

International Students' Attitudes to Postgraduate Study in Australia and New Zealand Survey 2013

Introduction

Working with StudyOptions, our survey aimed to find out potential postgraduate students' attitudes towards both postgraduate study (Masters, MBA and PhD) in general, and to postgraduate study in Australia and New Zealand in particular.

Objectives

The primary purpose of this survey was to determine the main motivating factors for, and the barriers to, choosing to undertake postgraduate study in Australia and New Zealand.

Data collection process

The survey was conducted online, so responses were not limited by respondents' geographical location.

In order to avoid bias in our survey sample, it was called 'Attitudes to Postgraduate Study'. This meant that our respondents were initially unaware that they would be asked specifically about their attitudes to studying in Australia and New Zealand.

Respondents were targeted through social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Google+) and FindAMasters.com and FindA^{PhD}.com newsletter emails to our database of potential postgraduate students.

We offered a survey completion incentive of the chance to be entered into a draw to win £50 Amazon vouchers. We did not actively exclude any respondents.

We were pleased to receive **970** fully completed responses to our survey in just four weeks.

Results and analysis

Results were collected from a total of 970 respondents who completed the survey during the period Friday 3 May – Friday 31 May 2013.

The analysis is directly extracted from the online survey from fully completed survey responses.

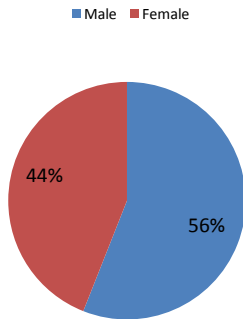
Main findings

- Of all of our respondents, 80% said that they would consider postgraduate study abroad.
- Of the 80% of respondents who said that they would consider postgraduate study abroad, 48% indicated that they would choose Australia and New Zealand as a study abroad destination.
- Australia and New Zealand are in the top four destinations for postgraduate study abroad with both UK and non-UK nationals.
- UK residents who are most interested in PhD level study are significantly more attracted to being able to 'work in Australia and New Zealand post-study' than those interested in Masters level study.
- A high proportion (70%) of non-UK residents say that they are attracted to studying in Australia and New Zealand because they are English-speaking countries.
- Over 20% of our survey respondents say that they have researched postgraduate study options through social media channels.
- Of those respondents who *would not* consider studying abroad, 53% of them said that they *would* consider a distance learning course delivered by a university outside their home country.

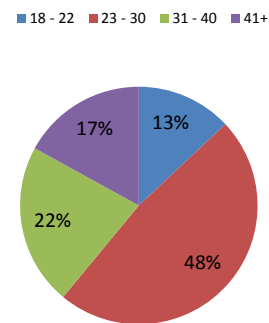
Reporting

There were 970 complete responses to our postgraduate study survey. Of those respondents, 581 are MOST interested in PhD level study, 359 are MOST interested in Masters level study and 30 are MOST interested in MBA level study.

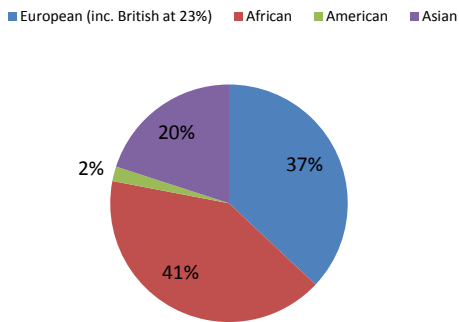
Gender



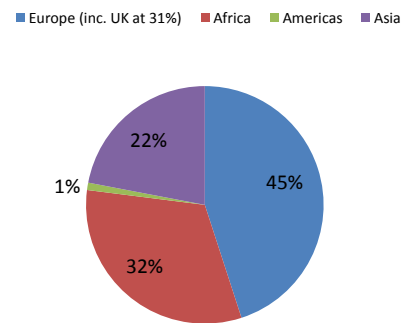
Age range



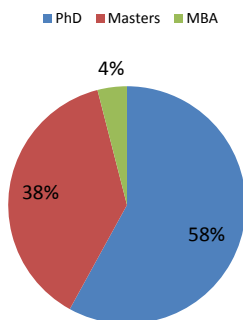
Nationality



Residence

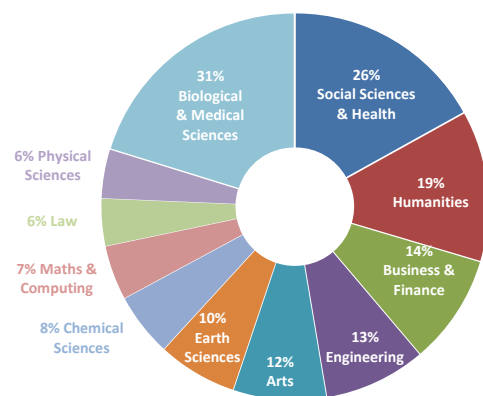


What level of postgraduate study are you most interested in?



Which subject areas are you interested in?

Respondents were able to select multiple subject areas to reflect their range of interests.

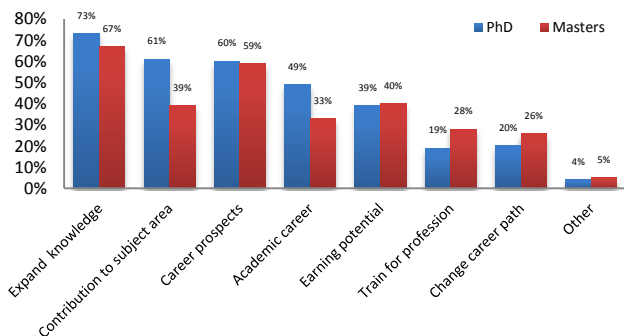


Why are you considering postgraduate study?

Overall, 'expanding knowledge' and 'improving career prospects' were the main drivers for people considering postgraduate study.

The difference between PhD candidates and Masters candidates is that nearly half of potential PhD students hope to pursue an academic career, and 60% of them cite 'making a contribution to their subject area' as a reason for seeking out a PhD programme.

It is also notable that 33% of potential Masters students also hope that their degree will lead to an academic career.



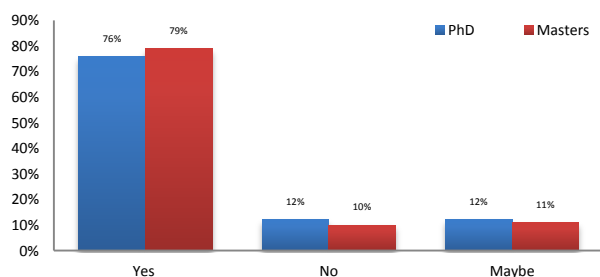
'Other' responses included:

- 'Personal satisfaction.'
- 'The recent rise in undergraduate tuition fees could result in a decline in the number of people pursuing postgraduate study, which could make me part of an elite group of professionals in my chosen field of study.'
- 'Love of subject.'

Would you consider studying abroad?

We went on to ask our respondents whether they would consider postgraduate study abroad (i.e. not in their home country).

Only a little over 10% of those respondents said they would not consider studying abroad, although this is probably more reflective of the audience of our websites than it is of potential postgraduates as a whole.



Where would you consider studying abroad?

In much of the analysis to follow, we compare UK residents with those living outside the UK; however, in these breakdowns we are comparing UK nationals against non-UK nationals.

The list of countries was extensive – these are the top 10 destinations.

Top 10 study abroad countries: UK nationals:

1. United States 63%
2. Australia and New Zealand 57%
3. Canada 50%
4. Germany 42 %
5. France 41%
6. The Netherlands 34%
7. Switzerland 32%
8. Scandinavia 30%
9. Italy 28%
10. Spain 25%

Top 10 study abroad countries: Rest of the world:

1. UK 68%
2. United States 54%
3. Canada 52%
4. Australia and New Zealand 47%
5. Germany 37%
6. The Netherlands 32%
7. Switzerland 31%
8. France 24%
9. Belgium 21%
10. Austria 19%

As you can see from the results, Australia and New Zealand are popular study abroad destinations with UK nationals, but slightly less so with those from outside the UK. Overall, 57% of UK nationals and 47% of non-UK nationals are happy to consider studying in Australia and New Zealand.

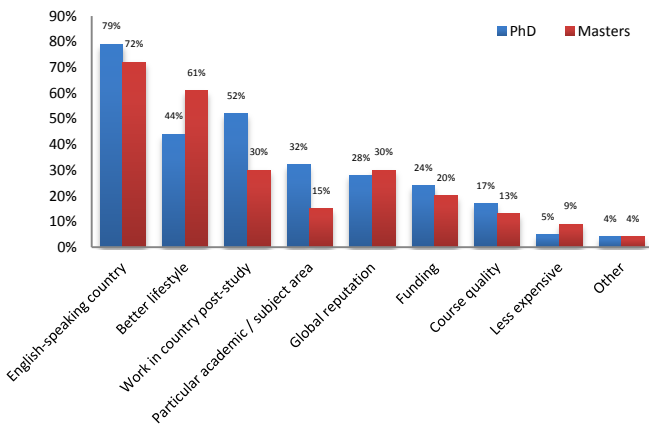
Factors influencing study in Australia and New Zealand

In the next few questions we will compare the responses of UK residents with those of people living outside the UK.

Please note that 25% of our UK resident sample are international students who are currently studying in the UK.

UK residents: what attracts you to study in Australia and New Zealand?

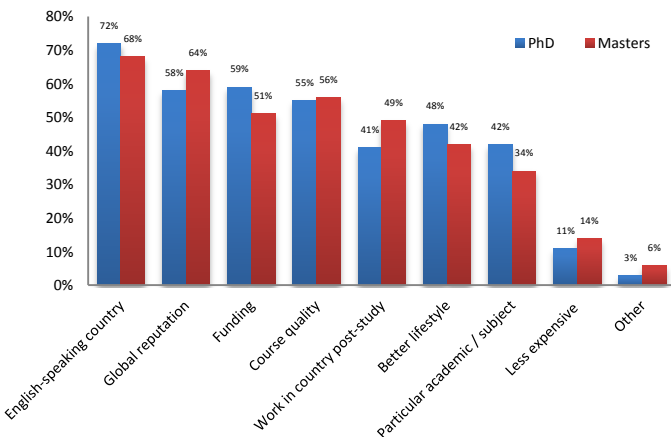
For UK residents, course quality and global reputation of Australian and New Zealand universities was not a factor that attracted them. UK residents have a great choice of high-quality universities to choose from at home and perhaps need more awareness that institutions in Australia and New Zealand can compete on course quality as well as a better lifestyle.



'Other' responses include:

- 'Wildlife and nature present.'
- 'My experience of the countries when travelling.'

Non-UK residents: what attracts you to study in Australia and New Zealand?



'Other' responses include:

- 'Quality of life.'
- 'Security of the region.'

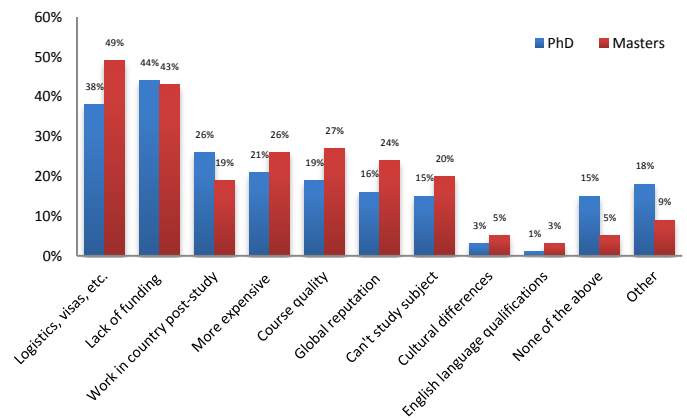
UK residents: what might stop you studying in Australia and New Zealand?

UK residents are more concerned with the global reputation of universities in Australia and New Zealand than potential students based outside the UK.

The most striking thing about UK residents' responses is that a high proportion cite logistics (organising travel visas, accommodation, etc.) as a factor that might stop them studying in Australia and New Zealand. It is likely that our non-UK audience are more prepared for studies abroad and therefore don't see these logistical issues as a hurdle. Generally speaking, our UK audience have more postgraduate options at home, which means they may need convincing that study abroad is worth the extra effort.

A common answer in our 'other' option was a concern about the distance from family and friends – particularly amongst mature respondents.

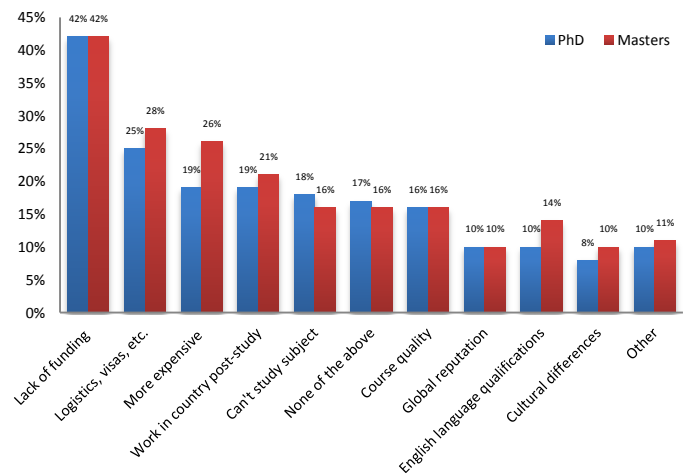
It is also worth noting that 15% of our respondents who said 'yes' or 'maybe' to studying abroad selected 'none of the above' when asked what might stop them studying in Australia or New Zealand.



'Other' answers included:

- 'Being unable to return home in case of an emergency.'
- 'Lack of information on how to apply successfully.'

Non-UK residents: what might stop you studying in Australia and New Zealand?



'Other' answers included:

- 'Family duties and economic constraints.'
- 'I have no idea about prospects there.'

No to studying abroad

105 of our survey respondents told us that they didn't want to study abroad and half of these said there were no factors that would make them change this position.

By far the most popular reason for not wanting to study abroad was family commitments and responsibilities.

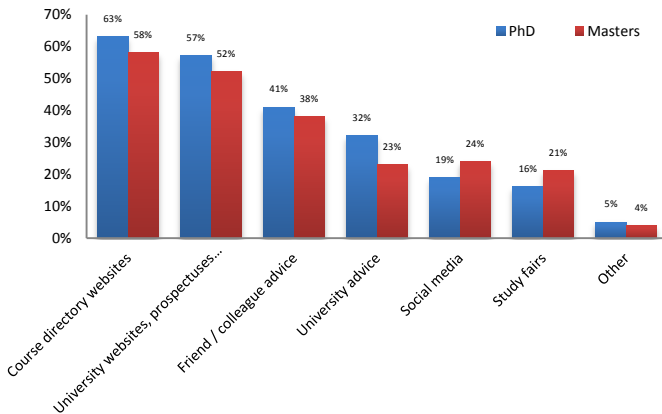
Would you consider distance learning?

53% of the people who wanted to study in their home country rather than abroad said they would consider studying a distance learning course in a university outside their home country.

How have you researched postgraduate study?

The most popular place to research PG study amongst our sample was on course directory websites (unsurprising given where we found our respondents).

Also of note is that over 20% of our respondents cited 'social media' as where they had researched postgraduate study options, indicating that there could be strong opportunities for interaction and conversation with potential students through social networks.



Conclusions

Based on the responses we received from our survey, there appear to be strong recruitment opportunities for universities based in Australia and New Zealand from both UK and non-UK residents: high numbers of respondents from both groups told us that they would consider studying there.

- UK residents: ✓ English-speaking ✗ Logistics.
- Rest of the world: ✓ Global reputation ✗ Lack of funding.
- Possible opportunities in distance learning programmes.

Targeting the FindAMasters.com and FindAPhD.com audience:

- Attract potential students with information about a better lifestyle (particularly Masters students).
- Overcome concerns with accessible scholarship, payment plan, visa and relocation information.

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