international higher education and research with international relations. *British Council*.
- Kortegast, C., & Leilani Kupo, V. (2017). Deconstructing underlying practices of short-term study abroad: Exploring issues of consumerism, postcolonialism, cultural tourism, and commodification of experience. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 8(1).
- Kosman, B. A., Knight-Agarwal, C. R., de Jong, D. C., Chipchase, L., & Etxebarria, N. (2024). International work-integrated learning programs: Insights from the in-country partners. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 25(3), 337–349.
- Lehmann, W., & Trower, H. (2018). Forms of capital and habitus in the decision to go on academic exchange. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie*, 55(1), 136–148.
- Leonard, M. (2002). *Public diplomacy*. The Foreign Policy Centre. <https://fpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/35.pdf>
- Lewin, R. (Ed.). (2009). *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship*. Routledge.
- Lo, W. Y. W. (2019). Beyond competition: A comparative review of conceptual approaches to international student mobility. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 17(3), 261–273.
- Marginson, S. (2014). Student self-formation in international education. *Journal of studies in international education*, 18(1), 6–22.
- Mellors-Bourne, R., Jones, E., Lawton, W. and Woodfield, S. (2015). *Student perspectives on going international*. British Council, Go International.
- Mok, K. H., Xiong, W., Ke, G., & Cheung, J. O. W. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on international higher education and student mobility: Student perspectives from mainland China and Hong Kong. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 105, 101718. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101718>
- Moorhead, B., Ivory, N., Boetto, H., & Bell, K. (2022). Short-term study abroad programmes in social work: A scoping review of the literature on learning outcomes. *Social Work Education*, 41(8), 1577–1591.

- Moreno, R. (2021). Disrupting neoliberal and neocolonial ideologies in US study abroad: from discourse to intervention. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 33(2), 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v33i2.529>
- Mukherjee, M. (2012). US study abroad from the periphery to the center of the global curriculum in the information age. *Policy Futures in Education*, 10(1), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2012.10.1.81>
- Mulvey, L. (2012). Why study abroad? Why not! *Educational Research and Innovation*, 319–332.
- Nerlich, S. (2013). Australians as international students—where they go, what they do and why they do it. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35(4), 386–395.
- Nerlich, S. (2021). Outcomes-focused evaluation of study abroad experiences. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 43(2), 166–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2020.1771511>
- Nye, J. J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. Public affairs.
- Nye, J. J. S. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616, 94–94.
- Pamment, J. (2014). Articulating influence: Toward a research agenda for interpreting the evaluation of soft power, public diplomacy and nation brands. *Public Relations Review*, 40(1), 50–59.
- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 93–117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/146498805200034266>
- Robeyns, I. (2011). The capability approach. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall 2017th ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/capability-approach/>
- Roy, A., Newman, A., Ellenberger, T., & Pyman, A. (2019). Outcomes of international student mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(9), 1630–1644.
- Roy, A., Newman, A., & Lahiri-Roy, R. (2024). Antecedents of short-term international mobility programs: a systematic review and agenda for future research. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 22(2), 226–239.
- Scharoun, L. (2016). Short-term study tours as a driver for increasing domestic student mobility in order to generate global work-ready students and cultural exchange in Asia Pacific. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 20(2–3), 83–89.
- Schnepf, S. V., Bastianelli, E., & Blasko, Z. (2022). What can explain the socio-economic gap in international student mobility uptake? Similarities between Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the UK. *European Educational Research Journal*, 23(4), 479–597. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14749041221135080>
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sison, M. D., & Brennan, L. (2012). Students as global citizens: strategies for mobilizing studies abroad. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 22(2), 167–181.
- Soltani, B., & Tran, L. (2023). Examining space, silence, and agency in language socialization of an international student in the EAP and mainstream courses. *TESOL Quarterly*, 57(2), 480–510. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3164>

- Souto-Otero, M., Huisman, J., Beerkens, M., de Wit, H., & Vujic, S. (2013). Barriers to international student mobility evidence from the erasmus program. *Educational Researcher*, 42(2), 70–77.
- Stroud, A. H. (2010). Who plans (not) to study abroad? An examination of US student intent. *Journal of Studies in International Education*.
- Sweeney, K. (2013). Inclusive Excellence and Underrepresentation of Students of Color in Study Abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 22.
- Sylwia, P., Barzykowski, K., Tracz-Krupa, K., Cassar, V., & Said, E. (2024). Developing cross-cultural competence of students through short-term international mobility programme. *International Journal of Training and Development*, 28(2), 169–188.
- Tiessen, R. (2017). *Learning and volunteering abroad for development: Unpacking host organization and volunteer rationales* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351709415>
- Tran, L. T (2016). ‘Mobility as becoming’: A Bourdieuan analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(8), 1268–1289.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2021). Public diplomacy and social impact of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Host countries’ perspectives on hosting New Colombo Plan students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315320984833>
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). ‘It’s a few weeks I’ll cherish forever’: Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248.
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2021). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2) 409–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2021.2017784>
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.24083>
- Tran, L., Do, T. & Bui, H. (2021). ‘Employability in context’: The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. & Goddard, T. (2024). *Studying abroad is more than a holiday – it’s an act of diplomacy*. The Canberra Times. <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8790352/new-reforms-set-to-reshape-student-mobility-programs/>

- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers' professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., & Phan, H. L. T. (2024). Conceptualising mobility as becoming, connecting and contributing: Australian New Colombo Plan scholars learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102429>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2021). 'There's a much bigger world of science than just Australia': Australian students' development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science Education*, 43(6), 888–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2021.1891322>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2024). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students' curriculum-specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 876–893.
- Tran, L. T., & Rahimi, M. (2018). *New Colombo Plan: A review of research and implications for practice*. Research digest (Vol. 14). IEAA.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1737656>
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students' career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. (2017a). 'Agency in mobility': An examination of student agency in transnational education. *Educational Review*, 28(3), 283–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2017.1293615>
- Tran, L. T. & Vu, T. (2017b). 'Agency in mobility': An examination of student agency in transnational education. *Educational Review*. 28(3), 283–303.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. T. P. (2018). Beyond the 'normal' to the 'new possibles': Australian students' experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan. *Higher education quarterly*, 72(3), 194–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12166>
- Tran, L. T., Zou, T. X., & Ota, H. (2024). Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Rise of East and Southeast Asia. In *East and Southeast Asian Perspectives on the Internationalisation of Higher Education* (pp. 3–26). Routledge.
- Trentman, E., & Diao, W. (2017). The American gaze east: Discourses and destinations of US study abroad. *Study Abroad Research in Second Language Acquisition and International Education*, 2(2), 175–205. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/sar.16001.tre>
- Tuch, H. N. (1990). *Communicating with the world: U.S. public diplomacy overseas*. Springer.
- Van Mol, C. (2014). *Intra-European Student Mobility in International Higher Education Circuits: Europe on the Move*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Walker, M. (2024). A reparative lens for exploring youth aspirations in South African universities. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 25(4), 595–615. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2024.2401015>
- Wang, C. (2010). Toward a second language socialization perspective: Issues in study abroad research. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01059.x>
- Waters, J. L. (2023). Time well spent? Temporal dimensions of study abroad and implications for student experiences and outcomes under the UK Turing Scheme. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(2), 314–328.
- Watson, J. R., & Wolfel, R. (2015). The Intersection of Language and Culture in Study Abroad: Assessment and Analysis of Study Abroad Outcomes. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 25, 57–72.
- Xu, X., & Tran, L. T. (2022). A qualitative investigation into Chinese international doctoral students' navigation of a disrupted study trajectory during COVID-19. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 26(5), 553–571.
- Zemach-Bersin, T. (2007). Global citizenship & study abroad. It's all about U.S. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, 1(2), 16–28.

3 The diversity of Australian students' motivations in study abroad in the Indo-Pacific

Introduction

In recent decades, study abroad has become a key aspect of internationalisation of higher education. Research on the rationales shaping outbound student mobility programs suggests the complex interplay of government, institutional, and individual factors. Government may see the potential benefits of outbound student mobility beyond the student development parameters to include economic, geopolitical, and public diplomacy purposes such as enhancing human capital for the country and deepening country-to-country connections and regional engagement (Tran & Bui, 2021; Tran & Phan, 2024). Institutions are mainly driven by the desire to use study abroad as a stepping stone to boost comprehensive internationalisation, strengthen transnational partnerships, and enhance students' international experiences and employability (Tran & Bui, 2021; Tran, Do & Bui, 2021; Tran et al., 2021; Tran, Phan & Bellgrove, 2021). Study abroad has been reported to offer students valuable opportunities to develop a range of personal and professional skills (Tran et al., 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2021), enhance their intercultural knowledge and competencies (Anderson et al., 2006; Cai & Sankaran, 2014; Clarke et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2019), improve their foreign language proficiency (Netz, 2021), and increase their employment prospects (Tran & Bui, 2023; Tran et al., 2021).

However, the participation and experiences of studying abroad can vary significantly, as not all participants have the same level of access, support, or outcomes. The benefits are often contingent on specific contexts, with different types of programs affecting students and graduates in diverse ways (Netz, 2021). For example, female students from Australia, Europe, and the USA are more likely to study abroad than their male counterparts (Cordua & Netz, 2022; Di Pietro, 2022; Van Mol, 2021). This gender imbalance is consistent across subject areas and countries and is under researched (Van Mol, 2021). Kim and Lawrence (2021) also observed the variance in students' intention and decisions to study abroad that are shaped by student attitudes, subjective norms, behavioural control beliefs, and campus involvement. There is therefore a need for more research on the effects of heterogeneity in study abroad (Netz, 2021).

This chapter aims to fill this gap by exploring the differences in students' motivation of studying abroad according to their gender and types of programs. The analysis is based on a broader research project on Australian student mobility in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan (NCP) (See Chapter 1 for detailed discussion of the NCP, Tran et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2019; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran et al., 2022; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2023; Tran, Phan & Belgrove, 2022; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021). We use Sen's capability approach and the notion of mobility as becoming (Tran, 2016; Tran & Phan, 2024) as a theoretical framework to discuss the findings (See Chapter 2 for details about this theoretical framework). The findings on the heterogeneity of students' motivations to participate in study abroad make a unique contribution to the existing literature on outbound student mobility, offering a nuanced understanding of how factors such as gender and the types of programs shape students' motivations for studying abroad.

Review of research on students' motivations to study abroad

There are various factors that motivate students to participate in study abroad programs. Within the international student mobility literature, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) documented that there are push and pull factors that impact international students' decision-making process. The push factors are those related to home country that drive the students to leave their country to embark on their international study journey whereas pull factors are the factors from the host country that draw the students to their study destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In the context of study abroad specifically involving students from the Global North to Global South, the pull factors in the host countries play a crucial role in attracting students to their study destination. For example, Rhein and Phillips (2024) observed that the tourism attraction as tourism-related motivation in the host country plays an important role in American university students' decision making process in their study abroad in Thailand.

Pull factors can also include opportunities for personal and professional development that students gain by joining study abroad programs. These study abroad opportunities are viewed through Sen's capability approach as the capabilities of a person to enable her/him to achieve the desired goals and valued outcomes (Sen, 1999). Capabilities are not limited to an individual's abilities to exercise in everyday practice. Instead, capabilities are viewed as the substantive freedom that enables a person to attain functionings, which are defined as 'the various things a person may value doing or being' (Sen, 1999, p. 75), encompassing both beings (valuable states) and activities (doings). In the context of study abroad, students' functionings and valued goals linked with their desired outcomes could be gaining the necessary personal and professional skills, adopting a global mindset and building valuable connections (McInnes et al., 2017; Tran & Gomes, 2017). Students can also enhance their employment prospects through acquiring international work experiences and

discipline-specific knowledge (Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2019; Tran et al., 2021). Study abroad can foster the development of skills in complexity management, agility, and creativity (Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2019) and creates opportunities for students to build intercultural knowledge and competencies through interactions with local people and communities (Anderson et al., 2006; Byker & Putman, 2018; Clarke et al., 2009; Van Langenhove, 2017). Students can also be driven to study abroad for the opportunity to enrich their foreign language proficiency and cultural literacy (Jackson, 2020; Tran & Bui, 2023).

There have been multiple motivations for students to participate in study abroad programs. These include the opportunities for personal development such as increasing students' understanding of the outside world (Anderson & Lawton, 2015), expanding students' horizons by living in another culture (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018; Tran et al., 2021), and fostering a desire to experience different cultures and languages (Tran et al., 2021). For example, Rhein and Phillips (2024) argued that the quality of experience perspective is more weighted than the quality of learning motivation in American students' study abroad in Thailand. Students participating in study abroad are also motivated by the opportunity to build their resume (Tran et al., 2021) and increase their career prospects after graduation (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018; Tran et al., 2021). Study abroad also offers an opportunity for students to explore a topic that was not offered at a home institution (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018).

Study abroad programs vary greatly in terms of type and duration, leading to different impacts on participating students with mixed findings reported on the association between the program duration and impact. Students participating in longer-term programs are more likely than those in short-term programs to expand their cultural understanding and global outlook (Gan & Kang, 2022) and to increase their global awareness (DeLoach et al., 2021). However, on some dimensions such as foreign language interest, shorter programs had similar impacts on students as longer programs provided that they had sufficient depth (DeLoach et al., 2021). Short-term mobility programs have been associated more with leisure or tourism than with educational objectives. Our research found that the duration of study abroad programs in the Indo-Pacific – whether short-term or long-term – does not lead to statistically significant differences in students' learning outcomes or overall development (Tran et al., 2023). However, short-term mobility students are more satisfied with their Indo-Pacific experiences than long-term mobility peers (*ibid*). Short-term mobility programs such as study tours, international internships, and experiences have recently been reported to enable greater accessibility and opportunities for students from under-represented backgrounds (Waters, 2023; Tran & Goddard, 2024). However, the long-term benefits of these programs, compared to those with longer durations, remain unclear.

In addition, while existing research in study abroad provides current insights into the motivations and impact of studying abroad on students, differences exist in how students perceive study abroad benefits. These include gender differences

in students' intention to study abroad (Cordua & Netz, 2022; Di Pietro, 2022), differences in motivating factors among students from different field of studies, for example, motivation differences between business and non-business students (Nyaupane et al., 2011), and individual differences in study abroad attitudes, university degrees, and perceptions (Llanes et al., 2012). There is therefore a need to examine the heterogeneity, such as group differences in individual motivations, challenges, and behaviours, which can help advance knowledge by capturing group-specific patterns of study abroad (Netz, 2021).

Methods

This chapter is derived from a large study that aimed to explore the impacts of Australian students' learning and engagement in the Indo-Pacific funded by the Australian government through the NCP (See Chapter 1 for more details about the research). This mixed-methods study includes fieldwork, an online survey, and 298 interviews with academics, mobility staff, policy-makers, and NCP students going to the Indo-Pacific.

This chapter focuses on the survey data of scaled questions that aim to explore the motivations of participating students in study abroad programs in the Indo-Pacific. The survey was created and administered using the Qualtrics secured online platform. The survey questions and items were developed based on the results of initial interviews with NCP students, mobility staff, and academics directly involved in the NCP programs and adaptation from ASR's 2018 NCP cumulative survey. The survey was reviewed multiple times by participants and stakeholder representatives, and its readability, logic, and accuracy were tested through a pilot test. For the purpose of this chapter, only responses to the questions relevant to student demographics and the topic on motivations are explored.

Australian students and graduates who participated in study abroad programs funded by the NCP since its launch in 2014 were invited to complete the survey. Survey participants were recruited using multiple communication channels. This includes an invitation to participate in the survey sent to all NCP alumni by the NCP Secretariat from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), promotion of the survey through the NCP alumni LinkedIn Page via the project LinkedIn account, and distribution of the survey invitation by student mobility managers and NCP academics as mobility program leaders at several universities in Australia. The survey received a high response rate. There were 1,371 respondents who commenced the survey, which has accounted for around 4.6% of the total NCP alumni and students by 2020. However, the number of responses to different questions varies due to the survey flow, which directed specific questions to different participant categories, as well as the number of participants in each category who completed the survey.

The survey questions relevant to this Chapter include questions about participating students' demographics and motivations of participation in the

program. A scale of ten items was used to measure students' motivations of participating in the NCP program. The items consisted of statements regarding their motivations of personal and academic development as well as employment skills and opportunities (e.g. 'challenge myself' (personal development), 'improve my chance of getting a good job in Australia' (employability). Survey participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point-Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('not at all important') to 5 ('extremely important').

Findings

Descriptive statistics

The survey has a high completion rate of 82%. The validity test was measured by Pearson's correlation that was statistically significant with $p < .001$ for all the measurement items. Cronbach's alpha values of the questions on motivations were 0.834, which were well above the cutoff value of 0.7 and established the scale reliability.

Table 3.1 summarises descriptive statistics for all the respondents to the survey. Participating students were studying in a range of disciplines including accounting, business, administration, economics (22%), education (6%), engineering and surveying (11%), health and community services (13%), land, marine resources (1%), animal husbandry (1%), law and legal studies (16%),

Table 3.1 Demographics of respondents

<i>Gender</i> (<i>n</i> = 1,371)	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Disciplines</i> (<i>n</i> = 1,248)	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	492	36%	Accounting, business, administration, economics	274	22%
Female	866	63%	Education	74	6%
Other(s)	19	1%	Engineering, surveying	133	11%
Age (<i>n</i> = 1,371)	Frequency	Percent	Health, community services	160	13%
18–21	402	29%	Land, marine resources	18	1%
22–25	660	48%	Animal husbandry	6	1%
26–30	197	14%	Law, legal study	199	16%
31–35	53	4%	Science	205	16%
36–40	24	2%	Computing, information technology	54	4%
41–45	15	1%	Others	125	10%
45+	26	2%			

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

<i>Gender</i> (<i>n</i> = 1,371)	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Disciplines</i> (<i>n</i> = 1,248)	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Year of Study (<i>n</i> = 1,371)	Frequency	Percent	Program (<i>n</i> = 1,311)	Frequency	Percent
Year 1	13	1%	Short-term study tour (mobility program)	655	50%
Year 2	89	7%	Summer school (mobility program)	53	4%
Year 3	325	22%	Short-term internship (mobility program)	125	10%
Year 4	309	23%	Semester/Trimester-based study (mobility program)	196	15%
Year 5	127	9%	Scholarship program	212	16%
Year 6	48	4%	Others	70	5%
Year 7	12	1%			
Graduated	448	33%			

science (16%), computing, information technology (4%), and others (10%). In terms of gender, 63% of the participants were female, 36% were male, and 1% was classified as 'others'. A vast majority of respondents were less than 30 years old (91%), with the survey population dominated by students aged between 22 and 25 (48%). Of the survey participants, 67% were students and 33% were graduates.

Descriptive analysis of motivations

All the motivations were important to most of the survey respondents at varying extents ranging from slightly to extremely. The top motivations were to get familiar with other cultures, broaden my understanding of the Indo-Pacific, gain experience in the region, and challenge myself, with 99% of students reported that these motivations were important to them. The least important motivation, with 85% of respondents considering it significant, was developing connections in their professional field through studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific (see Figure 3.1).

However, the analysis of the mean motivations reveals slight differences in the perceived importance of the motivations among the respondents. 'Challenge myself' and 'travel to a new place' had the highest mean scores of 4.4, followed by 'get familiar with other cultures' and 'broaden my understanding of the Indo-Pacific' with the mean score of 4.3 and 4.2 out of 5.0 respectively. 'Improve my foreign language skills' scored the least with the mean score of 3.5 (see Figure 3.2).

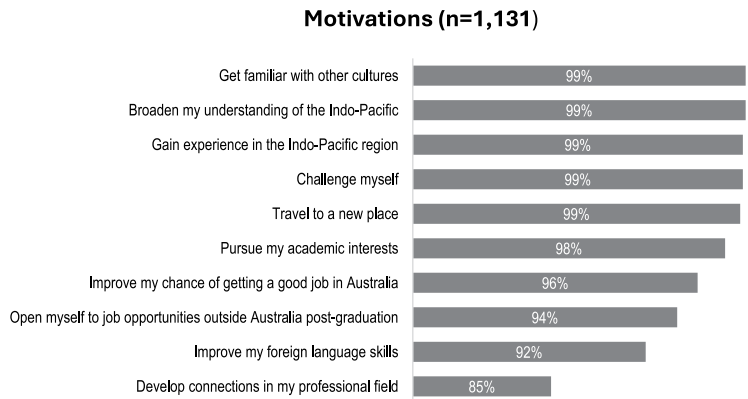


Figure 3.1 Students’ motivations for NCP participation (n = 1,131)

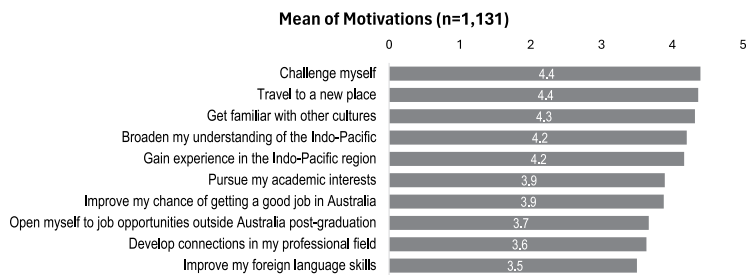


Figure 3.2 Motivation mean score for Indo-Pacific studying abroad (n = 1,131)

The above descriptive analyses show that all the motivations were important to the participants in their decision to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific. There is however a need to investigate the possible grouping of the items of the scales and explore the discrepancies of different groups of respondents to gain deeper insights into the heterogeneous importance of motivations of different participant groups in the NCP program.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to construct our measures of motivations. EFA is a widely used technique designed to combine highly correlated variables into a smaller number of easily interpretable factors. The EFA

was performed on all ten items using maximum likelihood and Promax rotation to extract factors, with items having a factor loading of less than 0.4 being suppressed. The result of the EFA confirmed 8 of 10 variables loaded onto two high-correlated factors. Table 3.3 shows the KMO coefficient, which was 0.849 confirming the sampling adequacy for the EFA. The results of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2(45) = 3751.339$, $p < 0.001$) indicated that the correlations between items were sufficiently large. There were no cross-factor loadings, and the two factor correlation was .553, which was significantly lower than 0.70, establishing the discriminant validity of the data. Factor 1 consisted of five observed variables with factor loadings ranging between .462 and .895. Factor 2 consisted of three observed variables with factor loadings ranging between .591 and .848 (see Table 3.2), which well exceeded the 0.35 cutoff (Hair, 2014). Thus, convergent validity of the data was achieved. The two factors together

Table 3.2 EFA factor loadings (standardised estimates) for study abroad motivation

Item	Variables	Factor 1 Personal development	Factor 2 Employability
MOV3	Get familiar with other cultures	.895	
MOV5	Broaden my understanding of the Indo-Pacific	.723	
MOV2	Gain experience in the Indo-Pacific	.652	
MOV4	Challenge myself	.631	
MOV9	Travel to a new place	.462	
MOV7	Open myself to job opportunities outside Australia post-graduation		.848
MOV6	Develop connections in my professional field		.799
MOV8	Improve my chance of getting a good job in Australia		.591
Accumulate Percentage of Variance (%)		54.856	

Note: EFA = exploratory factor analysis; MOV# = Motivation Variable#.

Table 3.3 KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.		.849
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3,751.339
	df	45
	Sig.	< .001

explained 54.856 % of the shared variance, which was higher than the critical value of 50% (Field, 2013).

The EFA resulted in two factors, which were Personal Development (PER) comprising five survey items and Employability (EMP) of three items. The two scale items with low factor loadings (less than 0.4) were ‘Improve my foreign language skills’ and ‘pursue my academic interests’ and were deleted from the factors and were observed separately. Cronbach’s Alpha for personal development and employability were 0.807 and 0.788 respectively.

Gender differences in study-abroad motivations

In terms of gender, only 1.4% of the respondents considered being ‘others’, which was too small to be included in the analysis. The analysis of gender differences was thus conducted based on ‘male’ and ‘female’ respondents. An independent t-test was performed to explore if there were differences between male and female students on their motivations to study abroad. Because the two groups were unequal, the independent samples t-test for unequal variances known as Welch’s t-test was conducted to elaborate group differences using IBM SPSS statistics 30.

The results show that there was no statistically significant difference between female and male students in their motivation for employability in taking part in the NCP program ($p > .05$), which is consistent with Van Mol (2021) who reported no statistically significant differences between female and male students for ‘professional-oriented motivations’. However, there was statistically significant difference in their personal development motivations. That is, female students scored higher than male students on personal development in their motivation to study abroad (see Table 3.4).

As it has been determined that significant group differences on personal development motivation exist, it is important to perform further tests to determine where the differences lie.

Table 3.4 Comparison of means on personal development and employability motivation

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Sample size</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Remark</i>
PER	Male	407	4.21	0.65856	-3.363	804	<.001	Significant*
	Female	655	4.35	0.60366				
EMP	Male	407	3.73	0.96928	0.261	871	0.793	Not significant
	Female	655	3.72	0.98489				

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Another independent t-test was conducted for each of the five personal development scale items and the results were reported in Table 3.5. Of the five motivations, four of them were detected to have statistically significant differences between male and female students. While the motivation on gaining experience in the Indo-Pacific region was not observed to be different according to the student genders, the other four motivations, which were 'get familiar with other cultures', 'challenge myself', 'broaden my understanding of the Indo-Pacific', and 'travel to a new place' were scored higher by female students than their male peers.

An independent t-test was also performed for two motivations, which were 'pursue my academic interests' and 'improve my foreign language skills', and a statistically significant difference was detected between female and male students on 'pursue my academic interests', whereas there was no statistically significant difference on 'improve my foreign language skills' (see Table 3.6).

Across all the motivations where there were statistically significant differences in study abroad motivations, female students scored higher than male students, indicating that they had a stronger motivation to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific than their male counterpart. This finding extends the current literature on gender gaps in study abroad beyond the USA (Kim & Lawrence, 2021), the European context through the Erasmus program (Bottcher et al., 2016), and the Dutch context (Van Mol, 2021) about the overrepresentation

Table 3.5 Comparison of means of personal development items

Variables	Gender	Sample size	Mean	Std. deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Gain experience in the Indo-Pacific region	Male	407	4.16	0.862	-0.508	867	0.612	Not significant
	Female	655	4.19	0.871				
Get familiar with other cultures	Male	407	4.22	0.847	-3.413	819	0.001	Significant
	Female	655	4.40	0.794				
Challenge myself	Male	407	4.31	0.833	-3.260	791	0.001	Significant
	Female	655	4.48	0.748				
Broaden my understanding of the Indo-Pacific	Male	407	4.11	0.902	-3.205	804	0.001	Significant
	Female	655	4.28	0.826				
Travel to a new place	Male	407	4.29	0.953	-2.280	757	0.023	Significant
	Female	655	4.42	0.809				

Table 3.6 Comparison of means of motivation on academic interest and foreign language skills

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Pursue my academic interests	Male	407	3.83	0.993	-2.148	852	0.032	Significant
	Female	655	3.96	0.978				
Improve my foreign language skills	Male	407	3.53	1.271	0.479	877	0.632	Not significant
	Female	655	3.49	1.303				

of female students in study abroad programs. It confirms that (1) the domination of female students was also observed in the Australian context and to the Indo-Pacific as a specific study abroad destination and (2) the overrepresentation of female students in study abroad literature could be because female students have stronger motivations to study abroad than their male counterparts in their desire for personal development.

Differences in motivations among students of different programs

Respondents to this survey participated in different NCP programs as shown in Table 3.1.

In this research, the program duration was measured by whether the students participated in short-term mobility or a semester/trimester-based program or if they are NCP scholars. The students were categorised in three groups according to their length of program: (1) short-term mobility program comprising short-term study, summer school, and short-term internship; (2) semester/trimester-based programs; and (3) scholarship program. The aim of the statistical analysis was to explore if there were statistically significant differences among these three groups in their motivations to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific.

One-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were performed on their motivations to study in the Indo-Pacific region. The analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in personal development motivation ($F(2, 1071) = 4.291, p < .05$), employability motivation ($F(2, 1071) = 12.850, p < .01$), and improving foreign language motivation ($F(2, 1071) = 39.200, p < .01$) between at least two groups of students (see Table 3.7).

As there are statistically significant differences between groups, it is important to conduct an after-the-fact (or post hoc) test to identify where the differences lie.

Table 3.7 ANOVA analysis results

ANOVA		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
PER	Between Groups	3.521	2	1.760	4.291	0.014
	Within Groups	439.436	1,071	0.410		
	Total	442.957	1,073			
EMP	Between Groups	24.341	2	12.170	12.850	0.000
	Within Groups	1,014.379	1,071	0.947		
	Total	1,038.720	1,073			
LANG	Between Groups	123.082	2	61.541	39.200	0.000
	Within Groups	1,681.372	1,071	1.570		
	Total	1,804.454	1,073			

Table 3.8 Tukey post hoc test results

Dependent variables			Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	Significant
PER	Short-term mobility	Semester/ trimester length	-.144*	.055	0.009	Significant
		NCP scholarship	-.096	.053	0.071	Not significant
	Semester/ trimester-based program	Short-term mobility	.144*	.055	0.009	Significant
		NCP scholarship	.048	.069	0.482	Not significant
	NCP scholarship	Short-term mobility	.096	.053	0.071	Not significant
		Semester/ trimester length	-.048	.069	0.482	Not significant

(Continued)

Table 3.8 (Continued)

<i>Dependent variables</i>			<i>Mean difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Significant</i>
EMP	Short-term mobility	Semester/trimester length	-.110	.084	0.191	Not significant
		NCP scholarship	-.408*	.081	0.000	Significant
	Semester/trimester length	Short-term mobility	.110	.084	0.191	Not significant
		NCP scholarship	-.298*	.105	0.004	Significant
	NCP scholarship	Short-term mobility	.408*	.081	0.000	Significant
		Semester/trimester length	.298*	.105	0.004	Significant
LANG	Short-term mobility	Semester/trimester length	-.816*	.108	0.000	Significant
		NCP scholarship	-.622*	.104	0.000	Significant
	Semester/trimester length	Short-term mobility	.816*	.108	0.000	Significant
		NCP scholarship	.194	.135	0.320	Not significant
	NCP scholarship	Short-term mobility	.622*	.104	0.000	Significant
		Semester/trimester length	-.194	.135	0.320	Not significant

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that students in the semester/trimester study programs reported statistically significant higher levels of motivation on personal development than the short-term mobility group ($p < .01$). This could be because high-quality courses and ambitious assignments likely influence the development of professional skills more positively than sojourns that generally resemble touristic stays (Netz, 2021). However, there was no statistically significant difference between short-term mobility and semester/trimester program students on employability motivation ($p > .05$).

NCP scholars reported statistically significant higher levels of motivation of employability than students from both short-term mobility and semester/trimester study programs ($p < .01$). No statistically significant differences between the NCP scholars and the remaining groups were observed in their motivation of personal development.

Regarding the enhancement of foreign language motivation, students in the short-term mobility group reported statistically significant lower levels of motivation than semester/trimester mobility students and NCP scholars ($p < .01$). This could be because semester/trimester study and NCP scholars have more confidence in their chance to improve their foreign language given that their time of study abroad is longer than short-term mobility students, which is consistent with current literature that reported the longer time of study abroad the students have, the more confidence in their foreign language they acquire (DeLoach et al., 2021; Dwyer, 2004).

Discussion and conclusion

This chapter explores the heterogeneity of motivations among Australian students studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific region, focusing on gender differences and the types of programs in which students participated. The findings enrich existing literature in study abroad from multiple perspectives.

First, results from the exploratory factor analysis suggested that study abroad motivation could be broken down into two distinct components: (1) employability; and (2) personal development. Exploring motivation discrepancy based on these two latent dimensions of motivation allows researchers to find hidden patterns and gain an understanding of the underlying structure and patterns within the data.

Second, the dominance of female students in this survey, who nearly double the number of male students, affirms the existing literature on the overrepresentation of women in study abroad programs in different contexts such as in the European countries (Di Pietro, 2022), the US (Kim & Lawrence, 2021; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015), and the Netherlands (Van Mol, 2021). This trend is observed in a specific context of the NCP program for Australian students studying in the Indo-Pacific region funded by the Australian government, reinforcing the current understanding on gender gap in study abroad.

Third, this study reveals a large discrepancy in Indo-Pacific study abroad motivations by gender. Overall, Australian female students exhibit stronger motivations to study abroad in the region than their male counterparts, which is consistent with previous research on students' intentions to study abroad, where female students were found to have a higher likelihood of intending to study abroad compared to male students (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). Researchers also reported the persistent differences in study abroad intentions between male and female students with males being less inclined to engage because of their majors and academic performance (Fischer, 2012; Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). This

chapter provides further insights into the types of motivation that were found that differed between female and male participating students. The analysis shows that while there were no differences between male and female students regarding motivations related to employability through study abroad, they did differ in personal development motivations. Specifically, female students indicated stronger motivations to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific for the opportunity to foster their personal growth. These personal development motivations include 'travel to a new place', 'challenge yourself', 'gain experience in the Indo-Pacific region', and 'get familiar with other cultures'. Australian female students also have a greater motivation to study abroad to pursue their academic interests compared to their male counterparts. These findings reinforce the current understanding in gender gap in study abroad where female students were reported to score significantly higher than males in their motivation to study abroad to gain world enlightenment and for personal growth (Anderson & Lawton, 2015).

Fourth, the findings that there exists a variance in study abroad motivations among students of different programs extend the current literature by highlighting that the type and duration of study abroad programs impact study abroad motivation. Dwyer (2004) reported that the longer students study abroad, the greater the academic, cultural, and personal growth benefits they accrue. Within the NCP program, semester/trimester study students were found to have stronger motivation in participating in their programs than those in the short-term programs. Specifically, the motivation on personal development was stronger among those studying the entire semester or trimester abroad compared to those in short-term programs whereas these two groups showed no difference in their motivation for employability. On the contrary, while there is no variance found between NCP scholars and short-term mobility students, and between NCP scholars and semester/trimester study students on personal development motivation, employability motivation was found to be prominent among NCP scholars in their decision to study abroad in the Indo-Pacific compared to the other two groups of students.

In terms of the motivation to improve foreign language skills, short-term mobility students were found to have a lower level of motivation as compared to semester/trimester study students and NCP scholars. This could be because of (1) the duration of the program where short-term mobility often lasts for a few weeks, which may allow the students to taste foreign language learning but may not be sufficient to improve foreign language skills, whereas students who study one semester or trimester abroad and NCP scholars whose program duration is at least ten weeks and three months respectively have more time to acquire a foreign language; (2) the differences in study abroad programs with short-term mobility programs being more intensive in academic activities within a short timeframe, leaving little space for the focus on improving language skills. Of the three groups of students, NCP scholars are encouraged by DFAT to undertake language training as part of their study program, and semester/trimester program students who are interested learning a foreign language

have more time to study compared to short-term mobility. Importantly, language training is encouraged and tuition fee to support language training is available within the NCP scholarship program. These structural factors provide the opportunities to enable NCP scholars to pursue language training, which explains their stronger motivation to improve foreign language skills compared to students in short-term mobility programs.

The variance in study abroad motivations can be viewed through Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1999) in combination with the concept of mobility as becoming (Tran & Phan, 2024). This theoretical framework provides a new lens to explain the differences in the transformative process that shifts students from 'being' – who they currently are – to 'doing' – what activities students take – to becoming – who they aspire to become – through their study abroad experiences in the Indo-Pacific. In the context of the heterogeneity of students' motivations for studying abroad, their 'doings' refer to the decision to participate in the programs, driven by various aspirations of who they wish to become (e.g., becoming knowledgeable about the Indo-Pacific, becoming culturally aware, becoming self-challenged, or becoming more proficient in a foreign language). This journey varies depending on who the students are and whether the opportunity or resources available can be transformed into the desired outcomes or enable them to live the life they value (Sen, 1999). Robeyns and Ingrid (2016) argued that everyone has a unique profile of conversion factors including gender, class, or race. Therefore, within the capacity approach, human diversity is emphasised by the focus on personal, environmental, and social conversion factors that enable or inhibit the conversion of resources into 'functionings'. Human diversity is also highlighted by the social, institutional, and environmental context that affects both the conversion factors and the capability or the real freedom to pursue valued outcomes (Robeyns & Morten, 2025).

The variance in study abroad motivations among different groups of students results from the interaction of multiple forces: personal factors such as gender and external factors such as different opportunities, types of programs and their associated resources, along with specific points in time in the process of forming students' motivations to participate in study abroad. Students' personal capacities vary and the opportunities available to them are perceived differently. These opportunities also differ depending on how students view them and act on them, affecting their transition from 'being' to 'doing' to 'becoming'. In the 'doing' domain, the opportunities presented by program design and activities, study duration, and the resources associated with the different programs may lead to significant heterogeneity in student motivation. Thus, turning opportunities and resources into desired functionings or valued outcomes is highly personal and contextual. This new approach to viewing the effect of heterogeneity of study abroad programs can help explain the variance among in study abroad experiences among student different groups, such as the impact of program duration (Dwyer, 2004), fields of study (Nyaupane et al., 2011), and student background characteristics (Van Mol, 2021).

References

- Anderson, P. H., & Lawton, L. (2015). Student motivation to study abroad and their intercultural development. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 26, 39–52.
- Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R. J., & Hubbard, A. C. (2006). Short-term study abroad and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(4), 457–469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.10.004>
- Bottcher, L., Araujo, N. A., Nagler, J., Mendes, J. F., Helbing, D., & Herrmann, H. J. (2016). Gender gap in the ERASMUS mobility program. *PLoS One*, 11(2), e0149514. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149514>
- Byker, E. J., & Putman, S. M. (2018). Catalyzing cultural and global competencies: Engaging preservice teachers in study abroad to expand the agency of citizenship. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(1), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318814559>
- Cai, W., & Sankaran, G. (2014). Promoting critical thinking through an interdisciplinary abroad program. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 38–49.
- Clarke, I., Flaherty, T. B., Wright, N. D., & McMillen, R. M. (2009). Student intercultural proficiency from study abroad programs. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 31(2), 173–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475309335583>
- Cordua, F., & Netz, N. (2022). Why do women more often intend to study abroad than men? *Higher Education*, 83(5), 1079–1101.
- Curtis, T., & Ledgerwood, J. R. (2018). Students' motivations, perceived benefits and constraints towards study abroad and other international education opportunities. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 11(1), 63–78.
- DeLoach, S. B., Kurt, M. R., & Olitsky, N. H. (2021). Duration matters: Separating the impact of depth and duration in study abroad programs. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(1), 100–118.
- DFAT. (2019). *About the New Colombo Plan*. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/about/Pages/about.aspx>
- Di Pietro, G. (2022). Changes in the study abroad gender gap: A European cross-country analysis. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 76(2), 436–459.
- Dwyer, M. M. (2004). More is better: The impact of study abroad program duration. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 151–163.
- Field, A. P. 2013. *Discovering statistics using SPSS: (And sex, drugs and rock'n'roll)* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Fischer, K. (2012). *In study abroad, men are hard to find*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/in-study-abroad-men-are-hard-to-find/>
- Gan, L., & Kang, Z. (2022). Study abroad: Benefits, concerns, who goes and why? *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 34(4), 206–240.
- Hains-Wesson, R., & Ji, K. (2019). Students' perceptions of an interdisciplinary global study tour: Uncovering inexplicit employability skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1–15.
- Hair, J. F. (2014). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Jackson, J. (2020). The language and intercultural dimension of education abroad. In *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (pp. 442–456). Routledge.

- Kim, H. S., & Lawrence, J. H. (2021). Who studies abroad? Understanding the impact of intent on participation. *Research in Higher Education*, 1–47.
- Llanes, À., Tragant, E., & Serrano, R. (2012). The role of individual differences in a study abroad experience: The case of Erasmus students. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 9(3), 318–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2011.620614>
- Luo, J., & Jamieson-Drake, D. (2015). Predictors of study abroad intent, participation, and college outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 56(1), 29–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9338-7>
- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. (2002). “Push-pull” factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82–90.
- McInnes, A., Goss, J. M., Fisher, H., & Brockman, R. (2017). Learning from others: A critical reflection on an international study programme. *International Social Work*, 62(1), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872817727575>
- Netz, N. (2021). Who benefits most from studying abroad? A conceptual and empirical overview. *Higher Education*, 82(6), 1049–1069.
- Nyaupane, G. P., Paris, C. M., & Teye, V. (2011). Study abroad motivations, destination selection and pre-trip attitude formation. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(3), 205–217.
- Rhein, D., & Phillips, B. (2024). American international students' motivation to study abroad in Thailand. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 22(5), 790–805. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2160970>
- Robeyns, I., & Morten, F. B. (2025). The capability approach. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall 2017th ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/capability-approach/>.
- Roy, A., Newman, A., Ellenberger, T., & Pyman, A. (2019). Outcomes of international student mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(9), 1630–1644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1458222>
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Tran, L. T. (2016). Mobility as ‘becoming’: A Bourdieuan analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(8), 1268–1289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2015.1044070>
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2021). Public diplomacy and social impact of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Host countries' perspectives on hosting New Colombo Plan students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 425–442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315320984833>
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). ‘It’s a few weeks I’ll cherish forever’: Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999231163402>
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection

- building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.
- Tran, L., Do, T. & Bui, H. (2021). ‘Employability in context’: The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.24083>
- Tran, L. T., & Goddard, T. (2024). Studying abroad is more than a holiday – it’s an act of diplomacy. *The Canberra Times*. <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8790352/new-reforms-set-to-reshape-student-mobility-programs/>
- Tran, L. T., & Gomes, C. (2017). *Student mobility, connectedness and identity* (Vol. 6). Springer eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2601-0>
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers’ professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1737656>
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students’ career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T. & Bellgrove, A. (2021). “There’s a much bigger world of science than just Australia”: Australian students’ development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science*. 43(6), 888–905.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Belgrove, A. (2022). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students’ curriculum specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 1–18.
- Van Langenhove, L. (2017). Varieties of moral orders and the dual structure of society: A perspective from positioning theory [hypothesis and theory]. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 2(9). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2017.00009>
- Van Mol, C. (2021). Exploring explanations for the gender gap in study abroad: A case study of the Netherlands. *Higher Education*, 1–19.
- Waters, J. L. (2023). Time well spent? Temporal dimensions of study abroad and implications for student experiences and outcomes under the UK turing scheme. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(2), 314–328.
- Zimmermann, J., Greischel, H., Jonkmann, K., & Neyer, F. J. (2021). Growth all along the road? Personality development and international contacts of (in) experienced sojourners. *European Journal of Personality*, 35(4), 581–597. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890207020988439>

4 **Understanding the diverse challenges faced by Australian students studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific**

Introduction

Study abroad entails both benefits and challenges associated with the students' journey. Current research investigates various aspects of study abroad including the diversity of participants (Kim & Lawrence, 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2021), the impact of study abroad on students' personal and professional development (Tran & Bui, 2023), employment opportunities (Tran, Do, et al., 2021), intercultural capabilities (Tangen & Henderson, 2023), as well as associated risks (Luethge, 2004). However, there is a lack of understanding of the differences in students' experiences in their study abroad, highlighting a need to shift the focus on the heterogeneity of study-abroad experiences (Netz, 2021). This chapter responds to this gap by analysing both the quantitative and qualitative data of the NCP program with the focus on the variance in perceived challenges associated with Australian students' study abroad in the Indo-Pacific region.

The chapter begins with a review of the literature on the challenges students often encounter in studying abroad, followed by an identification of the gaps in the current literature. It uses demographics information and data from survey questions including 5-point Likert scale questions and an open-ended question on perceived challenges by participating students. The survey questions and items were developed based on the results of initial interviews with NCP students, mobility staff, and academics directly involved in the NCP programs and adaptation from ASR's 2018 NCP cumulative survey (see details about the research design in Chapter 1). The chapter analyses the differences in challenges faced by students of different programs to provide not only insights into the differences in certain student groups but also explanations for these differences. It concludes by emphasising the importance of evidence-based recognition of the heterogeneity of experiences of study-abroad students.

Challenges in study abroad

Study abroad has been reported to benefit students in multiple ways. These include personal and professional development through international interactions that help

increase students' openness and extraversion (Bretag & van der Veen, 2017; Zimmermann et al., 2021), understanding of moral issues, and sense of empathy (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran & Vu, 2018); enhance confidence and self-reliance (Cardwell, 2020), acquire the necessary professional skills; and improve their employment prospects (Netz, 2021; Tran, Stafford, et al., 2021; Tran, Phan & Bellgrove, 2021; Tran et al., 2019). Students also have an opportunity to develop their cultural knowledge and capability (Gan & Kang, 2022; Tangen & Henderson, 2023; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2023), improve foreign language proficiency (Tran & Bui, 2023), and increase their academic performance (Cardwell, 2020; Tran et al., 2024; Tran & Phan, 2024). Petersdotter et al. (2017) observed that students who participated in an international mobility program often developed a higher level of self-efficacy than those who did not.

Despite the above potential benefits, study abroad presents multiple challenges. The popular words and ideas reflecting these challenges include 'adjusting', 'adapting', 'being away from home', 'stereotypes', 'culture shock', 'language barrier', 'staying patient', and 'trying to assimilate' (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). These challenges are many and varied during both the pre-departure and in-country stages. During the preparation for study abroad, a common challenge highlighted in the literature is the complication of the visa process that often causes delays in visa approval. The complexity of the visa administration and processing is country-specific and varies depending on the country destinations and the requirements (Atalar, 2020; Dall'Alba & Sidhu, 2015; Luethge, 2004). These visa issues can affect students' participation and plans, escalate students' anxiety, and cause stress among the students. In addition, pre-departure briefings, which aim to provide students with background knowledge of the host country, institutions, and planned activities, were not always found helpful. For example, Tangen and Henderson (2023) reported the frustration of pre-service teachers because their pre-departure briefings provided little in terms of a clear departure itinerary and lacked clarity of their roles and what they would be doing in the host country. Pre-departure workshops were reported as insufficient in delivering relevant knowledge and information, which increased pressure and anxiety, especially for those had never travelled abroad (Luethge, 2004).

The challenges students faced during their time abroad were both prominent and significant, ranging from psychological and physical adjustment to a new environment, to difficulties in interacting and communicating with local people, peers, and colleagues due to language and cultural differences. Additional challenges included adapting to the host country's norms and systems, as well as managing academic workloads (Gong et al., 2021; Tran & Bui, 2023). For example, Briscoe et al. (2020) reported that stress associated with travel overseas, being away from home, and adjusting to a new culture increased students' pre-existing mental health conditions and triggered new issues such as homesickness and anxiety. With regard to academic workload, students were reported to have difficulties in coping with an increasing academic workload caused by the program's timing, which is often scheduled during mid-term break, and the activities associated

with the programs including pre-departure preparation and post-study reflection (Ritchie, 2003). Another significant challenge is the intensity of the program, as students are expected to manage both the academic components and the cultural and social activities associated with it (Bradly et al., 2024).

Among the challenges encountered by participating students, cultural and language issues including cultural shock and cultural sensitivity are the popular theme reported. Study-abroad programs are designed to challenge students intellectually, culturally, and emotionally. While studying abroad in an unfamiliar environment, students are exposed to a range of experiences and are often required to confront and navigate multiple challenges on a daily basis (Bradly et al., 2024; Themudo et al., 2007). Psychological distress such as culture shock and loneliness have been noted to impact students' overall ability to function while abroad, triggering anxiety and depression (Hunley, 2010). According to Mardiningrum and Larasati (2021), cultural related issues such as foreign languages, local foods, local people's character, handshake culture, and traffic became culture shock sources among study abroad students. However, challenges are considered necessary for students' growth during their study abroad (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005).

The culture shock associated with studying abroad can be a vital and important part in a student's life experience as there are greatly diverse cultures in the world that should be experienced and understood (Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018). These experiences will lead to an understanding that being sensitive to another culture required being open to its dynamics, acknowledging social and political structures, and incorporating other people's beliefs (Ruddock & Turner, 2007). However, not all students experience the same challenges and their ability to handle these challenges are varied depending on different factors such as their previous travel experience, types of study abroad programs, the duration of the programs, and the students' background (Van Mol, 2021). Some take it as a learning curve and reflect on the impact created through experiencing these events while others see it as a negative impact that affects their learning experiences (Netz, 2021). The variance in cultural learning experience is also impacted by the type of study abroad programs in such a way that the ability of short-term programs to increase cultural sensitivity and provide holistic growth on the same level as long-term programs is limited (Anderson et al., 2006) as they do not provide sufficient time for students to integrate a full educational experience into such short travel-oriented programs (Dwyer, 2004). In addition, the duration of study abroad was found to impact the intercultural experience of the participants. For example, Gan and Kang (2022) found that relative to those in the longer term (1–3 months) program, participants in the short-term program (2–4 weeks) were more motivated by their desire to experience culture in another country. Similarly, in some categories, summer students were as likely or more likely to achieve sustainable benefit from studying abroad in comparison with semester students (Dwyer, 2004). Therefore, short-term study-abroad programs, if well-designed and delivered, will have a similar impact to long-term program (Prakaash, 2022)

Research gaps

There are multiple types of study abroad programs, which greatly vary in length and activities (Strange & Gibson, 2017). Study abroad is often categorised into long-term and short-term mobility depending on the length of time students carry out the program activities in the host countries. However, definitions of short-term and long-term mobility vary. For example, Open Doors classifies study abroad into short-term of eight weeks or less, summer term, mid-length of one or two quarters or a semester, and long-term, which is for a calendar year (Open Door, 2021). Dwyer (2004) reported that full-year programs are typically 32 weeks; semester programs are a minimum of 16 weeks, and summer term programs range from six to seven weeks in duration. Students participating in these programs are more often required to step out of their comfort zones and integrate into the host culture with the emphasis on educational experiences and cultural adaptation (Roy et al., 2024; Strange & Gibson, 2017). Long-term programs, however, often require students to spend an academic year abroad with the program being more academically focused since they require a greater level of linguistic and cultural preparation (Slotkin et al., 2012; Strange & Gibson, 2017). In the Australian context, the Australian University International Directors' Forum (AUIDF) categorises short-term mobility as lasting from 1 day to 10–12 weeks, medium-term as one trimester or semester, and long-term as one year (AUIDF, 2021).

In the context of this research, the NCP program comprises the NCP scholarship for a duration of up to 19 months and the NCP mobility programs ranging from 14 days (prior to the NCP reform announced in August 2024) to two semesters (Australian Government, 2024). The motivations, challenges, and benefits of study abroad significantly vary according to the program length, types of programs, and students' demographics as not all students have the same level of experiences of studying abroad. For example, the depth and duration of study-abroad program are reported to affect the efficacy of students' learning experiences of cultural competencies (Berg et al., 2009). Parents' education influences students' study-abroad motivation (Van Mol, 2021). There are gender gaps found in study-abroad motivation and benefits (Di Pietro, 2022; Jessup-Anger, 2008; Van Mol, 2021). There is therefore a need to explore the effect of heterogeneity in study-abroad research (Netz, 2021; Van Mol, 2021). This chapter aims to address this research gap by analysing the survey and qualitative data on challenges faced by different groups of students participating in different NCP programs.

Research design and methodology

This book chapter is derived from a large study that aimed to explore the impacts of Australian students' learning and engagement in the Indo-Pacific funded by the Australian government through the NCP (see chapter 1 for more details; Tran et al., 2021). This study employed a mixed-methods approach including fieldwork, an online survey, and 298 semi-structured interviews with

academics, mobility staff, policy-makers in both Australia and the Indo-Pacific host countries, and NCP students and alumni.

This chapter focuses on the survey data of scaled questions that aim to explore the challenges associated with students' study abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. It was reviewed multiple times by participants and stakeholder representatives, and its readability, logic, and accuracy were tested through a pilot test.

The survey questions relevant to this book chapter include questions about participating students' demographics and challenges associated with their study abroad. A scale of seven items was used to measure students' perceived challenges in participating in the NCP. The items consisted of statements regarding their perceived challenges such as 'dealing with a new language' on a five-point-Likert scale, ranging from 1 ('not at all challenging') to 5 ('extremely challenging'). An open-ended question invited respondents to describe any further factors they perceived as challenging. Data from these two questions together with students' demographics were used for data analysis for this chapter.

Data analysis

Data of this research were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 30. Descriptive statistics of the data were generated and included means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) tests were performed to analyse the differences in perceived challenges among students of different groups. The open-ended data were analysed and subjected to a thematic analysis with the focus on exploring and providing explanations of the results of the quantitative data analysis as well identifying emerging themes. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive understanding of the research problem and strengthens the research validity.

Findings

The survey has a completion rate of 82%. The validity test was measured by Pearson's correlation that was statistically significant with $p < .001$ for all the measurement items. Cronbach's alpha values of the seven questions on challenges were 0.738, which were above the cut-off value of 0.7 and established the scale reliability.

Descriptive statistics for all the respondents to the survey were analysed and revealed that 63% of the respondents were female, 36% were males, and 1% was classified as 'others'. The respondents were studying in a wide range of disciplines with the largest proportion being students from accounting, business, administration, economics (22%), education (6%), followed by science (16%), and law and legal studies (16%). Students from computing, information technology contributed the lowest portion, which is 4%. Others include engineering and surveying (1%), health and community services (13%), land and marine resources (1%), and animal husbandry (1%).

The total response for program questions was 1,311 of which 50% were short-term study tour students ($n = 655$), followed by 15% of students who did

a semester length program, ($n = 196$), 10% from internship students ($n = 125$), and 4% from summer school students ($n = 61$). NCP scholars accounted for 15% of the respondents ($n = 212$).

Descriptive analysis of challenges

Descriptive analysis (see Figure 4.1) revealed that dealing with a new language was challenging for most participating students at different magnitudes from being extremely to slightly challenging (89%), followed by dealing with the culture of the host country (84%). Half of the respondents considered getting away from their current job a challenge and less than half of them reported getting homesick as a challenge during their study abroad.

The Mean of Challenges analysis (see Figure 4.2) reported dealing with a new language was the greatest challenge ($M = 2.79$). While more students reported dealing with culture was challenging (84%), the magnitude of the challenge in adjusting to teaching and learning methods was greater ($M = 2.47$) than in dealing with culture ($M = 2.42$). The lowest mean score of challenges was getting homesick, which was 1.81.

Gender differences in perceived challenges in study abroad

Due to the small percentage of students considered as being ‘others’ (1%), this sample is too small to be included in the analysis. An independent t-test was performed to explore if there were differences between male and female

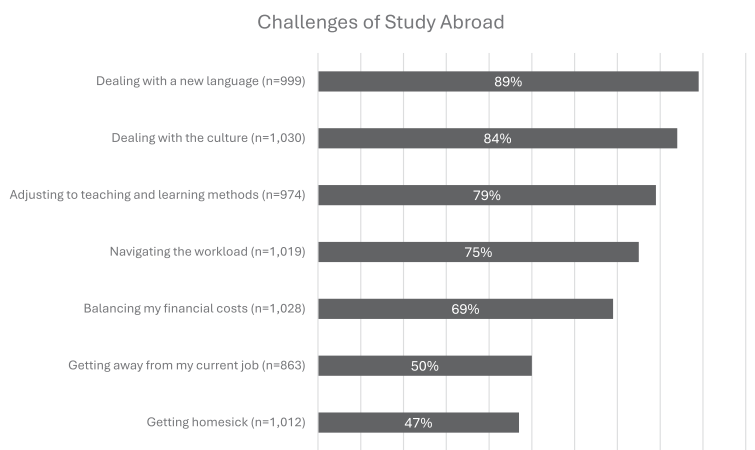


Figure 4.1 Challenges in studying abroad

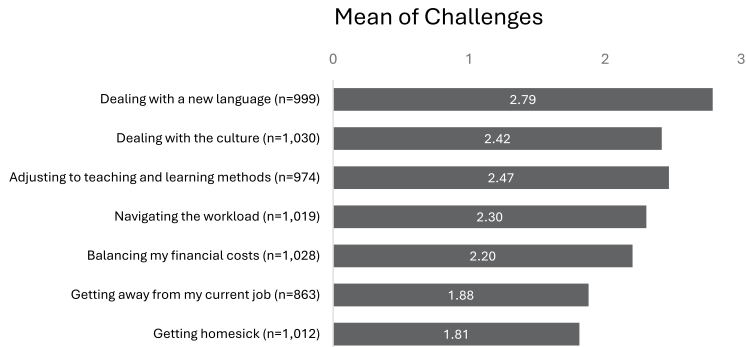


Figure 4.2 Mean score of perceived challenges for Indo-Pacific study abroad

students on their perceived challenges of study abroad. Because the two groups were unequal, the independent samples t-test for unequal variances known as Welch's t-test was conducted to elaborate group differences using IBM SPSS statistics 30.

The results show that there was no statistically significant difference between female and male students for perceived challenges when studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific through the NCP program ($p > .05$), which means that there was no gender gap in perceived challenges associated with the students' study abroad. Research in study abroad reported that while there exists the heterogeneity of effects on study-abroad students, the gender gap was not found on some categories. For example, Van Mol (2021) reported no statistically significant differences between female and male students for 'self-development motivations' and 'professional-oriented motivations'.

Differences in perceived challenges among students of different programs

Respondents to this survey participated in different NCP programs.

The students were categorised in three groups according to their program types: (1) short-to-medium term study abroad between two weeks to less than one year comprising short-term study summer school, language training, mentorships, research and semester-based study; (2) internship; and (3) the NCP scholarship program. The aim of the statistical analysis was to explore if there were statistically significant differences among these three groups in perceived challenges associated with their study abroad.

One-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were performed on their perceived challenges to study in the Indo-Pacific region. The ANOVA shows that there was a statistically significant difference in dealing

with culture, dealing with a new language, adjusting to teaching and learning methods, navigating the workload, and getting away from my current job between at least two groups of students (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 ANOVA analysis results

<i>ANOVA</i>						
<i>Variables</i>		<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Dealing with the culture	Between groups	6.375	2	3.188	3.528	0.030
	Within groups	683.893	757	0.903		
	Total	690.268	759			
Dealing with a new language	Between groups	6.147	2	3.073	2.660	0.041
	Within groups	874.694	757	1.155		
	Total	880.841	759			
Adjusting to teaching and learning methods	Between groups	10.533	2	5.267	4.799	0.008
	Within groups	830.683	757	1.097		
	Total	841.216	759			
Getting homesick	Between groups	4.654	2	2.327	2.143	0.118
	Within groups	821.957	757	1.086		
	Total	826.611	759			
Balancing my financial costs	Between groups	6.584	2	3.292	2.770	0.063
	Within groups	899.720	757	1.189		
	Total	906.304	759			
Navigating the workload	Between groups	6.308	2	3.154	3.131	0.044
	Within groups	762.533	757	1.007		
	Total	768.841	759			
Getting away from my current job	Between groups	8.045	2	4.022	3.452	0.032
	Within groups	882.059	757	1.165		
	Total	890.104	759			

As shown in Table 4.1, there were statistically significant differences between groups on

- Dealing with the culture ($F(2,757) = 3.528, p = .030$).
- Dealing with a new language ($F(2,757) = 2.660, p = .041$).
- Adjusting to teaching and learning methods ($F(2, 757) = 4.799, p = .008$).
- Navigating the workload ($F(2, 757) = 3.131, p = .044$).
- Getting away from my current job ($F(2, 757) = 3.452, p = .032$).

Therefore, it was important to conduct an after-the-fact (or post hoc) test to identify where the differences lie.

Short-to-medium term study and internship students

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test (see Table 4.2) indicated that students in the short-to-medium term study programs reported statistically significant lower levels of challenges as compared to internship group in dealing with culture ($p = 0.039$, Mean Difference = $-.236$), navigating the workload ($p = 0.016$, Mean Difference = $-.292$) and dealing with a new language ($p = 0.028$, Mean difference = $-.284$).

Short-to-medium term study students and NCP scholars

Short-to-medium term study students found that adjusting to teaching and learning methods to be less challenging than NCP scholars ($p = 0.002$, Mean difference: $-.319$). In contrast, getting away from my current job was more challenging for these students compared to NCP Scholars ($p = 0.011$, Mean difference: $.277$).

Internship students and NCP scholars

The only difference in perceived challenges between internship students and NCP scholars was dealing with a new language with the former reporting it as more challenging than the latter ($p = 0.038$, Mean difference: $.323$)

Open-ended questions

Language and cultural barriers

The results of the quantitative analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences between short-to-medium term study and internship students regarding language and cultural barriers, with the latter reporting greater intensity of these challenges. The mean scores of differences between internship students and their counterpart were $.236$ for dealing with culture and $.284$ for dealing with new language, meaning that the magnitude of these challenges was greater among internship students.

Table 4.2 Tukey post hoc test results

<i>Multiple comparisons</i>					
<i>Dependent variable</i>			<i>Mean difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Dealing with the culture	Short-to-medium term study	Internship	-.236*	0.114	0.039
		NCP Scholarship	-.0187	0.095	0.051
	Internship	Short-to-medium term study	.236*	0.114	0.039
		NCP scholarship	0.049	0.137	0.719
	NCP scholarship	Short-to-medium term study	0.187	0.095	0.051
Adjusting to teaching and learning methods	Short-to-medium term study	Internship	-0.049	0.137	0.719
		Internship	-.0131	0.126	0.297
	Internship	NCP Scholarship	-.319*	0.105	0.002
		Short-to-medium term study	0.131	0.126	0.297
	NCP Scholarship	NCP Scholarship	-0.188	0.152	0.215
		Short-to-medium term study	.319*	0.105	0.002
	NCP Scholarship	Internship	0.188	0.152	0.215
		NCP Scholarship	0.274	0.158	0.083
		Short-to-medium term study	-.251*	0.109	0.022
		Internship	-0.274	0.158	0.083
Navigating the workload	Short-to-medium term study	Internship	-.292*	0.121	0.016
		NCP Scholarship	-0.100	0.101	0.321
	Internship	Short-to-medium term study	.292*	0.121	0.016
		NCP Scholarship	0.192	0.145	0.187
	NCP Scholarship	Short-to-medium term study	0.100	0.101	0.321
		Internship	-0.192	0.145	0.187

(Continued)

Table 4.2 (Continued)

<i>Multiple comparisons</i>					
<i>Dependent variable</i>			<i>Mean difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Getting away from my current job	Short-to-medium term study	Internship	−0.028	0.130	0.830
		NCP Scholarship	.277*	0.108	0.011
	Internship	Short-to-medium term study	0.028	0.130	0.830
		NCP Scholarship	0.305	0.156	0.051
	NCP Scholarship	Short-to-medium term study	−.277*	0.108	0.011
		Internship	−0.305	0.156	0.051
Dealing with a new language	Short-to-medium term study	Internship	−.284*	0.129	0.028
		NCP Scholarship	0.039	0.108	0.720
	Internship	Short-to-medium term study	.284*	0.129	0.028
		NCP Scholarship	.323*	0.155	0.038
	NCP Scholarship	Short-to-medium term study	−0.039	0.108	0.720
		Internship	−.323*	0.155	0.038

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

An open-ended question asked participants to briefly describe any further factors they found challenging. The data analysis shows that navigating workplace culture emerged as a great challenge for internship students whereas visa issues were significantly challenging for NCP scholars. Short-to-medium term mobility students reported multiple challenges including weather and health issues. The results of the open-ended question data analysis provided explanations on some of the quantitative findings. Although language and cultural barriers were acknowledged as significant challenges across all three student groups, the degree to which they were experienced and the ways students navigated challenges varied considerably. This heterogeneity of perceived challenges stemmed from the diverse study-abroad programs, the varying program lengths, and the different contexts that the students navigated through during their study abroad.

For short-to-medium term study students, most of them faced challenges associated with language barriers when interacting with local people and local

Table 4.3 Summary of statistically significant differences between the groups

	<i>Short-to-medium term study</i>	<i>Internship</i>
Internship	• Dealing with the culture • Navigating the workload • Dealing with a new language	
NCP scholarship	• Adjusting to teaching and learning methods • Getting away from my current job	Dealing with a new language

students. They also reported that language barriers created difficulties in navigating daily life, such as shopping, ordering food at restaurants, and communicating with local medical staff when dealing with health issues.

Mostly the language and cultural barriers when it came to eating at restaurants.

(Short-to-medium term study student, female, to Japan)

I got severe food poisoning at one point of the trip and had to stay overnight in the medical centre on campus which had some unusual practices such as giving me antibiotics which was not necessary. . . . At times, it was also challenging communicating with local staff who knew very little English, but this was a valuable learning experience.

(Short-to-medium term study student, male, to India)

However, challenges related to cultural and language barriers were most prominent in the work environment for internship students. These challenges were particularly intense because, in addition to navigating the local culture in their daily lives, students had to manage these barriers in the workplace due to their internship placements. They, therefore, faced more complex difficulties as they struggled with understanding workplace culture, communicating with their employers, and interacting with colleagues as reflected in the following excerpts.

Communicating with my co-workers could often be a struggle as well as them finding work for me to do.

(Internship student, female, to Malaysia)

Initially I found it challenging getting to understand the new culture, especially how their businesses work. It is very different than how the businesses here work.

(Internship student, female, to Japan)

What was interesting was needing to perform cultural as well as linguistic translations – that is, while we may use the same word, it may have different meanings or connotations which affects the output at work.

(Internship student, female, to Indonesia)

The intensity of challenges in navigating the work environment provides an explanation of the greater difficulties in cultural and language barriers encountered by internship students as compared to short-to-medium term study abroad students during their study abroad as reported in the quantitative analysis.

NCP scholars also reported language barriers as a challenge, but it was not considered as significant as internship students. This may be because NCP scholars are often encouraged to undertake a language study component as part of their scholarship program. Additionally, since their stay in the host country is significantly longer than that of the other two groups, they have more time to settle in, develop their language skills, and make progress – as reflected in the following quote from an NCP scholar:

These factors were initially challenging, but did get significantly better after about 6 months.

(NCP scholar, male, to Japan)

However, for NCP scholars with an internship component in their program, they faced similar cultural and language barriers at work to those in the internship programs as seen in the following excerpt.

In many situations during my internship, I struggled to understand why my employer and workmates thought in a certain way. Things that I would consider normal or not stressful at home were considered very challenging for them. For example, saying no, rejecting people or being direct seems to be quite troubling for the local people.

(NCP scholar, male, to Republic of Korea)

Adjusting to teaching and learning methods and getting away from work

The challenges perceived by short-to-medium term study students differed from those faced by NCP scholars. Short-to-medium term study students reported fewer difficulties in adjusting to teaching and learning methods compared to NCP scholars. This is likely because short-term mobility programs are often accompanied by academics from Australian universities who provide support throughout the trip. In contrast, NCP scholars typically have a language study component and for some, complete semester-long studies at the host institution along with

an internship placement. As a result, they have to adjust to the host study environment, while balancing with the demands of internships and course alignment which they found challenging as shared in the following quotes by NCP scholars:

Balancing Korean academics expectations with my own workload and NCP study requirements was very difficult. I was taking 5 courses in semester 2 and a Korean Professor . . . wanted me to do an internship with his research group in second semester. I was very keen to join his group but I thought he understood my workload. . . . But I later found out he expected me to work round the clock and essentially abandon my coursework for his internship which was never made official anyway.

(NCP scholar, male, to Republic of Korea)

Finding ways to balance or connect two different course structures was exceptionally challenging.

(NCP scholar, male, to Fiji)

Matching university units from Aus to my university in the region. Most universities in the region do not allow cross-faculty study which makes it hard for double-degree students.

(NCP scholar, female, to Malaysia)

However, short-to-medium-term study students found it more challenging to manage time off from their jobs in order to participate in the program. Prior to the reform of the NCP announced in August 2024, short-to-medium term study programs typically ranged from two weeks to one semester, often requiring students to take time off from their current employment while attempting to keep their job. This can create difficulties for employers, and approval for time off is not always guaranteed. In contrast, NCP scholars are generally able to plan to quit their job when securing the scholarship, given the longer duration of their programs. Therefore, while they still consider it a challenge, the intensity of this challenge is not as strong as short-term study students in managing time off from work during their study abroad.

I quit my Job at (name of the employer) so I was able to undertake this opportunity.

(NCP scholar, male, to Solomon Islands)

Getting away from what was my current job at the time of my placement was a considerable challenge as I was essentially fired (although I officially resigned) as I was unsuccessful in negotiating an unpaid leave request for the considerable length of my NCP placement (11 months).

(NCP scholar, male, to Japan)

Challenges in getting out of the country, getting a visa, getting time off work.

(Short-to-medium-term study student, male to India)

Reverse culture shock

While reverse culture shock was not reported by short-to-medium-term study students and NCP scholars, it was found in internship students and especially mentioned by many semester-length students as reflected in the following excerpts

I found it very challenging to reintegrate into Australian society after immersing myself into life in Borneo.

(Internship, female, to Malaysia)

Returning home was the most challenging part of my experience.

(Semester mobility student, female, to Indonesia)

Reverse culture shock on return to Australia.

(Semester mobility student, female, to Japan)

Re-entry to Australia.

(Semester mobility student, female, to Indonesia)

Reverse culture shock refers to the negative experiences when students return home and readapt to the environment of their own culture after having spent time studying abroad. Potential symptoms of reverse culture shock the students may encounter include depression, boredom, rejection, confusion, frustration, and restlessness (Mastrianni, 2021). It is a condition if left unaddressed can lead to anxiety, trouble in school, and relationship difficulties (Tomlin et al., 2014). The finding of this study reveals that reverse culture shock has been found mostly in semester length students, which supports research by Mastrianni (2021) who observed that returning home after living a semester in a host country can result in a shock to individuals. In addition, this study found that not all study-abroad students suffer from reverse culture shock, which was consistent with existing literature (e.g. Mastrianni, 2021; Tomlin et al., 2014). This may be because, unlike study tours that typically last two to four weeks, a one-semester study program provides students with sufficient time to immerse themselves in the host culture, build connections, and develop a sense of attachment to the host country – making it more challenging to readjust to their home country upon return. Some of them wanted to stay longer in the host country for further experiences as shared in the following quote:

It was quite difficult to leave the host country since I was able to make a lot of new friends and connections. I stayed 1 month extra in the host country to be able to see and experience more.

(Semester-based student, male, to Thailand)

However, upon return to home countries, the students exercised their agency of adjusting and adapting and while reverse culture shock was found in some

students, the majority of them readjusted well to their home country (Mastrianni, 2021).

Experiencing challenges as becoming

The differences in students' perceived challenges during their study-abroad experiences resulted from the varying contexts they navigated and the environments they operated in. These acted as fields that shaped how students experienced and acquired different knowledge and skills as the outcomes of their studying abroad.

Many students see the challenges as real-life experiences that help them develop and acquire various skills. They described their initial negative experiences from the perspective of experiential learning, transforming for becoming such as becoming positive by acknowledging the challenges, but considered it as 'exciting and rewarding', becoming resilient by viewing the challenge as an opportunity to 'learn new things', becoming patient by acknowledging that 'our language developed slowly, with small phrases learnt', and becoming strong by seeing that 'these (challenges) are not things to be afraid of'. The following excerpts further reflect how students turn perceived challenges to learning opportunities.

The NCP experience has reaffirmed to me that challenges should be accepted with a positive outlook. I continue to assure myself that new experiences, challenging ones, will teach me something and likely help me become a better version of myself.

(Short-to-medium-term study student, female, to Indonesia)

Initially I found it challenging getting to understand the new culture, especially how their businesses work. It is very different than how the businesses here work. I found it challenging at first to grasp, but also extremely interesting.

(Internship student, female, to Japan)

I found it difficult to engage with the local students . . . as they do not make much effort to become friends with someone staying for only a short time. However, by seeking out extracurricular activities, such as a youth leadership camp, membership of a church, volunteering with North Korean refugees, and membership with a local Korean culture and history club, I was able to build relationships with Koreans from different walks of life.

(NCP scholar, female, to Republic of Korea)

Through the process of reflective observation, students consciously reflect on their experiences and draw context-specific, pragmatic conclusions (Morris,

2020) – a process that contributes to personal growth, as one student described it, ‘becoming a better version’ of themselves. During their study, students were involved in a process of experiential learning by participating in real-life activities and transformed their observations into their understanding to create their own learning outcomes (Chiocca, 2021). This transformative process and the outcomes are driven by the interactions between the individual students with these cultural, political, and economic fields in the host countries in their daily life and in the work environment for those who carried out their internship as part of their program. Both positive and negative learning experiences will have powerful impacts on student learning (Mardiningrum & Larasati, 2021) as they are real opportunities made available to students to work towards their goals of becoming when participating in the NCP program. In this study, the challenges associated with students’ study abroad help them develop interculturally, becoming more aware of their own culture as well as cultural differences and navigating through these challenges. This process embodies the underlying curiosity of individuals to explore new and different experiences and involves both a willingness and capacity to deal with discomfort and disequilibrium while studying abroad (Engberg et al., 2016). Regardless that these experiences were seen as challenges, in many ways, they are not negatives but valuable to the development of the student, both personally and academically (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005).

Discussion and conclusion

This chapter explores the heterogeneity in perceived challenges between different groups of students who studied abroad in the Indo-Pacific Region under different programs including short-to-medium term study, internship, and the NCP scholarship program. The study used both quantitative and qualitative data to analyse the differences in perceived challenges among the students and what these challenges mean to them regarding their development from the experiences of studying abroad.

The analysis indicates that while male and female students reported similar levels of perceived challenges during their study-abroad experience, notable differences were observed among students participating in different types of programs: short-to-medium-term study, internships, and scholarship programs. The findings enrich the current literature on student mobility by not only confirming the existence of the heterogeneity in the experiences among study abroad students (Netz, 2021; Van Mol, 2021) but also providing insights into the diversified intensity of these challenges depending on the programs the students participated in and the contexts they navigated through during their studying abroad.

Regarding perceived challenges such as adapting to the culture, managing the workload, and dealing with a new language, short-to-medium term study students with the program duration from two weeks to one semester reported

these challenges as less intense compared to short-term internship students. While short-to-medium-term study students encountered these challenges in their daily life such as speaking with local people or interacting in restaurants, internship students often faced these challenges in a professional work environment. The explanation offers fresh insight into the diverse nature of challenges experienced by different groups of students during study-abroad programs.

Risks and challenges associated with study abroad have been discussed in the current literature. A prominent and recent review of literature by Bradley et al. (2024) listed 42 challenges and risks associated with study abroad. The article however did not elaborate who suffered which challenges and how different they are in experiencing these challenges. This chapter makes a unique contribution to the study-abroad literature by offering insights into the variations in perceived challenges across different student groups, along with explanations for these differences.

This chapter highlights the importance of understanding different types of challenges encountered by study-abroad students to provide them with relevant and appropriate support. For instance, one of the most significant challenges for NCP scholars is visa issues, which can have a profound impact on their preparation for studying abroad as well as their mental wellbeing. Home and host universities can offer timely support by providing essential information about the visa process, required documents, and timing as well as offering problem-solving assistance when needed. Similarly, internship students are reported to often face language and culture barriers in the workplace where they do their internships. Support and services in the form of language and intercultural training in a professional context may be necessary to help them better navigate and manage their expectations when dealing with these challenges.

References

- Atalar, A. (2020). Student exchange: The first step toward international collaboration. In A. Ai-Youbi, A. H. M. Zahed, & W. G. Tierney (Eds.), *Successful global collaborations in higher education institutions* (pp. 63–71). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25525-1_7
- Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R. J., & Hubbard, A. C. (2006). Short-term study abroad and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(4), 457–469.
- AUIDF. (2021). *Australian universities learning abroad 2019*. Canberra, Australia.
- Australian Government. (2024). *About the New Colombo Plan*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan>
- Berg, M. V., Connor-Linton, J., & Paige, R. M. (2009). The Georgetown consortium project: Interventions for student learning abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 18(1), 1–75.
- Bradly, A., Iskhakova, M., & Ott, D. L. (2024). Short-term study abroad (STSA): A review of key risks and challenges. *Journal of International Education in Business*. (ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIEB-04-2024-0036>

- Bretag, T., & van der Veen, R. (2017). 'Pushing the boundaries': Participant motivation and self-reported benefits of short-term international study tours. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 54(3), 175–183.
- Briscoe, K. L., Niehaus, E., Nelson, M., & Bryan, A. (2020). The role of mental health issues in faculty-led short-term study abroad. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 38(2), 143–156.
- Cardwell, P. J. (2020). Does studying abroad help academic achievement? *European Journal of Higher Education*, 10(2), 147–163.
- Chiocca, E. S. (2021). Talking with 'others': Experiences and perspective transformation in a short-term study abroad program. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 33(2), 35–60.
- Curtis, T., & Ledgerwood, J. R. (2018). Students' motivations, perceived benefits and constraints towards study abroad and other international education opportunities. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 11(1), 63–78.
- Dall'Alba, G., & Sidhu, R. (2015). Australian undergraduate students on the move: Experiencing outbound mobility. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(4), 721–744.
- DFAT. (2019). *About the New Colombo Plan*. Retrieved February 28, 2020, from <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-columbo-plan/about/Pages/about.aspx>
- Di Pietro, G. (2022). Changes in the study abroad gender gap: A European cross-country analysis. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 76(2), 436–459.
- Dwyer, M. M. (2004). More is better: The impact of study abroad program duration. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 151–163.
- Engberg, M. E., Jourian, T. J., & Davidson, L. M. (2016). The mediating role of intercultural wonderment: Connecting programmatic components to global outcomes in study abroad. *Higher Education*, 71, 21–37.
- Gan, L., & Kang, Z. (2022). Study abroad: Benefits, concerns, who goes and why? *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 34(4), 206–240.
- Gong, Y., Gao, X., Li, M., & Lai, C. (2021). Cultural adaptation challenges and strategies during study abroad: New Zealand students in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 34(4), 417–437.
- Hunley, H. A. (2010). Students' functioning while studying abroad: The impact of psychological distress and loneliness. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(4), 386–392.
- Jessup-Anger, J. E. (2008). Gender observations and study abroad: How students reconcile cross-cultural differences related to gender. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(4), 360–373.
- Kim, H. S., & Lawrence, J. H. (2021). Who studies abroad? Understanding the impact of intent on participation. *Research in Higher Education*, 1–47.
- Luehtge, D. J. (2004). Perceived risk and risk reduction strategies in study abroad programs. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, 15(4), 23–45. https://doi.org/10.1300/J066v15n04_03
- Luo, J., & Jamieson-Drake, D. (2015). Predictors of study abroad intent, participation, and college outcomes. *Research in Higher Education*, 56(1), 29–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9338-7>
- Mardiningrum, A., & Larasati, A. (2021). *Culture shock in a study abroad program in an Indonesian context*. 4th International Conference on Sustainable Innovation 2020–Social, Humanity, and Education (ICoSIHESS 2020).

- Mastrianni, M. (2021). Is the end just the beginning? The study of the effect of reverse culture shock on American students when they return home from a semester long study abroad experience. *Honour Thesis*. Bryan University. https://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=honors_english
- Morris, T. H. (2020). A systematic review and revision of Kolb's model. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 28(8), 1064–1077. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2020.1823675>
- Netz, N. (2021). Who benefits most from studying abroad? A conceptual and empirical overview. *Higher Education*, 82(6), 1049–1069.
- Open Doors. (2021). *Fast fact 2021*. https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2021/
- Petersdotter, L., Niehoff, E., & Freund, P. A. (2017). International experience makes a difference: Effects of studying abroad on students' self-efficacy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 107, 174–178.
- Prakaash, M. (2022). Short mobility 'much more' than just tourism. *The Pie*.
- Ritchie, M. A. (2003). Risk management in study abroad: Lessons from the wilderness. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 9(1), 53–69.
- Roy, A., Newman, A., & Lahiri-Roy, R. (2024). Antecedents of short-term international mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 22(2), 226–239.
- Ruddock, H. C., & Turner, D. S. (2007). Developing cultural sensitivity: Nursing students' experiences of a study abroad programme. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 59(4), 361–369.
- Slotkin, M. H., Durie, C. J., & Eisenberg, J. R. (2012). The benefits of short-term study abroad as a blended learning experience. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 5(2), 163–173.
- Strange, H., & Gibson, H. J. (2017). An investigation of experiential and transformative learning in study abroad programs. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 29(1), 85–100.
- Tangen, D., & Henderson, D. (2023). Long-term transformative learning from short-term outbound mobility programs and the connection to government's soft power initiatives. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(5), 440–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2023.2230155>
- Themudo, D., Page, D., & Benander, R. (2007). Student and faculty perceptions of the impact of study abroad on language acquisition, culture shock, and personal growth. *AURCO Journal*, 13, 65–79.
- Tomlin, C. R., Miller, M. L., Schellhase, E., New, G., Karwa, R., & Ouma, M. N. (2014). Assessing reverse culture shock following an international pharmacy practice experience. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 6(1), 106–113.
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Do, T. Q., & Bui, H. (2021). 'Employability in context': The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). 'It's a few weeks I'll cherish forever': Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo

- Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999231163402>
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.2408385>
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers' professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., & Phan, H. L. T. (2024). Conceptualising mobility as becoming, connecting and contributing: Australian New Colombo Plan scholars learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102429>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2021). 'There's a much bigger world of science than just Australia': Australian students' development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science Education*, 43(6), 888–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2021.1891322>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2024). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students' curriculum-specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 876–893.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1737656>
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students' career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. T. P. (2018). Beyond the 'normal' to the 'new possibles': Australian students' experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 72(3), 194–207.
- Van Hoof, H. B., & Verbeeten, M. J. (2005). Wine is for drinking, water is for washing: Student opinions about international exchange programs. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9(1), 42–61.
- Van Mol, C. (2021). Exploring explanations for the gender gap in study abroad: A case study of the Netherlands. *Higher Education*, 1–19.
- Zimmermann, J., Greischel, H., Jonkmann, K., & Neyer, F. J. (2021). Growth all along the road? Personality development and international contacts of (in) experienced sojourners. *European Journal of Personality*, 35(4), 581–597. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0890207020988439>

5 Study abroad in the Indo-Pacific

Student development and community impacts from the perspectives of students, academics, and professional staff from home and host countries

Introduction

Study abroad has been widely adopted by universities around the world due to its perceived impacts on students, institutions, and communities. Research consistently shows that study abroad offers numerous benefits for students' learning and skill development (Haas, 2018; Iskhakova & Bradly, 2022; Sisavath, 2021). The key themes discussed in the literature include the impact of study abroad on students' foreign language proficiency (Borràs & Llanes, 2021), intercultural awareness (Haas, 2018; Huang et al., 2023), graduate employability (Sisavath, 2021; Tran et al, 2019; Tran, Phan & Belgrove, 2021), and personal growth (Zhang & Gibson, 2021; Tran & Vu, 2018; Tran et al., 2021). The literature also explores the impact of study abroad on pedagogy and faculty enhancement (Iskhakova & Bradly, 2022). However, little research examines the broader contributions of study abroad experiences to the communities and societies. In addition, very few studies explore the benefits of outbound mobility from the Global North to the Global South.

This chapter extends the literature by providing evidence that study abroad impacts not only students themselves but also the broader society. Specifically, through participation in the New Colombo Plan (NCP) program to Indo-Pacific countries, Australian students have the potential to experience personal, intercultural and professional development. Additionally, they may use their Indo-Pacific knowledge and experience to help family, friends, and communities deepen their understanding about the region.

Using the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2017) and the conceptualisation of mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing (Tran, 2016; Tran & Phan, 2024; Tran et al., 2024) for data analysis (see Chapter 2 for details about the theoretical framework for this study), this chapter discusses findings from survey and interview data on the impacts of study abroad in the Indo-Pacific on student learning, skill development, employability, and career orientation. It also explores the broader impacts on their family, home and host

communities. In addition to students' perspectives, this chapter includes insights from interviews with academic staff, mobility practitioners, and staff from host organisations – voices that are often under-represented in the literature.

This chapter draws on a broader research project on Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific under the New Colombo Plan (see Chapter 1; Tran, Stafford, Soejatminah & Gribble, 2021; Tran et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2022; Tran, Phan & Belgrove, 2021; 2024; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021; Tran & Vu, 2018). Quantitative data in this chapter comes from survey questions that investigate the impact of Australian students' study abroad in the Indo-Pacific. Qualitative data from open-ended questions in the survey, interviews with students, academic staff, mobility practitioners, and host staff will then provide further intriguing insights on impacts.

Impacts on student learning and development

Impacts on academic learning

Survey data with students shows that the Indo-Pacific experiences had significant positive impacts on participating students' learning and development. Viewed through the lens of the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999), the NCP program can be conceptualised as social arrangements that enable the expansion of students' capabilities, which are understood as 'the substantive freedoms' open to a person to lead the life he or she values (Sen, 1999, p. 87). In this sense, capabilities are not limited to inner abilities that a person possesses. Capabilities of NCP students refer to real opportunities or freedoms developed through the NCP programs.

The NCP study experience brought various and significant benefits to participating students with more than 80% of the survey respondents reporting studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific was *very valuable* or *extremely valuable* for their personal and intercultural development. The highest proportions of students emphasised the value of the program in that it 'helped me build confidence to step out of my comfort zone', followed by 'make me appreciate of different perspectives and ways of doing things' (93% and 91% considered it very or extremely valuable respectively). The findings that studying abroad helped students develop personal and intercultural skills are consistent with the extant literature (Tangen & Henderson, 2023; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran & Bui, 2023). The least valuable factor but still significant was that the Indo-Pacific experiences 'helped clarify my career options' with 59% considering it very valuable or extremely valuable.

Translation of the Indo-Pacific experiences into actions

While the Indo-Pacific experiences had a significant impact on students' personal and professional development, as well as their career prospects, there were limited immediate initiatives or changes in students' study fields

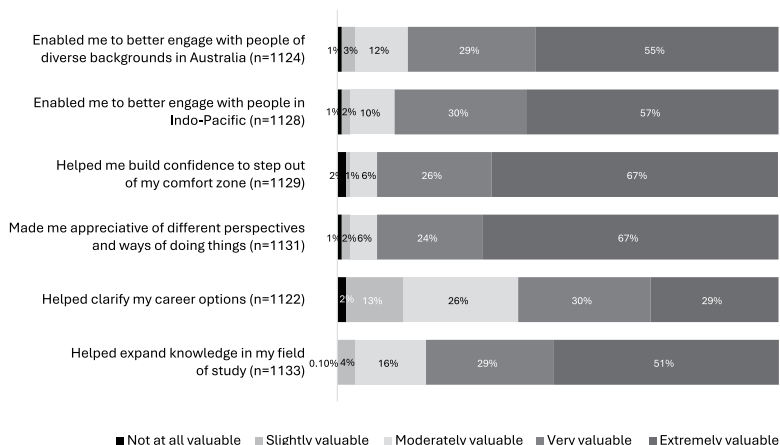


Figure 5.1 Impacts on students' personal and intercultural development

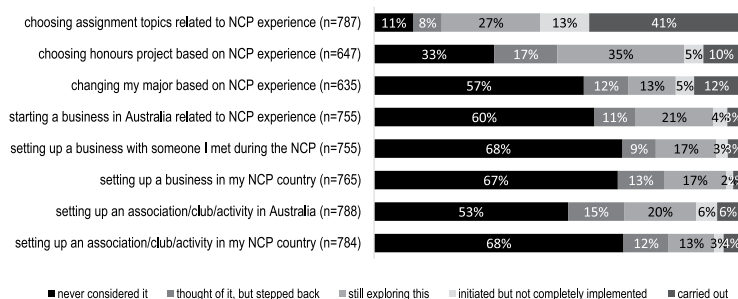


Figure 5.2 Translation of the Indo-Pacific experiences into action

driven by or oriented towards the NCP experience. Among the eight measuring items, only 'choosing assignment topic related to the NCP experience' was carried out by 41% of the survey students. The other seven initiatives and changes related to the Indo-Pacific experiences were much more limited, with the highest proportion (12%) changing their major based on their Indo-Pacific study abroad, and the lowest (2%) setting up a business in their NCP country.

These limited actions taken by the students could be explained by their study and work status at the time of the survey. At that point, 72% were still studying, 38% had recently graduated, only 25% of respondents were working

full-time, and 3.2% were self-employed. Therefore, their capacity for setting up a business or an association relating to their NCP experiences is limited. Mawer (2018) contended that the evidence for international scholarship alumni in shaping international relations is more about charting potential pathways for impact creation rather than accounting for actual impacts. He also suggested that the impacts of a scholarship program are often a legacy of decades of public diplomacy efforts.

International and comparative perspectives on discipline-specific knowledge

In alignment with the survey data, interviews with students reveal that the program has made a significant contribution to enhancing their curriculum-specific learning, which Sen (1992, 1999) identifies as achieved functionings. Students reported being provided with unique opportunities to acquire discipline-specific knowledge in the Indo-Pacific countries through international and comparative perspectives, real-life experiences, practical applications, and intensive learning.

First, through the study-abroad program, students gained knowledge about the subject matter from international and comparative perspectives in transnational contexts. By gaining new insights into the systems, approaches, and procedures in Indo-Pacific countries, which often differ from those in Australia, students' understanding of discipline-specific knowledge could be deepened and diversified. As some students indicated:

I definitely have a *deeper understanding of the health issues* faced in other countries and the comparison to an Australian setting.

(Short-term mobility student, to India, interview)

My experiences with studying in Hong Kong *opened my eyes to an Eastern approach to Psychology*. A lot of what we learnt was relevant to individuals from collectivist countries, and *could be easily be applied in Australia* due to our diverse population whereas studying in Australia has really *only ever taught me about the Western perspective*.

(Long-term mobility student, to Hong Kong, interview)

The NCP experience I had in Taiwan provided me with a unique opportunity to learn about social work in a different political and cultural context.

(Short-term mobility student, to Taiwan, interview)

The comparative lens provides students with the opportunity to critically assess professional practices in the same field in Australia and identify what can be

learned from the Indo-Pacific context to enhance Australian practices. This was also reported by both home and host staff:

I definitely think that *they improve academically* as well because I really think it challenges them and they quite often have to be more [flexible] than they're used to or *have to think differently in terms of their academic learning* and when they come back I think they really can apply that in the class room, particularly if they've gone for a semester of being exposed to a very different learning environment.

(Academic, female)

I think it's hugely beneficial. What we hear again and again, people have very low expectations of Vietnam and I think in big parts of Asia and *they always walk away surprised at the quality of programming* here.

(Host, Vietnam)

Student's and staff's perspectives in these excerpts not only reinforce the literature about the contribution of study abroad to broadening students' outlooks through comparative international perspectives (Sisavath, 2021; Tran et al., 2021, 2022, 2023) but also emphasise the importance of conversion factors in shaping students' agency to turn opportunities into functionings, which is achieved outcomes. Conversion factors, according to Conradie (2024), include social and environmental factors, which are additional elements that help explain how a person can transform resources into the doings and beings they value. In this context, conversion factors include the 'quality of programs' offered, as well as the social, cultural, and geopolitical factors, and the learning environment in the host country – all of which play an important role in enabling or inhibiting students from realising their desired outcomes. By exercising their agency, some students compared and reflected on their learning, which resulted in forming their aspiration for becoming a better self, and their intended actions after the study, such as applying the knowledge gained in the Indo-Pacific into Australia or engaging with people from different cultures.

Real-life learning experience

The international experiences, especially internship programs in the Indo-Pacific, enabled first-hand, real-life, and experiential learning that was highly relevant and complementary to the theoretical knowledge gained in Australia. As the following student remarked, immersion into the realities of their field of study helped them confirm, change, and reflect on their prior knowledge and assumptions drawn from research or during their formal learning.

Obviously, there's not a lot of research currently about Vietnam or it's difficult to find. So *the best way to do that is being able to go over there and see firsthand whether some of our assumptions being made are correct or if*

they're wrong. And then we can modify our research based on those results. So in terms of the class itself, it's very relevant.

(Short-term mobility student, to Vietnam, interview)

Exposure to experiential learning conditions was, most of the time, eye-opening to students and therefore enabled them to internalise the acquired knowledge. For example, one student reported:

Tackling that project [at a Japan's research centre] which was probably the first open-ended lab experiment I've done, which didn't have a definitive answer. Like we didn't know what was going to happen. So that was a *turning point of, that was an eye-opener of what real science will be like*.

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

In addition, practical and authentic experiences were beneficial for students writing their research papers and reports. By observing things firsthand and documenting their findings during field trips in the host countries, they were able to gather information and empirical knowledge, which added depth and richness to their research, as indicated in the following excerpt:

The topic that we were doing about municipal waste management and that as the system, I mean, they just *opened your eyes to a whole new chapters* that we hadn't even studied before. . . . And I'd say without going there, the report is just another, you know, theoretical piece of paper. But because we went there, everything in the report is, you know, it's factual and it's firsthand documented.

(Short-term mobility student, to Vietnam, interview)

The 'eye-opening' and 'turning point' value of field trips was highlighted by staff:

On a personal level the thing that I think is the most important in this experience is just that *eye opening . . . mind opening moment* when you get off the plane . . . That mind opening experience that students have . . . *the learning outcomes, the employment outcomes* . . . it all comes from that moment you step off the plane.

(Third party provider, male)

This program firstly *broadens their horizon and awareness* for an interest in science research, and in their pursuit of their career in science and technological research.

(Host, China)

[E]xperiencing firsthand the impacts of the tsunami . . . for my students studying marine biology and sustainability, it's *life in practice*.

(Host, Japan)

Both students' and staff's comments underscore the profound and life-changing impact of the Indo-Pacific study abroad on transforming student learning process, with hands-on experiences shaping meaningful learning for participating students. The NCP program serves to enable social arrangements that promote students' opportunities to access unique learning conditions. In the capability approach, a person who has access to favourable conditions is seen to have greater real opportunities and advantages compared to others (Sen, 2009).

Application of theory to practice

Indo-Pacific study-abroad programs may create a learning environment that bridges theory and practice through the knowledge application process. Along with seeing global workplaces firsthand while in the host countries, students had the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practice, as one student acknowledged:

It's something you can apply what you've been learning, your skills, your knowledge . . . you've learned at university. . . . So you can apply that and practice the actual skills you got rather than just learning about it.

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

By applying theoretical knowledge and acquired skills, students were able to develop deeper theoretical and empirical understandings of their discipline. Simultaneously, through learning by doing (Bruce & Bloch, 2012), students became key actors in their learning process, instead of being passive recipients of knowledge. As such, the mobility programs complemented and enhanced the formal learning experienced by Australian students in their home country. Interview data indicates that learning happens in their direct field of expertise and related ones, broadening students' knowledge horizons:

It wasn't my area of work because as I said, we are software engineering students and we got to work with a lot of electronics. . . . But I think once we got to know about it, it was a really good experience and we did have a lot of programming knowledge in it as well, so in that way it ended up being a good experience for us and we ended up learning way more than what we thought we would.

(Short-term mobility student, to Vietnam, interview)

The capability approach states that an individual's ability to convert resources into functionings depends on the personal, sociopolitical, and environmental conversion factors (Robeyns, 2011). This holds true in this case, when the ecological conditions of the NCP program provide participating students with the opportunities to convert the theoretical knowledge into practical outcomes and gain meaningful learning experiences.

Intensive learning period through short-term mobility

Short-term mobility and internship programs offered students an intensive learning period that significantly expedited their learning. This is echoed by a recent study conducted by Universities UK International (2021) on the effects of short-term mobility. Students acknowledged that their short-term mobility programs proved to be even more productive than semester/trimester-long formal study at home universities, although the full schedule created high pressure. This is because students were able to form a collective learning community through cohort mobility, had 24/7 access to their academic program leader, and became actively engaged in meetings, observations, and real-world work:

I feel like that [during the] two and a half week course I learned more than what I did during the whole semester of uni. So I just feel like it was condensed, like you know, it was quite intense, we were like travelling and doing lots of work. But I just feel like the, basically, you know, meeting other Japanese students, seeing what they're up to, and formulating work within a few days like *it was really like high pressure but very productive and just like a great learning experience.*

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

Students' accounts of learning through short-term mobility challenged the assumption that these programs are similar to a tourist experience:

You know, in the enormity of it is really, I guess, I could probably best illustrate that what I've learned in this time here [Japan], might've taken me 10 years back in my own country [Australia].

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

The intensiveness of the short-term mobility program was also reported by host staff who saw this as a substantial contribution to students' learning:

But *within that two weeks staying in the country, they will have to deliver the final outcomes and presentation to the client. So that mean that they really have to work really hard during that two week. . . .* And they work together very intensively instead of just meeting for three hours each week, like when they're on campus. . . . We also meet with them many times and, you know, give our feedback and advice as they progress. So it's a lot more intensive for both students and also for staff. And therefore they have quite a *steep learning curve during the period.*

(Host, Vietnam)

If well-designed, academically rigorous short-term mobility programs provided students with valuable conditions for content knowledge learning. The

capability approach highlights the important role of social arrangements in shaping individuals' capabilities, in the form of freedoms and opportunities, to achieve desired beings (states) and doings (activities) (Sen, 1992). This point provides a lens to see the intensive learning period in short-term and internship NCP programs as a favourable social arrangement that enables effective learning among participating students. Well-designed programs exposed Australian students to unfamiliar Indo-Pacific contexts, creating an engaging and authentic learning environment where students gained a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, both theoretically and practically.

Access to resources and support

Another important contribution of the NCP program to the student learning process is the access to valuable resources and support, which would otherwise be unavailable to them in Australia. Specifically, students benefited from extensive support from academics, researchers, professionals, peers, and local people in the Indo-Pacific. This created a stimulating learning environment where students could learn from different people and learning activities. Apart from that, students had the chance to visit or work in laboratories and specialist centres that they were not exposed to in their home country, which was considered a valuable platform for learning as this student reported,

And particularly with some of the places we visited . . . I've never had the opportunity to see something like that, even in Australia. So it really broadened my understanding of what are the procedures and what takes place . . . in that setting.

(Short-term mobility student, to China, interview)

Access to resources is a key focus in the capability approach. Resources and support available for students in the NCP program can be seen as an enabling social arrangement and an important means for potential capabilities (Sen, 1992; Robeyns, 2011). Although resources alone do not ensure that people are able to convert them into actual doings and beings (Robeyns, 2011), the availability of resources expands their capabilities to gain rich learning experiences and personal and professional growth. Depending on personal, social, and environmental conversion factors, students can leverage these resources to achieve enhanced learning experiences.

Impacts on students' employability, employment, and career orientations

For almost 90% of survey respondents, the Indo-Pacific study-abroad was useful for their resume whereas less than 50% reported it was valued by their

current employer. The NCP experience provided students with the edge to navigate the labour market and secure employment, which is consistent with studies that reported study abroad helps increase students' employability skills, strengthen their resume, and therefore enhance their career prospects (e.g., Farugia & Sanger, 2017; Tran et al., 2020, 2021). For Erasmus students, mobility placed them in a better position to find their first job and to enhance their career development from both students' and employers' perspectives (Brandenburg et al., 2014).

In line with the statistics, data from open-ended questions provided further insights into how students leveraged the learning abroad experience when navigating the labour market. By including their Indo-Pacific experience in their portfolio, students demonstrated their ability to transfer knowledge and skills in the workplace and engage with different cultures, showing potential employers that they were well-rounded candidates with a range of soft and hard skills,

I participated in 2 NCP study programs which coupled with overseas volunteer work in Zambia and short summer study in Belfast *enabled me to get to the interview stage of all the positions I applied.* Using overseas experiences as examples to answer interview questions landed me both jobs. *These overseas experiences are highly respected by future employees,* it expresses your adaptability skills, and eagerness to learn and much more.

(Short-term mobility student, to Nepal, survey)

My NCP experience opened so many doors, but it also helped me close the doors I wasn't interested in and *given career options I never thought I had before.* This has allowed me to focus on my passions and strive to enter a career I know I am passionate about and keen to make a difference in. I have been offered several positions since returning to Australia, all because of my experiences abroad.

(NCP scholar, to Japan, survey)

The impact of the NCP program on students' career orientations and its contributions to expanding job prospects is echoed by home and host staff:

I think it really gives them a different perspective on their studies. I've actually found that student who participate in the NCP program usually come back sort of revitalised and *often even changed the path of their career* that they previously sort of had mapped out because they've *discovered a new perspective* or been sort of reinvigorated by the whole program.

(Academic, female)

Those interested in business or bilateral relation will be able to practice their experience, skills and knowledge gained from the internship directly. For example, they could apply for jobs or research projects dealing with Australian-Indonesian relationship. Records of studying/doing internship in Indonesia will make the CV look stronger.

(Host, Indonesia)

These excerpts point to the contributions of the Indo-Pacific experiences to widening students' employment options, conceptualised as a form of capabilities or substantive freedoms (Sen, 1992), that enables students to pursue their career aspirations and achieve their desired outcomes. In the capability approach, capability reflects a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living. In this case, students have more freedom to choose their valued career pathway thanks to the profile and skills gained from studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific. These findings are consistent with Lukas et al.'s (2014) study on Erasmus programs and Tran et al.'s (2021) argument that studying in the Indo-Pacific provides students with a contextual experience to develop connections with the host communities and increase knowledge about the region, shaping their employability and career orientation.

Participants also reported the NCP program's impact on students' career planning and network building, which will be useful for their future career, as the following students and staff commented.

I now have *international goals in my career planning*. I would especially like to return to Bhutan to develop inter-agency work around domestic violence.

(Short-term mobility student, to Bhutan, survey)

I think that they also really *develop networks*. Networks is so important. And I think it gives students an *international network that they can draw on once they graduate*. So that's also really important as well.

(Academic, female)

It *builds up the relationship* with not only [host university] students, but also campers coming from other universities, and to build their connections, which hopefully can be *their future research partners*, all over the world.

(Host, China)

These comments demonstrate the role of the Indo-Pacific experiences in shaping students' agency goals (Sen, 1985; Burchardt, 2009) that work towards not only students' own benefits but also the commitments to the host communities. According to Burchardt (2009), agency goals are usually adaptive and

person-specific, subjective to individuals' circumstances. These NCP students are able to incorporate international dimensions into their career goals thanks to the immersion into the international contexts outside Australia.

That being said, it is worth noting that fewer than 50% of students reported the international experience was valued by their current employer, as mentioned earlier. This was also commented on by the following student:

I think once you explain what the NCP is and the significance, people are more interested in you. I was hired at a Big 4 because of my NCP Scholarship while being able to by-pass the usual steps (I was still overseas during this process). As great as that was, I don't think the firm suited me and I left within 6 months of starting. *I don't think they appreciated my skills gained overseas.*

(NCP scholar, to Papua New Guinea, survey)

This quote once again underscores the important role of conversion factors in the student's capability building. The lack of employers' understanding and appreciation of the student's skills, experience, and knowledge gained from their study abroad in the Indo-Pacific can be seen as environmental conversion factors that constrained her from converting this personal and professional capital into real opportunities referred to as capabilities (Sen, 1999). Conradie (2024) argued that conversion factors can enable a person to transform resources into the doings and beings they value or can act as barriers that limit their ability to do so (Conradie, 2024). In this context, the lack of conversion factors prevent the student from realising their capabilities to work towards their valued goals. Additionally, it is unclear whether the student exercised any agency in confronting these challenges, or if she was unsuccessful and chose to move on. This demonstrates that, in the context of limited conversion factors and a lack of individual agency, one's capabilities cannot be fully developed.

Impacts on students' interests in the Indo-Pacific and personal attributes and skills

Becoming interested in the Indo-Pacific

Students' interest in the Indo-Pacific was explored using seven measuring items of agreement on a five-point Likert scale. As shown in Figure 5.3, the overall impact of the NCP on increasing students' interest in the Indo-Pacific was significantly positive. Ninety-six percent of the survey respondents reported that the NCP helped them develop an understanding of their host country, 93% have become more confident about engaging with the Indo-Pacific, and 87% became

interested in connecting with people of Indo-Pacific background in Australia. The impact on study and job opportunities related to the Indo-Pacific was not as high as the development of intercultural competence. Specifically, 73% of students expressed an interest in learning an Asian language, while 66% became interested in pursuing a job or further study in the Indo-Pacific as a result of their NCP experience.

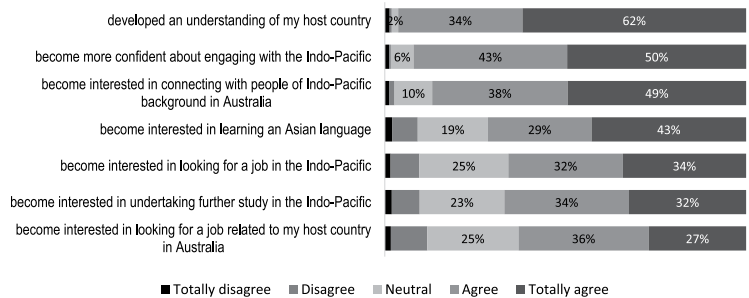


Figure 5.3 Increase of participating students' interest in the Indo-Pacific (n = 1,181)

The increased interest among students in the Indo-Pacific can be attributable to a number of factors, one of which is the ‘eye-opening’ and ‘horizon broadening’ experiences students gained during their time in the region, as discussed above. Additionally, as a host staff observed below, students were impressed by the friendliness of the host communities and the natural beauty of the host country, something that they might not have expected prior to departure:

They’re impressed with the beauty of the country. Many students in the feedback they share and even later on they still keep connection with us and they share their photos. They said they’re impressed with the beauty of the country when they have the chance to visit different places in Vietnam. So *the beauty of the country and the friendliness* of the people were the two most important.

(Host, Vietnam)

This excerpt illustrates ‘mobility as becoming’ (Tran, 2016; Tran & Phan, 2024) among Australian students as they transformed their expectations, impressions, and perspectives through mobility, which plays an important role in shaping students’ agency goals (Burchardt, 2009).

Attributes and skills

From the capability approach's perspectives (Sen, 1992, 1999; Robeyns, 2011), attributes and skills are part of students' capabilities in the sense that these abilities expand their opportunities to achieve the life they want to pursue. Through open-ended survey questions and interviews, students reported having acquired various personal and professional attributes and skills through a unique learning environment during their NCP program. This unique environment was constructed by host countries' distinctive societal system, diverse culture, traditions, and languages with multiple players involved in co-creating knowledge and meanings.

These attributes and skills include *cross-cultural communication skills*, *intercultural understanding*, and *regional language*, as shown in the following extracts:

My NCP experience allowed me to gain employment straight out of university in a business that operates in Papua New Guinea. I was able to utilise my *cross-cultural communication skills* in my role marketing services in PNG and across the broader Pacific region.

(Long-term mobility student, to Papua New Guinea, interview)

Definitely in terms of *intercultural communication* because I find that Australians do, on a whole, can be quite exclusive when they have to work in groups with international students here in Melbourne. But when they go overseas and they do that in a different environment, I think when they come back they're much better at working interculturally at [Australian university] with their classmates and with other people. And quite often they volunteer as ambassadors when they get back because they're so enthusiastic about intercultural communication which is great to see.

(Academic, female)

These skills and understanding proved to be directly beneficial for students by expanding their employment opportunities:

Cultural diversity and understanding helped me with my employment in the Australian Army and when I was deployed to Iraq.

(Short-term mobility alumni, to Cambodia, survey)

This excerpt shows that the accumulation of this personal, social, cultural, and language capital increases students' employability skills and contributes to enhance their employment prospects in Australia and Indo-Pacific countries. The NCP learning environment acts as a social arrangement enabling the

development of capabilities in which one capability often leads to another (Sen, 1992, 1999). Such profound impact reinforces the journey of ‘becoming’ (Tran, 2016) among students when learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific.

Another attribute that students developed through mobility is resilience and problem-solving skills, seen as a form of achieved functionings (beings) in the capability approach (Sen, 1992). These functionings also act as capabilities, in the form of inner abilities, that can lead to other potential functionings such as employment and career development. This growth stems from the chance to step out of their comfort zones in their home countries and witness firsthand how others navigate and recover from disasters.

I find the students who’ve been on a program like this, tend to be *more resilient and more able to cope with problems and problem solving* in general.

(Academic, female)

The students have said that the experience that they’ve had here in these few days, they just couldn’t have got in Australia. . . . The group that I spoke with that I brought here two years ago, they still say it was a life changing experience coming to Japan in general. But also, particularly experiencing firsthand the impacts of the tsunami on your community. But more importantly, the *amazing resilience and community connections and strength of the people in Minamisanriku*.

(Host, Japan)

Closely related to resilience is **social empathy**, which is also reported to be developed among students through study abroad experiences. Social empathy is seen as the ability to understand different people, cultures, and communities by perceiving or experiencing real life situations and gaining insights into structural inequalities and disparities (Segal, 2011). Some NCP students developed their empathy and appreciation by being exposed to different social contexts and interactions with different groups of people as a result of their learning abroad experience. They also learned to appreciate the resilience of local people who went through disastrous events, or the positive attitudes to life of people living in less favourable living conditions:

So it was really *eye opening for me to see how resilient people [suffered from Tsunami earthquake] can be in situations of really extreme challenges* . . . with all the, the adversity that they were faced with in relation to their losses and the devastation of their livelihoods and their home, to be able to come back and actually be a higher order representation on the global scale is extraordinary and really eye opening.

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

Students' development of social empathy was also reported by academic and mobility staff and host staff:

Then I think the real benefit of these types of programs is more about that recognition and understanding and that linking and that softening of views and that *empathy* that our students have towards the country after it.

(Academic, female)

The key benefits I think just the concept of broadening their horizons and that seeing that *the world isn't all as comfortable and privileged as it is in Australia*. That there are people who are worse off than us, that you just come across in your day-to-day dealings in China. Poverty is much more visible. You see people and stuff that you just don't see in Australia anywhere to the same extent and I think just that whole, yeah there is another world outside the borders of Australia.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

An understanding of challenges and experience of difficulties associated with living, studying, and working in a foreign country resulted in students' sense of empathy with international students and migrants back in Australia, as empathy may lead to a desire to take action for positive change and improve societal wellbeing (Segal, 2011). As one student commented,

Yeah, it has changed my perspective, like because now I really, I know what it's like to be a foreign student.

(NCP scholar, to Papua New Guinea, interview)

Indo-Pacific nations have substantially diverse historical, cultural, and ethnic profiles and represent various stages of political evolution and economic development. Most countries in the region are developing countries, dealing with a variety of complexities such as environmental problems, gender inequality, and low living standards. This richness and diversity provide NCP students with unique opportunities to develop different intercultural skills, including empathy and respect for others. These situational elements, referred to as conversion factors by Conradie (2024), enable students to construct their capabilities as real opportunities to choose who they want to become. By comparing the host countries with Australia, students have the potential to reflect on what they have learned and exercise their agency in the process of becoming, which involves shifting their viewpoints and mindsets to emerge as a new version of themselves. As the capability approach posits, the inner abilities and attributes of a person is one important type of capabilities. Sen emphasises that capabilities of a person depend on the nature of social arrangements (Sen, 1999). Seen from this lens, the NCP program provides favourable social arrangements

for developing students' interest in the region as well as personal attributes and skills. This sense of becoming was strongly felt by NCP students when immersing into the Indo-Pacific contexts, which reinforces Farrugia and Sanger's (2017) argument that students who choose to study in a less popular or culturally dissimilar location are more likely to articulate a clear impact on professional and personal development.

Impacts on family, community, and society

Using data from interviews with students and staff from host institutions and organisations, this section presents the impacts of the NCP on students' family, the wider community, and society in both the home and host country. The positive impacts of the NCP program demonstrate that study abroad not only enables the 'becoming' of participating students but also the communities involved.

Impacts on students' family, and the community and society in the home country

The capability approach sees individuals as active agents of their life who exercise their agency with respect to their valued goals (Alkire, 2008; Sen, 2017). This argument holds true when it comes to NCP students' contributions to their family, community, and society.

Undergoing a journey of growth and transformation through the NCP program, students shared their experience and knowledge with friends and family as the retrospective meaning-making that goes beyond self-reflection. The experience sharing included what to expect and cultural differences in the Pacific heritage and how resilient local people were living in difficult conditions. One student showed photos of their study abroad experience and 'opened the eye' for their father about practices in the host country:

I told my family about that [aquaculture farms in Japan] and my dad was really interested in all the aquaculture farms around there. They've got, they've got like some shellfish farms, seaweed farms down there too. . . . That was like a big eye opener for both of us.

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

There was also a desire to share what they have experienced and encourage others to learn from these experiences as a spill-over effect.

I was speaking with a Japanese man at breakfast this morning telling him about Minamisanriku. He is from Osaka and had very little knowledge of the way the town is still recovering! I told him when he next returns home

to Japan he should visit Minamisanriku because it is a beautiful place with beautiful people.

(Short-term mobility student, to Japan, interview)

The experience sharing reflects the students' ability to perceive the meanings of the mobility experience and empathise with others, as well as to communicate those feelings and encourage others to act. By sharing stories and inspiring family and community, students proved to be active agents (Sen, 2017) to facilitate the becoming of 'others'.

In addition, students have made multiple societal impacts during their study. Through their connections and networks, students enacted agency and advocated for social justice as well as other global issues, including climate change and environment protection, by actively participating in different conferences, forums, and conversations (Tran & Bui, 2021; Tran et al., 2023). For example, a student reported having advocated for human rights through an array of activities including attending a conference on women's empowerment in Cambodia and undertaking research on human trafficking and LGBTQ youth. Another student in the mobility program to Japan voluntarily assisted refugees to improve their language capacity and well-being, as reflected in the following excerpt:

Quite a few actually. I was quite involved when I was at uni . . . in some volunteering to do with refugees. So no one really thinks there're refugees in Japan, but there're lots of them. *So I taught both Japanese and English to the refugees and we've visited them every week in the detention centre and supported them a lot.*

(NCP scholar, to Japan, interview)

Some students also attended international conferences that strengthened the relationships between Australia and the region, such as ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue organised in Malaysia on various topics to contribute to fostering Australia-ASEAN relationships and the ASEAN Australian Southeast Asian Nations Young Leaders forum in Indonesia where students could 'build networks and address some of the issues in ASEAN region' (NCP scholar, Indonesia, interview).

Students' reflection on their experience resulted in self-transformation and them becoming a catalyst for change in their family members, community, and society at different stages of the learning cycle. In this context, the concept of mobility as becoming (Tran, 2016) is not limited to the becoming of the Self but extended to the becoming of Others. Antônio (2007) referred to students' learning passed onto the host countries as a multiplier effect. While this impact is more organic and depends on individual students, it is worth noting that these students did not just share their experiences by chance; they intentionally aimed to spread the positive impacts of their Indo-Pacific experiences. This

demonstrates that they have adapted their agency goals (Burchardt, 2009) to take actions that benefit others.

Impacts on host countries

From host perspectives, the NCP program has impacts on the host communities at the national, institutional, and individual levels.

At the national level, Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific contributed to **strengthening the relationships** between home and host countries. Specifically, the NCP was seen to act as a public diplomacy mechanism to foster sustainable relationships with Australia and a catalyst for their international agenda.

In the long-term, they [NCP students] can contribute and share the information to their communities in Australia, contributing to the relationship between two nations. . . . One of our responsibilities is public diplomacy then we consider receiving Australia students as our responsibility.

(Host, Vietnam)

This excerpt also points to the self-positioning of host organisations as facilitators and contributors to their national geopolitical capital through long-term collaborations with the Australian Government and universities. This reinforces previous literature in reporting that public diplomacy is being achieved through mutual understandings and collaborations at the individual and collective levels (Gribble & Tran, 2016; Tran & Bui, 2021).

At the institutional level, the NCP was seen as an enabler for developing the capabilities of host institutions and organisations. As shown in the following excerpts, host institutions' **internationalisation agenda** was strengthened thanks to hosting NCP students.

We have internationalisation agenda that entails hosting foreign students. The aim is 25% out of total students enrolled.

(Host, Indonesia)

The first and also the biggest motivation is *to upgrade our level into an international institution*. So in our opinion an *international institution must have international students* so we are doing a lot of different things in order to attract international student coming to Vietnam for studying . . . and also have to *increase our performance in terms of international ranking, accrediting* because we need to act as an international institution.

(Host, Vietnam)

Seen from these comments, the NCP program expanded host institutions' internationalisation agenda through diversifying their student body, boosting international ranking and branding at both local and international levels, and

increasing student enrolment. This results from Australian students being present around the campus, participating in different activities, and interacting with local students. Although hosting NCP students does not bring significant direct economic benefits due to a small number, it contributes to enhancing international branding, which subsequently facilitates student recruitment and results in potential economic gains for host universities. From the lens of the capability approach (Sen, 1992; Robeyns, 2011), study abroad in the Indo-Pacific contributes significantly to the development of host institutions' internationalisation opportunities and capacity, which is, capabilities.

In addition, the NCP program also drove **innovation in teaching, learning, and services** provided by the host organisations, exemplified in the following excerpt:

I would say it has had a fairly significant organisational, it's been used as *an organisational tool for change*. So we have now a *much better set of processes for international internships* for example. . . . So the people in our career centre who run our internship program are now much better placed to manage international interns as a consequence of NCP. Very specifically.
(Host, Vietnam)

The capability approach (Sen, 1992) sees innovation as a form of functionings that acts as capabilities for other functionings – enhanced quality of programs and processes provided by the host institutions. That is, the NCP program expands host institutions' capabilities to achieve valuable functionings.

Another significant impact of the NCP lies in the enhanced institutional connections and relationships between host countries and Australia. Host organisations perceived that hosting NCP students contributes to enhancing their capabilities (real opportunities) for research collaborations and other sustainable relationships for host universities. These capabilities are enhanced through making connections and building institutional trust between host institutions and Australian counterparts.

Right now, we have a lot of scheme and type of grants to be given to our students to go to foreign universities, including Australia and other universities, but Australia I think become more prioritised right now. *Because we try to build very good relationships with Australian universities right now which is quite difficult previously. . . . We agree that our grants right now tend to be given to students to have the student exchange to Australian university.*
(Host, Indonesia)

So they try – my university – that is to say, after so many years, they try to do some international cooperation and programs with American universities, with Australian universities, but all of this it seems not go deeper. . . . So at this time, the university is eager to do some real work. . . . So we

hope, that is to say, *to have some connection educationally, to learn from such programs, to introduce some good systems, some more sound educational reform or some quite sound, good education systems into our education system so we learn from* – we try to learn from foreign universities.
(Host, China)

With regard to the internship programs in particular, the NCP provides industry hosts with **access to a diverse labour force** who possesses distinctive knowledge, mindset, skills, and culture that can enrich the local workforce. This diversity makes NCP interns crucial actors:

somebody with great English, somebody that can think a little bit differently, they hope that it will *challenge their local staff to think a little bit differently, to practice their English*. And also, it's just fresh ideas. They're bringing up-to-the-minute ideas, plus they come from a totally different education background.

(Host, Malaysia)

In addition, the NCP program helps host institutions and organisations to create **a pathway to international markets** thanks to increased awareness and understanding of host countries:

Interviewer: When you have international employees and interns in your profile, does it increase your profile and help you attract more potential international customers?

Participant: For sure. The diverse culture is the plus point for our team here. Many customers really like it.

Interviewer: So, is it one of the competitive advantages when attracting customers in IT industry?

Participant: Yes, it is correct.

(Host, Vietnam)

Host organisations also position NCP students as valuable actors who can **improve institutional training capacity**, as staff have to take on different roles in training Australian students and therefore learn new skills along the way. In this regard, NCP students act as a catalyst for the expansion of host institutions' capabilities to train interns and new staff.

The increase in recruiting these interns will also increase the company's training capacity. In training the interns, the staff have to play different roles such as procedure training, basic knowledge training, gaming business indicators training, technical training, fine arts training, graphics training. Therefore, the training capacity of our staff has developed.

(Host, Vietnam)

In some cases, working with people from other cultures helps increase **local communities' awareness of their own values and strengths**, which can otherwise be underrated or makes them re-examine their current situation from a different perspective:

[W]hen you realize what the strengths are, that I think results in pride. And being able to point that out in the future and notice the value in what you, what you do, what may be very normal to people in this community.

(Host, Japan)

At the individual level, the NCP program was reported to contribute to **the development of language, cultural and social capital** of local staff and students, as reported in the following comments:

Apart from *friendship*, I see our students actually improve *their language skills* in speaking with the partners here. Yeah, they understand better the Australian cultures in their daily life, when we play with them or study with them.

(Host, China)

Our technicians are not good at English, then we find it difficult at first. Now, we get used to *English* communication. Our staff and students also become more confident communicating with the foreigners. One of the most important things is receiving Australian students helps Japanese students to improve their English skills.

(Host, Japan)

For both local students and staff, the NCP program enhances the substantive opportunities to achieve English language proficiency and understanding about different cultures and values – or valued functionings (Sen, 1992). These functionings, in turn, are capabilities that enable local students to establish more meaningful connection and relationships with Australian students. Thus, the NCP program expands both capabilities and functionings for local students.

Conclusion

This chapter analyses the impacts of studying abroad in the Indo-Pacific on students and societies. Drawing on the capability approach and conceptualisation of mobility as becoming, connecting, and contributing, the chapter argues that student mobility to the Indo-Pacific contributes to advancing the capabilities for participating students, their families, their institutions, and the home and host societies. These capabilities include the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are framed as inner capabilities (Robeyns, 2011) that promote ‘mobility as becoming’ (Tran, 2015; Tran & Phan, 2024), seeing outbound mobility as

a transformative experience. More importantly, this chapter discusses how mobility to the Indo-Pacific expands the real opportunities for students to become more employable and establish meaningful connections with students and communities in the host countries as well as their own families and Australian communities. The societal impacts of student mobility to the Indo-Pacific are manifested in students' contribution to promoting knowledge and understanding of the Indo-Pacific to their families and communities and strengthening the relationship between Australia and the region. In doing so, students potentially exercised their agency in achieving goals that led to actions beneficial not only to themselves but also to others. As such, this chapter extends the literature on the impacts of study-abroad programs beyond the contributions to developing students' knowledge and skills. It demonstrates how study-abroad experiences can shape students' agency and expand their capabilities to make meaningful social impacts.

References

- Alkire, S. (2008). Concepts and measures of agency. OPHI Working Paper 09, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford.
- Antônio, F. D. L. (2007). The role of international educational exchanges in public diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3(3), 234. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.pb.6000066>
- Borràs, J., & Llanes, A. (2021). Re-examining the impact of study abroad on L2 development: A critical overview. *The Language Learning Journal*, 49(5), 527–540.
- Brandenburg, U., Berghoff, S., & Taboadela, O. (2014). *The ERASMUS impact study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Bruce, B. C., & Bloch, N. (2012). Learning by doing. In N. M. Seel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the sciences of learning* (pp. 1821–1824). Springer.
- Burchardt, T. (2009). Agency goals, adaptation and capability sets. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 10(1), 3–19.
- Conradie, I. (2024). Enriching agency in the capability approach through social theory contributions. In F. Comim, P. B. Anand, & S. Fenell (Eds.), *Social choice, agency, inclusiveness and capabilities* (pp. 257–283). Cambridge University Press.
- Farrugia, C., & Sanger, J. (2017). *Gaining an employment edge: The impact of study abroad on 21st century skills & career prospects in the United States*. Washington, DC: IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research and Impact.
- Gribble, C., & Tran, L. (2016). *International trends in learning abroad: Information and promotions campaign for student mobility*. IEAA and Universities Australia. <https://www.ieaa.org.au/IEAA/Research/Publication/2016/international-trends-in-learning-abroad-information-and-promotions-campaign-for-student-mobility.aspx>

- Haas, B. W. (2018). The impact of study abroad on improved cultural awareness: A quantitative review. *Intercultural Education*, 29(5–6), 571–588.
- Huang, Q., Cheung, A. C., & Xuan, Q. (2023). The impact of study abroad on pre-service and in-service teachers' intercultural competence: A meta-analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 127, 104091.
- Iskhakova, M., & Bradly, A. (2022). Short-term study abroad research: A systematic review 2000–2019. *Journal of Management Education*, 46(2), 383–427.
- Lukas, B., Uwe, B., Sonja, B., Obdulia, T., Joanna, G., & Anna, G. (2014). *The ERASMUS impact study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Mawer, M. (2018). Magnitudes of impact: A three-level review of evidence from scholarship evaluation. In J. R. Dassin, R. R. Marsh, & M. Mawer (Eds.), *International scholarships in higher education: Pathways to social change* (pp. 257–280). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62734-2_13
- Robeyns, I. (2011). The capability approach. In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/>
- Segal, E. A. (2011). Social empathy: A model built on empathy, contextual understanding, and social responsibility that promotes social justice. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 37(3), 266–277.
- Sen, A. (1985). Well-being, agency and freedom: The Dewey lectures 1984. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82(4), 169–221.
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality reexamined*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. England: Penguin Group.
- Sen, A. (2017). Well-being, agency and freedom the dewey lectures 1984. In *Justice and the capabilities approach* (pp. 3–55). Routledge.
- Sisavath, S. (2021). Benefits of studying abroad for graduate employability: Perspectives of exchange students from Lao universities. *Journal of International Students*, 11(3), 547–566.
- Tangen, D., & Henderson, D. (2023). Long-term transformative learning from short-term outbound mobility programs and the connection to government's soft power initiatives. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(5), 440–457. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2023.2230155>
- Tran, L. T. (2016). Mobility as 'becoming': A Bourdieuan analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(8), 1268–1289.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). 'It's a few weeks I'll cherish forever': Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248.
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection

- building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2021.2017784>
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.24083>
- Tran, L. T., Do, T., & Bui, H. (2021). ‘Employability in context’: The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers’ professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., & Phan, H. L. T. (2024). Conceptualising mobility as becoming, connecting and contributing: Australian New Colombo Plan scholars learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102429.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T. & Bellgrove, A. (2021). “There’s a much bigger world of science than just Australia”: Australian students’ development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science*, 43(6), 888–905.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2024). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students’ curriculum-specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 876–893.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1737656>
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students’ career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. T. P. (2018). Beyond the ‘normal’ to the ‘new possibles’: Australian students’ experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 72(3), 194–207.
- Universities UK International. (2021). *Short-term mobility, long-term impact*. Retrieved July 20, 2021, from <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/Short-term-mobility-long-term-impact-report.pdf>
- Zhang, H., & Gibson, H. J. (2021). Long-term impact of study abroad on sustainability-related attitudes and behaviors. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13(4), 1953.

6 Challenges and tensions in study-abroad programs for Australian students in the Indo-Pacific

Insights from academics,
practitioners, and host
communities

Introduction

This chapter discusses the main challenges and tensions associated with study-abroad programs for Australian students in the Indo-Pacific. The literature on challenges of outbound mobility programs is limited, since the majority of research focuses on the outcomes and impacts (Bradley et al., 2024; Bradly & Iskhakova, 2022). The chapter aims to fill this critical gap in the extant literature with insights into study-abroad challenges facing both home and host institutions. It brings together comprehensive perspectives from academics, professional staff, and host communities – key stakeholders directly involved in designing and implementing study-abroad programs, yet whose voices are often overlooked.

The analysis in this chapter is informed by a broader research project on Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan (also see Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021; Tran et al., 2019; Tran & Do, 2024; Tran & Bui, 2023; Tran et al, 2022; Tran, Do & Bui, 2021; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2023; Tran, Phan & Bellgrove, 2021, 2024; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021). The study incorporates a national survey, in-country fieldwork, policy analysis and interviews with key stakeholders in both Australia and the Indo-Pacific region (see Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of the research project).

Drawing on the capability approach, this chapter discusses the challenges and tensions in delivering study-abroad programs experienced by both home and host organisations. The capability approach posits that individuals' real opportunities or freedoms (capabilities) to achieve valued outcomes (functionings) are contingent upon whether there are enabling social arrangements (Sen, 1992). Restricted opportunities and freedoms are, therefore, framed as 'capability deprivation' (Sen, 1999, p. 87). The capability approach also suggests that how resources can be converted to actual capabilities depends on personal, social, and environmental conversion factors. As such, the

challenges and tensions in this chapter will be discussed through the lens of capabilities and conversion factors (see details about the capability approach as a theoretical framework in Chapter 2). Key challenges and tensions discussed in this chapter are related to the expectations by students, homes, and host institutions; the funding application process; the student selection process; the workload for students and staff; credit recognition; program evaluation; program sustainability; language and cross-cultural factors; and in-country risks management.

Lack of understanding and motivation among students and staff

Interviews with academics, practitioners, and host staff highlight a lack of awareness and understanding about the NCP program among students as well as home and host staff. As a result, the program attracted a small number of student applications and participation from academics. The lack of awareness of and interest in the NCP program among Australian students was reported in the following excerpt:

I must say it's actually quite hard to find students who are willing to go. So, I mean, the two candidates for last year were fitting quite well. But we didn't have more than the two candidates anyway so we couldn't select in the end. ... *it's not easy to find students who fit into that and who are actually interested to go overseas even in cases everything is paid for them.*

(Academic, male)

This comment points to the difficulties facing Australian institutions in encouraging students to participate in the NCP program despite universities' extensive effort to promote the program through different channels such as emails from academics, learning abroad offices' information sessions and newsletters, and information posted on the university websites. For some institutions, it is challenging to reach the required number of applicants. Where competition was low, selection was based on a 'first come, first served' basis, or sometimes all applicants would be accepted.

The difficulties in raising students' awareness of the NCP scheme are attributed to the lack of interest in mobility experiences in general. Students tended to be more interested in short-term mobility programs than semester-long ones. This was due to factors such as students' work, study, or home commitments and hesitation to stay in non-English speaking destinations for a long period of time as they might find it confronting.

I feel that students see Asia as a really good opportunity for a short-term program. I don't think they necessarily have it in their heads to have a full semester or a year-long exchange to Asia. *I think it's either too confronting*

for students or they're still drawn to the traditional markets of the US, UK, Canada.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

In addition, there was a lack of interest from non-mobile students in NCP students' mobility experiences. The knowledge gained by NCP students during their time in the Indo-Pacific was not given sufficient recognition and appreciation from the community of their home university:

[The challenge in] not only NCP study-abroad program or student mobility programs is the complaint that the students have when they come back in saying '*nobody wants to know*' and as a result saying 'when I mentioned the various things that I have learned or various things I've experienced then apart from my best mates, *the faculty are not interested. They're bored by it*'.

(Academic, male)

The lack of awareness about the NCP program was also reported by staff in the home and host countries. As commented in the following excerpt, many academics never heard of the NCP program:

I will say I've never heard of the scheme until Andy [pseudonym] mentioned it to me so I don't know how he found out about it. So I would say *probably 90% of the academics that you're hoping to attract don't even know the scheme exists.*

(Academic, male)

Academics' lack of knowledge about the program was partly attributable to their minimal involvement in the process, since NCP programs are mainly managed by international offices instead of faculties:

basically kids [students] find out the opportunity and never even consult anybody in the faculty, they go directly to the international office...*so as a result there is not even a single person here, not even an Associate Dean International who knows about the possibilities of NCP in curriculum terms rather than in mechanical terms* ... Those kinds of [mechanical] things become dominant issues rather than curriculum driving it... [But] I think the program ought to be driven by the faculties.

(Academic, male)

Along the same line, host staff reported they need more information about the NCP in relation to the overview, goals, and nature of the program and require guidance about hosting NCP students, especially for organisations that lack experiences in hosting foreign students. Host organisations outside the university sector who are engaged by a host university or partner to provide internships

or some activities for NCP students as part of their mobility program are in particular unaware of the NCP and not engaged in designing the program.

We need a unified instruction/booklet for all Chinese hosts, at least [to understand] a general picture [of the New Colombo Plan].

(Host, China)

We need to learn more as [an] organiser. . . . I was [an] organiser of this project but before I organised this project, I didn't see any booklet, I didn't read any brochure of this New Colombo Project and after students came and I read – because they brought one – they have this brochure I read and it [the NCP] looked like this, I said to myself.

(Host, China)

A lack of understanding and awareness can limit what students and staff value and their agency objectives, which is, goals that they aim to achieve through their roles as active agents (Sen, 1992, 1999; Burchardt, 2009), to participate in study-abroad programs. Agency objectives are crucial to determine students' and staff's choices to participate. Without adequate and correct information and understanding about the program, students and staff may overlook the opportunity, thereby missing out the potential valuable experiences offered through the NCP program. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the NCP program among students and staff indicates the need for better communication and advertisement of the NCP program to expand students' and staff's opportunities, which is, capabilities (Sen, 1992, 1999) and encourage student participation and staff meaningful engagement.

Lack of transparency, consistency, and inclusivity in the student selection process

The capability approach argues that access to opportunities is key to ensuring social equality and inclusion as well as individual wellbeing (Sen, 1992). However, academics, practitioners, and host communities in this study reported issues with the student selection process that impacted students' access to the study-abroad opportunities.

As noted in the following comments, there is a lack of transparency in the selection process at the institutional level – specifically regarding the selection criteria, the individuals responsible for selection, outcomes, feedback mechanisms, and the profiles of selected students:

How the universities are selecting that's also a major issue. We don't know enough about that: who's being selected and how that's happening and who's doing the selecting. Because at [our university] . . . it's a very opaque and

mysterious process . . . I mean there is very little data that is available as to which categories and how and when and what it is . . . and at what level of their studies.

(Academic, male)

I think one [challenge] is [to have] increased transparency on how the selection is actually made. In my experience, the feedback has been quite vague.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

It can be very subjective as well, and hard to explain to students why one got it over the other one basically.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

In the capability approach, access to information is considered an enabling social arrangement and conversion factor that facilitates individuals' real opportunities to achieve certain outcomes (Robeyns, 2005, 2011). The lack of transparent information on the selection process is, therefore, an inhibiting factor that impacts students' real opportunities, which is, capabilities (Sen, 1992, 1999), to join study-abroad programs.

Another issue is the inconsistency across different Australian institutions in the selection process. While some universities employed a range of criteria to assess students' applications, others focused on students' academic performance, which is reflected in the high percentage allocated to academic merit criterion:

basically they look at those four criteria . . . 40%, 10%, 20%...[but] why is it 10% you know ... So I don't think they've paid enough attention on the criteria that they have listed. Those things ought to be discussed much more widely . . . *I mean at one level it's largely reward for academic results. The way that the criteria read with the 40% allocated to academic merit.*

(Academic, male)

The reason for emphasising academic merit stems from the general belief that high-performing students will likely take the experience more seriously and make the most of the mobility experience. However, academics and mobility practitioners did not entirely agree with this approach. Rather, they believed that NCP funding should provide equal opportunities for all students, not just academic high-achievers:

but what I notice that there are students who went there for non-academic reasons and that was really not very good idea you see . . . this year we really looked at the academic scores and did select students carefully . . . [those] students who go abroad tend to be concentrated . . . [But it is] equally

important for students who are not academically perfect, so I don't hundred percent agree to sending students on the basis of academic achievement.

(Academic, female)

The capability approach emphasises the important role of genuine equal opportunities in ensuring social justice, rather than merely focusing on resources or capability inputs (Sen, 1992; Robeyns, 2011). Equality in access to opportunities would enhance individual students' capability to gain valuable mobility experiences. As academics and mobility practitioners suggested, the use of a range of selection criteria beyond academic merits can make the program more inclusive for different groups of students, including disadvantaged ones.

To reduce barriers to participation, the Australian government announced in August 2024 the removal of the minimum grade point average (GPA) as an eligibility requirement for New Colombo Plan (NCP) scholars. The assessment criteria for 2025 mobility grants include the following: ensuring a high-quality education experience (30%); deepening people-to-people and institutional linkages with the Indo-Pacific Weighting (40%); broadening diverse participation in the New Colombo Plan (20%); and ensuring sound student welfare management in mobility projects (10%) (Australian Government, 2024). These changes to the selection criteria demonstrate the efforts of the Australian government to ensure inclusive and equal access to the NCP program, expanding the real opportunities, which is, capabilities (Sen, 1992), for Australian students who are interested in applying for the NCP program.

Challenges with the funding application

At the institutional level, home institutions experienced a number of challenges in securing sustainable funding for NCP programs. As academics and practitioners indicated in the following quotations, application for NCP funding is not only highly competitive, but also an unclear selection process for home institutions.

I have been involved in a number of [NCP] proposal submissions and I have seen there's quite a small fraction eventually successful. . . . So the time and effort you have to put in is quite substantial and the success rate is not that large.

(Academic, male)

I mean, my biggest thing is getting feedback from [DFAT], and I know DFAT, they won't give feedback on unsuccessful projects. But I think if you want better projects, then you need to be able to provide feedback on why they're not being approved.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

From the application point of view, *from DFAT selection of successful applications, I think it'd be very beneficial if how they made their selections clearer . . .* I think that would be hugely beneficial so we can work out where, where our program was not successful. We have a better chance of then building a better program and application for the following year so it increases chances of being funded.

(Mobility practitioner, male)

These excerpts highlight that institutions do not receive feedback from DFAT regarding their unsuccessful applications. Without a clear feedback system from DFAT, institutions lack guidance on how to improve their applications for future submission rounds. The capability approach underscores the need for social arrangements that enable individuals to achieve desired functionings (Sen, 1992, 1999). In this sense, the absence of a feedback mechanism from the funding body is seen as a restrictive social arrangement that constrains institutions' potential to secure opportunities to deliver study-abroad programs.

Additionally, there was dissatisfaction among staff regarding the bureaucratic procedures in the application process, especially the timing of the outcome announcements.

It's a very bureaucratic . . . until today they haven't announced yet what is going . . . [T]his is week 4 already [and] I can't do the promoting. You see that it caused a problem for me. If I know by July I got it all the first week, I already do the promotion.

(Academic, male)

Delays in the release of application outcomes cause difficulties for staff in the home institutions to effectively promote the program to prospective students in a timely manner. Adopting the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999; Robeyns, 2005, 2011), if we see the funding scheme as available resources and program promotion to students as a desired functioning, bureaucratic delays can be framed as the limiting social conversion factors and social arrangements hindering institutions' capabilities, which is, real opportunities, to convert available resources into desired functionings.

Unrealistic and unmatched expectations

Academic and mobility staff reported that participating students had some unrealistic expectations about the study-abroad program, especially if it was their first time to go overseas or they were poorly prepared prior to departure. As a result of this, students could lack preparedness for mobility experiences and have difficulties adapting to the new systems in host countries and

organisations. As the following excerpt shows, students made complaints about the living conditions in the host country or had inappropriate behaviours:

Probably they stayed in a 5* hotel with their parents and probably they've never lived away from home before. If we send them to a university program in Malaysia . . . they complain. . . . *We have had some instances where students have been out partying all night.*

(Mobility practitioner, male)

Irrelevant expectations among students about in-country experiences could be due to the accuracy of information provided in pre-departure programs. For example, the pre-departure briefings delivered by one third-party provider were criticised as generalising Asia:

So the . . . training in particular, the feedback that my students have given me, and to take this in context, these are students in our degree programs who've had some exposure to Asia content before . . . so a lot of them aren't coming at this as their first exposure to Asia but they've found that *the training that's been delivered kind of homogenises Asia which is hugely problematic.*

(Mobility practitioner, female)

From the lens of the capability approach (Robeyns, 2011), pre-departure programs are the means to facilitate students' ability to convert the resources, which is, the NCP program, into valuable functionings, which is, realistic expectations. This suggests the need to improve the quality of pre-departure programs to set realistic expectations and equip students with essential intercultural knowledge and skills that assist them with obtaining meaningful Indo-Pacific experiences.

There were also mismatched expectations between home and host institutions. From the host perspectives, certain expectations – especially concerning the home university's status and ranking – were not met. Some host organisations expected to receive students from the world's top universities, with universities in Japan and China in particular placing emphasis on ranking when selecting NCP partner institutions.

The main challenge, actually the very first, [is] we target the world's top university. But a few years recently students may be from some university we are not talking to, not in the very good ranking in the world. So I think how to attract students from much better universities or even with some science talent, I think that is a problem for us.

(Host, China)

This excerpt shows the host organisation's desire to partner with higher-ranked Australian universities as opposed to the actual situation. The unmet

expectations to some extent could have some impact on the motivations and dedication of host staff when supporting the NCP program. According to the capability approach, motivations are referred to as agency objectives/goals that individuals make efforts to achieve in their role as active agents (Sen, 1992; Burchardt, 2009). As such, the unmet expectations might influence hosts' agency goals and subsequently, their choices and dedicated actions for the NCP program.

Workload for staff and students

Workload and complex process for staff

Data shows that staff's and students' experiences with mobility programs were affected by staff's workload and pressure associated with running the programs and the application process. The administrative workload involves multiple tasks such as preparing grant applications, overseeing the project, reporting, and accounting. The workload could be at peak at times during the year due to the trimester model. As one practitioner stated,

So because of our trimesters we've lost our ability to send programs in the June/July period because we've only got usually one or two week break. So they all go at the end of the year between November, December or January and February. So that's an extremely busy time for our office.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

Despite the workload experienced by both academics and practitioners, interviews show the lack of recognition of workload by DFAT and home institutions:

the workload and I think the lack of understanding of the Department as to how universities work, what students are really like . . . and how much is involved in making sure that the ship is moving along. And so that all the names can be in their lovely database and all the applications in on time, is a huge amount of work.

(Mobility practitioner, male)

And I think the real gap is the support for academic staff who run the short programs particularly because quite often *I'm still seeing that it's not counted in workloads*, or it's not seen as a career path that academics can take.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

These extracts highlighted the need for more adequately recognising the large amount of pressure and workload on universities and individual staff in running NCP programs. The lack of recognition of workload was an inhibiting social

arrangement (Sen, 1992) that could lead to insufficient support structure and keep university staff from being involved in study-abroad programs to the Indo-Pacific.

As the NCP fund is mainly managed by the international offices of Australian institutions, academics sometimes had to use their own money to pay for the NCP-funded trip upfront and afterwards go through complicated paperwork to be reimbursed, as indicated in the following quotation:

system is too complicated because we are at the faculty, we applied and were granted the fund, but the fund was held by international office. NCP has a clause that allows 10% admin fund to be allocated directly to the faculty, but it was not. My current situation is that I have to pay upfront from my pocket, and do a reimbursement claim which is frustrating. You see, how much paperwork I have to go through.

(Academic, male)

Meanwhile, the current structure creates an expectation among universities that DFAT is a problem solver by providing sufficient resources and support for home universities. Universities feel they are under-resourced to run NCP programs and are at times unclear about where to seek help in a timely manner on a range of matters such as visa applications and consortium arrangements.

For host staff, the short duration of mobility programs, typically only a few weeks long, causes difficulties in arranging meaningful activities for students. Particularly for internship programs, host organisations found it challenging to involve Australian interns in a project cycle in the workplace and evaluate their performance.

One-month internship is a bit short for a serious internship. We need at least 6-8 weeks to have a specific and measurable result. One-month is too short and not enough to finish one project cycle. We find we could [do] it better with longer duration.

(Host, Vietnam)

This quote shows a mismatch between students' and DFAT's expectations of mobility programs and the actual conditions for host staff to support capability development. In addition, despite host organisations' intention to develop students' cultural knowledge about the host country before the mobility programs, the limited time and capacity of host staff constrained both students' real opportunities, which is, capabilities (Sen, 1992) to make the most of the mobility experiences and the host agency to foster student capabilities. In this context, DFAT as well as home and host organisations should adequately recognise staff workload to create a favourable social arrangement that supports staff participation in mobility programs.

Heavy student workload

Academics indicated that students might experience a heavy workload with assignments for various units in addition to undertaking the learning-abroad experience. This might be attributable to academics' high expectations of their students and underestimation of the challenges of an intensive short-term mobility program.

It was a big challenge for them [students] . . . maybe *too many assessment and assignments and things... they were physically exhausted* . . . I think that was the biggest challenge that student and myself did realise after coming back. Before we went we didn't think about it too much, but just the *weight of the workload just hit us after coming back*.

(Academic, male)

The substantial workload imposed on students participating in study-abroad programs may result in burnout and affect student wellbeing. As indicated in the extract above, the workload for students is heightened after they return from mobility programs, hindering their capabilities to convert their mobility experiences into significant outcomes and contributions upon their return to Australia. According to Robeyns (2011), a central aspect of the capability approach is that individuals should possess the freedoms – or capabilities – to pursue lives they have reason to value, with an emphasis on the quality of life they can achieve. This argument underscores the need to ensure the overall wellbeing of students who participate in study-abroad programs, suggesting that requirements should be adjusted to help students fully benefit from and enjoy their mobility experiences.

Credit recognition

Another challenge is around crediting Indo-Pacific learning-abroad and internship experiences towards students' degrees. Specifically, the credit recognition mechanism is unclear, causing confusion and frustration among students:

The big problem is one of the rules is participating in the workshop has to count as a mark to a unit the students are studying back here. And that is a huge hurdle. That is so difficult to meet that criterion because we're just not geared up to do that.

(Academic, male)

I think the second biggest issue that I was aware of for students was getting the course or the NCP activity credited towards their degree. *And it was a huge frustration for the students* and I had to elevate the situation to the deputy vice chancellor on a number of occasions.

(Practitioner, female)

The challenges in recognising credits of study-abroad experiences proved to be a demotivating factor for students. The capability approach argues that social arrangements have an impact on individuals' capabilities (i.e. real opportunities) and agency (Sen, 1992, 1999). Seen from this lens, the lack of clarity in credit recognition is a hindrance for students' agency objectives to participate in study-abroad programs. Meanwhile, academics felt a lack of support in solving issues related to giving credits to students as well as other academic issues.

It would make me a bit reticent to do it again if a student wasn't enrolled in my course. . . . If they're not in my course, I found it really difficult to negotiate that with other people. . . . How can I give marks to one student for this, when everyone else in the course is not going? . . . everyone kind of thought it was someone else's problem to solve. . . . I went up through so many different channels of admin where they just found it was impossible to solve that problem for me.

(Academic, male)

Given these challenges in credit recognition, universities felt they need consider numerous factors when selecting partners for hosting NCP programs such as transfer of credits, quality of programs offered by host organisations, and language of instruction. As such, establishing partnerships could be challenging at times, as indicated in the following excerpt:

In China we have limited partners because quite often we have issues with credit being approved or with English taught classes.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

The challenges in credit recognition and selecting partner institutions were consistent with findings in the literature (e.g. Rhodes, 2014) that study-abroad programs pose challenges for universities due to the differences in curriculum, learning activities, and pedagogy between the two systems. Addressing these challenges requires a more flexible system in credit transfer as an enabling social arrangement for outbound student mobility.

Program evaluation

Academics indicated that NCP program evaluation was often incorporated through student feedback in their units and therefore does not generate sufficient insights. However, the lack of resources restricts academics' capacity to address this issue. In addition, student evaluation is also collected by DFAT. However, the data is not shared with academics, indicating academics' lack of access to student feedback and inputs. Similarly, hosts are unclear about how program evaluations are conducted by home institutions and DFAT, how they can access and learn from these evaluations, and how

to share the feedback they themselves have collected from NCP students. This indicates a critical need to have a more coherent mechanism for the evaluation of NCP programs and keep home and host stakeholders involved and informed.

We're not [having an evaluation system], which is a bit sad, isn't it? *The only way that it will get evaluated is through student feedback through normal unit processes.* It would be nice to be able to do them more than that, [but] we just don't have the capacity or the resource to be able to do it.

(Academic, female)

Although hosts might seek feedback from students directly, student evaluation is typically collected by Australian universities. Therefore, some host organisations found it challenging when not being informed of the evaluation on the mobility program hosted by their organisations. They recommend it is critical to share evaluation and feedback between home and host organisations for mutual improvement.

We are not sure about whether [Australian University, pseudonym] require students to make any report after return. . . . For us, we also have a review/reflection meeting with students to discuss about their work, the comments and feedback of students about the program in Vietnam. We also want to listen to students' feedback to improve our program. If [Australian University] has requested students to do the report, it will be very good if they can share the report with us.

(Host, Vietnam)

The interview extracts in this section show the absence of a coordinated feedback collection system, which constrained home and host staff in their efforts to make necessary adjustments to the program. From the lens of the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999; Robeyns, 2011), this is seen as a lacking social arrangement restricting staff's ability to enact changes and improve outcomes.

Post-program connection

As discussed in Chapter 5, NCP students played an important role in promoting Australian communities' understanding of the Indo-Pacific and strengthening the reciprocal relationships between their home and host countries. Their contribution largely stemmed from sharing, endorsing, and promoting their Indo-Pacific experiences. Alumni also contribute to the recruitment of the next cohorts of students, for example by sharing their experiences in NCP information sessions. As such, sustaining connections with students and alumni after their mobility period is essential for leveraging the long-term impact of the NCP alumni and maximising their ongoing contributions. However, as reported by

academics, mobility practitioners, and host staff, there were challenges in maintaining alumni engagement due to the lack of financial and human resources:

And my experience is that it's very difficult to *keep them [NCP alumni] engaged* but also I think that comes down to resourcing from our perspective as well.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

The only thing that I would change is just, you know, potentially with what I do, which is making sure that the students have *a proper debriefing from the program which I think is really lacking at the moment*.

(Academic, female)

As these extracts indicated, inadequate resources led to a lack of post-study events for NCP alumni. From the capability approach, this shortfall reflects the absence of *enabling social arrangements*, which is, the structural conditions that allow individual staff and home institutions to convert intentions to maintain alumni engagement into meaningful actions.

Similarly, host organisations experienced difficulties in maintaining post-study contacts with NCP students, with most of their efforts being ad hoc and unstructured. For this reason, bigger organisations might find it harder than smaller ones to keep the connection with their Australian students, as observed by this host:

There's *nothing structured*. Some hosts keep really good contact with their interns. But it's *ad hoc*. And you know where that is – it's the smaller companies. So, the smaller companies, they maintain contact. . . . I don't think it happens with larger companies.

(Host, Malaysia)

The capability approach holds that real freedoms to participate in any activity depend on the availability of and access to the activity (Sen, 1992, 1999). The lack of a structured approach and formal channels to maintain ongoing contact between NCP students and host communities limits students' capabilities to stay connected and translate the experiences, knowledge, and skills gained during mobility into post-program contributions.

Sustainability issues

The sustainability of study-abroad programs is contingent on the availability of continuous funding for students and home institutions (Chao, 2023). In other words, sustainable funding is a key social arrangement that enables individual students' and institutions' real freedoms to participate in study-abroad programs. However, interviews with mobility practitioners and academics reveal a number of issues in relation to NCP funding structure.

First, the allocation of the NCP funding for universities on a year-to-year basis was identified as a challenge to the sustainability of the program itself and of the partnerships between Australian and foreign universities:

Our program was *funded once*, but that was just once . . . *from next year onwards we don't have any funding*, so student will have to fund it themselves and that will change the student numbers. So I don't know how sustainable that program is going to be next year onwards.

(Academic, female)

One year you get funding and then next year, nothing. It's very hard to plan and to be strategic and to build a long-lasting relationship, which is one of the aims, if the program funding is so variable and comes and goes from things.

(Mobility practitioner, male)

These extracts show that funding allocation on an annual basis with no or limited opportunities for roll-over caused difficulties for home universities in long-term planning and building sustainable partnerships with host organisations. In addition, the amount of administrative funding allocated to universities varying from year to year, subject to the number of students being awarded the grants, is believed to prevent recruitment of additional supporting staff.

We're not sure how much money we're going to get each year. So we can't employ somebody to do the job of supporting NCP. Because I could win 10 funds, 10 projects with \$100,000 funding. That's \$10,000 [for the university]. I can't employ somebody on \$10,000.

(Mobility practitioner, male)

Another reported issue with the funding allocation model in the NCP program was related to the lack of recognition for the work involved in delivering a mobility program for academics and mobility practitioners. These issues are reflected in the following excerpt:

I mean, say, an academic takes ten students to Indonesia, they get \$3,000. They do the same [amount of] work if they send five students to Indonesia but they only get \$1,500.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

Meanwhile, there are strict regulations on how the funding could be spent. Therefore, as mobility practitioners reported, the majority of the funding would go to the central university office, while only a small portion is allocated to the academic unit, which is, the faculty, that delivers the program:

But I think the challenge would be admin funding is that *there's very strict things that you can use it for and not all of those are aligned with the costs*

that you need to cover from the academic unit's perspective in delivering the program. Because we've had to use so much of the admin funding to fund the central position to make sure that we can actually administer the grants correctly, it means that there's less of that admin funding available for running of the actual program.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

With respect to funding for students, the uniform allocation for mobility programs regardless of destination proved to be an ineffective approach. As this practitioner participant commented, the amount of money is insufficient for expensive host countries such as Japan:

I think for most countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the funding is sufficient. But I do think that some of the more expensive countries like Japan it doesn't generally cover it all and the students have to rely on things like the OS-HELP loan additionally to help them.

(Mobility practitioner, female)

Overall, staff participants in our research reported that the deficiencies in the funding allocation mechanism hindered program sustainability and equitable participation of students and home institutions in the program. This appears to be inconsistent with the NCP objective to enhance Australia's relationships with the Indo-Pacific region, which requires long-term and sustainable delivery of the program. From the lens of the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999), this inadequacy is framed as capability deprivation, limiting institutional and national freedoms to achieve the overall goals of the NCP program.

Recently, in the 2025 mobility grant guidelines, DFAT outlined the following indicative grant amounts for students participating in NCP mobility projects: up to \$4,000 for a project lasting at least 4 weeks; up to \$5,000 for a project lasting at least 6 weeks; up to \$10,000 for a project lasting at least one semester; and up to \$20,000 for a project spanning two consecutive semesters (Australian Government, 2024). However, DFAT also noted that individual student grant amounts may differ depending on the cost of the host location, the characteristics of the mobility project, and additional factors such as increased travel costs for students from regional or remote areas, or the need to improve accessibility for students with disabilities (*ibid*). The clearer guidelines and greater flexibility in the funding scheme for students illustrate the Australian Government's effort to improve the sustainability and equity of the NCP program, and subsequently expand students' capabilities, which is, real opportunities, to participate in study abroad programs.

Language and cross-cultural barriers

Language was another key barrier affecting the experience of Australian students during their stay in host countries. As members in the host communities might not speak English or have limited English proficiency, Australian students' lack of Indo-Pacific language skills led to difficulties in communication.

While university staff and students relatively speak English, English is still a foreign language in Indonesia. This means people outside the campus may not be able to speak English.

(Host, Indonesia)

Although the use of English has increased in universities in Indo-Pacific countries, the number of programs delivered in English language remains limited.

The only problem for Japanese university to attract to many foreign students is unfortunately the number of English programs is limited. That is a very big disadvantage.

(Host, Japan)

Language barriers in study abroad have been discussed in the literature (Tran & Bui, 2023; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013). Given the limited number of programs delivered in English by the host institutions and limited English proficiency among host communities outside campus, the lack of proficiency in Indo-Pacific languages among Australian students restricts their opportunities to engage in programs delivered in the local languages in the host institutions. Tran and Bui (2023) observed that the lack of proficiency in Indo-Pacific languages among Australian NCP students stems from the deeply rooted systematic barriers to language learning in schools and universities in Australia and assumption that learning or knowing the host language is not required for students in short-term mobility programs.

In addition, cross-cultural tensions occurred in some cases due to a mismatch in expectations between hosts and students. Some hosts in Japan complained about the manners of students using their accommodation. In places where there is a language barrier, cross-cultural communication incidents made the matter worse. As a host stated,

The challenge, I think [is] their lifestyle. Compared to Australian culture, especially in Tokyo, everything is . . . very strict . . . in terms of rules of the accommodation. Not everyone, but many Australian exchange students use the dormitory in their way. Sometimes they don't wash the dishes. That kind of cultural communication [is] problematic.

(Host, Japan)

This quote highlights the need to equip students with knowledge about the people and culture of the host destinations to ensure students have meaningful experiences while studying abroad in the host countries. However, this was sometimes hard to achieve due to the short timeframe in the pre-departure stage. Seen from the lens of the capability approach, language and cross-cultural understandings are the personal conversion factors (Robeyns, 2011) that influence students' ability to benefit from mobility experiences. Hence, the language barriers and lack of cross-cultural understandings reported in this section constrain students' capabilities to engage effectively and meaningfully in academic and non-academic activities in the host country.

Management of in-country risks

A challenge facing academics who accompany short-term NCP students to the host destinations is concerned with managing in-country incidents, risks, and issues. The process of responding to critical incidents, such as sexual harassment and accidents, involves multiple layers of administration and reporting, including the International Office, Faculty, Department, Dean of Teaching and Learning, Student Disciplinary Committee, Student Welfare, Counselling, and medical advice. The process is more complicated in consortium programs since it involves different universities and host organisations, where protocols for critical incident management are different. Less critical issues, for example in relation to late scholarship payments and insurance claims, could also emerge as a challenge causing stress for students and accompanying academics, as commented in the following excerpt.

The student didn't get the money on time. So that is a big problem... The second one, is when the student get sick, we don't know who we're meant to contact . . . Last year in Bangkok . . . after two days we arrived one student got sick. I had to bring her to the medical [centre]. The problem is that when we called the Australian, nobody picked up the phone. . . . Finally, after the next day, the student emailed back and then [they said] 'we changed the insurance and please use this insurance company'. . . . By the time we had to pay, this insurance was not in their payment system. So my student had to use her own money.

(Academic, female)

As shown in this comment, in the instances of late scholarship payment and delayed insurance process, academic program leaders are generally the first point of contact for students. However, without clear guidance and coordination between involving stakeholders such as international offices from Australian institutions and insurance companies, academics found it difficult to provide support for students. This highlights the need for a systemic and coordinated guidance mechanism for handling in-country issues

as an enabling social arrangement to develop academics' real opportunities (Sen, 1992, 1999), to handle emerging in-country incidents and risks as well as students' opportunities to gain positive mobility experiences in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the challenges and tensions facing the NCP program from the perspectives of academics, mobility practitioners, and host communities. The chapter makes significant contributions to the literature on study abroad by providing nuanced insights into various challenges and tensions involving different stages of study-abroad programs, from awareness and funding application to program delivery and post-program stages. Bringing together perspectives from diverse groups of stakeholders, the chapter presents challenges and tensions facing both home and host institutions and staff as well as participating students. The challenges and tensions are analysed in light of the capability approach to unpack how restrictive social arrangements could impact students' and staff's capabilities to participate in and leverage study-abroad programs. These challenges and tensions also impacted students' and staff's motivations and aspirations, which is, the agency objectives (Sen, 1992; Burchardt, 2009) – the goals they take actions to achieve in study abroad. In the context of lacking awareness and understanding of the NCP program among students and staff as discussed in this chapter, the challenges and tensions should be addressed to provide more enabling social arrangements that attract more participating students and home institutions.

References

- Australian Government. (2024). *New Colombo Plan mobility program 2025 round guidelines*. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Bradly, A., & Iskhakova, M. (2022). Systematic review of short-term study abroad outcomes and an agenda for future research. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 16(1), 70–90.
- Bradly, A., Iskhakova, M., & Ott, D. L. (2024). Short-term study abroad (STSA): a review of key risks and challenges. *Journal of international education in business*. Vol. ahead-of-print (No. ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIEB-04-2024-0036>
- Burchardt, T. (2009). Agency goals, adaptation and capability sets. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 10(1), 3–19.
- Chao, R. Y. (2023). Intra-ASEAN student mobility: Overview, challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 15(5), 1736–1751. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-07-2019-0178>
- Rhodes, G. (2014). Risk management for study abroad programs: Issues and resources to inform program development, administration, and training. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2014(146), 41–50.

- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 93–117.
- Robeyns, I. (2011). *The capability approach*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/>
- Root, E., & Ngampornchai, A. (2013). I came back as a new human being” student descriptions of intercultural competence acquired through education abroad experiences. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(5): 513–532
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality reexamined*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). ‘It’s a few weeks I’ll cherish forever’: Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248.
- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.24083>
- Tran, L., Do, T. & Bui, H. (2021). ‘Employability in context’: The importance of considering contextual factors in reimagining employability through Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific region. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75(4), 591–607.
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers’ professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T. & Bellgrove, A. (2021). “There’s a much bigger world of science than just Australia”: Australian students’ development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science*, 43(6), 888–905.
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2024). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students’ curriculum-specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 876–893.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students’ career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.

7 Rethinking outbound student mobility to the Indo-Pacific

Pathways, policy, and practice implications and future directions

Introduction

Outbound student mobility plays a crucial role in the internationalisation of higher education, offering a wide array of benefits for students, institutions, and nations alike. Many countries are implementing policies to encourage study abroad, motivated by geopolitical goals, internationalisation objectives, and human development aspirations. However, the policies and practices surrounding study abroad vary greatly across countries and regions. These differences are influenced by the underlying motivations for study-abroad programs, the nature of partnerships between countries and institutions, and a range of socio-economic, geopolitical, and cultural factors.

A substantial body of literature has documented various aspects of study abroad, including trends, motivations, activities, experiences, and outcomes. (Humphreys & Baker, 2021; Shimmi & Ota, 2018; Tran, Stafford, et al., 2021; Tran, Phan, et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2024). This book is an extension of the important groundwork laid by the existing literature in student mobilities. Despite various countries' efforts to diversify study-abroad destinations, the majority of scholarly work on student mobilities focuses on international students and the Global South to Global North trend of student mobility. In contrast, this book offers fresh insights into a growing reverse trend of student mobility from an Anglophone country like Australia to Indo-Pacific countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Bangladesh. It delves deeply into the learning and engagement experiences of students from a developed country studying in developing nations. Despite the policy goal aimed at using outbound student mobility to strengthen country-to-country connections and regional relations, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on how effectively this goal has been realised (Tran & Do, 2024). Among the study-abroad literature, our book covers a unique angle as it addresses the nexus of study-abroad and public diplomacy. It also differs from existing literature as it draws on a study that takes a close look into outbound student mobility from multiple perspectives: students, alumni,

academics, professional staff, institution leaders, government representatives and host communities. The mixed-methods project reported in this book draws on data from government policy, in-country fieldwork, a national survey of 1,371 NCP students and alumni, and 298 interviews with students and alumni, academics, mobility practitioners, host communities, third-party providers, and government representatives in Australia and host countries. This diverse data strengthens the validity and reliability of the research findings by enabling cross-verification and offering a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the research problem (see Chapter 1 for details about the research design).

This conclusion chapter brings together the key findings of the study regarding Australian students' motivations in participating in study abroad in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan, the challenges they face, the impacts of this mobility flow from diverse perspectives, and the tensions arising. The chapter also puts forward a range of recommendations for improving Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific and study-abroad programs in general.

Motivations and challenges

The survey with NCP students and alumni shows that the primary motivations of students (from slightly to extremely important) were to challenge themselves (99%), gain experience in the Indo-Pacific region and broaden their understanding about the region (99%), become familiar with another culture (99%), and travel to a new place (99%). Although 90% of survey students had previous overseas travel experience, they reported multiple challenges associated with learning abroad. The top three were: dealing with a new language (89%), dealing with the culture (84%), and adjusting to teaching and learning methods (79%).

Impacts and the distinctive advancement of the NCP

The research shows that the New Colombo Plan has significantly changed Australia's student mobility and internationalisation landscape. Specifically, it has **built two-way flow of students** between Australia and the Indo-Pacific. The NCP could therefore be regarded as a symbol of reciprocal international education between Australia and the region. The NCP has also **re-positioned the Indo-Pacific** as a powerful place for professional, personal, and intercultural learning and laid the platform to raise the awareness of the public and local Australians of the value of Indo-Pacific knowledge and engagement. In addition, the NCP has significantly **diversified student mobility options**: study tours exchange, internships, language training mentorships, practicums, volunteering, clinical placements, and research. It has **broadened destination options** for Australian students to 40 destinations in the Indo-Pacific. Importantly, unlike previous schemes, a key strength of the NCP is its explicit commitment to broadening participation among students from less privileged backgrounds,

supported by flexible short-term mobility options, grants and funding and targeted measures to realise this access and equity goal. As a result, the NCP has significantly **widened access** and promoted equity in outbound mobility for Australian students, contributing to an increase in the study-abroad participation rate to approximately 23% prior to the pandemic (AUIDF, 2020). Moving forward, it will be important to build on this foundation to address the ongoing reproduction of social inequalities in international learning experiences across Australian institutions and the broader international education sector (Tran & Goddard, 2024). Through a range of mobility programs, the NCP has **created, diversified, or reinforced various networks and partnerships** between Australian universities and Indo-Pacific universities/organisations that can lead to strengthened research, teaching and learning, and service collaborations. Equally important, the NCP has **diversified and expanded industry engagement**, especially with the private sector as hosts and with business champions.

Student learning and connection

The research provides evidence that the NCP program has achieved its objective of increasing knowledge of the Indo-Pacific among young Australians. The NCP has expanded Australian youth's capabilities to pursue their valued goals in their learning, career trajectories, and ways of life. The key areas of student learning identified were developing an understanding of and confidence in engagement with the region, while also stimulating connections with Australians of Indo-Pacific background and developing an interest in learning an Asian/Indo-Pacific language. In particular, up to 66% of the students indicated the learning abroad experience made them interested in pursuing employment within the Indo-Pacific.

For post mobility connections, the top three host groups with whom NCP students maintain connections were local students (26%), buddies (18%), and academics (14%). Social media is the main communication channel; the top three are Facebook (31%), Instagram (20%), and WhatsApp (13%). The three main NCP-related activities on return were joining the NCP Alumni LinkedIn group (27%), speaking about their NCP experience at an event by their department/University or others (10%), and attending network events with NCP alumni (10%).

Employability and career outcomes

There is strong correlation between Indo-Pacific learning abroad experiences and region-related career outcomes: The top eight host countries (75% of study participants) mirror the top eight countries NCP alumni in this study are working in or with (74% NCP alumni) (Japan, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Republic of Korea, India, Singapore, Malaysia). NCP students accumulate personal, professional, intercultural, and symbolic capital that potentially provides them with a competitive edge in the graduate labour market. The learning experience

also enhances their employment prospects beyond Australia. However, while 89% participating students agreed that the Indo-Pacific learning abroad experience was useful for their resume, only 44% agreed that it was valued by their current employer. Indo-Pacific study-abroad experiences have a significant impact on students' personal and professional development and their career aspirations (mean score of 4.25). However, the magnitude of these impacts is higher among NCP scholars (mean score of 4.51) than mobility students (mean score of 4.21).

Beyond-the-self mobility and social impacts

One of the distinctive advancements of the NCP, compared to many other study-abroad schemes in Australia and around the world, is around how it **guides and shapes students' thinking beyond the self**. The program overall highlights beyond the individual as the centre of the learning and study abroad predominantly serving the personal, professional, cultural, and employability development of individual actors to their interactions and commitment to the context and other people collectively. The NCP does so by articulating explicitly the commitment for Australian students to enrich people-to-people connections and country-to-country connections. This can be an ideology that reflects the Australian government's public diplomacy strategy for using study abroad as a tool for strengthening regional engagement, but it is educative in orienting students to their social responsibility. It prompts students to frame their study abroad in the region as a project larger than the self that they should think about when embarking on their NCP experience in the Indo-Pacific. This rhetoric also resonates with the ideology about national building, collectivism, and international and regional integration that is favoured in a range of Indo-Pacific countries. Within the study abroad as public diplomacy framework, NCP students are positioned as not only learners, peers, partners, and connectors but also actors of public diplomacy and future leaders in shaping Australia's regional relationship.

Learning collectively towards social responsibility to enhance the public good is a mission embedded in the NCP. Our research found evidence about how Australian students' experiences in the Indo-Pacific have sparked their awareness of their social responsibility and how they have come to the decision to contribute to serving the community or the action taken to contribute to the wider community. Students have increased their social responsibility manifested through:

- Increased awareness of their privilege and a sense of gratefulness to their family and Australia as their home country and feeling an urge to give back to their community.
- Growing understanding of the gaps and differences between education systems and societies in home and host countries. As a result, they feel an urge towards social equality and working towards lifting the life of those who are more disadvantaged and not as privileged as themselves.

- Opportunity to develop multiple frames of reference and appreciation for different worldviews and alternative approaches to constructing knowledge and doing things, especially between their home and host countries.
- Developing empathy through not only intercultural interactions but also intercultural compassions, reciprocal intercultural learning, and human-to-human experiences.
- Learning collectively with Australian peers and Indo-Pacific students and people in internships and classrooms, which assists with the development of relational and multiple frames of references.
- Opportunities to challenge or change presumptions about the Indo-Pacific.

These are examples about humanising ideology about social responsibility. Students are given the exposure to have firsthand experiences about the context to nurture their desire and develop a commitment to action. There is also evidence that NCP students not only experience personal, intercultural, and professional development, but that they use their Indo-Pacific knowledge and experience to influence their family, friends, and communities in both home and host countries. However, this impact is more organic and depends on individual students. Intercultural pedagogies are therefore needed to design the program, orientation, in-country guidance, re-entry reinforcement, and a community of practice and a mechanism to nurture and sustain the learning for social responsibility. Well-structured post-mobility programs could leverage NCP alumni to enhance Indo-Pacific knowledge in the wider community and use them as a catalyst to strengthen relationships between Australia and the region.

Reverse mobility through the New Colombo Plan as a tool for decolonisation

The findings highlight the New Colombo Plan as a stellar example of reversal mobility, through which students from a developed country in the Global North are given the opportunity to study, undertake internships, and experience life in the Indo-Pacific. It provides evidence about the benefits of Indo-Pacific study abroad to students' academic, intercultural, professional, and personal development, to institutional relationships, and to home and host communities. These impacts challenge traditional thinking about student mobility, which is predominantly bound to Global South to Global North flows, and in which Western knowledge is positioned to be superior and universal (Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Raghuram, 2016) and Western experiences are seen as desirable, elite, and a marker of distinction.

The New Colombo Plan marks a reverse trend of student mobility (Tran & Vu, 2018; Tran & Bui, 2021), countering coloniality in student mobilities and international education. Through the NCP, formerly colonised countries in the Indo-Pacific such as Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Brunei, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea, which used to be periphery study-abroad destinations, now provide powerful learning spaces for

students from a Western country like Australia (Tran et al., 2019; Tran, Le, & Henderson, 2021; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021; Tran & Phan, 2024; Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2023). The learning and connections that Australian students have accumulated and developed through the Indo-Pacific study-abroad experiences demonstrate the values of reciprocal learning, human-to-human experiences, and human-to-human connections rather than the predominant one-way flow of knowledge and learning from the West to developing countries. The recognition of Global South Indo-Pacific countries as valuable study destinations is a step towards challenging the traditional preference for ‘Western’ destinations, ‘Western’ cultural experiences, and ‘Western’ values. This North-South reorientation disrupts the entrenched privileging of Western destinations and epistemologies within international education, repositioning the Indo-Pacific as a legitimate and dynamic site of intellectual and intercultural exchange. In this respect, the NCP holds symbolic potential as a decolonising initiative. However, symbolic interventions are inadequate in themselves. For the NCP to serve as a substantive mechanism of decolonisation, it must extend beyond spatial reconfigurations to actively dismantle enduring colonial power structures, interrogate the Eurocentrism that continues to underpin dominant educational paradigms, and address the systemic inequities embedded in global mobility and knowledge exchange. It is crucial to incorporate critical, reflexive, and decolonial pedagogies when designing and implementing NCP programs to transform these opportunities into meaningful learning (doings), intercultural understandings (beings), and outcomes as functionings (Sen, 1999). Only through such critical and structural transformations can study abroad initiatives foster equitable, reciprocal, and enduring partnerships between individuals, institutions, and states. Otherwise, superficial engagement with the Indo-Pacific may inadvertently reinforce colonialism and ‘othering’ by upholding notions of superiority, disregarding cultural biases, and devaluing the knowledge of cultural ‘others’ (Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017).

Short-term and long-term mobility

Short-term mobility is one of the key features of the New Colombo Plan. Seventy-nine percent of NCP students participated in mobility programs. Our research found that the impact of short-term mobility on student learning outcomes and development is similar to that of long-term mobility, with mean scores of 4.25/5 and 4.3/5 respectively. However, short-term mobility students are more satisfied with their learning abroad experience than long-term ones, with mean scores of 8.81/10 and 8.49/10 on meeting expectations, respectively (see Tran, Bui & Nguyen, 2021 for detailed discussion).

Empirical evidence from the interviews and survey shows short-term mobility is beneficial because:

- Students are exposed to collective learning with their cohort and host communities.

- Academic program leaders actively enhance academic rigour.
- Students have access to academic staff 24/7 who provide not only content knowledge expertise and academic learning support, but also cultural, social, wellbeing, medical, and travel advice.
- Learning is contextualised in an authentic environment by leveraging host community partnerships established by academics, universities, and third-party providers.
- NCP short-term mobility offers flexible short-term options from two weeks that accommodate students' academic study, part-time work, health issues and home responsibilities, thereby widening access for students from less privileged backgrounds, including Indigenous students, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with disabilities.
- There is evidence of the potential of short-term mobility to contribute to students' intercultural competence, knowledge about the region and development of attributes, soft skills, employability, and curriculum-specific learning.

Opinions vary regarding the minimum duration expected for NCP programs. The research however indicates a desire from host institutions for the minimum length of short-term programs (internships, summer schools, short-term studies, study tours) to be extended beyond the 14-day period. Hosts believe the intensive nature of these programs is challenging and that students would benefit from additional time to settle in, engage in deeper experiences, and establish connections with local communities. Academics support this view, though they also noted difficulty in accompanying students on mobility programs for more than two weeks due to their own academic responsibilities. In contrast, mobility practitioners are opposed to the extension, believing that a two-week program is more manageable and equitable for students juggling study, work, and family obligations at home and especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds or students with disabilities (see further discussion in chapters 1 & 2 and recommendation on the program duration in the section below). Pre-departure, many students indicated they would not have participated if the program duration exceeded two weeks. However, after experiencing the program, many changed their minds, recognising its value and outcomes.

Short-term mobility is often assumed to link to tourism (Kortegast & Leilani Kupo, 2017), with the experience being framed as 'fun', 'temporary', and 'leisure-oriented'. Youth mobility is characterised as being largely centred around the development of the student 'self' (Lulle & King, 2019). Yet the findings of our research provide empirical evidence about the impacts of Indo-Pacific short-term mobility experiences beyond the individual student to communal and social impact, national capacity building, and regional engagement. The communal impact resulted from being engaged with a group of peers, learning collectively, and being connected with and immersed into the host community. In addition, this research shows evidence of transnational

service collaborations, where NCP students work with host local students and communities in a range of social initiatives. These include refugee support services, environment protection activities, human rights action, women empowerment campaigns, and local community volunteer activities (see Chapter 5 for detailed discussion). These dimensions of the social impact of student mobility to the Indo-Pacific need to be brought to the fore and further explored.

In sum, despite challenges and areas for improvement as outlined in Chapter 6, the research shows strong evidence of the New Colombo Plan as a game changer for Australian and regional student mobility. It provides evidence about the impacts of Indo-Pacific studying abroad on students and national capacity building in human resource and regional engagement. It shows the ‘new possibles’ for an array of doings and beings (functionings) in the Indo-Pacific thanks to the expanded capabilities or real opportunities brought by the NCP (Sen, 1999; Tran & Vu, 2018) as well as the effects and challenges of re-balancing regional and global mobility. Insights shared by students, home universities, and host communities suggest the need for a regional re-imagination of learning abroad that embraces new potentials. The NCP contributes to shifting Australian international education away from the primary focus on commercialisation and supporting a re-framing of international education in more reciprocal terms. The research indicates an evolution from outbound mobility being a largely education-oriented experience to a social impact and regional engagement tool with diplomatic functions.

Challenges and tensions facing the NCP

Despite significant impacts, the main challenges exist such as language barriers (Tran & Bui, 2023) and lack of co-design with hosts. There is also a critical need for better integration of mobility experiences into curriculum and career services (Tran et al., 2021; McConachie, 2021). Key challenges and tensions listed later are synthesised from the variety of stakeholder views contributing to the project.

Host communities

Host needs and awareness of the NCP: Hosts lack understanding of the NCP and many are not effectively engaged in designing mobility programs. Students highlighted the importance of incorporating host perspectives into pre-departure content, country-specific information, and throughout all phases of mobility programs

Communication

- Program information: Evidence from stakeholders (students, alumni, academics, mobility practitioners, and hosts) shows that the program intent and values have not been adequately communicated and clearly understood.
- Student interest: Some universities and academics are struggling with generating student interest in the program.

- Expectations and consultation: DFAT and university expectations of each other differ, especially university staff perceptions of what they need and the reality of what DFAT is tasked with.

Academics

- Lack of academic engagement: Many academics are not adequately integrated into the program, are not aware of it, or do not sufficiently understand it.
- Lack of systemic guidelines for academic program leaders in the management of in-country critical incidents, and academics lack expertise in this area.

Program development

- Discrepancies in student selection criteria for mobility programs across universities.
- Challenges associated with heavy workloads for students in intensive short-term mobility.
- Challenges with credit recognition and transfer reported by academics, mobility practitioners, and students.
- Differences between academic and professional staff regarding key performance indicators, project application, program design, and reporting responsibilities but there has been increased understanding and empathy towards each other's responsibilities and workload.

Post-study support and engagement

- Post-study experience is a critical area for development. Student feedback indicates many do not know how to leverage their experience, nor are they aware of any resources to act on this. This reflects key stakeholders' uncertainty about who is responsible for this element.
- Both host communities and students expressed a strong desire for post-study connections but reported a struggle with sustaining them.

Evaluation

Hosts and academics are unclear about whether there are mechanisms for evaluating the program and who is responsible for them.

Workload and funding

- Workload: There is a consensus among academics, mobility practitioners, and hosts that one of their biggest challenges is the heightened workload involved in developing and delivering short-term mobility programs.
- Funding: Students have mixed opinions about the amount of funding and are concerned about how to manage their own. Academics and mobility practitioners question the financial return on their time investment and feel the funding allocation model does not recognise the workload invested in

delivering a mobility program. Universities feel that the heavy administrative burden delays funding and are concerned about funding implications for the program's sustainability and for the partnership between Australian universities and host communities.

Recommendations

Key recommendations below are generated from a variety of stakeholder views from the survey and interviews. The Australian government should consider both equity and quality factors when shaping student mobility programs to the Indo-Pacific (Tran & Goddard, 2024).

Co-design

Enrich partnership engagement and co-design programs with hosts, including downstream hosts: It is crucial to understand host needs and engage them across the program cycle (design, pre-departure, delivery, and post-study). Hosts should be positioned as equal partners and co-designers rather than as mere recipients of Australian students or program providers. Engaging hosts closely ensures programs are not developed solely through an Australian lens.

Communications

- More extensively and strategically communicate the intent and values of the NCP to hosts (current and prospective), academics, and students, especially underrepresented groups (regional and remote, low SES, first-in-family, Indigenous and students with disabilities) and tap into the role of academics in promoting the program to their students.
- Strengthen consultation and communications with the sector and enhance clarity of roles of stakeholders involved in the NCP, including source of leadership, delineation of responsibilities, and who resources specific activities and responds to queries.

Program development and evaluation

- Systemic framework to ensure quality and effective evaluation of short-term mobility programs: Program quality varies significantly across Australian universities. Further resources and investment will ensure consistent quality during and after study experiences.
- Pre-departure and in-country support: Systemic coordination of a range of pre-departure briefings delivered by multiple stakeholders, and provision of timely and coherent in-country support, especially for critical incidents and wellbeing.
- Focus more on the impact of student mobility beyond the in-country experience: provide continuing funding for programs that demonstrate impact

and engagement in terms of partnership development; leverage the benefits of mobility programs for research, teaching and learning, or service and industry collaborations.

- Enhance the post-study experience by developing a holistic and coherent mechanism, with concrete guidelines and clear communication regarding the stakeholders responsible for supporting students' post-study engagement and experiences. It is critical to create purposeful channels and activities for students to share their Indo-Pacific experiences, engage in ongoing reflection, and sustain collective post-mobility learning with peers and communities at home.
- Leverage Indo-Pacific experiences to enhance career progression and employability: Further support and explicit guidance for alumni to articulate their learning abroad experiences into employability.
- Balance and align the values and impacts of NCP-funded programs on student experience, national human capacity building, diplomatic relations, and regional engagement building.

Program length

Learning and development through programs does not solely take place during the in-country experience. It is essential to focus on how to optimise students' learning both before and after their international experience. Physical mobility is just one part of a broader range of global learning experiences, so the length of the program should not be evaluated separately (Tran & Goddard, 2024).

It is essential that the NCP both enhances Indo-Pacific capabilities and ensures equity. To achieve this balance, a mobility program should be designed to promote both quality and equity, while building regional capabilities. This program could feature a blended combination of onshore and offshore activities, such as a two-week in-country mobility experience, along with virtual mobility sessions and other complementary educational activities (Tran & Goddard, 2024). These pre- or post-travel components might include an introduction to the host community through an overview of the destination, online language, and cultural training prior to the trip, and a reflective re-entry activity. Additionally, participants could engage in activities related to the host location or region, along with creative forms of ongoing involvement with the host community to maintain long-term engagement.

Inspired by Australia and the NCP, the updated EU Erasmus+ program now expands access for disadvantaged students by allowing short-duration mobilities of as short as five days, including options like Blended Intensive Programmes that combine virtual and physical components. Similarly, in the US, Hybrid Exchange Programs (HEPs) are gaining popularity, offering around two weeks of physical mobility paired with virtual exchange before or after travel (Tran & Goddard, 2024).

Good practice

- Share good practice in the design and implementation of mobility programs across the sector, specifically:
 - Building project applications.
 - Constructing effective and impactful mobility programs.
 - Credit transfer and recognition.
 - Developing long-term and formative mobility program evaluation that engage key stakeholders: academics, mobility offices, hosts, third party providers, NCP students, and alumni.
 - Fulfilling reporting and acquittal requirements with DFAT and Palladium as program contract administrator.
 - Leveraging the potential of mobility programs for creating and strengthening research, teaching and learning, and service collaborations with hosts and business partners.
- Learn from good practices of mobility programs and initiatives regionally and globally especially through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and digitally enhanced learning abroad, which supports students across all phases, leverages impact and engagement, builds partnerships among key stakeholders, and strengthens alumni engagement.

Engagement

- Engage academics more effectively through communication, incentives, recognition of workload and contributions, and dedicated funding to ensure academic rigour in partnerships with hosts, planning and designing of mobility programs, supporting students' in-country experiences, and ongoing learning and engagement for students across the mobility cycle.
- Formally invest in capability building and targeted professional development for professional staff and academics as part of NCP funding. Current professional development programs for mobility practitioners are narrow and do not reflect their increasingly complex role.
- Expand the program's reach across the various functions of the university (e.g. careers and employment, alumni) so that administration, delivery, and engagement with mobility programs are not the sole function of the international office.
- Create an environment where the government, Palladium (as DFAT contractor), NCP research bodies, institutions' mobility offices, career services, alumni offices, academic program leaders, host communities, third party providers, and business champions can collaborate seamlessly.

Assessing the long-term benefits of the NCP

- Design longitudinal research to collect data on the benefits of the NCP to students and alumni over time. Our team is willing to assist with this.

- To enhance the benefits of the NCP, it is worth considering the development of a series of Good Practice Guides that provide principles, practical guidance, and good practice examples to support NCP students, alumni, academics as program leaders, mobility practitioners, and hosts.
- Develop long-term and formative mobility program evaluation that engages key stakeholders: students, academics, mobility offices, and hosts.
- Share evaluations and feedback between home and hosts for mutual improvement. Some host organisations found it challenging to not be informed of the evaluation collected by Australian universities on the program they hosted.

Leveraging the NCP to increase Asian/Indo-Pacific language learning in Australia

To enhance Indo-Pacific language learning in Australia, it is important to have a holistic, coordinated, and sustained approach, supported by a national language and literacy strategy, sustainable funding, and collaboration with businesses. The NCP should be seen as one of the pillars in this holistic commitment. The NCP alone cannot solve this deeply rooted issue without effective strategies and funding to revitalise language learning in schools and engaging with the business sector to help boost understanding and value of regional languages and literacy.

The NCP can consider the following strategies to support Indo-Pacific language learning and literacy:

- Provide students with access to language, tuition, and cultural literacy programs before the offshore experiences.
- Provide adequate pre-departure and re-entry training on cross-cultural development.
- Build a Language Support Portal or online language support resources to help students engage in language learning before, during, and after the offshore experiences.
- Create a country-specific information Portal to help students and alumni understand more about their host location.
- Encourage NCP students and alumni to use digital tools and language learning technologies, such as Duolingo, to support their learning of a regional language.
- Create a new NCP-branded language stream and language and literacy micro-credentials.
- Offer funding to universities to support the development of Asian language courses.
- Integrate language learning objectives into the program and incentivise language and cultural learning throughout NCP program's full cycle of pre-departure, in-country, and re-entry.

- Provide professional development for academics to help them raise students' awareness and interest in language learning within and outside NCP programs.
- Co-design with host communities to raise awareness of and embed language learning into NCP programs.
- Facilitate NCP student/alumni connections with international student alumni from the host country who studied in Australia and then went back home.
- Provide grants/training/support to help NCP alumni continue language learning.
- Facilitate NCP alumni/student connections with international students and diaspora in Australia from their host destination/region.
- Create opportunities for alumni to practise the language in both professional and intercultural contexts.
- Provide opportunities and training to help alumni promote Asian/Indo-Pacific language learning to other Australian students and communities.
- Leverage support from the consulate/embassy and businesses for NCP students/alumni to engage in language learning, in-country activities, and host destination-related events (see further recommendations in Tran & Bui, 2023).

Using alumni network to build sustained interest in the region

- Provide opportunities to help alumni maintain connections with their host communities, for example through involving alumni in supporting visits of their host delegations to Australian universities or organisations, joining events or webinars related to their host communities, and access to a list of activities or initiatives related to the host region that they can potentially contribute to.
- Provide grants and training to support alumni in sustaining and advancing their language learning.
- Provide funding and support mechanisms to help alumni undertake further study, exchange, internships, or mentorship programs in or related to their host location/region.
- Provide training and support mechanisms to help alumni articulate regional experiences and knowledge.
- Provide funding and support to help alumni attend events/conferences in or related to their host location/region.
- Facilitate connections and ongoing activities among alumni from the same host location.
- Connect alumni with international students and diaspora in Australia from the same host location/region.

- Facilitate events where alumni can learn from insights and connect with businesses, organisations, industry experts, and influencers related to the region in Australia.
- Provide alumni a list of networks, associations, and initiatives related to their host location/region and create opportunities for alumni to join.
- Facilitate opportunities for alumni to connect with the embassy/consulate of their host country in Australia and access to host location/regional updates.
- Provide funding/support to help alumni initiate activities to help Australian communities understand more about their host communities/region.
- Provide funding/support to help alumni create content on social media platforms to share Indo-Pacific experiences and value of regional languages and cultural literacy to Australians.

References

- Humphreys, G., & Baker, W. (2021). Developing intercultural awareness from short-term study abroad: Insights from an interview study of Japanese students. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 21(2), 260–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1860997>
- Kortegast, C., & Leilani Kupo, V. (2017). Deconstructing underlying practices of short-term study abroad: Exploring issues of consumerism, postcolonialism, cultural tourism, and commodification of experience. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 8(1).
- Lulle, A., & King, R. (2019). Youth mobility and well-being. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 9(2), 151–159.
- McConachie, B. (2021). The New Colombo Plan: addressing the barriers to scholarship recipients' contributing to Australia's public diplomacy goals in China. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 1.
- Raghuram, P. (2016). Locating care ethics beyond the global north. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 15(3), 511–533.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Shimmi, Y., & Ota, H. (2018). “Super-short-term” study abroad in Japan: A dramatic increase. *International Higher Education*, 94, 13–15. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.0.10559>
- Stein, S., & Andreotti, V. D. O. (2016). Decolonization and higher education. In *Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory* (Vol. 10, pp. 978–981). Science+ Business Media, Springer.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2021). Public diplomacy and social impact of Australian student mobility to the Indo-Pacific: Host countries' perspectives on hosting New Colombo Plan students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 25(4), 425–442. <https://doi.org/10.2831/5320984833>.
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2023). ‘It’s a few weeks I’ll cherish forever’: Transformative curriculum-specific learning, language awareness and cultural literacy development for Australian students in Vietnam through New Colombo Plan mobility programs. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 18(2), 228–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999231163402>

- Tran, L., Bui, H., & Nguyen, D. (2021). *National Report: Australian students in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan*. REDI: Deakin university.
- Tran, L. T., Bui, H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2023). Youth agency in public diplomacy: Australian youth participation in outbound mobility and connection building between Australia and the Indo-Pacific region. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 32(2), 409–433.
- Tran, L. T., & Do, T. T. Q. (2024). Transforming and thriving: Australian students in Vietnam through the New Colombo Plan. *Educational Review*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2024.2408385>
- Tran, L. T., & Goddard, T. (2024). Studying abroad is more than a holiday – it’s an act of diplomacy. *The Canberra Times*. <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8790352/new-reforms-set-to-reshape-student-mobility-programs/>
- Tran, L. T., Le, T. T. T., & Henderson, F. (2021). Rite of passage into the teaching profession? Australian pre-service teachers’ professional learning in the Indo-Pacific through the New Colombo Plan. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 27(6), 542–557.
- Tran, L. T., & Phan, H. L. T. (2024). Conceptualising mobility as becoming, connecting and contributing: Australian New Colombo Plan scholars learning abroad in the Indo-Pacific region. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 127, 102429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2024.102429>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2021). “There’s a much bigger world of science than just Australia”: Australian students’ development of disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills and attributes through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *International Journal of Science Education*, 43(6), 888–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2021.1891322>
- Tran, L. T., Phan, H. L. T., & Bellgrove, A. (2024). Knowing, acting and becoming: Australian students’ curriculum-specific learning through a New Colombo Plan short-term mobility program to Japan. *Educational Review*, 76(4), 876–893.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Soejatminah, S., & Gribble, C. (2021). Building experience, opportunities, and the resume: Motivations of students participating in learning-abroad programmes through the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(2), 416–430.
- Tran, L. T., Stafford, G., Vu, T. T. P. & Rahimi, M. (2019). *Engaging with Asia via the New Colombo Plan: Impact on Australian students’ career directions and employability*. In H.T.M. Bui, H.T.M. Nguyen & Cole, D. (Eds). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Tran, L. T., & Vu, T. T. P. (2018). Beyond the ‘normal’ to the ‘new possibles’: Australian students’ experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 72(3), 194–207. <https://rdcu.be/3moi>

Glossary

The following key terms are defined in context to assist Australian and international readers to engage with the content of the book. While the terms may be used variably across global sectors, for context, these terms used in the book sit firmly within this Australian Research Council Future Fellowship program on the Australian Government funded New Colombo Plan.

<i>Term</i>	<i>Proposed definition</i>	<i>Supportive sources</i>
New Colombo Plan	The New Colombo Plan is a signature initiative of the Australian Government that aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia by supporting Australian undergraduates to study and undertake internships in the region	https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan
Mobility grant	Award granted to successful applicants under the New Colombo Plan Mobility Program that includes three categories: Mobility Grant, Language Training Grant, and Internship Grant. The mobility grant funding is awarded to universities for the mobility program and then the student is awarded the mobility grant internally.	https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-ncp-mobility-guidelines.pdf

(Continued)

(Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Proposed definition</i>	<i>Supportive sources</i>
Scholarship	Award granted to successful applicants under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program that must include at least one Study Component	
Scholarship program	The New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program that provides scholarships to Australian undergraduates to undertake study, language training, internship and/or mentorship in the Indo-Pacific region for up to 19 months	https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/new-colombo-plan-scholarship-program/2025-scholarship-program-guidelines
Mobility program	The New Colombo Plan Mobility Program that provides funding to Australian universities to support Australian undergraduate students' participation in study, language training, internships, mentorships, practicums, research and semester/trimester-based programs between two weeks (four weeks from August 2025) and two semesters.	https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/mobility-program/2025-mobility-program-guidelines
Downstream host	A downstream host is an organisation that is engaged by a host university or partner to provide internships or some activities for NCP students as part of their mobility program.	
Mobility grant recipient	Recipient of funding under New Colombo Plan Mobility Program	https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/new-colombo-plan/mobility-program/2025-mobility-program-guidelines
Scholar	Recipient of funding under the New Colombo Plan Scholarship Program	

(Continued)

(Continued)

<i>Term</i>	<i>Proposed definition</i>	<i>Supportive sources</i>
Short-term mobility student	A student who undertakes a short-term mobility program, summer school, mentorship, and/or an internship abroad for less than a semester	
Pre-departure briefing	The program briefing students on the broader social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental aspects of the host country and the administrative and academic environment of the host institution related to their learning abroad experiences in preparation for their departure to the host country	
Studying/learning abroad	A form of intra-degree outbound mobility which refers to an educational experience where a student spends a period of time undertaking an academic activity in another country while remaining formally enrolled in an institution in the home country	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1028315315579241 https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/751
Third party provider	A third-party provider is an independent entity that facilitates part or all of a learning abroad program for university clients or assists universities in organising or delivering learning abroad activities for their students	

Index

- 100,000 Strong in China 10
100,000 Strong in the Americas 10
- Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Act 10
academic interests 50, 52–54, 58
academic learning 85, 135
academic program leaders 2, 15, 126, 137, 140
academics 15–17, 27, 33, 63, 75–76, 84, 92, 111, 114, 117–122, 126, 127, 130, 130, 135–138, 140, 141; and mobility 113, 123; mobility staff 47, 67; practitioners 109, 112
access 1, 3, 11, 17, 25–27, 32, 38, 44, 90–92, 104, 112–114, 120, 122, 131, 135, 141–143
agency 34–37, 41, 60, 77, 87–88, 94–95; student 97, 99–102, 106, 107, 112, 117, 118, 120, 127
alumni 2, 13–15, 32, 33, 47, 66, 87, 121–122, 129–131, 133, 136, 139–143
America 4
Anglophone destinations 2
application 27, 28, 90, 110, 114–117, 127, 137
ASEAN 4–6, 30, 101, 127
ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) 4
ASEAN University Network (AUN) 5
Asia: East 6, 41, 116, 124, 144; intra-Asian mobility 5–6, 18–19, 29, 41, 83, 88, 107, 110; Southeast 4–6, 101, 127; Asia Pacific region 4, 12Asia Capable and Globally Competent Building programs 13
Asian capabilities 25
Asian language learning 141
aspirations 35, 36, 41, 59, 94, 129, 132
attributes 19, 35, 95–97, 99, 100, 105, 135, 144
Australia: government policy in 1–2, 4, 12–14, 16–20, 26–27, 29–32, 37–41, 44, 47–48, 50–51, 66, 77, 86–89, 91–95, 98–99, 101–103, 106–108, 119, 124–125, 129–134, 141–144, 145; students from 1–2, 4, 12–14, 16–20, 26–27, 29–32, 37–41, 44, 47–48, 50–51, 66, 77, 86–89, 91–95, 98–99, 101–103, 106–108, 119, 124–125, 129–134, 141–144, 145; universities in 1–2, 4, 12–14, 16–20, 26–27, 29–32, 37–41, 44, 47–48, 50–51, 66, 77, 86–89, 91–95, 98–99, 101–103, 106–108, 119, 124–125, 129–134, 141–144, 145
Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy 13
Australian Government 2, 8, 13, 14, 18, 26, 30–32, 37, 66, 102, 114, 124, 145
awareness 4, 5, 9, 27, 28, 46, 61, 83, 84, 89, 104, 105, 109–112, 127, 130, 132, 136, 142, 143

- barriers 5, 7–8, 17, 18, 25–27, 35, 71, 73–75, 80, 95, 114, 125, 126, 136
- becoming 3, 17, 19–25, 34–36, 45, 59, 61, 78, 79, 84, 88, 96–101, 105–108, 144
- Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program 10
- Bologna Declaration 10
- Brexit 11, 38
- British Council 11, 27, 39
- Canada 2–4, 12, 111
- capabilities 2, 13, 31, 34–37, 45, 63, 85, 92, 93, 95, 97–107, 109, 112–120, 122, 124–127, 131, 136, 139
- capability approach 17, 20, 25, 34–37, 45, 59, 61, 84, 85, 90, 93, 94, 97–100, 103, 105–107, 109–110, 112–117, 119–120, 121, 122, 124–127
- capacity 11, 12, 27, 59, 79, 87, 101, 103–105, 118, 120–121, 135, 136, 139
- career 3, 7, 15, 18, 46, 57, 84–86, 89, 93–95, 98, 103, 106, 117, 131, 132, 136, 139, 140
- challenge yourself 58
- challenges 3, 6–8, 11, 17, 20, 25, 29, 32, 33, 38, 47, 63–71, 73–76, 78–82, 88, 95, 98, 99, 109–110, 116, 118–122, 126, 127, 130, 136, 137
- China 2–4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 41, 92, 99, 104, 105, 112, 113, 116, 120, 131
- China Scholarship Council (CSC) 9
- co-design 32, 136, 138
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) 6
- Colombo Plan 12–14, 17, 18, 30, 31
- coloniality 29, 133
- colonisation 2
- colonised countries 2, 133
- commodification 2, 17, 25, 28, 38, 143
- communication 30, 47, 97, 105, 112, 124, 125, 131, 139, 140
- community 2, 5, 24, 34, 36, 48, 67, 84, 91, 98, 100, 101, 105, 111, 132, 133, 135–136, 139
- comparative 39, 87, 88
- compassions 133
- connection 2, 20, 41, 96, 104, 105, 107, 121, 122, 131
- consumerism 17, 25, 28, 39, 143
- conversion factors 20, 34–36, 59, 88, 90, 92, 95, 99, 109–110, 115, 126
- cosmopolitanism 2
- country-to-country 31, 44, 129, 132
- credit mobility programs 1, 11
- credit recognition 110, 119, 120, 137
- credit transfer 5–7, 120
- cross-cultural barriers 125
- cross-cultural exchanges 9
- cultural biases 29, 134
- cultural literacy 20, 25, 46, 141, 143
- cultural tourism 25, 29, 39, 143
- curriculum 1, 20, 27, 28, 33, 37–41, 61, 83, 87, 111, 120, 127, 135, 136, 143, 144
- curriculum-specific learning 61, 83, 87, 127, 135, 143, 144
- decolonisation 29, 133, 134
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) 15, 47
- deprivation 109, 124
- destinations 3, 4, 14, 29, 42, 64, 110, 126, 129, 130, 134
- developed countries 2
- discipline-specific knowledge 20, 46, 87
- discipline-specific learning 33
- doings 34, 35, 45, 59, 88, 92, 95, 134, 136
- duration 8–9, 32, 33, 46, 54, 58–60, 65, 66, 76, 79, 118, 135
- economy 2, 7, 8, 18, 28, 31
- education abroad 1, 29, 37, 60, 127
- empathy 25, 64, 98, 99, 107, 133, 137
- employability 3, 13, 15, 18–20, 32, 33, 44, 48, 52, 54, 56–58, 60, 83, 84, 92, 94, 98, 106–108, 132, 135, 139
- environmental conversion factors 34
- equity 1, 3, 17, 25, 26, 29, 32, 33, 38, 124, 131, 138, 139

- Erasmus 9–11, 18, 27–28, 37, 38,
53, 61, 93, 94
ERASMUS+ 9–11
Euro-Anglophone 3, 5, 31
Europe 3, 9, 10, 25–27, 44
European Credit Transfer and
Accumulation System (ECTS) 10
European Higher Education Area 10
exchanges 1, 6, 30, 106
expectations 32, 76, 80, 88, 96, 110,
116, 117, 118–119, 125, 134, 137
experience 1, 2, 8–10, 12–13, 16,
20–27, 39, 46, 49–51, 53, 58, 61,
65, 73–74, 77–80, 82–101, 106,
112–117, 118, 121, 122, 124,
130–137, 139, 143, 147
export 1, 12

faculty-led study 13
family 27, 32, 84, 100, 101, 132,
133, 135, 138
fieldwork 2, 15, 47, 66, 130
foreign language 4, 7, 20, 44, 46, 49,
50, 52–54, 57–59, 64, 84, 125
Foreign Policy White Paper 13, 30, 31
freedoms 85, 92, 94, 109, 119,
122, 124
Fulbright Program 10
functionings 20, 34, 45, 59, 87, 88, 90,
98, 103, 105, 115–116, 134, 136
funding 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 18, 31, 110,
113–115, 122–124, 137–143,
145, 146
future directions 129

gain experience 49, 50, 51, 53, 130
gaps 33, 53, 63, 66, 132
gender 44–46, 49, 52, 53, 57–60,
62, 66, 69, 83, 99
gender differences 46, 52
Generation Study Abroad 10, 11
Generation UK 11
get familiar with other cultures 49, 58
Global Britain 11
global citizenship 7
Global Mobility 15–16
Global North 2–4, 14, 25, 45, 84,
129, 133
global outlooks 1, 20
Global South 2–4, 14, 25, 45, 84,
129, 133, 134
Glossary 145–147
Go abroad! Study Overseas, Japan 7
Going Out policy 9
good practice 140, 141
government representatives 2,
15, 130

harmonisation 5, 6, 30
heterogeneity 44, 45, 47, 57, 59, 63,
73, 79
host communities 2, 3, 15, 17, 20,
29, 32, 33, 84–85, 94, 96, 102,
109, 112, 122, 125, 125, 130, 133,
134, 136–138, 140–143
host cultures 25, 29
host organisations 16, 25, 32, 85,
102, 103, 109, 118, 120–123,
126, 141
humanising 133
human-to-human 31, 36, 133, 134

impact 9, 12, 19, 25, 27, 28, 33,
36, 37, 45, 46, 58–61, 63, 65,
80–85, 87, 89–90, 94, 95–96,
98, 100, 101, 103, 106–108, 117,
120, 121, 127, 132–136, 139,
140, 143
inclusivity 112
India 2, 3, 12, 17, 88, 131
Indonesia 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 94, 101–103,
123, 125, 130, 131, 133
Indo-Pacific 1–20, 26, 28–32,
34, 36, 39–47, 49–51, 53–55,
57–59, 61, 63, 65–67, 69, 71, 72,
74, 76, 78–79, 83–94, 95–102,
103–110, 114–118, 119, 121,
124–146
Indo-Pacific capabilities 2, 139
inequity 25
innovation 103
Institute of International Education
(IIE) 10–11
institutions 2, 4, 5, 9–11, 13, 15,
16, 26–27, 30, 31, 64, 84, 100,
102–104, 105, 107, 109, 110,

- 113–118, 120–122, 124–131, 134, 135, 140
- intercultural communication 97
- intercultural understandings 1, 20, 134
- interest 8, 46, 54, 89, 95, 100, 110–111, 131, 136–137, 142, 143
- international education 1, 12–14, 18–19, 29, 30, 35, 60, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136
- international experience 139
- internationalisation 1, 2, 4–6, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 32, 34, 44, 102, 103, 106, 107, 129, 130
- internship 13, 14, 32, 49, 68, 69, 71, 73–80, 88, 91, 92, 94, 103, 104, 118, 146, 147
- internships 1, 2, 7–9, 14, 33, 46, 80, 103, 111, 118, 130, 133, 135, 142, 146
- interviews 2, 15–16, 47, 63, 66, 85, 87, 97, 100, 122, 134, 138
- intra-Asian student mobility 5
- intra-degree mobility 1
- intra-European student mobility 9, 10
- intra-regional student mobility 5
- Japan 3, 5–8, 12, 14, 17–19, 89–91, 94, 98–101, 105, 116, 124–125, 131, 143–144
- Japan Revitalisation Strategy 7–8
- key developments 3
- K-Move 7, 30
- Korea 3, 6, 7, 13, 14, 17, 18, 131
- labour force 104
- labour market 93, 131
- Laos 6, 12, 129, 133
- learning 1, 2, 13–20, 27, 29, 31–33, 37, 39, 46, 47, 58, 65, 66, 68, 70–72, 74, 75, 78, 79, 81–85, 87–92, 96–98, 101, 103, 106–108, 110, 119–120, 125–126, 129–136, 139–142, 144, 147
- learning abroad 1, 13–18, 31, 32, 37, 39, 93, 98, 106, 110, 130–132, 134, 136, 139, 140, 147
- less developed 2
- longitudinal 2, 33, 140
- long-term benefits 33, 46, 140
- long-term program 65
- Malaysia 3, 5, 6, 12, 17, 101, 104, 116, 122, 131, 133
- mentorships 1, 14, 130, 146
- mobility 1–6, 7–27, 29, 31–41, 44–47, 49, 54–61, 63, 64, 66–67, 69, 71, 73, 79–85, 88–94, 96–102, 105–112, 113–117, 118–136, 137–141, 143–147
- mobility as becoming 35, 36, 101
- mobility as connecting 36
- mobility as contributing 36
- mobility grants 13, 114
- mobility practitioners 2, 15, 85, 113–114, 122–123, 127, 130, 135–137, 140, 141
- Mobility+ 8, 9
- motivations 3, 17, 44–50, 52–54, 56–62, 66, 69, 117, 127, 129, 130
- multi-method 2, 15
- National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) 13
- NCP 2–4, 12–17, 26, 29–32, 45, 47–50, 52, 54–59, 63, 66–69, 71, 72, 73–80, 84–86, 87, 88, 90–105, 110–114, 116–125, 127, 130–136, 138–142, 146
- NCP scholarship 69
- needs 2, 3, 7–8, 26, 32, 36, 136–137, 138
- neoliberalism 2, 17, 25, 28, 37
- New Colombo Plan 2–4, 12–15, 17–19, 26, 27, 29–31, 37, 41, 45, 60, 61, 83, 84, 108, 112, 114, 127, 130, 133, 134, 136, 143–147
- new possibles 19, 35, 41, 136, 144
- New Southbound Policy 9
- New Southbound Talent Development Program 9
- non-credit mobility programs 1
- non-degree seeking mobility 1
- North-to-South 2, 29

- observations 2, 15, 78, 91
- othering 25, 29, 134
- outbound mobility 26
- overrepresentation 53

- pandemic 3, 12, 39, 131
- pathways 87
- Pathways, policy, and practice
 - implications 129
- people-to-people 14, 18, 29–32, 60, 114, 132, 145, 146
- personal conversion factors 34
- personal development 3, 24, 46, 48, 52–54, 56–58, 100
- personal growth 1, 20, 35, 57, 58, 78, 83, 84
- policy 2, 3, 7–11, 13, 18, 25, 27, 29–32, 37, 41, 47, 66, 108, 129, 130
- policy goal 129
- postcolonialism 25, 28
- practice 3, 11, 19, 34, 45, 83, 90, 94, 104, 129, 133, 140
- practicums 1, 130, 146
- Prime Minister's Asia Awards 13
- privileged backgrounds 26, 27
- professional staff 16, 17, 33, 84, 109, 137, 140
- Program development and evaluation 138
- program evaluation 110, 120, 140, 141
- program length 66
- public diplomacy 1–4, 12, 14, 17, 20, 25, 30, 31, 34, 41, 44, 87, 102, 106, 129, 132
- pull factors 45
- push factors 45

- real opportunities 34, 79, 85, 90, 95, 99, 103, 106, 109, 113–115, 118, 125, 127, 136
- region 1–6, 12–15, 18, 19, 20, 30–32, 41, 49, 50, 53, 54, 57, 58, 63, 67, 69, 76, 83, 84, 94, 96, 97, 99–101, 106–108, 124, 130–133, 135, 139, 142–146
- regional and remote areas 26
- regional capability 8
- regional engagement 1, 12, 15, 29, 31, 44, 132, 136, 139
- regionalisation 6
- relationship 12, 29, 30, 77, 94, 94, 102, 106, 123, 132
- research 1–3, 9–11, 14–15, 17, 19, 20, 26, 27, 29, 32–35, 39–47, 54, 57, 61, 63, 66, 67, 76, 77, 84, 88, 89, 93, 94, 101, 103, 107, 109, 124, 127, 130–132, 134–136, 139, 140, 146
- reverse culture shock 77, 82
- reverse mobility 2, 133
- risk 26, 81

- scholarship 18, 59, 72, 75, 76, 79, 87, 107, 126, 146
- self-transformation 35, 36, 101
- semester/trimester program 54, 56, 58
- service learning 2
- short-term internship 17, 54, 79–80
- short-term mobility 14, 20, 26, 32, 33, 46, 54, 56, 58, 91, 110, 134, 135, 137
- Short-term mobility programs 33, 46
- short-term programs 6, 33, 46, 58, 65, 135
- short-term study tour 54, 67, 69
- short-to-medium term 69, 71, 73–76, 79–80
- Singapore 3, 6, 13, 14, 17, 131
- skills 7, 13–14, 19, 44–46, 48–50, 52–54, 56, 58–60, 64, 75, 78, 85, 90, 93–100, 104–107, 116, 122, 125, 135, 144
- social arrangements 85, 90, 92, 100, 109, 115, 120, 121, 127
- social conversion factors 34
- social equality 26, 112, 132
- social impact 135–136
- social justice 26, 29, 101, 107, 114
- social responsibility 1, 107, 132, 133
- social stratification 25
- societal inequalities 1
- society 1, 2, 14, 25, 34, 62, 77, 84, 100, 101

- South-East Asian Ministers
of Education Organisation
(SEAMEO) 5
- South-to-North 2
- student recruitment 1, 103
- students 1–5, 7–20, 26–41, 44–50,
52–54, 56–71, 73–86, 87–103,
104–116, 117–144, 146, 147
- students with disabilities 26, 124
- study abroad 1–3, 8, 10–14, 17,
20–43, 44–47, 50–54, 57–69,
73, 75, 79–85, 86, 88, 90, 93, 95,
98, 100, 103, 106–108, 124–131,
132–134, 143, 146
- study abroad intentions 57
- study tours 1, 33, 46, 77
- summer school 14, 17, 32, 54, 68,
69, 147
- summer schools 1, 135
- superficial engagement 134
- super-short-term 8
- survey 2, 8, 15–17, 47–49, 52, 54,
57, 63, 66, 67, 69, 84–86, 87,
92–97, 127, 130, 134, 138
- sustainability 2, 89, 108, 110, 122,
124, 138
- Taiwan 8, 9, 13, 30, 87
- target countries 1
- tensions 3, 17, 25, 109–110, 109,
112, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123,
125–127, 130, 136
- Thailand 5, 6, 13, 45, 46, 61
- The Australian University
International Directors Forum 3
- the Collective Action for Mobility
Program of University Students in
Asia (CAMPUS Asia) 5, 30
- the University Mobility in Asia and
the Pacific (UMAP) 30
- theoretical knowledge 88–91
- theory 37, 62, 90, 106, 143
- Tobitate Young Ambassador
Program 7
- Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan 7
- transformation 25, 35, 36, 100
- transnational education 1, 5, 20, 41
- transparency 112
- travel to a new place 49, 53, 58, 130
- trends 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15,
17–20, 34, 39, 106, 129
- Turing Scheme 11, 43
- types of programs 44, 45, 57, 59, 66,
79, 99
- UK 2–4, 11–12, 26, 27, 91, 111
- underrepresentation 27
- universities 1, 3–6, 8–10, 12–17,
20, 26, 29, 32, 37, 41, 47, 76, 80,
84, 91, 94, 102–104, 107, 110,
112, 113, 116–118, 120–121,
123–126, 131, 135–138, 141,
142, 145–147
- University Mobility in Asia and the
Pacific (UMAP) 6
- US 2–4, 10–12, 26, 44, 53, 57
- values 34–36, 48, 67, 85, 105, 134,
136, 138, 139
- Vietnam 2, 3, 5, 13, 17, 61, 83,
88–91, 96, 102, 104, 105, 121,
127, 129, 131, 133, 143–144
- volunteer work 1
- volunteering 2, 7, 41, 78, 101, 130
- Western 3, 29, 87, 133, 134
- work-integrated learning (WIL) 13
- workload 32, 33, 64, 68, 69, 71, 72,
73, 76, 79, 110, 117–119, 137,
140
- worth living 35, 36
- young Australians 2, 12–13, 131
- Youth mobility 135