

# Curricular and Extra-Curricular Programs Supporting Improved International Learning Mobility Experiences: An Emerging Trend in Australia

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## Introduction

International learning mobility is a strategic and operational priority for both the federal government and the majority of universities in Australia. Dating back over a decade, successive governments have stressed the public good to be derived from having an increased proportion of students participating in mobility programs. It is seen as contributing to the nation's competitiveness through a more globally competent cohort and a more globally engaged higher education sector. Strategic planning among universities with very few exceptions makes specific or indirect reference to the importance of learning mobility and both government and institutions have continued to invest in growing the program. This investment has included significant annual increases in scholarships and travel grants that act as a critical catalyst in getting the students mobile as well as adding the administration required to support a growing program.

In this positive environment students have taken up the option in increasing numbers to the point where Australian is now no longer a laggard in learning mobility and it can be compared with participation levels in the US and Europe.

The typical student experience of learning mobility is a solitary one with little opportunity for students to integrate the experience into the academic and social elements of their student life. Students are given good basic pre-departure services such as program marketing, application management and cultural orientation but are then left to their own devices both at the host institution and upon their return home. Meaningful engagement with host students and the host culture while abroad is often elusive. Despite the above, anecdotal evidence, with validation from the very little Australian research in the area, shows that this self-directed style of learning produces positive outcomes for participants. In the Australian context where there is a long

history of self-directed learning through a tradition of backpacker travel it is perhaps not surprising that all the major stakeholders including government, institutions, industry, students and parents ascribed high value to what is mainly loosely structured learning mobility.

However, the emergence of a programmatic trend in the sector may indicate that there is a belief that there is more to be done to improve the experience and outcomes for students. Planning and promotional documents from five global leadership programs are reviewed to identify the motivations behind the establishment of this new wave of programs. The common motivations of the programs – to increase participation in learning mobility programs, to improve students’ global and inter-cultural competence, to prepare students to compete in global labor markets, to better induct students to new cultures, to support internationalization of the campus and the curriculum, and to encourage greater integration of domestic and international students – can all be seen as aspiring to improve the international learning mobility experience for students.

## Definition and Scope

The terminology in Australia for outbound student mobility is interchangeable and somewhat confusing. A ‘study abroad student’ often refers to a foreign fee-paying student who spends a semester, or occasionally a year, on a non-award basis at an Australian university but it is also used to describe an outbound Australian student. Similarly the term ‘exchange student’ is not used consistently, and in the European literature on graduate skilled migration ‘international student mobility’ commonly refers to students who move to another country for the purpose of undertaking an entire degree. This essay uses the recently established European Union term that describes students who spend a period of study in another country for academic recognition as participating in ‘learning mobility’ (The Commission of the European Communities, 2009). For these students the time abroad and the activity for which the student gains academic recognition can vary significantly. Hence the term is applicable to study periods of anywhere from two weeks to a year or more in some instances and activities as diverse as regular or specially designed courses at the host institution, to internships and community service placements, to research training placements.

This study is not comprehensive across the sector and is not presented as being representative. The five cases are offered as being indicative of work in the area that holds promise for the strengthening of the Australian learning mobility offering. Identifying the true value of these programs and others like them, as well as identifying the true value of Australia’s international learning

mobility, requires major improvements in the way program and participant data is collected and analysed. The Australian Universities Directors' Forum (AUDIF) has made a start through its mobility benchmarking but there is much more quantitative and qualitative data required. Achieving this will require a deliberate effort at the institutional level with senior management being prepared to invest in developing the evidence base for what they have already deemed is a strategic priority. It will also require close collaboration between institutions, federal government, peak bodies such as Universities Australia (UA) and the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), and industry.

The author is aware of leadership programs at a number of Australian universities such as the Infinity Leadership Program at La Trobe University that target relatively small numbers of students. These niche programs have not been included in the programs reviewed in this essay. Each of the five global leadership programs reviewed here are structured and funded in a way that involves or expects to involve a large number of students. Each of the five programs aspires to influence the internationalisation process at the institution through attaining a critical mass of participation of both students as well as academic and administrative staff.

## A Growing Program

The number of Australian university students incorporating an international learning mobility into their award programs has grown strongly in recent years to the point that in 2007, the latest year where national figures are available, participation rates could be compared with that of the United States and Europe.

A national benchmark of student mobility commissioned by the Australian Universities Directors' Committee (AUIDF) showed that for the 37 universities reporting in the 2007 academic year there were 10,718 students at all levels undertaking international learning mobility. Of this cohort 8,354 (78%) were undergraduates and a further 1,454 (14%) were postgraduate research students. The undergraduate students were involved in one of four types of study experience: A semester or yearlong exchange program; another form of semester or year abroad; a short-term program; or a placement or practical training program. The mobility of the undergraduate cohort was equal to 5.8% of the most recently available data for the undergraduate graduating cohort (Olsen & Spain, 2008).

The previous version of the same AUIDF benchmark showed that for 2005 there were 7,282 students at all levels undertaking an international

study experience. In this case the mobile cohort was measured against the 2003 undergraduate completing cohort (Olsen, 2008). As the 2006 and 2008 mobility benchmark reports were the first instances of the survey being conducted the methodology was somewhat crude and in the process of being refined. However, the suggested growth in mobility from 2005 to 2007 of 47% is indicative of the trend to greater participation in the activity. The trend can also be identified in the growth in funding allocated to support the activity as reported in the same benchmark studies:

This Australian 2007 undergraduate participation rate of 5.8% compares with 9.4% in the United States for the 2006/2007 academic year. For the first time in 2008, IIE Open Doors, the most authoritative source of US student mobility data, presented a national undergraduate study abroad participation figure that was derived by using the same methodology that has been applied in Australia through the AUIDF benchmark. That is, a rate based on the total number of undergraduate study abroad students divided by the total number of undergraduate completions as reported by the US Department of Education's National Centre for Education Statistics. Based on this calculation, 9.4% of US undergraduate students studied abroad in 2006/07 (Institute of International Exchange IIE, 2008).

The US figure represents continued growth in mobility over the last decade and the trend is expected to increase in pace with the Lincoln Commission setting an objective of producing a four-fold increase in the annual number of US students studying abroad to 1 million by 2016 at which point the program would be supported by US\$128 million in government scholarships and fellowships. The two prime public good objectives of the program are to improve American competitiveness in the globalised economy and to improve national security through a more internationally aware community (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, 2005). John Hudzik speculated that while the legislation seems likely to be approved in 2010 it is unlikely that it will be funded and even more so due to the impact of the global financial crisis on the US economy (Hudzik, 2009). However, regardless of the final result for the associated legislation (the Paul Simon Bill) it has strong bi-partisan support that is indicative of the sentiment not only within government but also at the institutional and community level.

European data on student mobility is currently uneven across the European higher education area with inconsistent survey methodology being applied including how mobile students are categorised (Kelo, Teichler, & Wachter, 2006). The shortcomings in the data were also highlighted at a April 2009 Bologna process conference of European Education Ministers (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009). In September 2009 the

European Parliament issued a request for tender for a project examining the barriers to mobility in the Erasmus program in the context of the aspirational objectives set by the ministers. The tender document acknowledges the current lack of information and statistics supporting the program and directs the successful proponent to address the gap as part of the project. The document estimates Erasmus mobility at less than 4% of the cohort (European Parliament, 2009).

## A Growing Priority

Internationalisation is a major theme in the current round of institutional strategic planning, curriculum review and the second cycle of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audits across the higher education sector in Australia. Within this process of internationalisation, international learning mobility can be identified as a core component.

The increase in funding and associated volume of mobility is in line with the priority ascribed to learning mobility in the strategic plans of Australian universities. An analysis of the strategic plans of 28 universities in 2008 indicated that 60% had an explicit objective of supporting learning mobility. Furthermore, those institutions which referred to mobility objectives in their strategic plan were found to be more likely to send a proportionally larger number of students abroad than those institutions that did not (Daly & Barker, 2009). On a more general level a Departmental report stemming from a 2008 survey claimed that 97% of institutions promoted the importance of student mobility through their international strategies (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008).

The emergence of international learning mobility as a stated strategic goal of government and institutions is summarised in its historical context in table 2 below with three major phases identified since the Second World War. During the first period the sector was heavily committed to training the next generation of leaders from Asia, and Australia continues to reap the benefits of the strong people to people links that were developed through the Colombo Plan. However, this positive impact is likely to decline over the next few years as that generation of leadership moves into retirement, and it remains to be seen how influential the much larger Asian alumni cohort of the last two decades will be. During this first period of internationalisation most outbound student mobility was at the higher degree research level as Australian universities did not start conferring doctoral awards until the 1950s and the vast majority of Australian academics were trained overseas well beyond that. For example the University of Sydney had a total of just 20 doctoral candidates enrolled in 1950 and did not confer its first PhD until 1951 (Ward, 2008).

The second period saw Australia enter a very entrepreneurial phase in which internationalisation was heavily focused on the recruitment of fee-paying international students. For most institutions this was an urgent necessity as international students were the most accessible source of additional funds during an extended period where the government purse strings continued to tighten. Student mobility began to grow from a low base and was supported at the institutional level largely because it was seen as a good vehicle for developing Australia's international profile and offering leverage into emerging recruitment markets.

In the current phase institutions generally view themselves as global organisations and consequently are taking a more holistic and integrated view of internationalisation. Aspects of the two preceding phases have carried through to the current phase; so, for example, aid and development and international student recruitment remain important. In this period international student learning is a pillar of Australia's international engagement. This emergent priority can be clearly seen in the funding growth from government and institutions in table 1 above. It should also be noted that the sharp increase in institutional mobility scholarship programs has been the result of increased international student fees without which it is unlikely that the increases would have been able to occur no matter the strategic priority.

Australian federal government strategy and policy in recent years has placed a high priority on the outbound mobility of Australian students. Both the current Labour government and the Liberal government that preceded it recognise both the private and public good benefits that flow from increased mobility of students. In launching the 'Engaging the World through Education' policy in October 2003 the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, stressed the importance of student and academic mobility in developing international communities through knowledge exchange (Downer, 2003). More specifically the Education Minister, Julia Bishop, in 2006 stated:

As part of the challenge to our thinking in government on how we shape the future today, I am ensuring that my Department works with Australian education providers to help Australian students to study abroad. Australia places great value on engagement with the broader Asia-Pacific region. An international study experience builds links between countries and individuals and equips Australians with the skills for a globalised world. (Bishop, 2006)

At the same convention the Minister announced a project to increase the federal government funds available for international learning mobility, the

impact of which can partly be seen in table 1 above.

In a similar vein, the current Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has stated that international engagement produces global citizens who contribute to: Australia's business engagement and competitiveness; improved diplomatic relations; innovation in science and technology leading to improvements in quality of life; the addressing of global challenges; and the creation of deeper cultural engagement that enriches social experiences:

Many benefits flow our way, as our own students study overseas in greater numbers and are exposed to other cultures and education systems. Such experiences deepen and improve our own education system and I look forward to seeing real growth in numbers of students taking the opportunity to study overseas. (Gillard, 2008)

Further indication that student mobility is an integral part of the national agenda can be seen in the federal government's 2008 review of higher education which includes a recommendation that the federal government 'remove the loan fee on OS-HELP loans to encourage more Australian students to undertake part of their studies overseas' (Bradley, 2008). International learning mobility and the graduate attributes ascribed to it were also a recurring part of the discussion at the Australia 2020 Summit that was convened by the Prime Minister to assist with the development of a national strategy for the future of the nation (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). In short learning mobility is an entrenched component of the nation's international engagement.

The strategic priority among institutions for increased participation in outbound student mobility is also matched in the operations of institutions. An annual study for the AUIDF includes unpublished data on the staff resources in universities in Australia dedicated to international student exchanges. In 2008, 37 universities reported 97.275 (fte) staff dedicated to international student exchanges, and a total of 12,811 student exchanges: 6,588 incoming exchanges and 6,223 outgoing exchanges. This is a caseload of 132 international exchanges (incoming plus outgoing) per adviser in 2008, from 127 in 2007, 116 in 2006 and 122 in 2005.

International student exchange is seen as resource intensive: broadly, it takes an adviser nearly a week to set up an outgoing exchange, including the reciprocal incoming exchange. Over several years, economies of scale with student exchange advisers have been elusive.

Over the last decade in Australia international learning mobility participation rates have grown significantly as a result of institutions successfully applying resources to support the strategic objective in three critical areas

of operations. Firstly, resources have been applied to locating the demand through increasingly systematic marketing and promotional campaigns aimed at current and prospective students. In relation to this point it should also be noted that in an ever-more competitive environment international learning mobility options are used in general domestic recruitment campaigns as institutions seek to gain a competitive advantage through the value-adding programs they offer. Secondly, there has been a willingness at many institutions to continue to increase travel grants as an essential mechanism for unlocking the demand. Thirdly, institutions have managed the risks associated with the activity by offering quality assured services to the mobile students including by managing the bilateral relationships and admissions processes with the international institutional exchange partners; by establishing mechanisms for the transfer of academic credit back to the students' award program; by offering comprehensive predeparture orientation and information; and by ensuring that the travel risks are monitored and mitigated through clear travel policies and mandated minimum insurance requirements.

## **Cultural Integration and Isolation**

Despite the growth in participation in Australian international learning experiences and the rhetoric supporting it and despite the investment in quality assured relationships and policy and procedures that enable the activity, it remains the case that for the majority of Australian students international learning mobility is largely a solitary experience. Historically there has been little formal opportunity in the academic setting that enables students to prepare for the experience prior to travelling abroad; to contextualise the crosscultural experience while they are with the host institution; or to reflect on the experience upon their return to the home institution in Australia. Essentially students are given a sound international orientation and cultural introduction prior to their departure with little or no further contact with their Australian institution while they are abroad.

At the host institution the experience is often one of limited integration with local students with the exchange students more likely to socialise with other foreign students. Anecdotally this pattern of limited social integration holds a strong consensus view among Australian practitioners. It is also a view supported in the literature (Brustein, 2007; Mazon, 2009; Stohl, 2007; Vande Berg, 2007) with Otten arguing that mobility experiences often will not result in the level of integration or contact with the host culture or third cultures because students abroad tend to gravitate to their own cultural group despite a wish to mingle with local students. The reality is that it is very difficult for the foreign students to engage with local students as the locals are reluctant to take



the time to get to know foreign students because the effort is seen as a poor investment when the exchange students are about for a limited time and will soon be moving on (Otten, 2003).

Apart from the limitations of pre-departure preparation and of opportunities for integration with the host culture, there is also little formal opportunity for students to reflect on the experience in the academic setting once they return to their host institution. In this case the contact is normally limited to a brief re-orientation program and the completion of a rudimentary feedback form. In terms of re-orientation and program evaluation not much has changed from the situation that Engle and Engle reported in 2003:

For years, our evaluation of individual and group student experiences, and program strengths and weaknesses, relied upon self-reported, subjective methods: a written end-of-term student questionnaire; anecdotal evidence and conversation with current and past program participants; and the impressions of on-site administration, faculty, and host families. (Engle & Engle, 2003)

This student experience situation of good basic support being provided at pre-departure but with minimal intervention beyond that as the student is at the host institution and when he/she returns home is not limited to Australia and can be identified as the norm in the United States where there is a strong tradition of international learning dating back to the second world war. As Vande Berg has stated:

Too many existing study abroad programs limit intervention in any sort of focused and intentional way, to predeparture sessions alone, or to predeparture sessions that are supplemented by further orientation once on site. After this, students are for the most part left to their own devices. (Vande Berg, 2007)

Vande Berg goes on to argue that the loosely structured mobility that is the norm is not good enough for American students and that American institutions should be actively engaged in the programs delivered offshore as opposed to having students 'directly enrolling' with foreign institutions (Vande Berg, 2007). In Australia while there is a shorter history of large volume international learning mobility, there is a long tradition of self-directed travel as many hundreds of thousands of Australians have undertaken backpacking adventures dating back to the 1960s. As a society Australia values

the intercultural competence gained through this tradition of successive generations moving out to explore all corners of the globe. In this setting there is a logical step to also valuing international learning mobility even in a loosely structured way.

## Identifying the Value in International Learning Mobility

The above notwithstanding, in an environment where international learning mobility appears to face significant barriers to a fulsome cultural integration for students at the host institution the value of the experience needs to be questioned. Anecdotally Australian administrative practitioners and academics involved in sending students abroad have a strong consensus view that the experience is a powerful and positive one for participants. With very few exceptions to the rule, students upon their return home are seen to have been enriched by the experience and are often described as being more mature, more globally aware, more focussed on their studies, and more attuned to what they want to achieve from their studies and from life as compared to what they were prior to studying abroad.

A US study of approximately 100 returned students found that learning mobility improved open mindedness, levels of independence and the students' academic focus (Hadis, 2005). In Australia there is also research that supports the anecdotal evidence. In 2006 the University of Melbourne surveyed 233 former exchange students (Nunan, 2006) in a study that was modeled on the much larger landmark IES study (Dwyer, 2004). The Melbourne study covered students who were abroad between 1990 and 2000 with the majority moving after 1996 as the trend in Australia began gaining pace while the IES study drew on the longer history of US mobility and covered participation dating to the second world war. Nunan's study at the University of Melbourne found that 81% of respondents believed they had 'developed a more sophisticated way of looking at the world' as a result of their sojourn; that 77% and 70% respectively believed their time abroad had 'encouraged an interest in lifelong learning' and 'enhanced my interest in academic study'; and that 87% believed the experience had enhanced their employability. Three quarters of respondents said they had remained in contact with people they had met overseas (Nunan, 2006).

The Nunan report is an important first step in measuring the impact of international learning mobility in Australia. However, the survey was limited to a single elite institution, it has not been repeated since the original survey and there is no similar survey elsewhere in Australia. Both the University of Melbourne and IES surveys are limited in that they do not include control

groups against which impact outcomes can be compared. This lack of impact research in Australia is a gap that needs urgent addressing because in the current evidence based investment environment the major learning mobility stakeholders - government, institutions, industry, students and parents - will all want to be sure that they are getting value for their investment. The sector needs to be working with government and industry to develop robust mechanisms to examine the impact of international learning mobility.

## **Curricular and Extra-Curricular Programs Enhancing International Learning Mobility Experiences**

The rhetoric and investment of government and institutions, the enthusiastic support from the academic community, and the buy-in from students and parents has led to strong growth in participation over the last ten years and is clear evidence of the value ascribed to the activity by the major stakeholders. Consistent with Australia's long tradition of backpacker travel, international learning mobility for Australian students remains a largely self-directed experience that operates in a loosely structured fashion. However, in recent years there is an emerging trend in the development of curricular, extra-curricular and blended programs that may indicate a recognition at universities that there is more that can be done to enhance an experience that in many ways has been a fairly solitary one as students have been supported in pre-departure admissions processes and cultural orientation and then largely left to their own devices at the host institution. Similarly, the coming home re-orientation and debrief has also been handled in a minimal way remote from the students' academic environment. Thomas describes the return home as too often being seen as simply a return to the familiar and that 'this simplistic understanding of the phenomenon belies its multi-layered, complex nature' (Thomas, 2009).

This essay identifies three categories of program in the Australian system that either strongly encourage or require a study period abroad and aspire to improve the quality of the student experience in international learning mobility through integrative programming.

The first category has been described as 'value added' programs (Adams, 2007) that are available on a voluntary basis in addition to students' substantive studies although a component of the otherwise extra-curricular program may include one or more units which bear credit and can be attributed to the award program. Macquarie University pioneered this type of program in Australia with its Global Leadership Program (GLP) in 2005 having adapted a smaller scale Global Leadership Technology Seminar (GLTS) offered at Arizona State University. The Macquarie GLP has been subsequently adapted

at the University of Newcastle (UoN), the University of South Australia (UniSA) and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). Other universities have developed versions on the theme that may or may not have been influenced by the success of the Macquarie program. The second category is that of internationally oriented award programs where there is a compulsory international learning mobility component built into the program. The Bachelor of International Studies at UTS is one of the longest established and best-known programs of this type. Similar programs have been established at many Australian universities including the University of New South Wales, the University of Wollongong, the University of Queensland and Macquarie University. The third category is the emergence of programs that are aligned across Australian home campuses and remote international campuses in such a way that students are able and encouraged to move seamlessly from their home campus to an international campus. Examples of program integration in this category include Monash University with its campuses in Johannesburg, South Africa campus, and in Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia, Swinburne University of Technology with its campus in Sarawak, Malaysia, and RMIT University with its campus in Vietnam.

Of the three categories of program identified, this essay examines details of the first and leaves the others for investigation at another time. The value added programs identified are not meant to be comprehensive or representative of programs of this type across the sector. They are provided as indicative examples of programmatic development that show promise in terms of their stated or implied objectives towards addressing some of the gaps that have been identified in Australia's international learning mobility. The extent that the institution's objectives are actually met is also left to a more detailed study.

### **1. Macquarie University, Global Leadership Program (GLP)**

The GLP was established in 2005 based on an adaptation of a model that had been operating at the Arizona State University on a smaller scale than that was planned for the Macquarie program. The detail of the program was agreed at a working group which included the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, International, the Registrar as well as other senior officers, academics, administrators and students. The author was Executive Director International at Macquarie at the time and also on the working group and believes that the broad representation on the group was critical to the successful construction and implementation of the program as the process ensured that the final product addressed the needs of most of the major stakeholders and had their support from the outset. In hindsight, it may have been useful to have also included others such as industry, the local

community and parents on the group although the views of these stakeholders were sought and feed in to the planning process at a later stage.

The GLP is offered as a non-award certificate of achievement that includes a notation appearing on the students' transcripts once they attain the required 200 points which are drawn from activities arranged in three component parts: A colloquium series, a distinguished speaker series, and a broad and flexible range of experiential activities. The response from students and academic staff was immediately positive with an initial subscription of approximately 500 students into the first intake and over 1,500 students within two years of operation. The program was initially available to undergraduate award seeking students only but soon after its introduction postgraduate coursework students and short-term study abroad and exchange students began lobbying for it to be made available to them. This resulted in program adaptations that catered to the specific needs of those cohorts. For example large parts of the colloquia were packaged and offered in intensive mode over a long weekend prior to the commencement of the semester thereby allowing study abroad and exchange students to enrol in the program, accumulate a significant number of points immediately and proceed with the others components during the semester. By 2009 there were close to 3,000 students subscribed to the GLP and the support of the academic community grew proportionally as they were needed to teach in the colloquia series.

An instigator of the program, Russ Alexander, described the initial top-level objectives of the program:

The challenge was to design a program that had wide access, was multidisciplinary, transferred knowledge, delivered a set of skills perceived to be valuable to graduates and that promoted student mobility and international opportunities. (Alexander, 2006)

The Pro Vice-Chancellor, International at the time, Tony Adams on the same topic:

The GLP brings together a number of related and complimentary strategies. It supports the institutional mobility strategy, the development of generic skills and competencies, and community engagement through international or cross-culturally related volunteer projects. (Adams, 2007)

The colloquia series offered a wide range of workshops and classes on

the broadly interpreted theme of globalisation and global leadership that were run by academics drawn from right across the academic spectrum. The series formed the 'glue' of the program by providing an academic setting in which students were able to specifically and purposefully reflect on their international learning mobility experience (a strongly encouraged but not compulsory component of the program) both prior to studying abroad and upon their return – 'These (mobility) experiences allow students to put the skills sets developed in the colloquium series into practice' (Alexander, 2006). The series attracted domestic and international students in numbers proportional to their presence on campus and provided a desirable integration of domestic and international students in the informal curriculum that was elusive in the formal curriculum where international students tended to cluster in their own ethnic groups in a limited number of award programs.

Programs subsequently developed at the University of South Australia, the University of Newcastle, and the University of Technology, Sydney used the Macquarie GLP as a prototype from which their models could be adapted. In each case this included seeking advice from consultants who had been directly involved in the GLP.

## **2. The University of South Australia, Global Experience Program (GEP)**

Planning for the GEP at the University of South Australia commenced in late 2006 and the program was made available to all undergraduate students in early 2008. The GEP was developed by a project team that conducted an initial feasibility test which included consultation with major stakeholder including academic program directors, students and local industry with each group providing strong endorsement of the concept through a survey (Feast, Collyer-Braham, & Bretag, 2009). To complete the program students are required to accumulate 120 points in four components; Orientation (5 points), a compulsory credit bearing unit – Global Experience Professional Development, GEPD (10 points), experiential options (100 points), and a capstone component where students reflect on their experience in discussion with a panel of industry practitioners.

Program development was managed out of the Division of Business and the GEP has a strong emphasis on the professional development aspects of global engagement. Delivering enhanced employability is consistent with both a prime motivation expressed by the students for wanting to participate in the program and where industry saw the value. Achieving greater integration between domestic and international students was noted as a success of the Macquarie GLP and another motivation for UniSA to pursue a program of

this type. Equity of access was seen as a major issue for a university with a proportionally higher demographic of lower socio-economic and mature aged students. The program framework aimed to ‘package otherwise disparate experiences into a coherent program and thereby provide incentives for students to participate in a range of courses and activities that may not have otherwise been considered such as language studies and international exchange.’ (Feast, et al., 2009) However, while an international learning mobility experience was viewed as very important UniSA, like Macquarie University, did not make an international sojourn a compulsory component of the program.

Program development has included the establishment of a framework for the evaluation of the program that includes 1. Surveying the students on their levels of global and intercultural awareness before and after their sojourn, 2. Use of the university’s Course Evaluation Instrument (CEI) and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) surveys and 3. Analysis of comments provided in the students’ feedback as part of the reflective assessment of the CEPD. With small numbers in the program currently the findings (generally positive) are of limited value. The important thing to note is that the system is in place to monitor program performance on an on-going basis.

Reporting after the first year of operation program management concluded that:

If universities are serious about preparing their graduates to be leaders in a complex and unpredictable global environment, we believe that decision makers need to invest in programs such as Global Experience. The evidence from UniSA suggests that this investment will enhance the student learning outcomes, improve their employability, and enrich the experiences and opportunities for intercultural exchange on campus. (Feast, et al., 2009)

### **3. The University of Technology Sydney, Beyond UTS: International Leadership Program (BUiLD)**

The BUiLD program was developed during the course of 2009 and is due to be launched in March 2010 and made available to all UTS students. To complete the program students are required to accumulate 100 points across a broad range of activities arranged in three areas – networking, learning and experiential with international learning mobility strongly encouraged. Upon successful completion of the program students will receive a certificate, a letter of attainment and a notation will appear on their transcript (Malicki, 2009). Program governance includes a Student Committee and an Industry Advisory Committee that will assist with the on-going development of the program and

assist with the operation of the program. Part of the planning for the future of the program includes consideration of offering participation to the university's alumni (University of Technology Sydney, 2009).

#### **4. The University of Newcastle, iLEAD International Leadership Program**

The program addresses the themes of international leadership, international awareness, and integration with diverse cultures and communities, and has the stated objective of improving participant's competence in each area. Students accrue points over the duration of a four-step program – induction, seminar series, experiential options, and a capstone program. In the Newcastle model although each of the four steps are required for program completion, the required 100 points are all gained in the experiential component (The University of Newcastle, 2009).

#### **5. The University of Melbourne, Intercultural Communication and Global Leaderships Award**

The Intercultural Communication and Global Leaderships Award (IC&GLA) program is a concept that stemmed from a July 2008 University Provosts summit (The University of Melbourne, 2008) which reviewed the University's international profile, where its international ambitions lay and the opportunities and challenges it faced in achieving its objectives. The summit had a particular focus on the institution's teaching and learning mission and it took place at a time when the University was undergoing major reform of its curriculum under the 'Melbourne Model' – a new program model in the Australian sector with one of its motivations being its greater compatibility with a wider range of foreign systems – and at a time when the University had reached a record high of over 10,000 international students on-campus in Australia.

The designers of the IC&GLA program had a clear idea of how the program would fit with the University's international teaching and learning strategy from the outset:

The Melbourne experience aims to instil a range of attributes in a Melbourne graduate which will lead them to be; i) leaders in communities, ii) attuned to cultural diversity and iii) active global citizens, amongst other capabilities. In looking more closely at these capabilities and attributes, it is hoped that students should be able to mentor new generations of learners, engage in meaningful public discourse, value different cultures and contribute positively in their communities wherever they are in the world, have an understanding of



cultural and social diversity, and have broad global understanding. (The University of Melbourne, 2009)

The award program is designed for undergraduate students and is made up of 3 main components; two relevant subjects, and intercultural experience project, and the mentoring of other students. It is envisioned that the two compulsory units will sit on the regular undergraduate schedule and that they will be able to bear credit towards the students award program at the same time as meeting the requirement of the IC&GLA. The first unit, Intercultural Effectiveness, would be specifically designed for the program while the second would come from an audited list of existing units with a relevant international, global or cultural dimension. The idea is that the students would be required to take the unit prior to undertaking an international learning experience abroad and there was a suggestion that the Intercultural Effectiveness unit may be required of all students who are planning to participate in a University learning mobility experience and that it may be a determinant in how the University allocates its travel scholarships (The University of Melbourne, 2009). The program has broad objectives that are generally consistent with those of the programs listed above and with a recognition that the existing mobility program, as good as it may be, could be improved through deliberate programming. The stated objectives are:

1. Enhancing the ‘international’ aspects of the University’s curriculum
2. Expanding participation in the University’s international exchange, volunteer and internship programs
3. Provide strategic opportunities for international and domestic students to engage with each other more constructively (The University of Melbourne, 2009)

Like UniSA, Melbourne also recognises the importance of being able to monitor and measure the impact on students in critical areas such as the attainment of improved global competence. While the challenges of achieving this qualitative and quantitative data are recognised there was no indication in the documents available as to how the University proposed to achieve this.

## Further research

In the Australian higher education sector there is a large ‘feel good’ factor that has worked in favour of student mobility. To date participation rates have grown on the strength of the largely unquestioning belief of institutional

administrations and academic communities that student mobility delivers both a private good benefit to the individuals involved as well as a public good benefit through a more globally astute cohort. For academics, mobility practitioners, parents and friends contact with the students upon their return often confirms the benefits derived by the participants. However, this lack of formal research on Australian student mobility cannot be ignored. The data deficiency needs urgent redress as all stakeholders will demand an evidence base that clearly shows the benefits gained if they are to increase their investment in the activity such that Australian participation rates match other Western nations in the decade ahead. A research base will also ensure that informed decisions are made as programs are reviewed and improved. Sound evidence will be particularly important in critical areas of program development such as equity of access to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and the evaluation of the relative merits of shorter course programs and programs that are not with institutional partners.

The AUIDF benchmark survey in 2005 and 2007 is an important source of base quantitative data and the recent decision of Directors to make the mobility survey an annual event is encouraging. This data set offers a longitudinal view of the numbers of mobile students and the form that mobility takes – year abroad, semester abroad, short course program, volunteer or internship program, or research study – along with a few other indicators such as the source and quantum of travel scholarships and the number of study abroad advisors per 100 students. However, while the survey is being expanded for 2010 to identify socioeconomic status of students and foreign language competence and acquisition, there is a great deal about the students' motivation and experience; the social, academic and professional impact it has on students; and the view of the other major stakeholders including the academic community and industry.

There are four areas in need of mobilisation in order to effectively address the research gaps. First, the AUIDF benchmark should be further enhanced. The addition of two new areas of data collection next year – an attempt to identify the socio-economic status and the foreign language proficiency of participants - should be the pattern for the future. Secondly, individual institutions need to make reasonable investment in adequate human and IT resources to effectively international learning mobility including the systematic collection of program performance data. The impact survey at the University of Melbourne is an example of an important piece of research that should be replicated through the sector. It remains the case that, despite further investment in mobility scholarships, too often at Australian universities the exchange function, which is a non-revenue generating unit that normally resides

within a central international office, is well down the list when it comes time for budget allocation. The practical outcome of this is that the functional units struggle to keep up with the basic operational tasks of sending and receiving students and have little time for the more strategic aspects of the function including developing the quantitative and qualitative data set and maintaining institutional relationships in a orderly and strategic fashion. Thirdly, the existing Australian consortia – the Group of Eight (Go8), the Innovative Research Universities of Australia (IRUA), the Australian Technology Network (ATN) and ‘The Others’ - should improve their mobility benchmarking and in doing so look at how, within their own grouping or between groups, they can standardise research and data collection as well as the systems that support it. Fourthly, the Federal government, higher education peak bodies such as Universities Australia (UA) and the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) and industry peak bodies need to come together in recognition that the rhetoric and resources that each allocates to international learning mobility needs a national framework for research and data collection to ensure that it is sustainable and that it can be compared with other national and supra-national systems. In the future the federally mandated student experience and graduate destinations surveys should include examination of international learning mobility so a robust national data set can be established.

As mentioned above, the literature indicates that issues surrounding the preparation of students for their experience abroad and the barriers to that experience forming a more integrated part of their overall education experience is not limited to the Australian situation. As Australian institutions look at the development of programs which may improve the students’ experience they would benefit from exposure to best practice examples from foreign institutions and systems. It is likely that Europe and the United States have made progress in this area. However, as the student mobility spans many cultures and regions it would also be valuable to know what is happening outside the West, and Asian an examination of systems where mobility is well developed such as Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore would be valuable, as would a review of systems where bilateral mobility is emerging such as China and India.

## Conclusion

In the current phase of internationalisation of Australian higher education most universities view themselves as international organisations with a global outreach and engagement. This is reflected in their mission and vision statements and elaborated upon in their strategic plans. In this environment international learning mobility can be identified as a pillar of Australia’s international engagement with a key indicator being significant

funding investment increases from institutions and government, as well as from the students themselves.

In this supportive environment participation in international learning mobility has grown dramatically in recent years. The system tends to do a good job at marketing and administering the programs and the students are voting with their feet. However, despite the goodwill for the activity, it remains the case that the experience is typically an isolated one for students with little formal connection to their university and academic experience more generally.

However, things may be changing. An audit of planning documentation and program promotional material at five Australian universities indicates that each of the programs and institutions listed above recognise that an international learning mobility experience is able to enrich participants. Each institution actively encourages its students to participate in the learning mobility programs it offers and each makes available significant resources to assist the students in taking up the option. In fact, this is the case at most Australian universities where increased resources are being dedicated to enabling the mobility as at the same time the federal government is also increasing its support.

Beyond the standard program support, the five programs investigated show common motivations for developing a programmatic framework, inclusive of formal and informal curriculum, that aims to produce improved outcomes for participants. While these programs are offered as being indicative of an emerging trend in program development their success must be shown through the development of effective performance indicators. This is also the case for Australian international learning mobility generally. While the field enjoys strong support from the major stakeholders, further investment in growth will require a robust national data set that clearly indicates the impact of the activity.

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Table 1: Sources of Australian Student Mobility Funds

	University Funding	Government Funding	OS Program Help	Total
2005	\$6.1 mil	\$1.8 mil	\$3.1 mil	\$11 mil
2007	\$12.9 mil	\$3.5 mil	\$8.6 mil	\$25 mil
<b>% increase</b>	<b>111%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>177%</b>	<b>127%</b>

Table constructed using data from (Olsen & Spain, 2008)



Table 2. Three Phases of Internationalisation of Australian Higher Education: Student Mobility

Period	Prime Characteristics	Student Mobility
50s & 60s Colombo Plan	Aid diplomacy, Asia focus, Post WWII new world order response, Regional capacity building	Focused on individuals rather than institutional relationships, Elite students in and out, Mainly for HDR studies
Late 80s – early 00s Post Dawkins Era	Recruitment of fee-paying international students, Opportunistic and entrepreneurial, Success in international recruitment markets	A growing program, Largely ad hoc, Traffic skewed one-way to Australia, Outbound seen as a mechanism for priming international markets
Mid 00s – Now Integrated Internationalisation	Holistic view of internationalisation – aid, research, teaching and Learning, International engagement written large in institutional strategic plans, Seen as important in terms of Australia's competitiveness in the global knowledge	International learning mobility incorporated into curriculum review, More strategic selection of institutional partners, Scholarship funding (government & institutions) increased and aligned to strategic goals, More balanced student flows in