

# RESEARCH

**BIS** | Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**RESEARCH PAPER NO. 8**

Motivations and Experiences of UK  
Students Studying Abroad

JANUARY 2010

# **Motivations and Experiences of UK Students Studying Abroad**

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**BIS Research Paper No.8**

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**January 2010**

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## **Acknowledgements**

Throughout the course of the research on which this report is based, the researchers were greatly helped by the advice and comments of a steering group from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The group was led by Stijn Broecke. Steering group members included Charles Ritchie, Sue Rolfe, Mary Gurteen and Samantha Mason. The research team would like to thank them all for giving so generously of their time to help the project achieve its objectives. The research team leaders, Allan Findlay and Russell King, would also like to express a particular debt of gratitude to the two research assistants on the project, Alexandra Stam and Jill Ahrens and to the ever-supportive role of Jenny Money. Matej Blazek and Asayo Ohba were also of significant assistance on particular parts of the project.

## Executive summary

International student mobility, especially diploma mobility (students taking their entire degree outside the UK), has received little attention from researchers. This report summarises the findings of research funded by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills aimed at improving understanding of the motivations behind the international diploma mobility of UK students. It also seeks to evaluate the scale and significance of UK international diploma mobility.

The research was undertaken by a collaborative team from the Universities of Dundee and Sussex during 2008 and 2009 led by Professors Findlay and King. It involved three key elements

- a metadata analysis of sources providing statistics on international student mobility,
- a survey of the application intentions of 1400 final-year pupils from schools in two regions of England, and
- a survey of 560 UK students currently enrolled for study at universities in the USA, Ireland, Australia, the Czech Republic, France and Germany.

In addition to the two questionnaire surveys, interviews were conducted with UK international students, international recruitment officers in 16 higher education institutions from around the world, as well as with school careers guidance teachers.

According to the OECD the number of UK students studying abroad has risen from 16,866 in 1975 to 22,405 in 2005. This growth is less than that for most OECD countries. Metadata analysis reveals many problems with using international agency datasets to evaluate trends in diploma mobility. Careful examination of national datasets suggests that OECD statistics may over-estimate the true figure for UK international diploma-mobile students by more than 10 per cent. Best estimates produced by the researchers nevertheless point to UK diploma-mobile students accounting for the equivalent of about 1.7% of all UK domiciled students enrolled in higher education and over the last two decades the number has been growing

Responses to the researchers' English school questionnaire survey indicate that, amongst UK-nationals, some 2.8 per cent of state sector pupils and 5.5 per cent of independent sector pupils apply to universities outside the UK. Only a proportion of these are offered places to study abroad and choose finally to enrol. The survey revealed that many more pupils consider applying abroad, but in the end do not do so. The USA is by far the most popular destination for pupils considering studying abroad. It is particularly significant that it is the academically most gifted pupils who are the most likely to apply to foreign universities.

The international student survey identified a diverse range of motivations driving international student mobility.

- The dominant influence was the desire to attend a world-class institution (55% said this was important and 89% said it was important or very important). The significance of this driver of UK student mobility may be interpreted in several different ways as discussed in the main report. For some, failure to gain a place at their desired UK university was a trigger to mobility.

- Other motivations that were seen as very important included the opportunity for adventure (50%) and the desire to take the first step towards an international career (34%)

The report provides an analysis of which students were most likely to be driven by the desire to attend what they perceived to be the best universities in the world. It also considers whether this group of students was significantly different from those going abroad in search of adventure, or as a first step towards permanent emigration, or because of a desire to gain a place to study a particular discipline (where the opportunity to do so did not exist in the UK Higher Education system).

Amongst students in our survey, UK international diploma mobility is shown to be a selective process influenced by class and parental educational background. For example:

- Students who had attended independent schools were much more likely than those from the state sector to claim that their mobility was triggered by the search for a world class university
- Students from families where one or both parents had higher education were much more likely to go abroad in search of a world class university than those from other backgrounds.

The student survey suggested that it was not only students from fee-paying schools that succeeded in gaining a place to study abroad. Almost 30 per cent of respondents had attended a UK state comprehensive and 54 per cent of respondents had received state schooling. Nevertheless, the independent sector was much more strongly represented in the sample of UK international students than one would expect relative to the size of this sector in the UK education system.

Another key finding is that international diploma-mobility is highly differentiated by destination.

- UK students enrolled at US universities are often from more privileged backgrounds. They often claimed that their move was in search of an elite university and many were seeking to enter an international career.
- UK students in Australia were likely to be interested in permanent emigration.
- UK students in Ireland were much more likely to report that they would consider returning to the UK after graduation.

Another important issue addressed by the report is the relationship between international student mobility and intentions to return to the UK. Some 24 per cent of students in the survey claimed that they had no intention of ever returning to the UK once their studies were complete. The vast majority did, however, plan to return, although many wanted to work abroad before coming back to the UK. Significantly, the survey results point to the students with the strongest A level results being more likely to want to return to the UK at some point after their studies. International student mobility should not therefore be interpreted as a brain drain of the UK's best and brightest young people.

To the authors of this report, it seems likely that the emerging global hierarchy of universities will become even more important over the next two decades and therefore that the desire to attend a world class university will become even stronger in the future. The report concludes by briefly exploring the theoretical and policy implications of this trend. Those responsible for UK Higher Education need to take a clear position on the desirability or otherwise of the phenomenon of international diploma mobility of UK students and, in relation to this position, to implement appropriate policies to help maintain the UK's pool of global talent.

# 1. Context, aims and organisation of the study

International student mobility involves students leaving their country of usual residence to undertake study in another country. This report analyses outward mobility of students normally domiciled in the United Kingdom for the purpose of study in an international higher education institution in another part of the world. The research on which this report is based was concerned specifically with diploma mobility (students taking their entire degree outside the UK).

## *Context of the study*

There are currently (2009) an estimated 3.0 million international students of all nationalities studying abroad worldwide. According to the OECD this figure rose four times faster than the overall trend in international migration between 1998 and 2004. Beneath this overall pattern of rapid growth there have been huge variations in the dynamics of international student mobility (De Wit, 2008). For example in 1975 the UK was believed to be the sixth largest source country for international students with 16,866 UK students leaving the country (Table 1). The UK was not far behind China (fifth most important source with 17,201 international students). Since then, according to the OECD (2008), the number of UK students studying abroad has risen only modestly (+33%) to just over 22,400 in academic year 2005-6: the UK has lost its place in the global top ten sending nations. China now leads the world league table of origin countries (growing by 1894%) with an estimated 343,126 students (2005-6) enrolled in foreign universities (de Wit, 2008).

**Table 1 - Top ten countries of origin of foreign students, 1975–2005**

1975		1985		1995		2005	
Country	No.	Country	No.	Country	No.	Country	No.
Iran	33,021	China	42,481	China	115,871	China	343,126
USA	29,414	Iran	41,083	South Korea	69,736	India	123,559
Greece	23,363	Malaysia	40,493	Japan	62,324	South Korea	95,885
Hong Kong	21,059	Greece	34,086	Germany	45,432	Japan	60,424
China	17,201	Morocco	33,094	Greece	43,941	Germany	56,410
UK	16,866	Jordan	24,285	Malaysia	41,159	France	53,350
Nigeria	16,348	Hong Kong	23,657	India	39,626	Turkey	52,048
Malaysia	16,162	South Korea	22,468	Turkey	37,629	Morocco	51,503
India	14,805	Germany	22,424	Italy	36,515	Greece	49,631
Canada	12,664	USA	19,707	Hong Kong	35,141	USA	41,181

Source: OECD data compiled in de Wit (2008: 33–4)



While growth in the outflow of students who are normally domiciled in the UK has been modest, there has been a massive increase in the inflow of international students to the UK. Between 2000-1 and 2005-6 non-UK domiciled students studying at UK Higher Education Institutions rose by 57% to 361,470 (HESA, 2008; Findlay, in press). Thus non-UK domiciled students studying in the UK out-numbered formerly UK-domiciled students enrolled at universities in other countries by a ratio of 16:1. This brief statistical context leads inevitably to a number of questions such as 'How can recent international student trends be understood?' and 'Is it desirable or problematic that so few UK students go abroad?'

Given the rapid upward trend in international student mobility, it is surprising that the topic has received so little attention from academics (King et al, 2003). Some understand student flows as no more than the aggregation of individual choices affected by a range of personal and background characteristics (Jallade and Gordon, 1996). Others have argued that the drivers of international student mobility reflect the globalisation of higher education (Yang, 2003) and deeper social processes such as the preparation of students after graduation to engage in international careers requiring the mobility of high-level skills. Yet others detect the structuring effects of social class. This extends work on the differences between children of working-class parents who are more likely to attend local universities (Christie, 2007; Holdsworth, 2006) and children of middle-class families who are more likely to apply to the most elite universities and often study far from home (Findlay et al 2006). In this light, and drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'cultural capital', Waters (2006) has hypothesised that the growing middle class in the world's largest nation, China, have simply been seeking to maximise the cultural capital of the next generation by sending them to international universities, thereby ensuring that their education includes tuition at arguably the world's most elite institutions and thus reproducing class difference.

If one sees international student mobility as reflecting the need to attain human capital skills for a globally competitive economy, then one might be concerned about the slow pace of expansion of outward UK international student mobility (Kuptsch, 2006). On the other hand, if one reads the massive inflow of foreign students to the UK as a reflection of how highly esteemed UK universities are by the middle classes of other nations, then the imbalance of in- and outflows can be taken as proof of UK universities being world class, providing the best not only for foreign students but also for the UK domiciled student population (and hence obviating the need for major UK student outflows).

Turning to the policy context of the current research, it is important to make three brief introductory comments. First, there is great uncertainty surrounding international student numbers. Numbers of inward-bound non-UK domiciled students can be considered moderately reliable because they rest on carefully recorded enrollments at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The same cannot be said for estimates of the number of UK students studying in other countries. This report enlarges on this issue in some detail, because it is clearly important, given the theoretical context outlined above, to have greater certainty of exactly how many UK students are enrolled in HEIs in other countries. At present no clear consensus exists on this matter.

Second, the UK government set a target of increasing participation in HE towards 50% of those aged 17 to 30 by 2010. In 2006/7 participation fell some way short of the target (40%) with much lower participation in the lower socio-economic groups. However the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) does not cover English-domiciled students who study abroad for the full course of their studies. It is therefore interesting to explore whether inclusion of these students might be achieved.

Third, no UK policy exists that takes a position on the desirability of UK students studying abroad for the whole of their courses. If there is proof that UK students studying abroad do not return to the UK, then this might be taken as a sign of a brain drain. As reported later, some 24.3 per cent of students in our international student survey indicated that they never intended to return to the UK, but it should be emphasized that the desire to return or inversely to stay abroad varied hugely by study location. An alternative perspective on international student mobility is that there is a risk of the UK falling behind its competitors in training students through international mobility to prepare for working in a global economy. If this is so, then there would be a case for promoting international student mobility. And there are grounds to support the view that UK has fallen behind - the UK's outward-bound international student total for 2005 is, for example much less than that of France (53,350) or Germany (56,400).

Given this context, the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (formerly Innovation, Universities and Skills) took the very welcome step in 2007 of deciding to fund research on UK outward student mobility. In what follows, the research project is described in relation to two overall aims and ten key research questions.

### *Aims and key questions*

The research on which this report is based had two general aims:

- To improve understanding of the motivations behind diploma mobility and the career aspirations of those who choose to study abroad.
- To evaluate the scale and significance of international diploma mobility of English students.

Embedded within these aims, we immediately encounter issues of 'definition'. For example the first aim makes the distinction both between undergraduate and post-graduate mobility and also between 'diploma' and 'credit' mobility. The report provides some information on all levels of student mobility in the Higher Education sector, although the focus is on students taking a first degree abroad. We define a 'diploma mobile' student as someone from the UK whose mobility overseas is directly the result of choosing to undertake an entire Higher Education (HE) degree at a foreign institution. Students falling within this category are distinct from other internationally mobile students who gain 'credits' rather than 'diplomas' or degrees. 'Credit mobility' refers to students who are enrolled in HE degree programs with a UK institution and whose mobility results from their participation in short-term mobility programmes such as an ERASMUS exchange. Other definitional issues are addressed later in the report.

The two general aims listed above were addressed through a set of more specific research questions. These questions required engagement with:

- English school pupils who had not yet selected where to study, never mind whether to study abroad;
- UK students currently enrolled for degrees at a range of international universities;
- Secondary data providers and key gatekeepers (e.g. international recruitment officers of foreign universities) who could assist in evaluating the scale and significance of English international diploma mobility.

The ten key research questions that the researchers wanted to answer as a result of contact with these groups are listed below, and it is around the answers to these questions that the main body of this report is organised.

**Key questions relating to secondary data on international student mobility**

1. What quality of data exists for English diploma-mobile students?
2. What does the secondary data indicate about the scale and trends in English/UK diploma mobility?
3. Is it possible to construct/derive a Higher Education Initial Participation Rate which includes English-domiciled students studying abroad?

**Key questions relating to English school pupils**

1. What proportion of school-leavers aspiring to enter HE are applying, or thinking of applying, to study abroad?
2. For those who are applying, or considering applying, to study abroad, which countries and institutions are they oriented towards?
3. What socio-demographic and educational characteristics affect the likelihood of school pupils considering the study abroad option?

**Key questions relating to UK international students**

1. What are the characteristics of UK students studying abroad?
2. Why have students left the UK to study abroad?
3. What have been the experiences of UK students studying at foreign universities?
4. Is international student mobility a first step towards UK students settling and working in another country or do students see themselves returning to the UK to work?

*Organisation of the research*

The research lasted 18 months, starting in March 2008 and running through to August 2009. The work involved collaborative investigation between the Centre for Applied Population Research, University of Dundee and the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex. To address the ten key questions listed above a set of interlocking questionnaire surveys and interviews were conducted with final-year pupils and UK diploma-mobile students (see Appendix A). In addition interviews were conducted with school careers guidance teachers, university recruitment officers and statisticians responsible for collating national and international secondary data sources.

After an initial review of the literature and exploration of secondary data from international agencies, the researchers piloted the two questionnaire surveys. The revised questionnaires for the school and student surveys are presented in Appendices B and C. In total 560 questionnaires were completed by UK students living and studying in six countries (USA, Ireland, Australia, France, Germany and the Czech Republic), while the school surveys

produced 1400 questionnaires across a range of independent and state schools in two regions of England (including urban and rural locations). In addition a survey of two international schools was conducted.

This report is organised in three main sections. First, a review is offered of secondary data relating to UK diploma mobility. This review involved a meta-data analysis. This was undertaken not only to arrive at the best estimate of UK diploma student numbers, but also to assess the quality of available secondary data in order to discover if it would be possible to calculate a Higher Education Initial Participation Rate that includes English-domiciled students studying abroad.

The second section of the report analyses the survey of school pupils and the interviews with school careers guidance teachers. The purpose here is to discover what proportion of pupils aspiring to Higher Education consider studying abroad, and to determine which factors increase the propensity to apply to international universities.

The third main part of the report describes the results of the international student survey. It then seeks an explanation of the motivations for studying abroad before considering what have been the experiences of UK internationally diploma-mobile students and whether they are likely to return to work in the UK after graduation.

## 2. The national and international statistical picture of diploma mobility by UK students studying abroad

As noted above, OECD statistics estimate some 22,405 UK students were enrolled in foreign tertiary education institutions in 2006. This figure relates specifically to students who would normally be considered 'diploma-mobile' students, and should exclude a variety of forms of 'credit mobility' such as Erasmus exchange students. The 22,405 total is not an insignificant one. When compared with the 1,189,390 UK-domiciled students enrolled in UK Higher Education Institutions in 2006/7 (HESA, 2007), it is equivalent to 1.9 per cent of the total.

There is, however, considerable uncertainty about the reliability of these statistics and about trends in numbers over time. As a result, the researchers undertook an extensive survey of the main secondary data sources in an attempt to arrive at clearer answers to three questions:

1. What quality of data exists for English diploma-mobile students enrolled in foreign tertiary sector institutions?
2. What does secondary data indicate about the scale of and trends in English/UK diploma mobility?
3. Is it possible to construct / derive a Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) which includes English-domiciled students studying abroad?

### *Definitions*

In practice, the distinction between diploma and credit mobility, identified earlier, is very difficult to operationalise in relation to cross-national comparative data. This is because existing data series, especially those apparently offering international comparisons, rely on a diverse range of national sources each with different definitions of what constitutes a 'student' and what is meant by 'mobility' (Appendix D).

Perhaps the single most important distinction that makes international comparison problematic is the difference between students identified by citizenship and those identified by their country of domicile. Statistics based on citizenship are problematic because they include not only UK-domiciled students who have moved abroad to study but also UK citizens who are pursuing their degree outside the UK and who were already living outside the UK before commencing their studies, either permanently or temporarily. Ideally national and international statistics would differentiate UK-domiciled and non-UK domiciled<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, the majority of countries continue to collect student mobility data based only on citizenship.

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<sup>1</sup>The distinction may sound like a minor one, but in practice because of the very large UK expatriate population living around the world, it makes a major difference to the numbers of UK students recorded in national and international databases. Earlier research (Findlay et al 2003) identified two key constituencies among non-UK domiciled students: 1) students entering the higher education sector in the country they have been living in as a result of being second or later generation resident members of settled immigrant families; and 2) students entering the higher education system of the country where one or both of their parents are working temporarily, i.e. as a result of international labour mobility. For students in both groups (collectively labeled as non-UK domiciled), the decision to study outside the UK does not directly require them to make a decision to migrate from the UK (their parents made this decision for them some time earlier). There is however the possibility that some non-UK domiciled students may cross into the UK from a foreign country, for the purposes of study as was revealed by some survey work amongst pupils in international schools that was undertaken by the authors for the current research project.

## *Data sources*

A separate report on data sources for analysing international student mobility has been prepared by the researchers for BIS (Findlay et al, 2009) and so only a few key findings of the review of secondary data are discussed here. A variety of sources were investigated in order to prepare 'best estimates' of UK diploma-mobile students across the key destination countries under study. These included UK official sources (International Passenger Survey, Higher Education Statistics Agency survey of destinations of leavers from HEIs), UOE (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, OECD and EUROSTAT) datasets and national statistical sources for Australia, France, Germany, Ireland and the USA. Appendices D2 and D3 elaborate on these sources, and on OECD statistics in particular.

Analysis of secondary data available in the UK and from international agencies led to four main conclusions:

1. While systems are in place in the UK for recording incoming international students, as well as for recording credit-mobile students participating in exchange programmes, there is no statistical or administrative basis for gathering data specifically on all diploma-mobile students who leave the country (i.e. those that are normally UK-domiciled).
2. The production of comparable cross-national statistics on international student mobility via the annual UOE data collection (UOE = UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat) from individual countries remains in an uncertain state. For several years data collected as part of the UOE have included figures on foreign-citizen students studying in each participating country. In recent years this has been augmented to include figures on both students of foreign citizenship and students who are internationally mobile, the latter identified as such based on their country of prior residence or prior education. Investigations show however that the number of countries meeting the UOE request for figures on internationally mobile students (as just defined) remains relatively small. In the majority of countries participating in the UOE, national authorities tasked with meeting the requests for data are only able to supply figures on foreign citizen students. For this reason, the collection of data on internationally mobile students as part of the UOE was stated to remain in a 'pilot' phase at the time of the present research. There are two other consequences of this situation: first any published figures on numbers of internationally mobile students derived from the UOE remain only partial, and second, published figures on foreign-citizen students, while more comprehensive, are not a reliable indicator of the level or flows of internationally mobile students.
3. Investigations showed that the difficulties just referred to are compounded by the fact that the three international organizations responsible for the UOE each process figures from the annual UOE collection in different ways. Each organization has a requirement to produce its own statistical indicators based on the data collection and in the production of these indicators the position adopted differs with respect to using figures on foreign-citizen students in a given country as the nearest proxy for figures on internationally mobile students studying in that country. Investigations showed that the effect of these differences resulted in quite large variations between organizations in terms of their reporting of student numbers.

4. The conclusion drawn from the three preceding points is that none of the statistics published by the three main international agencies could be used alongside the UK's Higher Education Statistical Agency's statistics to calculate a revised HEIPR that would include English-domiciled students studying abroad.

Table 2 provides an example of one of the OECD datasets produced from the UOE data collection showing statistics for the years 2004-06.

**Table 2 - OECD statistics on UK-citizen students and UK international/mobile students, OECD countries, 2004-2006**

Destination	20: Non-citizen students of reporting country 2004	10: Non-resident students of reporting country 2004	30: Students with prior education outside the reporting country 2004	20: Non-citizen students of reporting country 2005	10: Non-resident students of reporting country 2005	30: Students with prior education outside the reporting country 2005	20: Non-citizen students of reporting country 2006	10: Non-resident students of reporting country 2006	30: Students with prior education outside the reporting country 2006
Austria	186	(m)	(m)	180	(m)	(m)	194	(x)	(x)
Belgium	270	1	(m)	145	31	(m)	210	14	(m)
Czech Republic	265	(m)	(m)	334	(m)	(m)	363	(m)	(m)
Denmark	450	1432	(m)	466	1394	(m)	471	1584	(m)
Finland	172	(m)	(m)	191	(x)	(x)	189	(m)	(x)
France	2611	(m)	(m)	2299	(m)	(m)	2570	(m)	(m)
Germany	2154	(m)	1949	1962.24	(m)	1914	1871.36	(m)	1949
Greece	14	(m)	(m)	19	(m)	(m)	85	(m)	(m)
Hungary	28	(m)	(m)	33	(m)	(m)	53	(m)	(m)
Iceland	8	(m)	(m)	13	(m)	(m)	23	(m)	(m)
Ireland	(m)	(m)	2165	(m)	(m)	1178	(m)	(m)	1196
Italy	247	(m)	(m)	249	(m)	(m)	280	(m)	(m)
Luxembourg	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	4	(m)	(m)
Netherlands	590	(m)	143	731	190	(m)	772	194	(m)
Norway	337	(m)	(m)	331	(m)	(m)	345	(m)	(m)
Poland	22	(m)	(m)	41	(m)	(m)	45	(m)	(m)
Portugal	90	(m)	(m)	107	(m)	(m)	86	(m)	(m)
Slovak Republic	5	5	(m)	6	6	(m)	12	12	(m)
Spain	593	338	(m)	538	451	(m)	618	485	(m)
Sweden	822	245	(m)	839	306	(m)	761	246	(m)
Switzerland	356	(m)	246	379	(x)	265	387	(m)	251
Turkey	162	(m)	(m)	106	(m)	(m)	117	(m)	(m)
Australia	(m)	1652	(m)	(m)	1662	(m)	(m)	1545	(m)
Canada	2498	781	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	2847	1221	(m)
Japan	403	(m)	(m)	393	(x)	(x)	350	(x)	(m)
Korea	11	(m)	(m)	15	(m)	(m)	17	(m)	(m)
Mexico	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)	(m)
New Zealand	378	378	(m)	406.25	406.25	(m)	419.2	419.2	(m)
United States	(m)	8439	(m)	(m)	8602.26	(m)	(m)	8567.7	(m)
<b>Column Sub-totals</b>	<b>4,556</b>	<b>13,271</b>	<b>4,503</b>	<b>4,311</b>	<b>13,049</b>	<b>3,357</b>	<b>4,721</b>	<b>14,288</b>	<b>3,396</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>22,330</b>			<b>20,717</b>			<b>22,405</b>	

- Column headings '20', '10' and '30' are OECD categories, defined as follows:  
20 - non-citizen students of reporting country; country of origin refers to country of citizenship;  
10 - non resident students of reporting country; country of origin refers to country of permanent residence;  
30 - students with prior education outside the reporting country); country of origin refers to country of prior education.
- Coding is retained in original source formatting: (m) indicates a missing value; (x) indicates that data are available but are included elsewhere (i.e. not reported as a separate count).
- Italicized figures relate to the calculation of UK 'foreign student' totals discussed in the main text.
- Additional country notes provided by the OECD:

European countries

- Austria 2004, 2005 and 2006: figures exclude tertiary type B programmes;
- Belgium 2005 and 2006: figures exclude data for social advancement education;
- Czech Republic 2005: figure excludes tertiary programmes (advanced research programmes only);
- Germany 2004, 2005 and 2006: foreign student totals exclude advanced research programmes;
- Greece 2005: figure excludes tertiary programmes (advanced research programmes only);
- Ireland 2005 and 2006: figures exclude part-time students;
- Italy 2005: figure excludes tertiary type-B programmes;
- Netherlands 2004, 2005 and 2006: foreign student figures exclude advanced research programmes;
- Poland 2004 figure excludes advanced research programmes;
- Spain 2004: foreign student figure excludes tertiary type-B programmes;

Other countries

Canada 2004: reference year 2002; Canada 2006: figure for foreign students is for reference year 2005; excludes tertiary type-B programmes; excludes private institutions.

Source: OECD Education Database - 'Foreign / international students enrolled' dataset - [www.oecd.org/education/database](http://www.oecd.org/education/database).



Using these figures for 2006 one would arrive at the best estimate of UK students as follows: USA appeared to be host to the largest number of UK students (8568), followed by France (2570), Germany (1949), Denmark (1584) and Australia (1545).

As a result of the significant difficulties uncovered by the researchers with OECD and other international agency data sources (Geddes et al, 2009), the researchers decided to look in more detail at national data available in the main countries of destination for UK diploma students (Australia, France, Germany, Ireland and the United States). Visits were made to the main data providers in each of these countries and interviews were undertaken with local data providers where possible, while correspondence via email was used in other instances.

Four main conclusions emerged from this investigation of the national level data sources in key destination countries:

1. Investigation of the national-level figures revealed certain ambiguities in UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat datasets which required clarification via email with the national providers responsible for meeting the UOE requests. For example, students normally domiciled in Northern Ireland were not included in the total for UK students studying in the Republic of Ireland.
2. National statistics - which were accessible for all five countries under study - provided a variety of useful and more detailed cross-tabulations on enrolled students beyond those published by international agencies.
3. The analysis confirmed that UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat statistics on diploma mobility exaggerate the actual level of UK diploma-mobility to the five countries under study since many of them class mobile students based simply on citizenship rather than based on information of country of normal domicile.
4. UK student diploma mobility has not followed a simple global trend across all destination countries, but is growing in some locations and declining in others. In Ireland the trend has been clearly upwards, the statistics indicating that this has been driven by the increased enrolments of students with a domiciliary origin in Britain (as opposed to Northern Ireland). In the case of the United States, numbers appear to have increased over the first part of the present decade before leveling-off in recent years, while for Australia there is similar evidence of an initial increase rising to a peak in numbers in 2004. Since then there has been a small dip in numbers. Figures for France and Germany provide a different picture. In both cases decreases are apparent in terms of the overall numbers of enrolled UK-citizen students, including in Germany a decrease in the numbers of UK students classed as mobile students on account of having received their entrance qualifications outside the German education system.

### *Best estimates of UK diploma students in other countries*

National datasets also provided the basis for the researchers to prepare best estimates for BIS of the number of internationally mobile UK diploma students (Table 3) enrolled in programmes at any of the three tertiary education levels within the ISCED framework (i.e. ISCED 5A, 5B and 6)<sup>2</sup>. An additional column is included for Ireland. This reflects the availability of separate figures reported on students with a British domiciliary origin (which together with figures on students domiciled in Northern Ireland form the basis for the UK-level totals also given in Table 3).

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<sup>2</sup> ISCED: the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) developed by UNESCO. ISCED-97 (the version currently used), defines the main education levels from Level 0, 'Pre-Primary' level through to Level 5 (First stage higher education) and Level 6 ('Second stage'). Educational programs classed at Level 6 are distinguished from those classed at Level 5 by the award of advanced research qualifications. Furthermore, educational programmes classed within ISCED Level 5 are sub-divided as belonging to one of two categories, either ISCED 5A, if they are judged to have a strong theoretical basis and are intended to provide sufficient qualifications for gaining entry into advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements, or ISCED 5B, encompassing programmes that are generally more practically, technically or occupationally-specific. Ambiguities detected between levels has led to an apparently growing number of countries calling for a review of the criteria adopted (Education Task Force of the United Nations Statistical Commission, 2009).

**Table 3 - Best estimates of number of diploma mobile students for the USA, Ireland, Australia, France and Germany, 1998-2008**

Year	United States	Ireland		Australia	France	Germany
		All UK domicile	GB domicile			
1998-09	n/a	1689	605	n/a	n/a	n/a
1999-00	7,990	1809	792	639	n/a	n/a
2000-01	8139	1939	852	888	n/a	n/a
2001-02	8414	1960	872	1933	n/a	n/a
2002-03	8326	2132	1039	2210	n/a	n/a
2003-04	8439	2165	1087	2494	n/a	n/a
2004-05	8236	2254	1153	1966	n/a	512
2005-06	8274	2119	1210	1709	1713	488
2006-07	8438	2282	1313	1783	1620	464
2007-08	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1635	445

Notes:

1. 'n/a' indicates where data are either not available or insufficient for estimation purposes;
2. Figures for United States use citizenship to classify country of origin;
3. UK-level figures for Ireland were derived by summing figures for numbers of students domiciled in Great Britain and in Northern Ireland;
4. UK-level figures for Australia were derived by summing together for numbers of students reported as having permanent residence in England, Scotland or the Channel Islands together with the numbers recorded in the 'UK nfd' (no further detail) category;
5. Figures for France are for numbers of non-bacheliers students, separate figures on which have only recently been produced by France's DEPP, and appear to use citizenship to classify country of origin;
6. Estimates for Germany are based on figures which appear to use citizenship to classify country of origin, but which include only those who were educated at school level outside Germany. National statistics appear to include students enrolled in both undergraduate as well as postgraduate courses.

Sources:

- United States: International Institute of Education - *Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange*, 1999/00 to 2003-04, available from CD Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange 1948-2004. Figures for 2000-2005 onwards are also from *Open Doors* reports but were obtained from U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics - Digest of Education Statistics 2007 - Table 406 Foreign students enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States and other jurisdictions, by continent, region, and selected countries of origin: Selected years, 1980-81 through 2005.
- Ireland: annual DES Statistical Reports 1998/1999 to 2005/2006 - <http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=17241&ecategory=46606&language=EN>.
- Australia: 1) DEEWR Higher Education Statistics Collection - "Full Year - Tables", 2000-2006 [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/publications\\_resources/statistics/publications\\_higher\\_education\\_statistics\\_collections.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/publications_higher_education_statistics_collections.htm). 2) OECD Education Database - 'Foreign / international students enrolled' dataset - [www.oecd.org/education/database](http://www.oecd.org/education/database);
- France: DEPP Statistical Tables - Statistics on Foreign Students Enrolled in Universities and Affiliated Establishments (annual reports for 2004-04 to 2006-07) / Foreign Students Enrolled in Universities and University Research and Training Centres (report for 2007-08) [https://www.pleiade.education.fr/portal/pleiade/depp?paf\\_dm=full&paf\\_gear\\_id=16400028&prevTheme=6002831&itemDesc=structure&contentid=6008723&level1=6002831&level2=6008723&openStructure=6008723](https://www.pleiade.education.fr/portal/pleiade/depp?paf_dm=full&paf_gear_id=16400028&prevTheme=6002831&itemDesc=structure&contentid=6008723&level1=6002831&level2=6008723&openStructure=6008723).
- German Federal Statistical Service - Fachserie 11, Reihe 4.1 (Students in higher education, winter semester reports), 2003/2004 - 2007/08 - [www.destatis.de](http://www.destatis.de)

Based on best estimates, the following points may be made:

1. It can be seen that the USA is approximately four times as important as any other country, numerically speaking. Ireland is the second most important destination followed by Australia. Thus, a somewhat different perspective on the size of flows to each country emerges than if the statistics were taken at face value from OECD sources (or from the 'top 5' ranking produced in UNESCO's *Global Education Digest* report)<sup>3</sup>.
2. If these estimates are compared with the OECD statistics<sup>4</sup> reported in Table 1, it can be seen that the authors' best estimates for USA, France and Germany are lower than the OECD. If all five countries are taken together the best estimate for 2005-06 would be 14,303. The equivalent OECD total would be 15,827 (or 10.7% higher).
3. Extrapolating to the overall number of UK students in all OECD destinations, it now becomes possible to derive a best estimate for the number of UK diploma students studying in other countries in 2005-6. If the OECD estimate for all UK students in all OECD countries bears the same relationship to the researchers' best estimate of the number<sup>5</sup>, then the OECD figure would be 10.7% higher than ours. Or put another way, the researchers would estimate 20,473 UK diploma students spread across all OECD destinations compared to the 'first cut' estimate from the OECD statistics made earlier in this report of 22,405 UK students.

Although these best estimates of diploma-mobile students are lower than those that might be made using OECD and other international sources, the total remains a significant one and would equate to 1.7% of all UK-domiciled students enrolled in UK Higher Education Institutions<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The five countries shown in Table 3 represent those that appear to consistently be the most important destinations for UK students. The only two other countries reported by either OECD or UIS as having more than 1000 UK students in any year between 2004 and 2006 were Canada and Denmark.

<sup>4</sup> Comparison here is made with the italicised OECD number in Table 2.

<sup>5</sup> This seems reasonable since, for most countries (other than the five included in Table 3), most statistical information is collected based on definitions of students by citizenship rather than place of normal domicile.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the 1.7% statistic includes some students taking postgraduate qualifications and it cannot be compared directly with HEIPR calculations that relate only to first time entrants to higher education.

#### 4. The perspective of UK school pupils on studying abroad

Existing studies of student international mobility and migration tend very much to focus on the mobility behaviour of *students who have already commenced their studies abroad*, or of *graduates* who have already completed their studies (King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003). One of the unique features of the present study was the attempt to discover the attitudes to international mobility of senior school pupils ('Year 13' students) or those in sixth form college, *before* they move into higher education.

In order to learn about the perspective of UK school pupils, the researchers undertook a questionnaire survey in 18 schools located in two parts of England - Brighton and Sussex in the South East of England, and Leicester and Leicestershire in the East Midlands. Both areas consist of one medium-sized city with a constellation of surrounding smaller towns and rural districts.

Within each region, the initial research design identified a mix of state and private-sector schools with a target of 700 completed questionnaires in each area, hence a total of 1400 responses. The questionnaire samples were equally divided by type of school (700 state, 700 independent, 350 of each in each region) and by respondent gender (700 males, 700 females, 350 in each region). More details on the survey design and the conduct of the school survey are included in Appendix A.

In most schools where the questionnaire was administered, an interview was also organized with the head of sixth form, or an equivalent key informant. These interviews, which usually lasted between 20 minutes and one hour, were extremely useful and yielded rich insights based on the interviewees' accumulated experience of monitoring HE applications over many years.

The survey permitted three key questions to be asked:

1. What proportion of school-leavers aspiring to enter HE are applying, or thinking of applying, to study abroad?
2. For those who are applying, or considering applying, to study abroad, which countries and institutions are they oriented towards?
3. What socio-demographic and educational characteristics affect the likelihood of school pupils considering the study abroad option?

*Proportion applying or thinking of applying to study abroad.*

Amongst UK-nationals in English schools, some 2.8 per cent of state sector pupils and 5.5 per cent of independent sector pupils reported that they had applied to universities outside the UK (Table 4).

**Table 4 - Study abroad by school type (proportions of all pupils): state vs. independent sector**

	Year 13 school pupils who were UK nationals	
	State (n = 655) %	Independent (n = 586) %
Proportions applying abroad	2.8	5.5
Proportion that considered applying but did not do so in the end	10.2	14.9
Both answers	13.0	20.4

Many more thought of applying abroad, but did not in fact do so (10.2 per cent of state pupils and 14.9 per cent in the independent sector). It should be noted that, whilst recording students who have left to study abroad or who are actually applying to do so are relatively objective measures, the notion of having ‘thought of’ studying abroad is far more imprecise, ranging from serious consideration and active research into the options, to a fleeting thought or passing whim. No doubt the much greater number of students who ticked the response ‘I thought about it but decided not to apply abroad’ embraces a range of depth of ‘thought’. Nevertheless the scale of the positive response to this question is interesting.

Bearing in mind that around 89 per cent of Year 13 pupils in England are in state schools and only 11 per cent in independent schools, it is possible to estimate the overall proportion of English school pupils who consider the foreign university option. Weighting the survey results in this way suggests that approximately 3.1 per cent of HE applicants apply to study abroad, and an additional 10.7 per cent consider the possibility but do not act on it. This translates into approximately 5000 Year 13 pupils in England applying to study abroad each year, plus a further 15,700 who consider the option but do not make an application<sup>7</sup>.

Three comments need to be made about these figures. First, the proportions are somewhat higher than those identified in the authors’ best estimates of the scale of UK international student mobility based on an analysis of secondary data sources (see previous section of this report). The most obvious reasons for the disparity would be that not all applications to foreign universities succeed, and even amongst those school pupils who succeed in gaining a place to study abroad, only some will subsequently take up the offer.

Second, the proportion applying abroad was higher than indicated on the basis of information gleaned from interviews with school careers guidance teachers. Consider the following comment from the HE adviser to a large, ethnically diverse, sixth-form college in Inner London:

<sup>7</sup> These findings are based on the researchers survey results standardised in relation to DCSF data. Using the school survey results from UK national sample, 3.1% (2.8% state and 5.5% independent schools) of Higher Education applicants claimed to have applied to study abroad, and 10.7% (10.2% state; 14.9% independent) had thought of applying. Using DCSF data, one arrives at the figure of approximately 5000 Year 13 pupils applying abroad each year.

*'Only a few end up going abroad. I would say out of a year group of 400 or 500 students we would get only a handful who would actually go ahead and apply... maybe one per cent... Usually [to] America, occasionally Canada. Occasionally we get the sports scholarship type student' (HE adviser, sixth-form college, Inner London).*

Higher levels of mobility were reported in the independent sector, especially from some of the more prestigious schools:

*'We've had a fair number, obviously smaller than the ones that go to British universities. I would say 5 or 6 every year [to the United States] and we have had girls go to Australia and Canada. I think it is partly the make-up of the students we have, because they are all very international. So the idea of going abroad is already part of their make-up. But the American universities are obviously the second choice... not the second choice but the alternative to the UK universities. [As for European universities] very few, hardly any I think' (Career guidance teacher, Independent girls' boarding school, Sussex)*

Third, it is worth returning briefly to the remarkable finding shown in Table 4 that between 10 and 15 per cent of pupils thought about applying abroad (even though they did not follow through with the idea). It raises the key policy question as to whether BIS (and other policy actors) should be encouraging teachers to support international applications to non-UK universities. If this route saves the tax-payer money, and if it helps to train a British-national educational elite via study at the world's leading universities, then the answer is 'yes'. If, by contrast one is concerned about a 1960s-style 'brain-drain' then the answer would be 'no'. Whichever position one takes, the survey results indicate that there is potential for much more international student mobility of UK nationals than is actually occurring at present.

#### *Pupils' destination preferences by country and institution*

The survey revealed a distinctive geography to the pattern of international applications. Not surprisingly, the Anglophone world dominated the pattern of preferred destinations, with the United States emerging as the top choice (51% of the total) with Australia coming second (13%). It should be noted that Ireland attracted more than half of those opting for a European destination.

Like the survey of international students discussed later in this report, our schools' data indicate very little interest amongst pupils in movement to continental Europe (Table 5).

**Table 5 - Destinations for Year 13 pupils who were applying, or had considered applying, abroad (UK nationals)**

	%
France	4.8
Germany	1.4
Ireland	11.6
Spain	1.4
Other Europe	2.7
<b>Europe subtotal</b>	<b>21.8</b>
USA	51.0
Canada	5.4
<b>North America</b>	<b>56.5</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>13.6</b>
<b>Latin America and Caribbean</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>East Asia</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Middle East</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Notes:* 'Other Europe' includes some applying to Charles University in Prague; in the category 'Latin America and Caribbean' several students applied to St George's, Grenada (both usually for Medicine). Percentages may not tally due to rounding

The proportions are also not unlike those revealed by the researchers' meta-data analysis, although secondary data would point to Ireland being ranked as the second most favoured destination and Australia as the third most popular place to study. Differences would be expected for the reasons discussed above, and in addition one would anticipate that a survey of English school pupils would have lower interest in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland (Eire) than had the survey included schools in Northern Ireland.

In terms of institutional choice, we examined the argument that the most aspirational individuals, defined in terms of their UK university choices, would also be the most likely to apply abroad. This hypothesis was not supported when we considered only those seeking entry to Oxford and Cambridge compared with other UK universities. But when the sample was examined for those who had applied to the UK's top ten universities<sup>8</sup> the results were positive - that is to say, those who had at least three of their UCAS choices as top-10 ranked universities were more likely to consider studying at a foreign higher education institution.

#### *Socio-demographic and educational determinants of the decision to apply abroad*

As the migration literature reveals (Boyle et al, 1998), one perspective on understanding international student mobility is to examine decisions to move as a function of the individual characteristics of those making the choice of whether or not to move - for instance, to a foreign university. Although this perspective is limited in the sense of making an underlying assumption that everyone is equally 'free' to choose, it is nevertheless a useful starting point in understanding which English school pupils were more likely to have applied to study abroad.

<sup>8</sup> Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial, UCL, King's, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, LSE, Warwick. The top-10 list was taken from the 2008 World University Rankings published in the *Times Higher Education*, 9 October 2008.



The survey showed that slightly more girls applied to go abroad than boys, but the difference is statistically insignificant. The same was true for ethnicity - some differences existed but not at a level that was statistically significant (see Appendix E). These results contrasted with the researchers' previous work on credit mobility (for example within the Erasmus programme where female dominance was very evident on account of the greater preponderance of female students taking language courses abroad as part of their UK-based language degrees (Findlay et al, 2006)).

Turning to the occupational status of parents, our anticipation, based on earlier work, was that there would be again a statistically significant relationship. However, here too we found that although children from the professional and managerial classes were more likely to have applied to study abroad than those from other backgrounds, there was not a statistically significant relationship, possibly because of the limited sample size. The results showed that a higher proportion of pupils who came from homes where both parents had university education had applied abroad (6.2 per cent) compared with pupils where neither parent had a university degree (2.8 per cent). The reader is referred to Appendix E for more information.

Even although the questionnaire results do not identify parental occupation as a strong predictor of international student mobility, it is clear that pupils whose parents could afford to send them to private or independent schools were much more likely to have considered the option of studying abroad. The survey showed that this selectivity by school type was not merely an effect associated with parental income, but was in part a function of the richer information provided by these schools about study abroad opportunities. Table 6 shows that a significantly higher proportion of pupils at independent schools had heard of opportunities to study outside the UK (and were given help in applying) from school staff than was the case at state schools. The international student survey also showed a marked differential between state and independent schools in this regard. The figures relate to those who had applied or had thought of applying abroad.

**Table 6 - Have your school teachers or career guidance staff provided information about non-UK universities?**

Type of school	Yes: Information and help applying	Yes: Information, but no help	No information
	%	%	%
State sector	6.5	5.0	29.5
Independent sector	22.0	10.0	27.0
Total	28.5	15.0	56.5

This said, it should be noted that many schools appeared not to do much pro-actively to market overseas universities and destinations. In some cases it was a matter of receiving books and promotional leaflets, placing them in the library or on display in the careers office, and letting the students do the rest. Typical quotes from school careers guidance staff tell this story and add to the concern raised above about the general lack of information on international study opportunities provided by schools:

*Some information we get from some very sexy destinations. I get information from very expensive medical schools in the Bahamas... very plush brochures which are functionally useless because they [the course fees] are so expensive... but none of the boys could afford to go there... though their entry requirements are substantially lower  
(Career guidance teacher, boys' independent day school, Leicester).*

*We do get students that come in and ask about studying in America and Australia. ... But we don't chase people up at all; they would have to come and talk to us about it (Career guidance teacher, State sixth-form college, Sussex).*

Arguably of greater policy concern (in relation to issues around 'brain drain' and 'training global talent') is the question 'Are England's best pupils more likely to study abroad?' The question was investigated both for GCSE results and for predicted A level grades. In both cases the evidence suggested a statistically significant relationship, with the academically most talented pupils being also the most likely to apply to study outside the UK. Table 7 shows the pattern in terms of GCSE results. The pattern is particularly striking with regard to the top performers (7 or more A and A\* grades). Taken along with the finding reported earlier about applicants to the UK's top universities, the picture which emerges is of international student mobility being highly self-selective. The academic cream of the English school system are those most interested in international study.

**Table 7 - Percentage of those achieving good GCSE grades who were applying to study abroad (UK nationals)\***

	Percentage of those achieving 7 GCSEs at A* or A who were applying abroad.		
	All schools	State	Independent
7+ at A* and A	5.3	4.5	5.4
Less	2.3	1.9	3.1

\*Percentages in this table are not comparable with those in Table 4 because not all pupils took GCSE exams.

A second interesting feature of the table is the comparison of the state and independent sectors. The gap between state and independent schools for the best pupils is quite small, even if a higher proportion of independent school pupils achieved top grades. More interesting is the larger gap between state and independent schools for those with lower grades. This may well be a reflection of the forces at play, revealed earlier in Table 6, that showed that independent schools provide more information and assistance about applying abroad.

A final feature of the school survey was the mobility status of pupils' families. Personal and family links were often decisive at the individual level; in quantitative terms, pupils recounting a history of personal/family travel abroad, and of friends and family members who had studied or were studying abroad (and also of engagement in school trips and exchanges) were much more likely to have applied to study abroad. The interviews conducted by the researchers confirmed these relationships:

*I can't think of anyone who has considered that option [of applying abroad to study] who hasn't had that sort of reason in their family  
(Career guidance teacher, Independent girls day school, Leicester).*

And from a pupil interviewee:

*I am not sure yet [about applying abroad] because I was thinking about a gap year. In my gap year, I might do that... I am interested in America, I have family there - uncles and aunts, my godfather is there and a bunch of cousins... Miami, Florida and Florida State [those are the universities I might apply to], that is where they [family] are, so I can acclimatise (Pupil from Leicester).*

Inevitably each story is individual, but the survey encountered many cases of transnational families - sometimes where the pupil's parents had separated, sometimes second- or third-generation immigrants, such as UK pupils of Irish descent being drawn by family links back to Ireland or children of families with emigrant connections such as those with relatives in North America.

So, in summary, the school survey identified a surprising number of pupils who either had applied to study abroad or who had considered doing so. The USA, Australia and Ireland were the main potential destinations. And universities in these countries were often compared by school pupils with the UK's top universities. Although for a variety of reasons gender, ethnicity and class did not emerge as predictors of which pupils were likely to consider studying abroad, pupils from independent schools were more likely to apply to international universities. Finally, it was England's academically most talented school pupils who were most likely to consider opportunities for international study.

## 4. Perspectives of UK students on studying abroad

The survey conducted by the researchers of 560 UK nationals living and studying abroad produced a very rich dataset, illuminating diverse aspects of the motivations and experiences of the UK's outward-bound international student population. It allowed us to answer four main questions:

1. What are the characteristics of UK students studying abroad?
2. Why have students left the UK to study abroad?
3. What have been the experiences of UK students studying at foreign universities?
4. Is international student mobility a first step towards UK students settling and working in another country or do students see themselves returning to the UK to work?

The international student survey was conducted in six countries: USA, Ireland, Australia, France, Germany and the Czech Republic. The secondary data reported earlier (Tables 2 and 3) show that the first five of these countries are the most important international destinations for UK students. The researchers' strategy was to target the questionnaire survey on the universities where they believed there to be the strongest concentration of UK students. It proved possible in advance of the survey to determine which universities were most popular for UK students in USA, Ireland and Australia.

The researchers visited 16 universities across the six countries to implement the questionnaire survey and to conduct follow up interviews, both with students and with staff involved in international recruitment. Once permission was given to contact students in the 16 target universities, an electronic questionnaire was e-mailed to the UK student population in each university. In addition, electronic responses to the questionnaire were received from students in a further 18 universities in the USA, Australia, France and Germany (but with no follow-up interviews by the researchers. Over 200 UK students participated in the research in the USA and Ireland and over 100 in Australia, with smaller numbers representing France, Germany and the Czech Republic. A full list of the institutions included in the survey is given in Appendices A2 and A3.

It is noticeable that the final set of Universities from which responses were received included some of the best universities in the world (at least in terms of the Times Higher Education rankings of 'world class' universities), but there were also some less well ranked universities within our sample. It is difficult, in the absence of any robust sampling frame, to know how representative the final sample of responses might be, especially in view of the possibility of selectivity effects in terms of which students were motivated to complete the on-line survey. However, the sample size and the diversity of countries and universities included in the survey add weight to the findings. In addition the survey avoids the pitfalls of some other studies that look very selectively only at UK students who have returned to the UK after a period of time abroad, ignoring the not insignificant proportion of UK students who remain abroad. There is little doubt that the work on which this report is based is by far the largest survey of its kind ever undertaken of UK students studying abroad.

Just over half the responses came from students undertaking undergraduate degrees abroad (52%) with 24% registered for postgraduate taught courses (mostly one year in duration) and 21% enrolled on postgraduate research degrees. It is possible that undergraduate numbers may be slightly undercounted since not all of the institutions agreeing to send out the questionnaire did so within dates of their undergraduate semesters. In the discussion that follows, the report initially analyses the survey results for all UK students, before turning from page 40 exclusively to the specific case of UK undergraduates who study abroad.

*Profile characteristics of UK students studying abroad.*

The 560 respondents to the researchers' survey were a near-even balance of men and women (52% female)<sup>9</sup> - in line with the final year school survey (54% of those reporting that they were applying abroad were female, Appendix E1) - and with the age distribution of the sample, not surprisingly, being concentrated in the 18-25 cohorts (66%). The very high academic standard of international students in terms of their school exam results confirmed the findings of the school survey reported above. Some 71% of respondents had 3 or more A grades in their A levels, rising to 92% if one considers A and B grades (in 2008 for all subjects in England and Wales only 25.9% of A grades were awarded).

One of the greatest surprises emerging from the survey is the pattern of school origins (Table 8). Some 55% of respondents had attended a state school or sixth form college. This is of course a smaller proportion than the proportion that this sector occupies in providing secondary education in England (89%), but it is still contrary to expectations that the state sector emerges as numerically the dominant source of UK students enrolled abroad. While the scale of international student mobility originating in the state sector is a striking feature of the survey, it remains important to recognise that the private school sector, with approximately 11% of the English school population, accounted for 33% of the sample of international students (and therefore over-represented by about three times). These figures are compatible with the higher application rates to international universities revealed by the researchers' school survey.

<b>Table 8 - Secondary schooling of UK international students (last school attended)</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
UK state comprehensive school	158	28.2
UK state grammar school*	114	20.4
UK state sixth-form college	32	5.7
UK fee-paying school, day pupil	123	22.0
UK fee-paying school as boarder	61	10.9
International school, non-UK	33	5.9
Other	32	5.7
Total	553	98.8
Missing values	7	1.2
Overall total	560	100.0

\*Note that the questionnaire specifically referred to 'state' grammar schools

<sup>9</sup> The Higher Education Statistics Agency (2008) reports that 59% of UK domiciled students (and 48% of non-UK domiciled) enrolled in UK Higher Education Institutions were female, but gender ratios for international students vary widely both in terms of those coming to the UK and those leaving UK to study in other countries (Findlay, in press; King and Findlay, in press).

Other aspects of the school survey that were confirmed by research amongst international students included selectivity in favour of individuals from households where both parents had attended university and from better off backgrounds. Parental support for international students was evident, for example, in terms of the high proportion of UK students whose studies abroad were either wholly or partially financed by their family (over a third of all students). The proportion rises to 59 per cent if one considers only undergraduates studying abroad. Perhaps not surprisingly postgraduates are more successful in winning scholarships from host institutions or from other grant giving bodies. Table 9 shows that the second most important source of support for all UK students was from host institutions (more than a fifth of all cases). The proportion rises to 74.6 per cent for students doing postgraduates research degrees.

	Frequency (all respondents)	Percent (all)**	Finance by school type (all)	
			State schools (%)	Non-state schools (%)
Parental support	214	37.6	23.6	47.2
Grant or bursary from host institution	122	21.4	28.0	18.3
Self-financing	117	20.6	25.1	18.8
Bank loan	39	6.9	7.0	5.5
Other (other grants and other sources)	65	11.4	14.8	8.7
Employer	12	2.1	1.4	1.4

\*It should be noted that the questionnaire allowed students to indicate more than one source of finance, although only 16 did so. The percentages reflect the proportion of all responses received.

\*\*The proportions for undergraduates were as follows: parental support 59.1%; grant or bursary from host institution 7.4%; self-financing 17.1%; bank loan 7.4%; employer 0.7% and other 9.1%

As one might anticipate, patterns of financing study abroad varied with the kind of school that students had attended. Some 24% of those at state schools depended on parents to provide some of the funding, while the proportion was almost double (47%) for those who had been at private or independent schools. UK students from state schools therefore depended to a much greater extent on accessing finance from sources such as bursaries from foreign universities and scholarships from international agencies and charitable foundations.

In contrast to the situation of students enrolled at UK HEIs, only 21% of those abroad claimed to be supporting their studies through a part-time job involving more than eight hours work per week. This compares with 53% of all full-time English-domiciled students in the most recent UK Student Income and Expenditure (DIUS, 2009).

In summary, the researchers' survey suggests that there are high levels of selectivity in UK international student mobility in relation to certain variables as compared with UK-domiciled students going to UK universities. International movers are from the most talented group of school leavers in terms of school exam grades. They are drawn disproportionately from independent schools (although the majority graduated from UK state schools), and they are more likely to come from higher income, professional and managerial homes that are able to help financially with support in studying abroad. Despite this socio-economic skew, it is important to note that significant numbers of international students from the UK have attended comprehensive or state-sector grammar schools and succeed in their ambitions to study abroad by accessing host university scholarships and international bursaries.

### *Motivations for international study*

Understanding the motivations for UK students studying abroad was one of the key objectives of the research. Social science researchers recognise that individuals are often happy to identify their personal reasons for taking certain actions. However attitudes and values are formed in a wider social and cultural context, and decisions, such as the choice to move country, are driven by many underlying forces. A migrant may not be aware of these forces or maybe only partly conscious of them at the time of making a mobility decision. Care therefore needs to be exercised in interpreting survey data gleaned from asking movers about their motives for re-locating (Boyle et al, 1998).

Table 10 reports the proportion of students that considered each of six factors to be very important or important in determining their decision to study outside the UK. Students were asked to rate each influence separately, so that it was possible to evaluate multiple drivers of international student mobility. The questionnaire also allowed students to indicate whether a factor was not applicable. In addition students had the opportunity to specify other determinants of their decision to go abroad.

Determinant/motivation	Percentage of applicable responses rated as important or very important	Percentage of applicable responses rated as very important
Determined to attend a world class university	88.7	55.0
Study outside the UK was an opportunity for a unique adventure	87.9	50.4
The first step towards an international career	68.7	33.8
Limited course places at a UK university to study a favoured discipline	42.5	24.1
Student fees in the UK	33.9	18.6
Family encouragement to study outside UK	27.3	11.6

#### i) The search for a world class education

The responses seem to confirm that some of the by-products of the globalisation of higher education, such as the emergence of a hierarchy of universities including an elite set of 'world class universities', are important in driving the international mobility of students, and that many students are aware of this social process. Perhaps it is not therefore surprising that the single most important driver of international student mobility revealed by Table 10 is the desire of those in the sample to attend what they consider to be a world class university<sup>10</sup>. Investigation shows

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<sup>10</sup> Some might argue that this response is no more than a reflection of the researchers' sample structure given that the survey included many of the world's top universities. It is true that a high proportion of respondents were studying in highly rated institutions, but this reflects the skew of UK students towards these HEIs and away from other universities. However, it is also true that many UK students abroad enrol outside the most elite set of universities. For example, in the USA according to secondary data sources, only 8.6% of UK students in the USA in 2006/7 were listed at the top 8 US universities (in terms of the Times Higher Education - THE- ranking of universities). Many top universities like Chicago, Duke, Johns Hopkins and the California Institute of Technology had very small numbers of UK students. The researchers' survey targeted the universities which were known to have most UK students regardless of their THE ranking. The finding that so many students claimed to be moving to find a world class university, however, demands more investigation. Is it that UK students perceptions are at odds with the rankings or is it that the meanings given to 'world class' by UK students imply something about their perception of the alternatives open to them in the UK?

that the meanings attached to terms such as 'world-class university' are complex and merit some analysis.

Box A presents the voices of some of the people whom the researchers interviewed in the search to understand better what mobile UK students perceive as important in the quest for a world class university. For example, Donna studying at Columbia University, New York, presented an unusually clear progression of thought from the idea of seeking to differentiate her degree through choosing an elite university before evaluating the relative merits of a top UK university relative to those in the US Ivy league. Others such as Ben (Harvard) and Martin (Trinity College) also explain their choices relative to their applications to Cambridge and Oxford. It seemed very clear from the interviews that students had a clear sense of a global hierarchy of universities.

For some, failure to gain a place at their desired university in the UK was certainly a trigger to them exploring alternative routes to achieving the intellectual and cultural capital that they were seeking from a 'good degree' (see Anna's quote in Box A below). This finding mirrors work on the international mobility of students from other parts of the world, where failure or fear of failure to access top local universities was a spur to international mobility (Waters, 2006).

#### **Box A - Statements about the importance of studying at a world class university**

##### **Donna\*, undergraduate at Columbia University, USA**

*.... you can go to so many universities to get a degree and get a degree in so many different things. There is so much talk in the newspaper of the devaluing of degrees, so I think that this is a way of making your CV stand out a little more. You didn't just get a degree, you went half way round the world to get a degree [laughs]. It's a different thing in a situation where you are constantly hearing that degrees aren't worth anything and everybody has a degree. And degrees are being devalued by the second, so it's something different I think. .... I suppose I looked at the Ivy League universities in the US. If I was going to make the trek over here and give up Cambridge, it needed to be something that was equally enjoyable and taxing and look(ed) good on my CV...*

##### **Susan, postgraduate, Berkeley, USA**

*I wanted an MBA which people would not think [it] is just from [some] tiny university in the middle of nowhere, and which were actually recognised in the UK. So I knew I had to go for one of the larger American universities. So I chose Harvard initially because that's the biggest name for business in the UK. That was the only one I applied for. But then towards the end of the first round I thought well, that's a risky strategy. We decided we wanted to go overseas, and I would study an MBA, so in a second round I also applied to Berkeley.*

##### **Ben, undergraduate at Harvard, USA**

*.... the Harvard website is pretty cool; I like the look of it. I guess that when I applied it was more like... I'll give it a go and see what happens. I also applied to Cambridge. Maybe when I started, it was like a back-up in case I didn't get into Cambridge, but I got accepted into Cambridge...*

##### **Anna, undergraduate at Trinity College Dublin**

*... In England I felt like that my only real options were either to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh or Durham. And I only got Edinburgh as an offer. And then my dad suggested... because my dad went to school over in Ireland... and he said 'Why don't you just do a CAO application alongside your UCAS, just so it gives you more options?'*



**Martin, undergraduate at Trinity College Dublin**

*... for a lot of students Trinity is a Cambridge reject place. People have the similar attitude towards Durham apparently, as far as I know. A lot of them... you get the impression that they all applied to Oxford and Cambridge and didn't get in. And so Trinity is the university closest to let's just say the prettiness and the prestige of an Oxford and Cambridge university.*

\* all students have been given pseudonyms

When asked their first choice of university in the UK, Oxford and Cambridge not only came out as clear leaders, but they were mentioned more than twice as often as the third-listed HEI (Edinburgh) and almost three times as often as the fourth ranked (Bristol). It is therefore interesting to investigate whether failure to get into universities such as Oxford and Cambridge stimulated some students to look abroad rather than accepting a place at another UK institution. Some 58.1% of undergraduate students said this was not an issue to them and that they would have studied abroad even if their preferred UK university had offered them a place. It therefore appears that most students wanted to study abroad for positive reasons rather than leaving because of an inability to fulfill their ambitions for 'world class' education in the UK.

ii) Studying abroad as the first step in an international career

Not surprisingly many students had not yet settled on their final career (42%), but of those that had, about a third (32%) planned to enter one of the traditional professions (teaching, medicine, law etc) and around a quarter (24%) planned to pursue academic life in some form or other. A further 22% planned working in business or management, including finance and accounting. The creative arts accounted for 8%. Mapping how these aspirations relate to the frequently declared motive of engaging in an international career is more difficult.

When asked if studying abroad was a first step to living outside the UK after graduation, some 60.1% of those with international career aspirations agreed, but relatively few of those seeking a world class university imagined they would live abroad after completing their studies (39.1%). Table 11 provides more detail of these results when disaggregated by the three most important destination countries. Clearly most of those seeking world class training at top US universities thought that they were likely to return to the UK with only 34.9% seeing studying abroad as a first step to living abroad after graduation. By contrast those set on an international career and choosing to study in Australia are very unlikely to return after their studies are complete (85.7%).

<b>Table 11 - Studying abroad as first step to living abroad after graduation* (%) as related to motivation for migration and study destination</b>		
Motivation (rated as v.important)	World class university	International career
Destination		
USA	34.9	47.1
Ireland	40.5	64.7
Australia	51.6	85.7
All destinations	39.1	60.1

\*The questionnaire survey also asked students for more detail about the nature of their future mobility plans and under what circumstances they would return to the UK. Appendix F4 suggests that students' future mobility plans are rather more complex than the pattern portrayed in Table 11.

The findings in Table 11 can be read in several ways. First, it is important to note that some respondents saw returning to the UK as compatible with pursuing an international career. This is an important finding that was borne out by the researchers' in-depth interviews with students who were driven primarily by career aspirations. Second, only a minority of those students who were abroad because that was where they perceived they could best access a world class university wanted to stay abroad. Most students in this category aspired to return to the UK after their studies to make use of the new knowledge that they had acquired. Third, the results suggest that living abroad and pursuing an international career are inter-related, but remain rather different concepts.

The interviews conducted with students help to throw more light on the meanings of student's motivations. Consider Sarah's perceptions (Box B):

### **Box B - Statements about seeking an international career**

#### **Sarah, postgraduate, Australian National University, Canberra**

*I will likely be working overseas, so if that's the case I need to go to an institution that has an international reputation. I had no interest of studying at Oxford or Cambridge. So I only considered ANU because I didn't consider any other University in Australia to be world renowned. A lot of the literature I was reading was written by or published by ANU*

#### **Donna, undergraduate at Columbia University, USA**

*I want to go back into journalism which is what I was doing immediately before coming here. Being here... originally part of what attracted me was the Journalism School here which is arguably the best in the world for journalism. .... I suppose longer, longer term I would like to work in Africa possibly for a British newspaper... I see myself going to London first and doing a couple of years work in London and then hopefully moving to work abroad, but for a London-based paper.*

There is little doubt that current motivations were closely linked to future career aspirations. Logically those seeking an international career were certainly less likely to declare an intention to ever return to the UK than other international students and they were also less likely to want to return to UK to work immediately after their studies. Some UK policy makers might be concerned that this might point to international student mobility as a hidden form of 'brain drain'. Others might take a different position seeing the circulation of global talent in a positive light and being concerned that there are so few UK students seeking an international career after graduation (King et al, 2003).

iii) Other motivations for international study: adventure, university fees, enrollment on specific courses.

The interviews revealed a diverse range of other motivations for migration to international universities. The desire simply to be different was raised by students time and time again, often in the guise of seeking adventure, but also as an escape from the mainstream path followed by 'normal students'. Some students (see Britney, Box C) also associated this 'difference' with being important in later access to the job market, although significantly she notes that attitudinal difference as opposed to academic excellence is the key factor in her understanding of why a degree from a university in another country might be superior to one from the UK. Quite a number of the interviewees stressed the importance of tacit knowledges and the soft skills that they associated with travelling and living in another country. Although very different in form from

the types of cultural capital defined by Waters (2006) in her study of international student mobility from Hong Kong to Canada, these statements nevertheless confirm some kind of recognition that studying in another country results in the accumulation of skills that are of wider value and result in benefits later in the lifecourse (see Calum, Box C).

### **Box C - Statements about experiencing something unique**

#### **Britney, undergraduate, University of South California**

*I went and stayed with some friends at Nottingham and at Leeds and I applied to LSE .. **this just wasn't me**, it just didn't seem to have that kind of vibe or buzz or anything. No one seemed **excited** to be there, no one seemed like **proud** that they were, you know it wouldn't be like you were interviewed for a job at home and be like. "ohhh I went to Nottingham" and someone would be like, "Ohhh, so did I, oh, you should have the job" kind of thing. No, they would be like oh, whatever. I just find them... like **attitudes at home are extremely negative** and they like [...] I just find it negative."*

#### **Calum, postgraduate, Free University of Berlin**

*I think that just living abroad is something which gives you a different perspective on life. [...] I also think that studying abroad gives you an advantage in terms of employers even if you want to work in the UK because you have shown that you could live abroad, you are showing, especially studying in Europe, within the European Union, I think that's a very important part of society and employers are looking for kind of that ability to work outside; [but] I just think it is a quality of life issue as well for me, I think the quality of life here is better than in the UK and if I'd stayed in the UK, yes I would have a good time but maybe not as good a time'*

#### **Ed(ward), undergraduate, Trinity College Dublin**

*... the idea of studying abroad was one step further than my friends were doing. All my friends were going to Leeds or Durham or whatever. I quite liked the idea of doing something different. Like I said, it was one step further than what my friends were doing, which I thought was kind of cool.*

#### **Fiona, undergraduate, University of New South Wales, Australia**

*I just wanted a big change. I've always been interested in Australia because my dad lived here for one year when he was my age as well, in between going to University and school, and I've always been interested in coming here, I wanted to experience another culture, and everything*

While positive attractions in destination countries were important, it was equally the case the many students in the interviews noted some negative attributes of the UK and in particular some features of the UK Higher Education system. Cost of fees in the UK and limited access to places on certain courses were frequently cited by students who had selected to study in Dublin (60% and 54% respectively). Box D provides further evidence:

#### **Box D - Statements about the cost of study**

##### **Caroline, undergraduate, Trinity College Dublin**

*Funding was tough though because you don't get offered a student loan from England, so then that's total badness on your parents. But it's so much cheaper to come to university over here. It's like the equivalent of £600 for a year and it's like what... £3,000 in England at the moment.*

##### **Jan, Masters student, Heidelberg, Germany and PhD, Australian National University, Canberra**

*I applied to the University of Cambridge and got accepted but I also applied for funding and I didn't get the funding for the Masters, so I couldn't afford to go, and at the same time I had applied to do a Masters in Heidelberg, in Germany, and not only was it free to do (it), but I got a DAAD scholarship to go.*

##### **Ben, undergraduate, Harvard, USA**

*... they are trying to reach out to the state schools now, because they traditionally just had fewer people from states schools applying here. But with the tuition getting more expensive at home... for me it is actually cheaper for me to come here than stay at home... Yeah, the financial aid here is really good. If your household income is under US\$60,000 then you have to pay nothing towards your costs... in terms of your tuition, your housing, your food, even travel expenses they'll cover... bus expenses and books and so on. So they will expect your parents to pay or you to pay nothing... towards your education, so that's pretty impressive*

The case of Charles University in Prague was one where we found significant numbers of medical students who had been unable to get a place in a UK university (Box E). No less than 90% of the small sample of medical students (20) responding from Prague cited lack of places in the UK as their key motivation for studying at Charles. Charles University, with its English language courses in medicine, provides a clear example of how international student flows may be stimulated by this kind of limitation on entry to study certain subjects in the UK and it is probable that other subject areas such as veterinary science where there is strong competition for a very limited number of places in the UK system may have stimulated other flows.

#### **Box E - Statements about limited study opportunities in the UK**

##### **Brian, studying Medicine, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic**

*I actually applied to a couple [of universities in Great Britain]... Three times, I applied - once when I was eighteen, and I got the offer but not the grades. Then I got the interview, but not the place, so I got closer. [...] It was basically impossible. [...] It was just, as far as I can tell, the last opportunity to get myself into any kind of medical course*

##### **John, studying Medicine, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic**

*I didn't apply to do medicine in England as I knew I wouldn't get the grades. I applied to do biomedical sciences [in UK] and I got my places for that course in my chosen universities but I was offered by my parents to go to Prague and study medicine straight away and I took the opportunity as I didn't want to waste the time/money doing a random medically-related degree .*

iv) Understanding which pupils leave the UK for which reasons

So far we have explored some of the meanings attached to the diverse reasons given by UK students for studying abroad. Analysis of the background characteristics of students shows that motivations for mobility are structured by parental education and occupation and by an individual's schooling, gender, ethnicity and mobility history. Statistical analysis examining the detailed nature of these relationships is not provided here (but is presented in a separate working paper prepared for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (Findlay et al, 2009)).

Students whose parents had both been at university were much more likely than others to see their migration as part of a drive to enroll in a world class university. Similarly, there was a relationship between parental occupation and an international student's search for an international career. The effects of the type of education that students had received in the UK relative to their motivations for studying abroad are particularly interesting. It is evident from table 12 that students who had attended an independent school of any kind were much more likely than those from a comprehensive or state grammar school to seek a world class university. Boarders and others from independent schools were also statistically more likely than those from a comprehensive or state grammar to move as part of their aspiration to embark on an international career.

Parental education, occupation and attendance at either a state or fee-fee paying school can all be seen as surrogates of class and privilege. If this is accepted then the relationships discussed above all hint at the role of class and privilege in impacting on certain motivations for studying abroad. Social structures therefore seem to be potentially very significant in moulding the mobility choices of students. Table 12 shows however that not all motivations were associated with these underlying social forces.

<i>Motivation (stated as very important)</i>	UK state school (%)	Non-state school (%) <sup>+</sup>	Statistically significant <sup>++</sup>
Determined to attend a world class university	50.4	60.7	Significant
Study outside the UK was an opportunity for a unique adventure	48.3	53.3	Not sig.
The first step towards an international career	29.9	38.8	Significant
Limited course places at a UK university to study a favored discipline	25.2	22.1	Not sig.
Student fees in the UK	20.0	17.2	Not sig.
Family encouragement to study outside UK	9.7	14.1	Not sig.

<sup>+</sup>Non State School = UK fee-paying as day pupil; UK fee-paying as boarder; International school; "other".

<sup>++</sup> Tested using the chi square test using cell frequencies for 2x2 tabulation for each row at p=0.05

Limited course places on certain professional courses, for example, was a reason given particularly by women for international study. Females were much more likely to search abroad for a place to study if they failed to gain access to their preferred course in the UK. This may not be entirely surprising since it is generally acknowledged that the type of courses that females apply for in the UK are more competitive than those to which men apply.

Extending the analysis to ethnicity we found that UK nationals defining themselves as non-white were much more likely to say that accessing an international career was very important in explaining their international mobility (47.2%) than white respondents (31.1%). They were also more likely to admit to being encouraged to study abroad by their families (20.8%) compared with respondents defining themselves as white-UK (8.8%). These results are interesting, fitting with ideas about transnationalism and the importance of international education in accumulating cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Waters, 2006).

v) Destination specificity

A very interesting aspect of the research was the extent to which study destinations were perceived to be very different from one another, and not only in relation to the character or quality of education provided. Table 13, for example, shows just how distinctive students' motivations were in relation to study destinations such as Prague or Dublin. The quotes reported earlier in Box A have already shown how Ireland was a favoured destination by students who felt that they had failed to get into Oxford or Cambridge, and who perceived Trinity or UCD as offering them something distinctive. Equally interviewees pointed to Ireland as a desirable destination for students concerned about UK university fee levels, but who wanted to study close to home in an English language culture.

<b>Table 13 - Destination choice in relation to lack of course places in the UK and fees (% rating factor as very important tabulated against final destination choice)</b>		
Destination	Motivation = lack of course places in UK universities to study a particular discipline	Student fees in the UK
Czech Republic (n=20)	90.0	17.6
Ireland (n=162)	53.8	69.2
Australia (n=108)	38.5	36.2*
USA (n=218)	37.3	25.0

\*NB: This figure in part reflects the views of the children of migrants from the UK

The case of the Czech Republic adds to the impression that certain students are very well informed about the nature of discipline-specific courses in foreign universities. Most UK students studying at Charles University, Prague had heard of its reputation while seeking to find a route into medical school, and had made contact with representatives of Charles when attending recruitment fairs or at summer schools designed to enhance their chances of gaining entry to medicine. The case of Charles University, Prague, was far from an isolated one. The interviews made evident that in a globalising education system, students are increasingly aware of international opportunities and if unable to enter the discipline of their choice in the UK, will (if supported by their parents) find other routes to achieve their ambitions. One such route is studying at a well-regarded international university where the courses are available in English. There is a growing tendency in many European countries to offer courses in English and there are many other examples of international campuses springing up across Europe that will over the next decade contribute to re-shaping patterns of UK international student mobility.

The Australian case stands out from other destinations in at least two important respects. First, Australia like the UK has had a distinctive history of trying to grow its international student community, especially over the last decade. Although the UK has not been a core market for recruiting international students, it has been drawn into the wider Australian strategy in order to allow elite Australian universities to be able to claim a diverse international student population. Second Australia emerged as the destination of choice for students wishing to emigrate

permanently from the UK. UK students in Australia epitomise the importance of recognising that some international movers are more concerned with using educational channels to facilitate their subsequent permanent migration plans than they are to move simply to attain an international education.

Finally we comment here on the USA as by far the largest single destination for UK students studying abroad. The dominant picture that emerges from our research in the US is of UK students being a selective cohort mainly from very privileged backgrounds and with a history of engaging in much international mobility before going to University. Both the questionnaire survey and the interviews in the USA highlighted the importance amongst this group of international students of the search for an elite global university. Like destinations in other parts of the world, students often had considered Oxford or Cambridge relative to the merits of a leading US university, but unlike other destinations, a significant number at the postgraduate level had already been at a top UK university for their first degree.

Unlike a destination such as Australia, there was no evidence that students were moving to the USA as part of wider strategy of settling there. Instead the USA fitted into a wider mobility trajectory that involved global mobility to achieve an international career and that might involve later migration to other global destinations, including the UK.

USA and Australia are also very different destinations in terms of the calibre of UK students enrolling to study at these destinations. Table 14 would suggest that the USA and Ireland are the destinations attracting the brightest UK students.

**Table 14 - Percent of UK students by A level attainment listed by destination**

Destination	Percent UK students with 3 or more A levels at A or B
Australia	47.2
France / Germany / Czech Rep	54.8
Ireland	84.5
USA	88.3

*The UK student experience of international study*

The previous section considered the motivations of UK students studying abroad. We turn now to consider experiences of studying abroad. First we report on how UK students initially engaged with universities around the world. Then we explore the experiences of students once established in their studies abroad in order to determine whether their expectations were confirmed.

A key feature to emerge from the study is the extent to which international student mobility is shaped by the very pro-active role of some elite Higher Education Institutions in seeking to extend their global reach by recruiting the best students (including UK students) from around the world. This process was amply illustrated by the interviews conducted with the international recruitment officers of many of the universities contacted in the course of the research project. This fed through from the point of view of the experience of UK undergraduates, in terms of the proportion who were notified while still at school of the possibility of bursaries to assist with the financial costs abroad. Over 35% of UK undergraduates had been informed of the possibility of bursaries by their host institution. For UK students in the USA the proportion rises to 57%, significantly more than for any other destination. And of those students in the survey who indicated that the possibility of winning a bursary was important to them, 68% were at US

universities. Interviews in the USA revealed that many schools automatically encouraged students to fill in bursary applications as part of the wider procedures for applying to study with them. Amongst undergraduates in our sample, some 7% (Table 9) went on to gain some form of scholarship or bursary from their host institution. As noted earlier the same statistic for postgraduate research students is 75%. Given the relatively privileged background of some of the students, this was not necessarily important financially, but about a third of those who were notified of the opportunity said that the possibility of winning a bursary had been important to them in their decision of where to study. As one might expect, bursaries were more likely to be seen as important for those coming from homes where the father was either retired or employed in manual occupations.

The importance of bursaries is made even more apparent when the concerns of undergraduates prior to leaving the UK are considered (Table 15). Almost a third remembered being concerned about finance before leaving home and, as the table shows, this concern was greater than worries over living in another culture or personal issues such as leaving the parental home or separation from friends.

<b>Table 15 - Concerns about studying outside UK before leaving home (Undergraduates only)</b>		
	Percentage rating each factor	
	Very Important	Very or slightly Important
Cost of overseas fees	39.1	65.2
Not enough finance for fees	22.1	48.1
Leaving boy / girlfriend	12.9	37.4
Visa concerns	12.7	39.9
Later recognition of qualifications	9.5	25.7
Leaving parental family	9.3	36.7
Health service costs	9.1	33.3
Wary of living in another country / culture	7.9	38.0

The experience of living and studying abroad transformed these concerns, with most students having few severe worries once they were established abroad (Appendix F). Financial issues were the main ongoing concern affecting half of all undergraduates. Over a third faced some problems getting a job to help finance their studies. Interestingly some 30% of students also had a slight problem with the standards of study being different from their expectations.

The overwhelming experience of UK undergraduates responding to the survey was very positive. Most valued were academic benefits and career enhancement, but also important was the way that living abroad contributed to personal development and to thinking differently about country of origin (Table 16). No statistically significant difference in perceptions was found by student background.



	Percentage rating each factor	
	Very worthwhile	Worthwhile or very worthwhile
Enhanced academic and professional knowledge	59.6	94.6
Personal development	58.9	94.3
New ways of thinking about UK	44.8	74.0
General career prospects	40.5	87.8
Potential for international career	40.5	78.1
Understanding of another country	37.5	71.8

Differences were however found in the benefits of study abroad depending on the destinations chosen (Table 17). The USA, for example, emerged as the destination which students felt had most enhanced their academic and professional knowledge and provided them with the best chance of entering an international career, but there was little difference between destinations in terms of the impact on personal development.

	United States	Australia	Ireland
Enhanced academic and professional knowledge	80.3	66.7	56.0
Personal development	55.5	50.9	46.5
New ways of thinking about UK	39.4	38.0	38.5
General career prospects	68.3	60.1	43.5
Potential for international career	62.3	51.9	28.5
Understanding of another country	40.4	32.4	30.5

### *Migrating to learn and learning to migrate*

A final important feature of the international student survey that merits attention is the light that it throws on the relationship between student mobility and wider mobility aspirations. Although nearly all students were satisfied with their experience of studying outside the UK regardless of the destination, there were quite important variations in how international study mapped onto the long-term plans held by students for lifecourse migration and career progression.

Survey respondents at all destinations revealed that they had considered the possibility of staying on or living somewhere else other than the UK after finishing their studies. While relatively few students had ruled out the option of settling permanently, except perhaps in the case of Dublin (29%), in some places the majority wanted to stay on after graduation. Table 18 shows that 71% of UK students studying in Australia saw their studies as merely the first step in their post-graduation emigration plans. This is not to say that all would succeed in these plans, but Australian government statistics (AEI, 2008) suggest that there is a significant conversion rate amongst international students studying in Australian Universities.

Live outside UK	Country of study		
	Ireland	Australia	USA
Definitely	32.9	71.4	49.2
Maybe	37.8	22.9	32.3

James captures the sentiments of many of the UK students that we spoke to during our research in Australia (Box F).

**Box F - Studying abroad to gain residency**

**James, undergraduate, Macquarie, Australia**

*While I was working somebody discussed going to Australia and [...] so we went and travelled everywhere, loved it, yes, just adored it and tried to get back and eventually got back. [...] I'd kind of fallen out with the UK. So I threw all my energies into coming back here. So I'm not going back to the UK - My plan is definitely to stay here, absolutely. I'm not studying because I want to, I'm studying because it is the only way I can stay here really, at the moment.*

The case of the USA was somewhat different from Australia. For those students interested in living outside the UK after graduation, this motivation was often linked to aspirations to engage in an international career rather than any specific desire to live in the USA (see Appendix F for more details). In contrast many UK students in Ireland were open to return to the UK at some point, but nearly half expected to work either in Ireland or elsewhere in the world economy before returning to the UK. Australia by contrast had attracted many young people who seriously wished to settle there after graduation, with few (15%) contemplating using their undergraduate studies in Australia as a preparation for immediately entering the UK labour market.

This discussion leads to one final set of questions: were the brightest UK students (in terms of their school grades) more likely to study abroad with the intention of settling permanently or were they more likely to want to return to the UK? Of the five possible responses given to students about future mobility plans, the three most popular responses were 'I will return to UK to work after a period of work abroad', 'I will return to work in UK after graduating' and 'I do not intend to return'. Other options included engaging in further study abroad, or returning to the UK for further study. Those not intending to return to the UK had the least impressive A level results. Table 19 cross-tabulates future mobility intentions against the A level scores of academically strong and less strong UK students. Similar proportions in each category expressed an intention to return to work in UK immediately after graduation, but significantly more of the group with 3 A levels at A or B grade intended to return after a period working abroad (30.2%). But those with good grades were more likely to want to return to the UK eventually, while significantly more of those with poorer grades expressed an intention of not returning at all (35.5%).

**Table 19 - Percentage of UK students expressing a range of future mobility intentions cross-tabulated by A-level results**

	3 A levels at A or B grade	Less than 3 A levels at A or B grade
Return to the UK to work after graduating	22.0	20.7
Return to work in UK after a period of work outside UK	30.2	16.8
Not intending to return	18.1	35.5
Other	29.7	27.0
	100	100

The survey might therefore be taken to refute the suggestion that UK international student migration involves a flight of talent, with the potential risk of the UK's brightest students settling abroad permanently. Although temporary international movement is part of the mobility plans of the brightest students, it is those with lower A level grades that seem most likely to want to migrate permanently.

### *Summary*

The international student survey produced results that were compatible with the school survey. The desire to enter a world class institution was the dominant reason given by students for going abroad. Deeper investigation showed that this was sometimes positively driven by those from the best schools and most privileged backgrounds seeking to differentiate their degrees from the ever-increasing proportion of people attaining a university degree. Sometimes this drive for distinction was fueled by failure to get a place in a top UK university and sometimes by the difficulty of not gaining a place on a particular professional course in the UK. But over and above academic merit, students were also motivated by adventure and the desire simply to be different from others in terms of where they chose to study. Not surprisingly this drive reflected deeply-seated structuring forces such as class, gender and ethnicity.

The research suggested that most students were very satisfied with the outcome of their decisions. Of some concern is the finding that some do not intend to return to the UK after their studies are completed. However, Tables 19 and 20 provide reassurance that the brightest UK students seem more likely to return to UK either immediately after graduation or after a spell working abroad.

## 5. Synthesis and implications of findings

*The research findings set in the context of the research literature.*

The research findings presented in this report help to redress the scarcity of studies of international student mobility, but what can be concluded in relation to the research literature?

First, the results challenge the common perception that international students are a transient category of mover who return to their place of origin after a short period of international study. Not only are their movements more complex than might at first have been imagined, but it has been shown that international mobility for study purposes may be tied in to future intentions about place of work and place of residence.

A second theoretical contribution is that the empirical findings confirm that choices on student migration, like other mobility decisions, are taken by individuals in circumstances that are not entirely of their choosing but are structured by class, ethnicity, and other social forces. In the case of school leavers the type of school that an individual attends has been shown to strongly influence the likelihood of deciding to pursue international study opportunities at university, while the survey of international students showed that propensity to seek out elite international universities was greatest amongst individuals from families where both parents had university education and other indicators of social privilege. This in part supports Bourdieu's (1986) idea of the middle class building cultural capital through the education system, with the particularity of international education opportunities helping to reproduce difference and advantage. There were cases where this developed in the same way as hypothesised by Waters (2006) with students who had failed to gain access to top UK universities using international study opportunities to pursue their aspirations for educational advancement. However, this was far from true for all students going abroad.

A third theoretical challenge presented by the survey results was the evidence of student flows emerging from the coming together of unsatisfied demand for training in particular subjects in the UK and the potential supply of these courses in English in foreign universities. This opens up the need for stronger theorisation of how supply-side and demand-side forces in a global higher education system come together to create new dynamics of international student mobility (de Wit, 2008; Findlay in press).

Fourth, the research points to the need to expand theories relative to the relation between mobility and the reproduction of difference. It was clearly revealed by the research on student motivations that many students simply declared their interest in studying abroad as a response to an opportunity for a unique adventure. This could be interpreted in many ways, but the in-depth interviews pointed to the possibility of young people, generally from more privileged backgrounds and with the best school exam results, expressing a desire to act on their future mobility and study plans in relation to their individualistic goals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) and as part of a wider thrust to shape distinctive educational and career trajectories. Simply by being 'different' they saw themselves as achieving 'distinction' through mobility. This arguably is simply a different form of cultural capital accumulation and one that reaches beyond the traditional 'class' structures identified in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1998) work.

Turning from the contribution of the current project to expanding fundamental understanding of international student mobility, we now consider the results of the research relative to the rather more specific and grounded questions set by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

*Answers to the ten key research question established in relation to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills funding of the research project.*

1. What quality of data exists for English diploma-mobile students?

There is no statistical or administrative basis for gathering data specifically on all diploma-mobile students who leave either England or the UK. International agencies appear to provide statistics on UK students by destination country, but the data is not based on a common set of definitions, making cross-national comparisons difficult. National data examined in a range of countries provide interesting insights into the nature of UK diploma mobility and provide the best basis for making estimates of the size and trends in UK diploma student mobility.

2. What does secondary data indicate about the scale of and trends in English/UK diploma mobility?

On the basis of careful analysis of secondary data the researchers have made a best estimate of UK diploma student numbers for 2005-6 of 20,473. This is lower than OECD estimates, but still accounts for the equivalent of 1.7% of UK domiciled students in UK higher education institutions. Time series data suggest that the number of UK international students in other countries has grown modestly over the last three decades (by about one third), but this growth has been much slower than in countries with which the UK normally compares itself (eg USA, France and Germany).

3. Is it possible to construct/derive a Higher Education Initial Participation Rate which includes English-domiciled students studying abroad?

Currently data incompatibilities make it impossible to construct a HEIPR which includes English-domiciled students abroad.

4. What proportion of school-leavers aspiring to enter HE are applying, or thinking of applying, to study abroad?

Amongst UK nationals included in our survey of 1400 school-leavers from a range of 18 English schools, some 2.8 per cent of state-sector pupils and 5.5 per cent of independent-sector pupils reported that they had applied to universities outside the UK. This would mean approximately 5000 Year 13 pupils in England applying to study abroad each year. Since the state sector greatly outweighs the independent sector, the majority of these applications would be from pupils in the state sector, even although the application rate is much higher in the independent sector.

5. For those who are applying, or considering applying, to study abroad, which countries and institutions are they oriented towards?

The USA remains by far the most dominant destination (51%) for aspiring international students (Table 5). France and Germany command little interest. Pupils who had applied to the UK's top ten universities were more likely to also apply to world-class institutions in other countries.

6. What socio-demographic and educational characteristics affect the likelihood of school pupils considering the study abroad option?

Pupils with the best school exam results were more likely than others to apply abroad as part of their strategy to access the best universities. Ethnic minorities were less likely to consider international study opportunities, while young people from white UK families with a strong history of engagement with international mobility were much more likely to have applied abroad.

7. What are the characteristics of UK students studying abroad?

The international survey provided evidence that those UK pupils who turned their applications into actions in terms of enrolling in universities outside the UK were much more likely to come from households where both parents had a university education. They were highly likely to have excellent A-levels. Although the majority had attended state schools in UK (55%), relative to its size independent schools were over-represented in our sample suggesting that those able to access these schools had a higher chance of achieving entry to international universities.

8. Why have students left the UK to study abroad?

Students offered many motivations for their choice of studying abroad. Top responses included attending a world class university (55%), opportunity for a unique adventure (50%) and taking the first step in an international career (38%). It was also evident that motivations varied between different types of students as well as by destination. Interesting features to emerge from the study were also the identification of a small but significant flow of students who went abroad because they could not access their favoured course in the UK. Other students were concerned about fee levels in the UK Higher Education system. These concerns varied by destination of study.

9. What have been the experiences of UK students studying at foreign universities?

Most students were very satisfied with their experience of living and studying abroad. Nearly 60% claimed that the experience had been very worthwhile in enhancing their academic and professional knowledge. Many other positive associations were reported in relation to the experience.

10. Is international student mobility a first step towards UK students settling and working in another country or do students see themselves returning to the UK to work?

Attitudes to future employment location and mobility trajectories varied greatly between one destination and another. The destination most likely to attract students to settle was Australia. The USA not only attracted students because of the perceived excellence of certain universities and the availability of funding, but because of the opportunities that it was believed to offer in facilitating entry into international labour markets. Students seeking an international career were not necessarily opposed to working in the UK at some point in the future. Students selecting foreign university courses because they had not managed to secure a place in a UK university were the most likely to want to return to work in the UK. Only 20.8% of survey respondents had no intention of returning to the UK and these were amongst the less academically able UK students. Given the evidence from the survey, it is hard to argue that international mobility of UK students represents a brain drain of the country's brightest and best. On the contrary it was the least well qualified in terms of A levels that were most likely to have no plans for returning at some stage to the UK.

### *Policy debate*

If the theorisation of international student mobility has been weak (hence meriting new research such as that provided in this report), then so too has been policy analysis in this area. One might well ask whether those charged with shaping UK Higher Education should discourage the outward mobility of UK students to other countries on the basis that it might drain some of the UK's brightest young talents to other economies (Kuptsch, 2006). Inversely one might argue that the UK does not send enough students abroad, given that the number of UK students attending the world's top Higher Education institutions around the world is only a tiny proportion of all foreign students at these universities. Is there not a real danger that in the long run the UK is in danger of missing out on training its brightest young people in world-leading skills that will be essential to the future vitality of the UK economy? If one accepts that globalisation implies a trade in knowledge just as much as an exchange of commodities, capital and labour, then UK international student mobility must be seen as a key part of a healthy engagement in this process (King et al, 2003).

The authors of this report suggest that failure to promote a strong two-way exchange of students, risks isolating the UK from access to critical skills and knowledges. These need to be embodied in UK students studying in foreign universities. If this position were accepted then it would lead to a need for policies that could be equitable in promoting international mobility for young people from all parts of UK society and not just those from middle-class families or those fortunate enough to attend independent schools. For such a policy to be effective in contributing to UK's economic growth, thought would also be needed as to how best to tap the human, social and cultural capital of UK students after their graduation from foreign universities (Williams, 2009). And for students following an international career trajectory, it is important that the UK remains one of a number of attractive locations where they can use their talents to good effect.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Research Methods

The researchers sought to achieve the project's aims in terms of addressing the key research questions through four different strands of work, as follows:

- i) Bibliographic research using library and internet sources
- ii) Compilation and analysis of statistical data from published, unpublished and web-based sources
- iii) A questionnaire survey of school leavers intending to apply to HE, from 18 schools in England and 2 international schools outside the UK
- iv) Survey of 560 UK students involved in diploma mobility to other countries, including questionnaires and in-depth interviews with students at 16 institutions in 6 different countries, and an electronic questionnaire survey of UK undergraduate students in other locations in the USA, Australia and Germany.

This section gives some further details on these strands.

*Bibliographic research using library and internet resources.* During the first three months of the project, the researchers updated their published bibliography on student mobility and conducted a brief literature review summarising issues raised by other researchers.

*Compilation and analysis of statistical data from published, unpublished and web based sources.* The researchers explored a number of data sources on UK students abroad as defined in Appendix D2. Relevant bodies that collate student statistical data in the six countries under study were contacted and the availability of data on English students enrolled in these countries was explored. The practicality of including information gleaned from these sources to re-calculate the HEI participation rate to include English students enrolled abroad was evaluated. It soon became apparent that in many destination countries, data was only recorded for students from the UK as opposed to students from England. A meta-data report was produced based on this survey of secondary data sources (Findlay et al. 2009).

#### *Survey of school leavers intending to enter HE*

The Schools Survey followed the remit as defined by the Invitation to Tender and agreed in subsequent discussion with BIS, namely a questionnaire survey of 1600 sixth-form or equivalent pupils, backed up by in-depth interviews with at least 10 school careers guidance teachers and advisers charged with managing their respective schools' applications to university. The questionnaire for school students and the interview schedule for staff are included in Appendix B. Another, relatively minor, part of the research design was 20 follow-up telephone interviews with university applicants who had applied to study abroad, or thought about applying, and who had indicated on their questionnaire their willingness to be contacted this way.

The research team selected two parts of England to administer the questionnaire survey and the teacher / adviser interviews: Brighton and Sussex in the South East of England, and Leicester and Leicestershire in the East Midlands. Brighton / Sussex was deemed broadly representative of the more affluent South of England, and Leicester(shire) of the Midlands and North of England with their heritage of industrial employment and postwar immigration. Whilst the population of Brighton and Sussex is predominantly White, that of Leicester (less so the county) contains substantial immigrant-origin cohorts, especially from the Indian subcontinent.

Within each region, our initial research design identified a mix of state and private-sector schools (with reserves in case of refusals) to administer the questionnaire. An additional target of 200 questionnaires was sought from two international schools located in mainland Europe with substantial enrolment of UK nationals. Table A1 sets out this sample design, with the numbers of questionnaires collected.

**Table A1 - Target sample number for the Schools Survey**

	total	state	ind.	boys	girls	achieved
Leicester schools	700	350	350	350	350	1136
Sussex schools	700	350	350	350	350	853
International schools	200	0	200	100	100	107
Totals	1600	700	700	800	800	2096

The schools were contacted in the summer of 2008 in order to lay the groundwork for the surveys and visits during the upcoming Autumn Term (i.e. September to December 2008): letters and emails were sent, along with follow-up telephone calls. Response was patchy. Some schools agreed to cooperate straightaway; others did not respond; and some refusals were received. The international schools proved particularly hard to pin down. Whilst it was gratifying to get the first tranche of schools on board, the delays (especially from those schools which eventually said 'no') were frustrating. Logistically, we decided to run the Leicester survey first, followed by the Sussex survey later in the Autumn Term and, as it turned out, overlapping into the following term.

For Leicester(shire) we carried out the questionnaire survey in five independent schools, one in the city of Leicester and four elsewhere in the county, and in two sixth-form colleges, both located in the city but drawing in some pupils from the wider county. Despite the imbalance in the numbers of the two types of school, we received more completed questionnaires from the state sixth-form colleges, due to their large size. Attempts to get cooperation from the wider-age-range comprehensive schools (11-18) were unsuccessful - all three schools contacted eventually refused. Nevertheless, the requisite targets were well exceeded, for all subcategories.

In Sussex we needed to extend the sample of schools surveyed from seven to eleven. Eventually, the schools which agreed to collaborate consisted of six independent schools, two located in Brighton and four in the county of Sussex. For the state sector, five schools/colleges participated in the survey. This group comprised one further education college, two sixth-form colleges and one comprehensive school, all situated in Brighton and Hove, and another comprehensive located in Sussex. All contacted schools eventually agreed to take part in the survey; however, the rate of completed questionnaires was lower than in the Leicester sample, and the Sussex school sizes were on average smaller than their Leicester counterparts. This is why we had to enlarge the sample number of institutions to eleven rather than the original seven.

For the international schools, agreement to co-operate and access proved more challenging. Requests for collaboration were sent to several schools which badged themselves as 'international' and taught their programmes in English; eventually two (in Belgium and France) accepted. The logic behind including a smaller quota-sample of international-school pupils was to 'capture' children of British nationals living and working abroad. Since the international school survey was small in size and involved a slightly different questionnaire, it has been decided to exclude the results from this final report.

The main school questionnaire was designed and piloted in such a way as to ensure that maximum relevant information could be collected with minimal imposition on the schools and their pupils. It took 15 minutes to complete on average, with a range between 10 and 20 minutes. It was filled in on the hard-copy version, either in special sessions (such as morning assembly) organised by the schools with the researchers present, or distributed via tutor groups, and collected by the researchers on a later visit or posted back to the research team at the University of Sussex. The on-site methods worked very well on the whole, and we are extremely grateful to the schools for facilitating this exercise.

The questionnaire was designed to provide useful data to answer, or at least shed light on, the research aims listed above in the Introduction. The questionnaire was divided into five sections that mainly involved closed questions, simple to tick or write a one-word response, with a few spaces for elaborations where it was thought necessary or useful. Section 1 documents the respondents' current studies: A2 and AS levels or other qualifications. Section 2 records past studies, mainly GCSE grades. Section 3 asks the important questions about plans to study at university, including universities applied for. The key question here is 3.3 which asks about applying to study abroad - whether respondents are actually doing this; or whether they considered applying abroad, but then decided not to. Other questions in section 3 elicit motivation for (not) applying to study abroad, levels of information and guidance available etc. Section 4 asks about pupils' previous links outside the UK (travel, holidays, residence abroad), and section 5 collects general demographic data, both for respondents and their parents, including the education and occupations of the latter.

We also interviewed, in most institutions where the questionnaire was administered, the corresponding local 'key informant' - usually the head of sixth form, HE adviser or other such strategic person. Against a target of 10 such interviews, we achieved a total of 15. These interviews usually lasted between 20 minutes and one hour. The staff interviews were recorded (permission was always sought, and granted in all cases) and subsequently transcribed. The interviewees were offered the chance to check the transcripts for accuracy, which a few respondents did, and the transcripts were revised accordingly.

In order to conform to our ethical approval guidelines and to undertakings to ensure individuals' confidentiality and school anonymity, we do not name interviewees or identify schools. In the analysis, schools (and interviewees within each school) are coded in the following manner (L stands for Leicester(shire); S for Sussex, including Brighton):

- L1 Independent day school, girls
- L2 Independent day school, girls
- L3 Independent day school, boys; a few boarders
- L4 Independent day / boarding school, mixed
- L5 Independent day / boarding school, mixed
- L6 State sixth-form college, mixed
- L7 State sixth-form college, mixed

S1 Independent day / boarding school, girls  
S2 Independent day / boarding school, girls  
S3 Independent day / boarding school, mixed  
S4 Independent day / boarding school, mixed  
S5 Independent day / boarding school, mixed  
S6 Independent day / boarding school, mixed  
S7 State FE college, mixed  
S8 State sixth-form college, mixed  
S9 State sixth-form college, mixed  
S10 State comprehensive, mixed  
S11 State comprehensive, mixed

The staff interview extracts use the above codes. In addition, and in order to cover certain aspects of the situation in London, we interviewed one HE adviser at a large Inner-London sixth-form college. This interview is coded IL1. For the pupil interviews, we added 'p' to the code as follows: Lp1, Sp3 etc.

Referring back to Table A1, it will be seen that our target samples for schools in England were 700 questionnaire returns in Leicester(shire), 700 for Brighton and Sussex, 700 state-school pupils, 700 independent-sector pupils, 700 males and 700 females, all subdivided into evenly-matched quotas of 350 and 175 - e.g. 350 state-sector respondents in Leicester, made up of 175 males and 175 females. The fact that these targets were exceeded by some margin meant that a random selection of completed questionnaires for coding was drawn from some schools where excessive numbers of questionnaires were filled in.<sup>11</sup>

At this point we need to spell out a crucial refinement which we make when presenting the results pertaining to the key question: 'Have you ever thought about applying to a non-UK university?' (question 3.3 in the questionnaire). Three responses are possible to this question: 'Yes, and I am in the process of applying'; 'Yes, but in the end I decided not to apply'; and 'No'. The refinement concerns the distinction between UK-domiciled pupils and non-UK-domiciled pupils. The latter group consists primarily, if not exclusively, of foreign-national pupils who have been sent to England as boarders or in the care of guardians in order to access British secondary and probably higher education. These students are, in a sense, moving in the opposite direction to the UK students considering moving to study abroad, who are the main focus of this research.

We found that foreign pupils sent to schools in the UK are also aiming to access (good) British universities but, given their international background, are also more likely to consider applying to universities abroad as well.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> It was tempting to code up all completed questionnaires; however this would have unbalanced the carefully stratified nature of the total sample. For instance, we had a greater excess of questionnaires from Leicester than for Sussex, and for state schools than for independents.

<sup>12</sup> We were not alone in being surprised at the existence of this partially 'hidden' population of foreign students in UK schools. A recent *Times Higher Education* article commented on the discrepancy between estimates of overseas students in British universities according to whether the students are classified by nationality (513,570 in 2007-08) or by domicile when applying (389,330). The inference here is that almost 125,000 overseas students have applied from a UK domicile - as boarders or whilst attending a UK language or foundation course (Gill 2009).

How to separate out these two categories of respondents was not simple. It was decided not to ask the explicit nationality question because of its potential sensitivity in certain cases - pupils may have been uncertain over their precise nationality, or be refugees or asylum-seekers. Accordingly we identified the non-UK-domiciled and foreign nationals indirectly by their answers to several questions: if they had been resident outside the UK for more than ten years (question 4.2), if they had been born outside the UK (question 5.4), their ethnic origin (i.e. other than White-UK / Irish, question 5.5.), their parents' residence (5.6), plus any clues given in 'open' answers to other questions (e.g. 'I may return to Hong Kong for university').

As a result of this refinement to our respondent categories, we achieved two comparator samples. We term these as follows:

1. The 'standard sample' - this is the number of respondents in the quota sample (n=1400) who answered positively to the study-abroad question, either in terms of actually applying to study abroad (n=101) or of having thought about it but then not done so (n=182).
2. The 'UK national sample' - as above but minus those who are, on the questionnaire evidence, highly likely to be non-UK students (n=159, so the total UK national sample becomes 1241). This reduces the two 'positive' response categories to n=50 and n=154 respectively.

To clarify these two categories a little further: 1 is broadly representative of the Year 13 pupil population, with the caveat that the stratified sample division (50 per cent each for state and independent sector schools) does not reflect the real division between the two (which is actually more like 89 and 11 per cent); and 2 is broadly representative of the UK-national Year 13 population (subject to the same caveat). In this final report only the UK national sample is used.

Finally, the international school sample consisted mainly of UK-origin pupils studying an English-language programme at two schools, one in Belgium and the other in France. In some respects, these pupils are the opposite of the overseas pupils at English schools, but the inverted comparison does not fully work, partly because the 'British-abroad' pupils are generally living with their expat parents (whereas the overseas pupils at English schools are boarders or living with guardians). In other respects, the international schools are rather like the UK independent-sector schools in that they are fee-charging, socio-economically selective, have superior facilities and a more international outlook when compared to the state sector.

#### *Survey of UK students involved in diploma mobility to other countries*

The UK international student survey was carried out in six countries, yielding a total of 560 responses. The vast majority of responses resulted from the electronic version of the questionnaire that the researchers mounted on the web in March 2008 (see Appendix C for a copy of the questionnaire). During site visits by the researchers, some extra contacts were made with students resulting in some hard copies of the questionnaires being distributed and completed in situ. A particular effort was made to get assistance from a target group of 16 universities where in-depth interviews were conducted, by asking these institutions to distribute an e-mail to enrolled UK students.

It is always very difficult with electronic surveys to calculate response rates and to gauge the effects of selective respondent bias. On several occasions universities claimed to have sent out electronic links to students, but no responses were returned and only after reminding the universities in question were completed questionnaires sent to us. Due to the need to maintain

anonymity the researchers did not have access to students' e-addresses making it impossible to follow up non-respondents, but having looked at questionnaire responses it became evident that some institutions only circulated to undergraduate students, or to students in a particular faculty, or to those defined as English as opposed to British, or inversely to British (but excluding those self-defining as English!). Wherever these effects were detected by the researchers, they went back to the institutions and asked for further questionnaires to be circulated to the wider UK student community. But as a result of these problems it is impossible to calculate response rates with any confidence. Assuming that all relevant UK students were contacted, the response rates for individual universities varied between 10% and 32%, but these rates represent the minimum response rates since not all students were either contacted (for example, in some Australian cases omission of undergraduates because certain universities only sent out the link outside undergraduate terms). Despite these limitations, the researchers feel confident that their work has produced the largest survey ever conducted of UK diploma mobility across six countries and provides insights to the student mobility process that more narrowly focused qualitative studies fail to capture.

In each of the six countries where field research was conducted it was decided to target universities in relation to two criteria. First the research team selected universities where it was anticipated that there would be a large number of UK students, and second for efficiency in terms of the researchers' time some universities located in the same city as the most popular university in a country were added to the sample. It was possible in advance to determine which universities were most popular in the USA, Ireland and Australia, but this was not possible in the cases of France, Germany and the Czech Republic.

The researchers are immensely grateful to the 16 universities for their cooperation. In total 469 questionnaire responses were received from the target 16 HEIs listed below (Table A2) of which 460 conformed to the projects definition of diploma-mobile students.

## **Table A2 - LIST OF UNIVERSITIES WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WERE CONDUCTED WITH STUDENTS / STAFF**

### ***Australia***

- Australian National University (10)
- Macquarie University (14)
- University of New South Wales (16)
- University of Sydney (22)

### ***France***

- Denis Diderot University (Paris 7) (1)
- Paris-Sorbonne University (Paris 4) (2)

### ***Germany***

- Free University (3)
- Humboldt University (1)

### ***Ireland***

- Trinity College Dublin (148)
- University College Dublin (52)

### ***Czech Republic***

- Charles University (20)

### ***USA:***

- Columbia University (38)
- Harvard University (63)
- New York University (32)
- University of Berkeley (18)
- University of Southern California (29)

In addition, the researchers also contacted a much larger number of Higher Education Institutions in the USA, Australia and Germany inviting them to assist with the questionnaire survey. The researchers were delighted at the positive responses received from students at many of these institutions (see Table A3), adding an extra 91 questionnaires. Although these other institutions tended to be those with smaller numbers of UK students, their participation in the survey was most helpful in revealing some interesting channels of student mobility that were not captured by the core set of institutions. For example, Central Michigan University enrolled UK students for a diploma in leisure and tourism studies in association with work experience for the Disney corporation. However, the diplomas offered to these students were for study for a period of less than one year. As a result no students from CMU completed the survey in accordance with the instructions on the questionnaire that it was for British citizens studying abroad for a year or more (Appendix C). Similar exclusions were found in other places too (eg students taking a short language qualification in France). These examples point to the difficulty of defining precisely where to draw the boundaries on international diploma mobility and illustrate the need for care when interpreting aggregate data such as that produced by the International Institute of Education (in its Open Doors annual report) on the size of the UK student body abroad.



**Table A3 - LIST OF OTHER UNIVERSITIES/HEI'S WHERE RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED TO THE ELECTRONIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

***Australia***

- Bond University (1)
- Griffith University (13)
- Monash University (8)
- RMIT University (4)
- University of Queensland (20)

***France***

- University of the New Sorbonne (Paris 3) (4)

***Germany***

- University of Heidelberg (1)
- University of Kassel (2)

***USA***

- Franklin Pierce University (1)
- Grand View College (1)
- Kennesaw State University (1)
- Mount Holyoke College (3)
- Northern Virginia Community College (4)
- SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology (3)
- Towson University (3)
- University of Miami (3)
- University of Richmond (2)
- Yale University (17)

To illustrate some of the main points emerging from the questionnaire survey, some quotations from the student interviews have been added to the text of this report. Some key descriptors are given for each voice represented by a quotation, but in every case pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

## **Appendix B - School Questionnaire and Interview Schedule**

**Appendix B1 - see separate file for electronic copy of the schools questionnaire.**

## **B2 - KEY QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOLS' HE ADVISERS**

### **Schools**

**Number** of pupils at the school? And type of school?

What are the **backgrounds of pupils** (social class, ethnic origin, etc.)?

Are there any **scholarships or bursaries** available?

Are there any **entry examinations** and what is the **application procedure** like?

Which **languages** are taught in school?

Are there any **exchange schemes, tours, sports tours** etc.?

### **Pupils**

Do students go to university in the UK - **home / away** (by ethnic origin)?

What advice does **careers or HE advisor** give the students?

Does the school receive **prospectuses or even visits** from overseas recruiting agents?

How about visits from **past students** studying abroad?

Does the school have particular contacts with **overseas universities**?

Where (**type of UK university**) do students go?

### **Studying abroad**

**How many students** from this school / college have gone abroad in recent years?

Is the **trend** up or down?


What **kind of students** apply abroad (e.g. in relation to Oxbridge)?

**Where** have they gone?

If students go abroad, for what **subject**?

**Appendix C - International**

**Appendix C1 - Online Questionnaire: International Students**



**International Student  
Mobility  
Study 2008**

This questionnaire applies only to students who hold British nationality and who are studying outside the UK for one year or longer (not on an exchange)

Thank you for participating in this survey of UK students studying in other countries. The survey is part of a wider project sponsored by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in the UK and is being carried out by a team of researchers from the Universities of Dundee, Scotland and Sussex, England. By clicking to continue you are consenting to voluntarily participate in the survey. You are free to withdraw at any time and without any reason. Respondents are assured full confidentiality and anonymity of any information provided.

I have read and understood the [Information Sheet](#). I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and without any reason and I agree to take part in this study.

This survey is in five parts and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

[Begin a New Survey](#)

## UK STUDENTS ABROAD

### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

This research project is sponsored by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in the UK, and is being carried out by a team of researchers from the University of Dundee and University of Sussex.

As part of the wider project, which is focused on the motivations and experiences of British students who choose to study for their degree(s) outside the UK, a questionnaire survey is being conducted with students from the UK who are currently studying abroad in a number of different countries.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY:

Questionnaire responses are being collected for the purpose of analysis but only the research team will have access to them and they will be destroyed after the research project has finished. All information collected via the questionnaire will be coded and held in an anonymised form. No individual participant will be either identified or identifiable in the research publications.

#### TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION:

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation.

#### RISKS:

There are no known risks for you in this study.  
Your participation in this study is voluntary.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY:

Please contact Professor Allan Findlay, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK.  
Email: [emaia.m.findlay@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:emaia.m.findlay@dundee.ac.uk)

## 1 Life at Present

### 1.1 Your current course of study? (Tick one response only)

<input type="radio"/> Undergraduate degree (eg Bachelor)	<input type="radio"/> Postgraduate taught course (eg MSc)	<input type="radio"/> Postgraduate research (eg PhD)
<input type="radio"/> Diploma, technical qualification	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): <input type="text"/>	

### 1.2 What is the main discipline you are studying?

### 1.3 Do you have a part-time job?

<input type="radio"/> None	<input type="radio"/> Fewer than 8 hours a week	<input type="radio"/> 8 to 20 hours a week	<input type="radio"/> More than 20 hours a week
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### 1.4a How do you see yourself in terms of your primary or main identity?

Regional/National				British	European	World citizen	Other (Please specify below)
English	<input type="radio"/>	N. Irish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scottish	<input type="radio"/>	Welsh	<input type="radio"/>				

### 1.4b How do you see yourself in terms of your secondary or alternative identity?

Regional/National				British	European	World citizen	Other (Please specify below)
English	<input type="radio"/>	N. Irish	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scottish	<input type="radio"/>	Welsh	<input type="radio"/>				

### 1.5 Did you live (six months or longer) in the country where you are now studying before entering university/college?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
---------------------------	--------------------------

### 1.6 Have you lived in any other country outside the UK for six months or longer prior to your current studies?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
---------------------------	--------------------------

### 1.7 If you answered yes to 1.6, which were the main countries other than the UK and why did you live there?

Country 1: <input type="text"/>	Country 2: <input type="text"/>
Reason: <input type="text"/>	Reason: <input type="text"/>

**1.8 If you have not previously lived in the country where you are now studying, what were your previous connections with the country?**

No previous connections

My family have lived here or have relatives living here

Other (please specify, eg. Gap year spent in the country or vacation work experience):

**1.9 How are you financing your studies?**  
(Please tick one or more boxes)

<input type="radio"/> Self-financing	<input type="radio"/> Parental support	<input type="radio"/> Grant or bursary from your host institution
<input type="radio"/> Bank loan	<input type="radio"/> Employer	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): <input type="text"/>

[Go to Part 2](#) [Reset](#)

## 2 School Experience

**2.1 What kind of school did you attend?**

<input type="radio"/> UK state comprehensive school	<input type="radio"/> UK fee-paying school as day pupil	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) : <input type="text"/>
<input type="radio"/> UK state grammar school	<input type="radio"/> UK fee-paying school as boarder	
<input type="radio"/> UK state sixth-form college	<input type="radio"/> International school, non-UK	

**2.2 Please list your A-level results by subject and grade. If other (eg International Bacculaureate), please specify and give subjects and grades**

Subject	Grade
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

<b>2.3 Did you learn languages other than English (either at school or by other means) before studying abroad?</b>				<input type="radio"/> Yes <i>(If yes, please specify which and rate level of command)</i>		<input type="radio"/> No	
Language <i>(list below)</i>	Speak			Write			
	Excellent	Good	Basic	Excellent	Good	Basic	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

<b>2.4 Did you participate in a school exchange to another country?</b>		<input type="radio"/> Yes <i>(If yes, please specify country and approximate length of stay)</i>		<input type="radio"/> No	
Country: <input type="text"/>		Length of stay <i>(in weeks/months)</i> : <input type="text"/>		Weeks <input type="button" value="v"/>	

<b>2.5 Did your school teachers/ guidance staff provide information about opportunities to study abroad?</b>			
<input type="radio"/> Yes, information and guidance about how to apply		<input type="radio"/> Information, but no help with applying	
<input type="radio"/> Teachers discouraged foreign study		<input type="radio"/> No information given	

<b>2.6 Before choosing to apply to study at your current university, did you make a visit to the university campus?</b>			
<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	Did you also visit other universities outside the UK?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No



### 3 Deciding to Study Abroad

#### 3.1 Which were the two main universities that you applied to in the United Kingdom?

First choice: <input type="text"/>	Second choice: <input type="text"/>
I did not apply to the UK (Please state reason): <input type="text"/>	

#### 3.2 Would you have studied in the UK if your preferred university had offered you a place?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Not applicable
---------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------------------

#### 3.3 Were restrictions on the number of places to study your discipline in UK universities a factor in encouraging you to consider studying abroad?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
---------------------------	--------------------------

#### 3.4 Before choosing to study at your current university, were you already in contact with other UK students here?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
---------------------------	--------------------------

#### 3.5 Did your current university notify you of bursaries that you could apply for and was this important in your decision of where to study?

<input type="radio"/> No notification	<input type="radio"/> Notification given, but not important	<input type="radio"/> Yes, and the possibility of a bursary was important
<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/>		

#### 3.6 What were the main determinants of your decision to study outside the UK? (Tick one in each row)

	Very important	Slightly important	Not important	Not applicable
I saw study abroad as an opportunity for a unique adventure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family was very keen for me to study in a particular country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was determined to attend a world-class university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want an international career and this was the first step towards it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rising student fee levels in the UK made me explore other study locations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limited course places at UK universities to study my favoured discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other ( please specify ) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 3.7 What were the factors that concerned you (before moving) about studying outside the UK? (Tick one box per row)

	Very important	Slightly important	Not important	Not Applicable
Not confident enough with the language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficult to leave parental family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wary of living in another country/culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not want to leave my boyfriend/girlfriend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not enough financial means to pay overseas fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overseas studies not recognised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was concerned about health service costs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern about getting a student visa	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost of overseas fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### 3.8 Once you had chosen to study outside the UK, what were the key factors influencing your choice of one country over another? Specify one or more factors that made you choose your current place of study.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

#### 3.9 Do you see your studies as the first step towards living abroad after graduation?

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Maybe
---------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------

**3.10 If yes, where would you like to live (a), and what career path do you hope to follow (b)?**

(a) Country:

(b) Career path:

**3.11 Regarding your intention to return to the UK, which of the following most closely matches your expectations? (Tick one only)**

I do not intend to return  Return to the UK to work after a period working abroad

Return to the UK after graduating, for employment  Return to the UK to study after a period working abroad

Return to the UK after graduating, for further study  Other (Please specify):

## 4 Experience abroad

**4.1 Please name your college/university and the expected duration of your period of study abroad**

College/University:  Duration (e.g. Oct. 2006 – June 2009):  
Jan  2006  - Jan  2006

**4.2 How often did you return to the UK during your first year and during last year (if not a first-year student)**

First-year return visits:  Never Last year:  Never

**4.3 Other than your family, state the number of friends in the UK you contacted last week by e-mail or on the web?**

**4.4 Do you agree with the following statements concerning social aspects of your period abroad?**

I mainly socialise with people from my host country	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Most of my friends are from my home country	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I tend to socialise mainly with other foreign students (ie not British or host country)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

**4.5 From your point of view now, to what extent do you consider your period of study abroad worthwhile with regard to the following? (Tick one box in each row)**

	Extremely worthwhile	Worthwhile	Slightly worthwhile	Not at all worthwhile
Enhancement of my academic and professional knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevance to my general career prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevance to my potential for developing an international career	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreign language proficiency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge and understanding of another country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturity and personal development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New ways of thinking about my home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify) <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4.6 How problematic are the following issues to you <i>now</i> in studying abroad?				
	Very problematic	Slightly problematic	Not problematic	Not applicable
Confidence with the language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being away from my parental family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living in another country/culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial means	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Standards of study are very different from those expected in a UK context	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local health services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting a local job while studying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of teaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other ( please specify ) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**4.7 In retrospect, and all things considered, how satisfied are you with your experience of studying abroad?**

Very satisfied   
 Satisfied   
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
 Dissatisfied   
 Very dissatisfied

**4.8 Any other comments you wish to make about your experience?**

## 5 General Information

**5.1 Gender**     Female     Male

**5.2 Age (years)**   

**5.3 What is your mother tongue?** *(If you're bilingual, please specify in which languages)*   

**5.4 If you have dual nationality, please list the nationality other than British**   

**5.5 What is your ethnic origin/heritage?** *(Please tick ONE ONLY)*

<input type="radio"/> White – UK/Irish	<input type="radio"/> Indian	<input type="radio"/> Other Asian
<input type="radio"/> White European	<input type="radio"/> Pakistani	<input type="radio"/> Black – Caribbean
<input type="radio"/> White Other	<input type="radio"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="radio"/> Black – African
<input type="radio"/> Mixed Race	<input type="radio"/> Chinese	<input type="radio"/> Black Other

If you belong to another ethnic group, please specify:

**5.6 What is your parents' nationality?**    Mother     Father

**5.7 What is your country of birth?**

<b>5.8 Have either of your parents ever lived outside the UK for six months or longer?</b>		<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
If yes, name of country other than UK (if more than one country, list where they have lived the longest outside the UK) and the length of residence (years):			
Father	<input type="text"/>	for	<input type="text"/> years
Mother	<input type="text"/>	for	<input type="text"/> years
<b>5.9 Do your parents have university-level education?</b>			
<input type="radio"/> Both	<input type="radio"/> Yes, my father	<input type="radio"/> Yes, my mother	<input type="radio"/> Neither of them
<b>5.10 Which of the following categories best describes your father's occupation?</b>			
<input type="radio"/> Skilled manual	<input type="radio"/> Professional/Teacher	<input type="radio"/> Retired	
<input type="radio"/> Non-skilled manual	<input type="radio"/> Housewife/Househusband	<input type="radio"/> Student	
<input type="radio"/> Sales person/Representative	<input type="radio"/> Director/Partner	<input type="radio"/> Unemployed	
<input type="radio"/> Clerical/Admin	<input type="radio"/> Manager	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/>	
<b>5.11 Which of the following categories best describes your mother's occupation?</b>			
<input type="radio"/> Skilled manual	<input type="radio"/> Professional/Teacher	<input type="radio"/> Retired	
<input type="radio"/> Non-skilled manual	<input type="radio"/> Housewife/Househusband	<input type="radio"/> Student	
<input type="radio"/> Sales person/Representative	<input type="radio"/> Director/Partner	<input type="radio"/> Unemployed	
<input type="radio"/> Clerical/Admin	<input type="radio"/> Manager	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/>	

We would very much like to talk to a small number of students in more depth about their experience of studying abroad. If you would be willing to take part, we would be grateful to have your e-mail address or mobile phone number here:

## Appendix C2 - Interview Schedule UK Students Abroad

1. Could you please introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your degree here?

**Prompts:** age, course of study, year of study, how many years to go

2. Can you recall when you first considered the possibility of studying outside the UK and explain why this idea became attractive to you?
3. Where did you go to school / college/ previous university?

**Prompts:** state or private school, residential or not, international school, experience of school exchanges / trips

4. Could you tell me what other people, contacts, events or experiences were important in helping you to decide to study outside the UK?

**Prompts:** family, friends, school (or previous university if studied before), particular teachers or guidance / career staff, on-line sources including on-line international student communities, recruitment event by the university

5. What were the main challenges in applying for your place here? Who or what was the most help in dealing with this?

**Prompts:**

- language issues, recognition of qualifications, getting information, visa issues, questions of funding for studies, competition for places
- role of the international office of university, help from family / friends, role of school (or previous university)

6. What would you say were the main motivations for you to decide to make the application to study here? Did you apply to other universities at the same time?

**Prompts:**

**Pull factors:** experience of living or studying abroad, learning language, staying in a country you had already experienced, specific degree programme, the reputation of the university, longer term career plans

**Push factors:** shortage of places in the UK, not getting a place at the institution of choice in the UK, cost of studying in the UK, concerns about standards of teaching in subject area in the UK, other factors about life in the UK which are unappealing

7. What made you finally decide to choose to study at this university?

**Prompts:** course on offer, facilities at the university, prestige of the university, career considerations, financial reasons, family, didn't get qualifications needed for another university applied to / got better qualifications than expected

8. What experience of living or studying outside the UK did you or your family have before you applied for your degree course? Did that include any time in the country you are now studying in? And how do you think these experiences affected your choice to study here?

**Prompts:**

- schooling outside UK
- family migration history, including international business travel
- gap year activities / travel
- parental / sibling study outside UK

9. What are the best aspects of life at the university here for you? And what are some of the main challenges?

**Prompts:**

- experiences of the course of study, style of learning and teaching, language of study
- socialising and friends
- international students, other UK students, local students, role of international office / international networks of students
- extracurricular activities
- halls of residence / accommodation
- opportunities to travel, experience local places
- family or friends had an opportunity to visit?

10a. Now that you have been studying here for a while, what do you think the main benefits are of studying here?

10b. Do you have any regrets about choosing to study here?

11. To what extent has living and studying outside the UK changed your sense of identity?

**Prompts:**

- More aware of cultural similarities or differences
- Already experienced living in diverse cultures
- Socialising with other UK students?
- Feel more of a 'national' identity outside the UK, or more of an 'international' identity?
- Would you consider living here in the longer term, for example?

12. What are your longer term plans beyond university? Has the experience of being here helped to shape these plans? Or to change them?

**Prompts:**

- Would you consider going back to study or work in the UK after your degree here?
- Plans for emigration
- Plans for further work in non-UK contexts?

13. What do you think you personally are getting from studying abroad which might be different from students who decided to study in the UK?

**Prompts:**

- Would you say your own personal experience is typical of most UK students who study abroad?

14. What would be your advice to other students who were thinking about coming from the UK to study here?

15. What do you think the main reasons are for the growth over the last decade in the number of UK students wanting to study outside the UK?

16. Finally, could you sum up how you think your time studying here has changed you as a person?

## Appendix D - Supplementary Tables relating to the Meta Data Analysis

### Appendix D1 - Definitions for 'foreign' and 'international / mobile' students adopted for UOE data collection

#### Foreign students

- Defined as non-citizens of the country in which they study. Most countries have data on country of citizenship, which in most cases is a clear and well-defined variable.
- This information is important to maintain time series on foreign students and measure tertiary participation rates of specific immigrant communities within countries.
- Students are non-citizens students if they do not have the citizenship of the country for which the data are collected.
- Normally citizenship corresponds to the nationality of the passport which the student holds or would hold. Countries unable to provide data or estimates for non-citizens on the basis of the passport held should fill information on international / mobile students depending on the concept available in their data sources (country of permanent or usual residence, country of prior education)

#### International/mobile students

- Defined as students who have crossed borders and moved to another country with the objective to study. Measurement of student mobility depends to a large extent on country-specific immigration legislations and data availability constraints.
- Permanent or usual residence in the reporting country or in other countries should be counted according to the national legislations and no attempt is done to harmonize. Legislation concerning residence can vary widely between countries and countries are asked to complete the tables in the way they can apply the concept of 'permanent or usual residence'. In practice, distinguishing between 'resident' and 'non-resident' students can be done in a number of ways, for example according to whether students hold a student visa or permit or had a foreign country of domicile in the year prior to entering the education system of the country reporting data.
- In cases where a student has more than one residence authorisation, the classification selected should be the primary or first immigration document. For example, if a person came to the country on a work permit and was subsequently granted a study authorisation, the student should be classified as a resident student.
- Prior education refers to the education which qualified for entrance to the ISCED level the student is enrolled in. Prior education refers to ISCED 3 or 4 for students enrolled in ISCED 5A or 5B and to ISCED 5A for students enrolled in ISCED 6.

Source: UNESCO-UIS/OECD/EUROSTAT - UOE data collection on education systems 2008 - Volume 1, pp.37-39 - [http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/edtcs/library?l=/public/unesco\\_collection](http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/edtcs/library?l=/public/unesco_collection).



## Appendix D2 - Data sources investigated

Source name / type		Specific reason(s) for investigating source
UK sources	International Passenger Survey	- Data on all outbound mobile HE students from the UK and destination countries
	HESA Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Institutions survey	- Data on outbound mobile students (those leaving UK HEIs) and destination countries and institutions
International sources	UOE (UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat) joint data collection	- UK enrolled in higher education programmes in other EU/OECD/UN member countries
Foreign national sources	National-level sources in:  Australia France Germany Ireland USA	- UK students enrolled in HEIs in in host country institutions - Sub-national breakdowns (e.g. by region / institution)

## Appendix D3 - Comment on OECD statistics presented in Table 2

Table 2 provides OECD's statistics for the 2004-2006 period, comparing reporting of 'foreign students' from the UK - i.e. having UK citizenship - to 'international / mobile students' from the UK. For each year shown, it is, in theory, possible that up to three separate values may be reported for each destination country. It should be noted that the statistics relate to numbers of students enrolled in tertiary education across both ISCED 5 and 6 categories. In cases of no data, the original 'flags' as used by OECD are retained and are explained in the footnotes. The column labels are also as per the original OECD data set, also explained in the table footnotes.

The structure of Table 2 thus enables:

- (a) comparison of data available for different destination countries according to the varying definitions just mentioned; and
- (b) illustration of how the variation in data availability affects estimates of overall levels of student mobility from the UK.

Regarding data availability, a conspicuous feature of the table is the much more widespread availability of statistics for UK citizens compared to statistics on international / mobile students classed as being from the UK (UK-domiciled). In particular it may be noted that:

- a. Among European countries mobility statistics (i.e. for 'international / mobile students') were available for only seven states in 2004, and although the total increased to nine in 2006 this was still less than half of the total number of OECD countries within Europe.
- b. In contrast, data on 'foreign students' (i.e. citizenship-based data) are much more prevalent, both among countries for which mobility statistics are not available and among countries for which mobility statistics are available (though an exception here being Ireland).
- c. Data availability among the seven non-European OECD countries is somewhat different compared to European countries. Statistics on non-resident mobile students are available for Australia, New Zealand and the United States for all three years, as well as for Canada for 2004. New Zealand is the only country reporting statistics for both definitions for all years, however. Citizenship-based statistics are reported for Japan and Korea. No data whatsoever are available for Mexico.

The many 'gaps' in availability of data on 'international/mobile students' also make clear that any attempt to assess the overall level of diploma mobility from the UK must be estimated using more widely available citizenship based counts as proxy data. One approach to this is taken via the italicised formatting applied to the values in Table 2, in conjunction with the sub-totals and totals shown in bold at the base of the columns. The aggregation approach assumes that where figures on international / mobile students are available they are used, but if they are unavailable, citizenship-based data are used instead. Values selected on these rules are shown in italics, aggregated first into the column sub-totals and ultimately into the overall annual total.

The merits of this approach are three-fold. First, it utilises figures on diploma mobile students where available. Second, given the limited availability of these data, using citizenship-based figures as proxies is unavoidable when the goal is to produce a 'global' total, and this seems preferable to missing out large amounts of data whatsoever. Third, analyses showed that a similar process the OECD itself uses to derive overall totals for the annual number of students of

UK citizenship studying in other OECD countries. In that case the OECD uses counts of mobile UK students as proxies as far as possible for countries for which figures on students of UK citizenship are unavailable<sup>13</sup>.

On the basis of the approach just defined, a 'first cut' best estimate for the overall total number of diploma mobile students from the UK which can be derived from the OECD statistics, are therefore as follows: 22,330 in 2004, 20,717 in 2005 and 22,405 in 2006. It should be remembered that these are estimates from the UK to other OECD destination countries. Moreover, the estimates are inevitably on the high side, given the degree of reliance on citizenship-based figures. Finally, it is also possible to revise these estimates in light of analyses conducted of national data sources.

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<sup>13</sup> The procedure appears to be more systematic and transparent than the one that the UIS applies in producing its statistics on the overall 'flow' of mobile students from the UK

## Appendix E - Supplementary Tables relating to the UK School Survey

**Table E1 - Study abroad by gender of respondents: UK nationals**

	Yes, and applying		Yes, not applying		No		Total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
Males	23	3.6	68	10.8	540	85.6	631
Females	27	4.5	85	14.2	485	81.2	597

**Table E2 - Study abroad by parental education: UK nationals**

Parents university-educated?	Yes, and applying		Yes, not applying		No		Total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
Both	22	6.0	49	13.2	299	80.8	370
One of them	14	4.2	38	11.5	280	84.3	332
Neither	14	2.8	64	12.8	423	84.4	501

**Table E3 - Study abroad by ethnic identity: UK nationals**

	Yes, and applying		Yes, not applying	
	%		%	
			18.3	
White-UK / Irish	3.6			
White European	5.0		6.6	
South Asian	3.6		8.4	
Chinese	3.3		5.0	
All ethnicities	3.4		14.6	

*Note:* 'all ethnicities' figures differ slightly from the data in Tables E1 and E2 because 53 respondents did not answer the 'ethnic question'. Percentages do not tally due to rounding).

## Appendix F - Supplementary Tables relating to the International Student Survey

Course of study	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate degree	293	52.3
Postgraduate taught course	133	23.8
Postgraduate research	117	20.9
Diploma, technical qualification	6	1.1
Other	11	2.0
Total	560	100.0

Country of destination	Absolute number (Nov 2008)	Percentage
USA	218	39%
Ireland	200	36%
Australia	108	19%
France, Germany and Czech R	34	6%
Total	560	100%

	Very Important	Very or Slightly Important
Financial means	17.2	56.1
Getting a local job while studying	11.4	45.8
Health service	7.3	37.2
Standards of study are different	6.9	37.9
Being away from parental family	5.3	28.0
Quality of teaching	4.1	18.1
Living in another country / culture	3.2	26.7

Intentions	Country of study		
	Ireland	Australia	USA
Never return to UK	16.8	50.0	25.0
Return to UK only after working elsewhere	45.6	14.7	26.6
Return to UK to work after graduating	24.0	14.7	10.9
Other	13.6	20.6	37.5
Total	100	100	100

