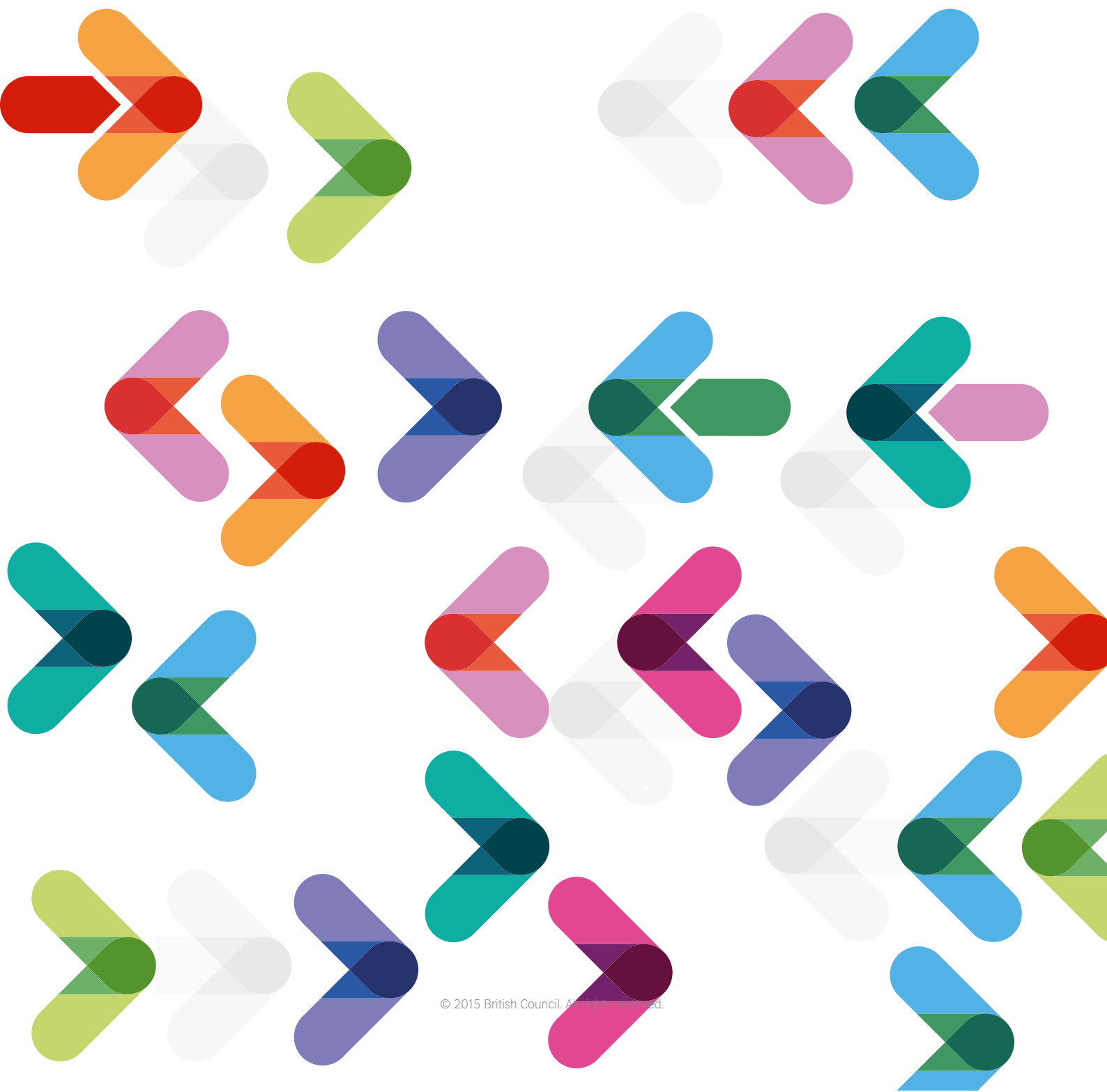


# Broadening Horizons

The value of the overseas experience

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June 2015



# Notice

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# Introduction

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The idea that the internationalisation of higher education is simply comprised of student recruitment is not only outdated, but also ultimately is incorrect. Policymakers, institutional staff and students alike largely recognise that internationalisation must be engrained in the culture of the university, that it must be part of an institutional ethos catalysed by each individual's experiences, openness and purpose, to achieve its multitude of objectives. To create an environment in which students and faculty can learn to change the lives of others – as well as their own – while contributing to innovation and growth at an institutional and national level, is one of the primary goals of internationalisation.

To achieve such aims, students must be given the opportunity to develop into global citizens; one of the ways this is happening is through important institutional and national policies encouraging home students to study overseas. Outward student mobility is essential at the individual level for growth personally and among one's peers, at the institutional level for diversification and knowledge sharing and at the national level as an investment in human capital and long-term relationship building.

The UK and the US have long been the top two study destinations for international students globally but there is a substantial imbalance of mobile students in each country. With the intention to promote overseas study, each of these countries in recent years has established initiatives, such as the UK Strategy for Outward Mobility and the Generation Study Abroad programme in the US. Through the Broadening Horizons series, we aim to understand UK and US students' prevailing perceived drivers and barriers to outward mobility to affect positive change at the individual, institution and national level.

# Key findings

- Thirty-four per cent of UK respondents indicated they are interested in overseas study
- Fifty-four per cent of US respondents stated that they were interested in study abroad
- UK students were most likely to be interested in studying abroad for a one year period at the undergraduate level whereas US students were more likely to consider a one semester experience at the undergraduate level
- The most desired destination for UK students was the US, but 42 per cent of respondents stated they wanted to study in non-English-speaking countries
- US students most wanted to travel to the UK for overseas study, with interest also in European countries as well as Japan, China and South Korea
- For both UK and US students, the cultural experience of studying abroad was a significantly stronger driver than academic- or employability-related factors
- While UK students valued study abroad as a unique adventure more than a resume-builder, they were more likely than their US counterparts to recognise and be motivated by career-related factors
- Costs, personal well-being and a lack of language skills were both the main deterrents to study abroad and the top concerns for those who aspire to overseas study
- The perceived barriers to study abroad by US students uninterested in overseas study were the same as the concerns held by those interested in the experience: disinterest in leaving one's family, lack of language skills and costs
- UK and US students who had already studied abroad were less concerned about overseas tuition being high, indicating a gap in perceptions between them and those who hadn't studied abroad
- The majority (62%) of UK respondents and US respondents (66%) not interested in or undecided about overseas study stated that they wanted to travel and live abroad
- UK and US students not interested in study abroad would most be incentivised to change their minds if they have help with funding and foreign language training
- While 84 per cent of UK respondents who had already studied abroad had enough information to inform their decision, just 56 per cent of those aspiring to study abroad, 32 per cent of those who didn't want to study abroad and 14 per cent of those who were undecided regarding outward mobility indicated they had adequate knowledge prior to their decision
- The majority of (94%) US respondents who had studied abroad prior to completing the survey felt happy with the amount of information they had to make their decision, as compared to their counterparts who wanted to study abroad (69%), didn't want to study abroad (59%) and were undecided (27%)
- Thirty-five per cent of UK respondents and sixty-three per cent of US respondents who had already studied abroad knew about government-sponsored programmes for overseas study

# Methodology

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The British Council administered surveys in the UK and the US in order to understand UK and US students' current perceived drivers and barriers to overseas study. The surveys were distributed and completed in March and April of 2015. In the UK, in cooperation with the National Union of Students (NUS) and market research company Survey Sampling International (SSI), we received 2,856 completed responses by full-time, UK-domiciled students aged mostly between 16 and 30. Students in secondary school were surveyed alongside those in tertiary education. In the US, market research partners SSI and m-telligent Solutions helped in the collection of 4,625 completed responses by full-time students aged mostly between 16 to 30 who were American citizens or permanent residents.

# Background

## The importance of outward mobility

Through overseas study, students are able to grow personally and many students return from their experiences more independent, confident and receptive to other viewpoints.<sup>1</sup> Further, study abroad aids in cultivating personal skills such as intercultural competencies, problem solving skills and language proficiency, all of which double as highly desirable professional competencies in a competitive marketplace. As such, those who engage in study abroad not only generally receive better marks and graduate at higher rates, they have broader career opportunities and access to higher paying jobs. Further, when study abroad alumni were able to secure a job, their experience enabled them to confidently learn new competencies.<sup>2,3</sup> According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), “study abroad is basic training for the 21st century.”<sup>4</sup>

By providing information to and incentivising home students to study abroad, institutions can more easily achieve strategic objectives including the internationalisation of the student body as well as of curriculum and research, leading to increased innovation and graduate outcomes.

One of the main arguments in support of outward mobility is that overseas experiences yield a more well-rounded supply of candidates as companies are increasing their demand for globally-competent employees that will help them compete internationally. There has been much debate about graduate outcomes and skills gaps in the market which have largely arisen from a demand by companies for higher-level skills. Regardless, graduates are competing fiercely for positions and employers are setting higher standards for those they recruit and hire.<sup>5</sup>

Alongside knowledge and passion, companies are looking for graduates with practiced intercultural skills, language abilities and flexibility; if these traits are scarce within home populations, it is logical that youth will have a harder time finding jobs, especially with international firms.<sup>6</sup> According to a 2013 report, 55 per cent of UK employers were unhappy with UK graduates’ foreign language abilities and 47 per cent were disappointed in graduates’ cultural awareness.<sup>7</sup> Further, according to McKinsey & Company, 40 per cent of job growth in developed countries, including the US, is going to non-citizens or permanent residents due to a lack of global skills on the part of local graduates.<sup>8</sup>

Student exchanges are building blocks for international relationship building, leading to academic and business collaborations that help define a country and drive forward an economy. As such, investment in overseas study is imperative for families, institutions and policymakers.

<sup>1</sup> Zimmermann, Julia, and Franz J. Neyer. “Do we become a different person when hitting the road? Personality development of sojourners.” (2013).

<sup>2</sup> Preston, Kendra. “Recent Graduates Survey: The Impact of Studying Abroad on Recent College Graduates’ Careers.” IES Abroad. 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.iesabroad.org/system/files/recentgraduatesurvey.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “AIFS Study Abroad Outcomes: A View from our Alumni.” American Institute for Foreign Study. 2013. Retrieved from [http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/AIFS\\_Study\\_Abroad\\_Outcomes.pdf](http://www.aifsabroad.com/advisors/pdf/AIFS_Study_Abroad_Outcomes.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Institute of International Education

<sup>5</sup> “The Graduate Market in 2015.” High Fliers Research Limited. 2015. Retrieved from [http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate\\_market/GMReport15.pdf](http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate_market/GMReport15.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Diamond, Abigail, et al. “Global graduates into global leaders.” Association of Graduate Recruiters, Council for Industry and Higher Education, CFE Research and Consulting. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> “Changing the pace.” Confederation of British Industry, Pearson. 2013.

<sup>8</sup> “The world at work: Jobs, pay, and skills for 3.5 billion people.” McKinsey Global Institute. June 2012.

## UK and US policy for outward mobility

The UK and US have each launched overseas study strategies catering to their countries' unique outward mobility situation and experience. As the UK strives towards the goal of sending at least 20 per cent of graduating students abroad by 2020, it in 2013 developed its national strategy, the UK Strategy for Outward Mobility, aiming to capitalise upon international opportunities and encourage overseas study of UK-domiciled students through a myriad of partnerships and incentives.

Prior to the formation of the Joint Steering Group on UK Outward Student Mobility in 2011 that led to the UK Strategy, one main study abroad initiative was the European Union's Erasmus programme. The scheme, launched in 1987, supports study and work opportunities within Europe and offers grants and tuition fee waivers to eligible applicants. Erasmus+, which commenced in January 2014 and will run to 2020, is the current EU initiative, incorporating programmes for education, training, youth and sport. While Erasmus drives much of the UK's outward mobility, other programmes including the Marie Curie Actions research fellowship and the British Council's Generation UK schemes to India and China are active in the promotion of overseas study.

Statistics regarding the number of UK students studying abroad vary due to a number of factors including but not limited to dissimilar data collection by institutions and organisations, differing definitions of outward mobility and incomplete reporting by inbound countries of the number of UK international students. Therefore, at the time of this report, there remain varying figures however organisations are in the process of ensuring the accuracy of current and future data.

Estimates of outward mobility range, with sources stating that anywhere from two to almost five per cent of UK students participate in overseas study. The UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) indicated that 14,775 UK students studied overseas for a period longer than three months in the 2012-2013 academic year. Data shows that in that academic year, 9,641 UK students studied on Erasmus programmes and 4,930 took advantage of work placements, totalling 14,571, up from 13,660 in 2011-2012, most of whom went to Italy, France and Spain. The number of mobile students rose again in 2013-2014, when 15,566 UK students went abroad on Erasmus programmes.

UNESCO reports that 27,968 UK students complete overseas study, primarily in the US, France, Ireland, Germany and Australia. According to the OECD, in 2011 37,491 students from the UK studied abroad for a minimum of one year.<sup>9</sup> Whilst statistics vary, international and national organisations concur that the outward mobility of UK students is increasing.

The US has a long history with study abroad, involving institutional partnerships and larger-scale initiatives such as the Fulbright Program, established in 1946, to promote exchange amongst students, teachers, scientists and other professionals. In 2009, President Barack Obama announced the launch of the 100,000 Strong campaign, to incentivise more US students to study in China and in 2014, the Institute of International Education (IIE) began Generation Study Abroad, a five-year programme with the aim of doubling US outward mobility – to just under 600,000 – by 2020. Generation Study Abroad aspires to bring together partners from higher education, the private sector and the government to create initiatives and incentives for students to participate in overseas study. As part of the programme, the IIE helps fund eligible students and also specifically incentivises study abroad to those in vulnerable communities.<sup>10</sup>

Generation Study Abroad counts foreign governments and organisations as partners in the attempt to create easier pathways and lasting relationships; international partners include but are not limited to Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Spain and the UK.<sup>11</sup> According to the IIE, 289,408 US university students in 2012-2013 studied abroad, a 2.1 per cent increase from 2011-2012, and nine per cent of US undergraduates study abroad before graduating. According to UNESCO, which has a different definition of study abroad, there were 58,133 US students studying abroad.

<sup>9</sup> "Gone International: mobile students and their outcomes." UK Higher Education International Unit. Retrieved from <http://www.go.international.ac.uk/content/how-many-students-are-going-abroad-uk>

<sup>10</sup> "IIE Passport Awards." Generation Study Abroad. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/Generation-Study-Abroad/IIE-Passport-Awards>

<sup>11</sup> Institute of International Education

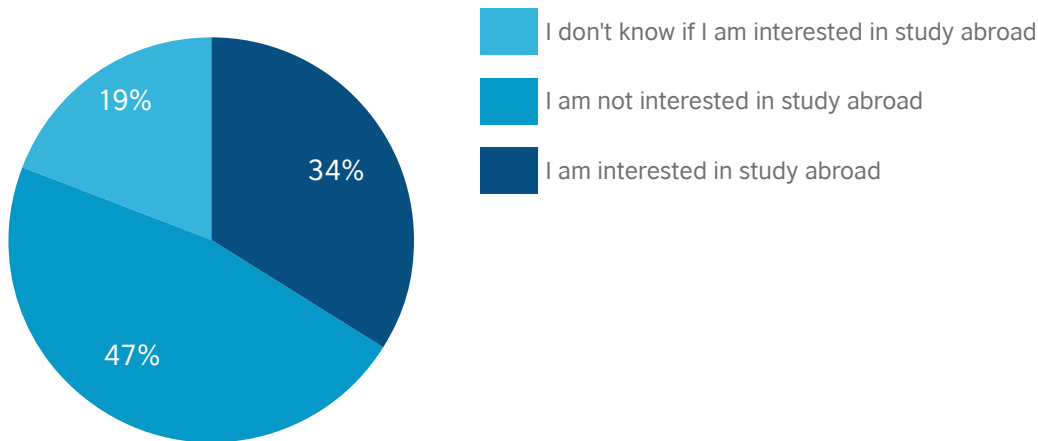


# UK data analysis

## Student profile

In early 2015, 2,856 full-time UK-domiciled students were surveyed to better understand their sentiments and perceptions regarding overseas study. In the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 1,307,775 full-time UK-domiciled students in higher education in the UK, 128,335 of whom were studying postgraduate courses and 1,179,435 of whom at the undergraduate level<sup>12</sup>.

### Are you interested in study abroad?



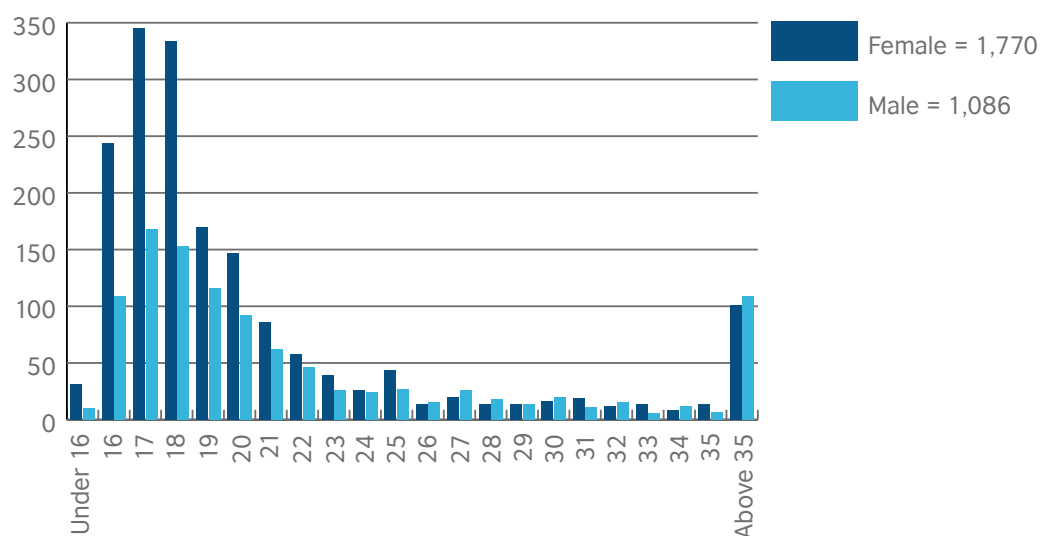
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Of the surveyed UK respondents, 34 per cent indicated they were interested in study abroad whilst 47 per cent stated they were not interested in an overseas study experience and 19 per cent said they had not made a concrete decision on the issue. Of those who were interested in study abroad, 31 per cent had already completed at least one study abroad experience. Estimates regarding the per cent of the UK higher education population remain low and the proportion of those interested in the experience was higher than that of those who actually do study overseas.

In 2014, 37 per cent of respondents to the same survey indicated they were interested in study abroad. Despite the three per cent difference between 2014 and 2015, interest remains significantly higher than in 2013, when just 20 per cent of respondents indicated interest, and the number of UK students traveling abroad for study continues to rise steadily.

<sup>12</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency

## Age and gender of respondents

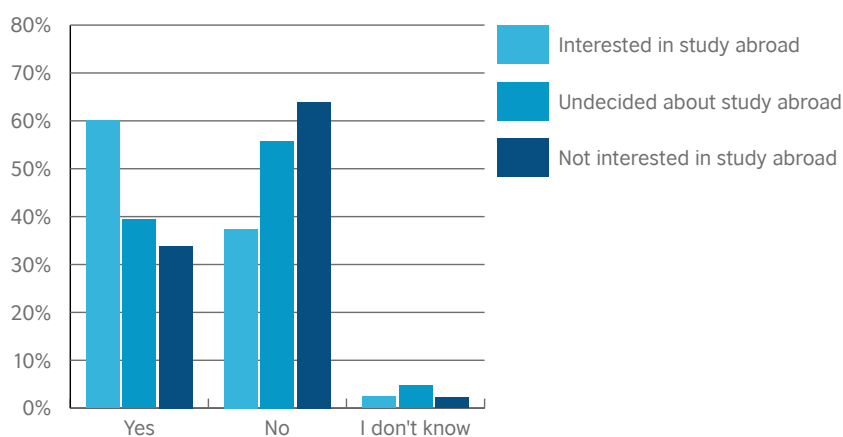


Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Survey respondents ranged in age, with 70 per cent of respondents between the ages of 16 and 21, inclusive. Seven per cent were above the age of 35. The respondents were more likely to be female, with males making up 38 per cent of the sample. As of 2012-2013, 66 per cent of UK students participating in Erasmus programmes were female and in 2013-2014, 55 per cent of UK-domiciled students studying in the UK were female. However, males and females had approximately equal levels of interest in study abroad: 35 per cent of females and 33 per cent of males surveyed indicated they were interested in study abroad.

UK respondents were very likely to have a passport, regardless of their sentiments on study abroad, though a student's interest in study abroad was positively correlated with one or both of the student's parents having studied abroad.

## Do you speak more than one language?



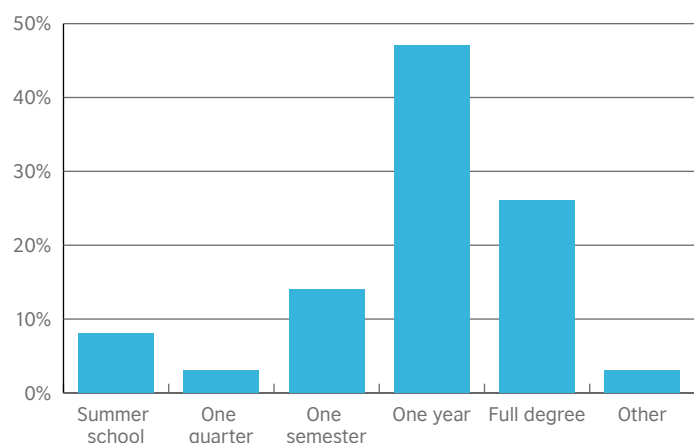
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Our survey results show the positive relationship between second language acquisition and interest in study abroad. Forty-four per cent of respondents stated they were able to speak more than one language, though this proportion increased to 60 per cent for those students interested in study abroad; just 34 per cent of people uninterested in overseas study said they could speak more than one language. It is interesting to note that due to the fact that those uninterested in study abroad are able to speak more than one language in moderate numbers and are very likely to own a passport, it is not unreasonable to assume that these students may have interest in travel, though perhaps not overseas study. This will be addressed further when looking more closely at this group of students.

## Courses and destinations

We asked respondents who indicated an interest in overseas study but had not yet undertaken it about their preferred overseas courses and destinations. This group numbered 681 and made up 69 per cent of those who stated they were interested in studying abroad.

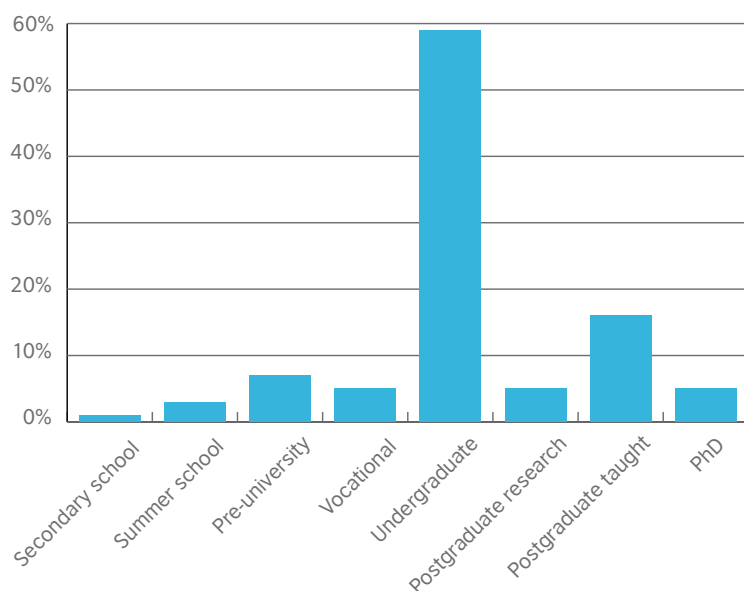
### Preferred duration of overseas study



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The highest proportion of students (47%) stated they would want to study abroad for a one year period, followed by those who would select a full degree (26%) and then one semester (14%). Just three per cent stated they would want other durations, including exchanges that are shorter than one quarter.

### Preferred level of overseas study

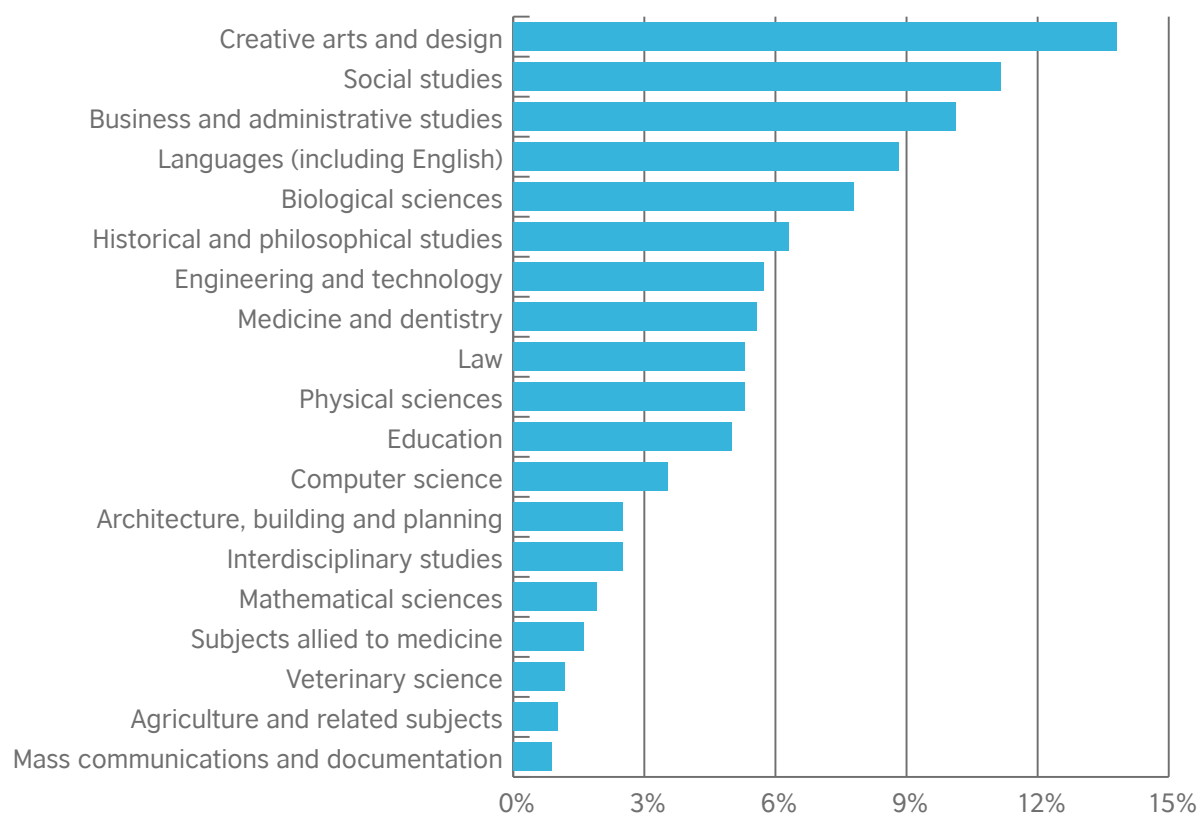


Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The majority of students (59%) were interested in a study abroad experience at the undergraduate level, though 16 per cent stated they would want to go abroad at the postgraduate taught level. Of those interested in study abroad, which includes students who had already been mobile for their studies, 50 per cent stated they would want to study abroad at the undergraduate level, as compared to 35 per cent in 2014.

Seven per cent of respondents stated that a pre-university overseas experience was preferable and relatively equal numbers of respondents wanted to study abroad at the vocational, postgraduate research and doctoral levels.

## Desired courses for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Students who were interested in studying abroad in the future would most like to do so in Creative arts and design (14% of respondents selected this subject), Social studies (11%), Business and administrative studies (10%), Languages (including English) (9%) and the Biological sciences (8%).

These subjects were also the most popular for those interested in study abroad at the undergraduate level, though they varied slightly for those interested in other levels of study. For example, students interested in study abroad at the postgraduate level were most interested in Creative arts and design (14%), Business and administrative studies (10%), Biological sciences (10%), Social studies (10%) and Engineering and technology (10%).

According to the UK Higher Education International Unit, students who are mobile during their course of higher education study are most likely to study Languages, followed by Business and administrative studies, Linguistics, Social studies, and Creative arts and design. Those who study Languages mostly study French, Spanish, German and English.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "Gone International: mobile students and their outcomes." UK Higher Education International Unit. Retrieved from <http://www.go.international.ac.uk/content/how-many-students-are-going-abroad-uk>

## Study abroad destinations

US	40%
Australia	11%
France	7%
Germany	6%
Canada	5%
Spain	4%
Netherlands	3%
Japan	3%
Italy	2%
New Zealand	2%
Sweden	2%
China	2%
Rest of world	15%

\*Sum is larger than 100% due to rounding

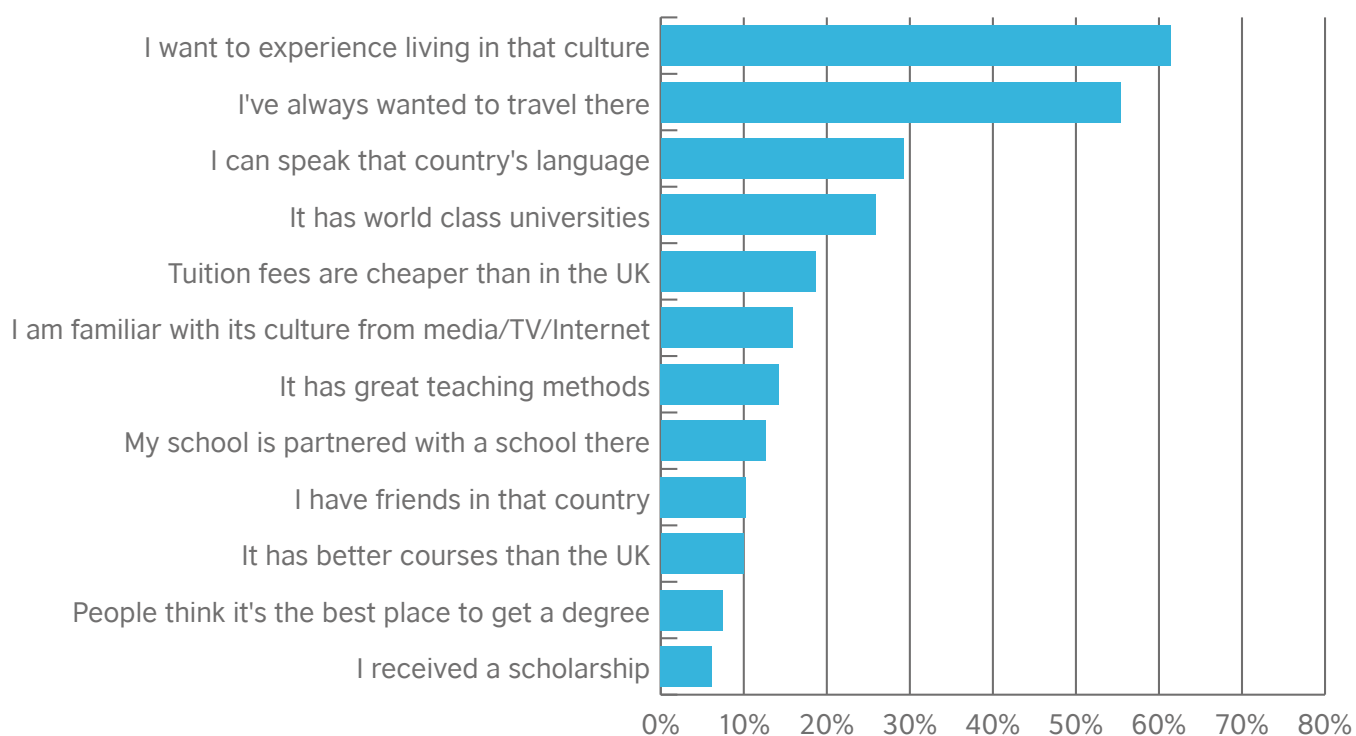
Respondents were asked in what country they aspired to study abroad and the highest proportion of students selected the US. Other countries of interest included Australia, France, Germany, Canada, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan, Italy and New Zealand. With the exception of Japan, all top desired destinations are in Europe or Anglophone countries and some see the UK's challenge as encouraging students to study in other areas of the world; it's important to note, however, that 42 per cent of respondents aspired to study in non-Anglophone countries, up from four per cent in 2014.

According to UNESCO, which tracks students studying abroad on degree programmes one year or longer, the top destination for UK students is the US, followed by France, Ireland, Germany and Australia.<sup>14</sup> While the top five countries of interest remained the same for undergraduate and postgraduate study abroad hopefuls, China was the number nine most desired country at the postgraduate level.

According to the UK Higher Education International Unit, 70 per cent of UK undergraduate student mobility takes place in Europe, with 25 per cent of students studying in France, 17 per cent in Spain and nine per cent in Germany; twelve per cent of UK students study in the US, making it the number three destination for undergraduate study abroad.

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO

## Most important factors in choosing a study abroad destination



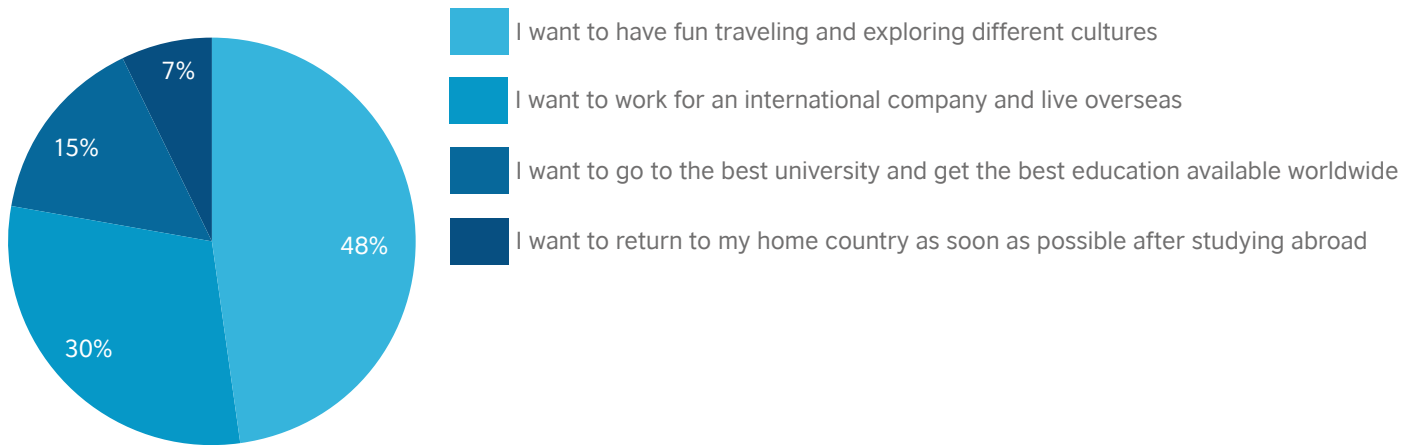
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

According to surveyed students, the most important factor in selecting a study abroad destination was wanting to experience living in that culture (61%) and wanting to travel to that country (55%). Respondents, who were allowed to select up to three considerations, also indicated that the ability to speak the country's language (29%) was an important factor. Interestingly, more academic factors having to do with their degrees, courses and teaching methods were less common considerations indicating that UK students aspiring to study abroad largely equate the experience as a cultural one over an academic one.

## Drivers of study abroad

There were 983 survey respondents who were interested in studying abroad, some of whom had already participated in an overseas study experience. This group was asked about what drove them to consider such an experience.

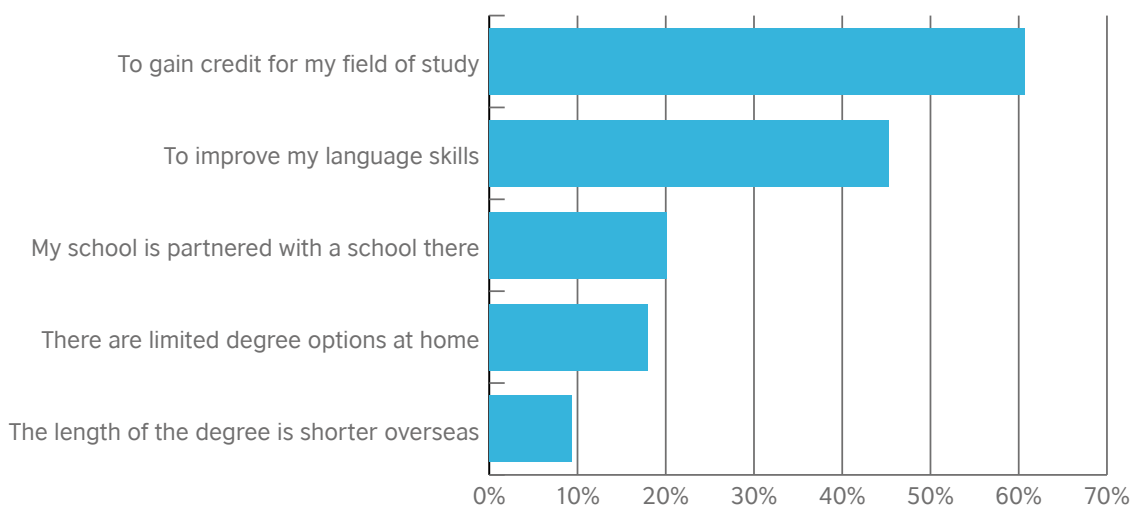
### Future aspirations



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

When asked which of the four statements above they most identified with, the highest percentage of students stated they wanted to have fun traveling and exploring different cultures (48%), while almost one third said they wanted to work for an international company and live overseas and 15 per cent stated they wanted to go the best university for the best education. Just seven per cent stated they would like to return home quickly after a study abroad experience. It is interesting to note that for students who already have experienced overseas study, the percentage of those who want to work and live overseas increases.

### Academic drivers for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The top academic drivers for study abroad were to gain credits for study (61%) and to improve language skills (45%). The length of the degree was a consideration for less than ten per cent of respondents. Interestingly, for those students who had already studied abroad, the improvement of language skills was the top academic driver, perhaps indicating an outcome of overseas study that wasn't altogether expected prior to the experience.

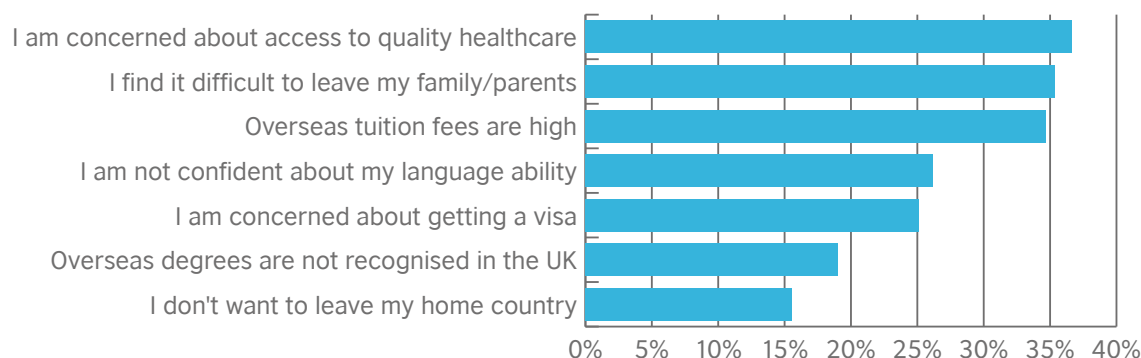
## Non-academic drivers for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Over half of respondents (52%) said their main non-academic driver for overseas study was to travel abroad, though many (49%) stated it was to have a unique adventure. Students also saw value in potentially building their confidence (37%) and obtaining better career prospects (35%). The least popular drivers included encouragement from family (9%) or friends who have studied abroad (4%). Respondents were allowed to select up to three factors.

## Concerns regarding study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

When asked about their concerns regarding overseas study, students in 2015 stated they were most concerned about their personal well-being, specifically access to quality healthcare (37%) and difficulty leaving their family (35%), and the financial burden (35%). Respondents were allowed to select up to three factors.

These concerns were shared by those who had already participated in a study abroad experience as well as those who were aspiring, but it is worth noting possible differences in perceptions; for those who had not yet studied abroad, it is unclear if these concerns were about perceived or actual expenses whereas one can assume that for those who had studied abroad, they referred to actual expenses.

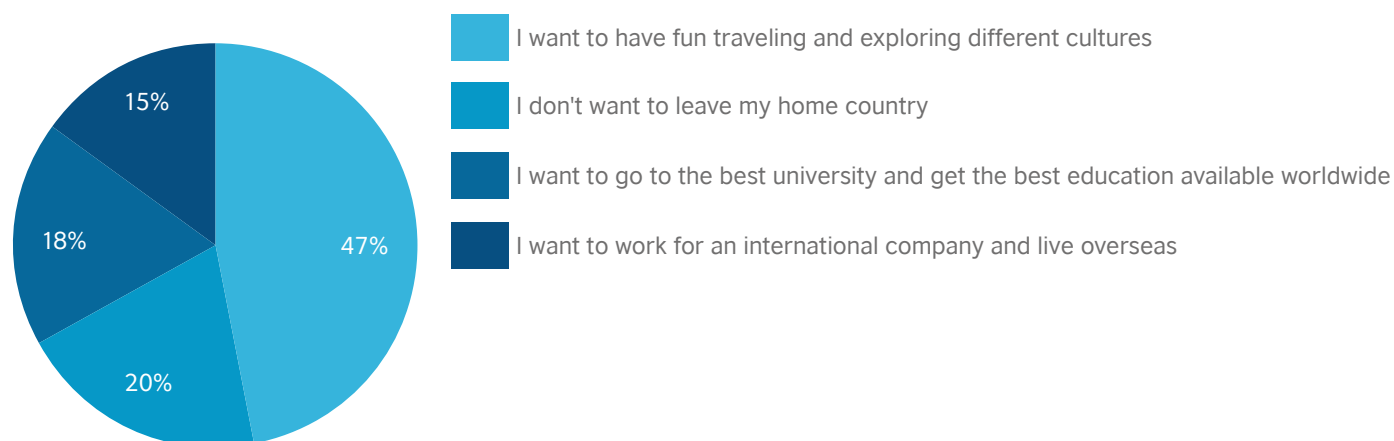
When asked if the cost of UK university tuition played a role in their interest in overseas study, 49 per cent of respondents said it had. When the same question was asked in 2014, 57 per cent of respondents stated it had. This indicates that it may be a diminishing factor.



## Perceived barriers to study abroad

Of the 2,856 full-time students who completed the survey, 1,348 stated they were not interested in study abroad and an additional 545 indicated they had not made a decision regarding study abroad. These 1,873 students were surveyed about perceived barriers to studying overseas.

The students were asked to select the statement that they most identify with:



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Almost half of respondents (47%) stated that they wanted to have fun traveling and exploring different cultures, with others stating they didn't want to leave the UK (20%), they wanted the best education from the best university (18%) and they wanted to work for an international company and live overseas.

Despite this group of students stating a lack of interest in any level of study abroad, there was a clear interest in travel and living abroad for at least 62 per cent of them. In fact, an increasing percentage of UK students are planning to take time off after graduation to rest or travel<sup>15</sup>. Clearly, there is a broader interest in going overseas, so what perceived and actual barriers exist to study abroad?

## Academic deterrents



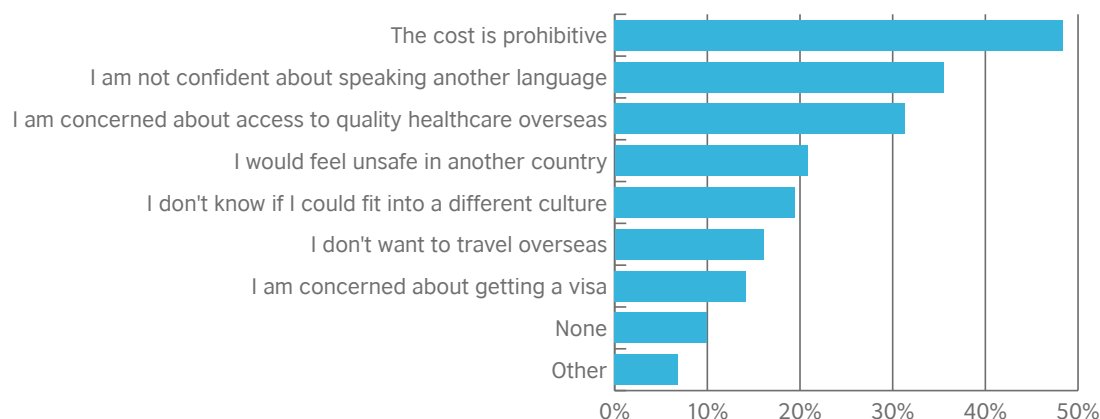
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

By far, the biggest academic deterrent to study abroad was the lack of foreign language skills, selected by 53 per cent of this group. Twenty-six per cent stated that they saw no academic deterrents to study abroad and smaller proportions of students felt barriers including the overseas degree not being recognised in their field (15%), the difficulty of the degree programme (15%), the inability to gain credit for their area of study (12%) and the length of overseas courses not fitting their needs (11%). Respondents were allowed to select up to three factors.

<sup>15</sup> "The Graduate Market in 2015." High Fliers Research Limited. 2015. Retrieved from [http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate\\_market/GMReport15.pdf](http://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2015/graduate_market/GMReport15.pdf)

It is often hypothesised that UK students may not want to study abroad due to inflexible structures within UK higher education, for example subject requirements or the timing of exams.<sup>16,17</sup> The findings of this survey show concern on the part of students regarding how study abroad will fit with their course requirements and schedules, but these factors were second to those regarding language abilities.

### Non-academic deterrents

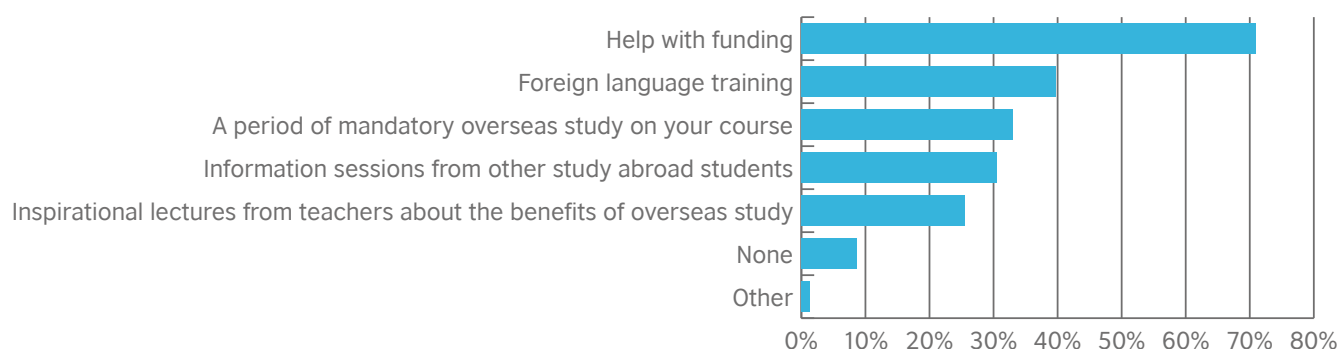


Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Almost half of this group (48%) stated that the top non-academic barrier to overseas study was the cost, followed by a lack of confidence in language skills (36%), access to quality healthcare (31%), feeling unsafe in another country (21%) and concerns regarding fitting into another culture (19%). Only ten per cent stated that there were no non-academic deterrents and most of the seven per cent that chose 'Other' indicated they would not want to leave their families. Respondents were allowed to select up to three factors.

It is worth noting that the top non-academic deterrents to study abroad – cost, perceived risks to personal well-being, and lack of language skills - were similar to the concerns of those who were interested in study abroad, perhaps indicating that those who had studied or wanted to study overseas previously had the same reservations but reconciled them enough to consider study abroad.

### Factors that could encourage consideration of study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Students who were not interested in or undecided regarding overseas study were asked what may incentivise them to consider the experience. Respondents were allowed to select up to three factors. By far, the most popular motivation would be help with funding (selected by 71 per cent), followed by foreign language training (40%). Respondents also would value a period of mandatory overseas study as part of their course (33%) and information from overseas study alumni (30%) and teachers (25%). Sources of information for students will be further explored in the next section.

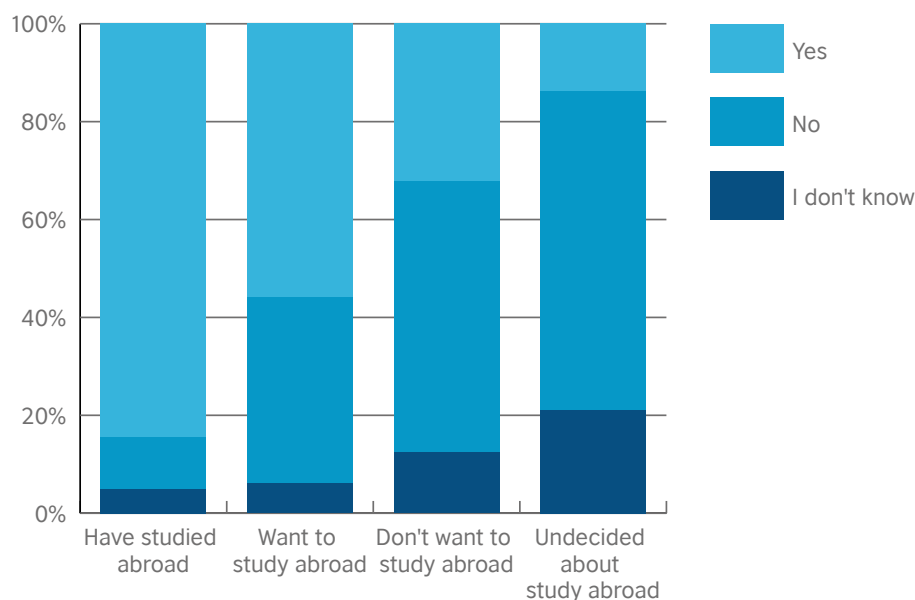
<sup>16</sup> "Next Generation UK," British Council, YouGov. Dec 2011. Retrieved from [http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/pagefiles/15492/yougov\\_report\\_v3.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/pagefiles/15492/yougov_report_v3.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Sweeney, Simon. "Going Mobile: Internationalisation, mobility and the European Higher Education Area." European Commission, The Higher Education Academy, British Council. Retrieved from [http://www.ucml.ac.uk/sites/default/files/shapingthefuture/102/Going\\_Mobile.pdf](http://www.ucml.ac.uk/sites/default/files/shapingthefuture/102/Going_Mobile.pdf)

## Awareness of study abroad

A perceived lack of information has been a barrier to study abroad. We asked all respondents if they felt they had enough information to make their study abroad decision and found that there was a relationship between information and openness to overseas study.

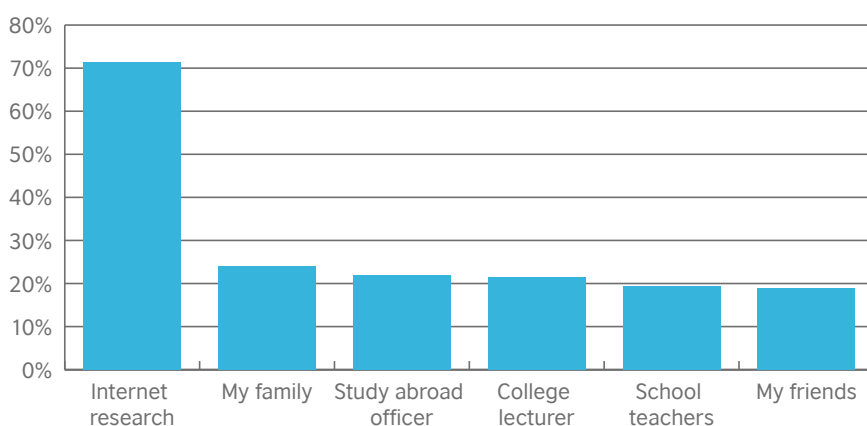
### Did you have enough information to make your study abroad decision?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Eighty-four per cent of those who had already studied abroad stated they had enough information to make their decision; it is possible that this group may be better informed after their experience, have completed research prior to going, or now realise, back from their journey, that they did in fact have adequate information. Just over half (56%) of those aspiring to study abroad stated they had enough information, and 32 per cent of those not interested in overseas study said they had adequate information. Just 14 per cent of those who were undecided said they had enough material to make a choice, perhaps demonstrating their current lack of a choice.

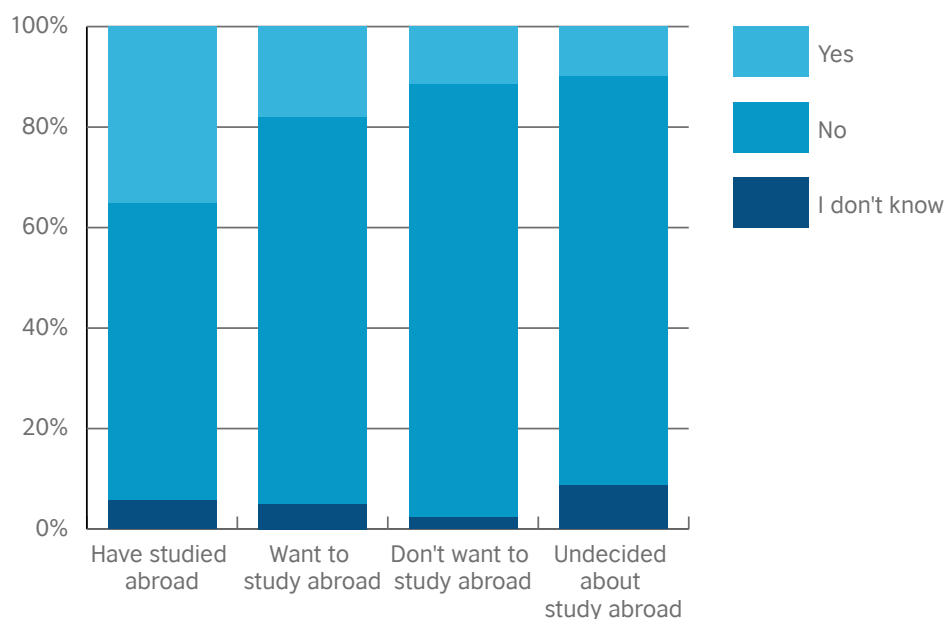
### Information sources



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

We asked those interested in study abroad what their sources of information were and by and large, they used the Internet (71 per cent selected this option). All other sources were used moderately, including input from family (24%), study abroad officers (22%), lecturers (22%), schoolteachers (19%) and friends (19%). In contrast, inspiring conversations with teachers and fellow students were cited by those uninterested in study abroad as a possible motivator, but these sources were less popular with those who aspired to study abroad.

## Awareness of government programmes



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

With the UK Outward Student Mobility Strategy in place and the presence of initiatives including the Erasmus programme, we asked participants if they were aware of government-sponsored schemes for overseas study. Of those who had previously studied abroad, 35 per cent were, but that proportion was smaller for those who aspired to study abroad (18%), those who did not want to study abroad (11%) and those who remained uncommitted (10%). There is room for improvement regarding student awareness of government study abroad programmes, especially given that concerns about cost may be assuaged with further knowledge.

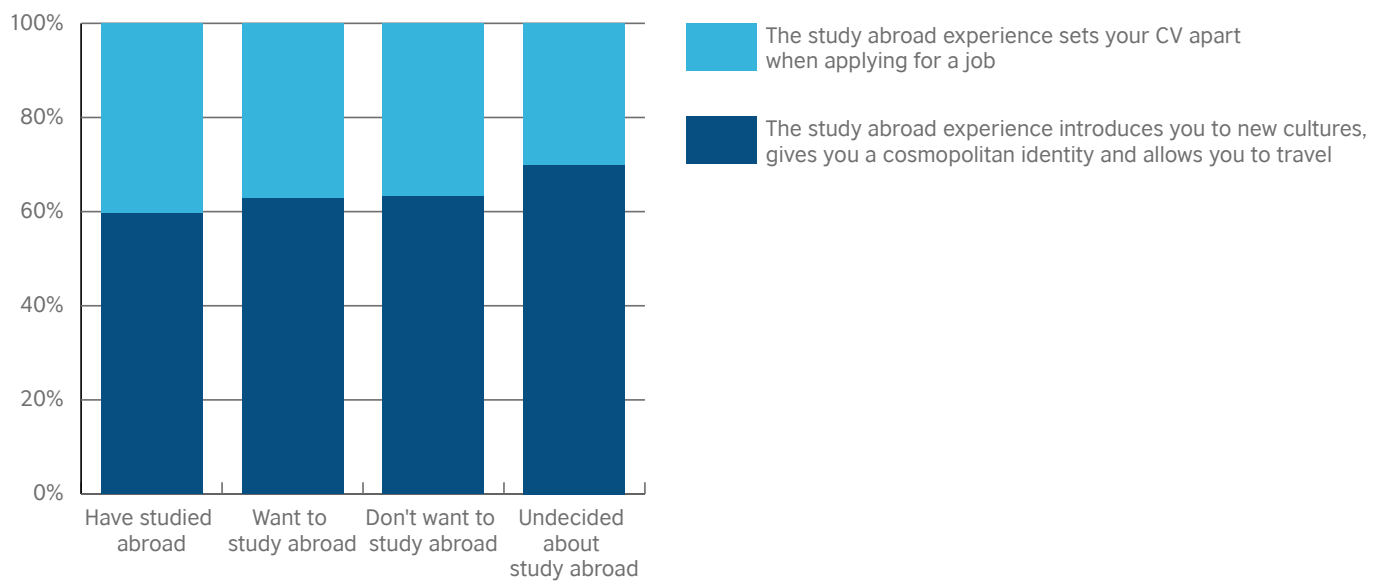
## The value of study abroad

According to the Office of National Statistics in the UK, of people aged 16 to 24 in March 2015, ten per cent were unemployed and in the last quarter of 2014 963,000 youths were classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), an increase of 9,000 from the quarter before<sup>18,19</sup>. Certainly, given the value that employers increasingly place on languages and intercultural competencies, the study abroad experience may advantage students in a competitive job market. We asked all survey respondents about their perceptions of the value of study abroad to them personally, academically and professionally, to better understand the underlying connections students draw between overseas study and career prospects.

<sup>18</sup> "UK Labour Market, May 2015." Office for National Statistics. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/may-2015/statistical-bulletin.html#tab-12--Young-people-in-the-labour-market>

<sup>19</sup> "Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), February 2015." Office for National Statistics. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/young-people-not-in-education--employment-or-training--neets-/february-2015/index.html>

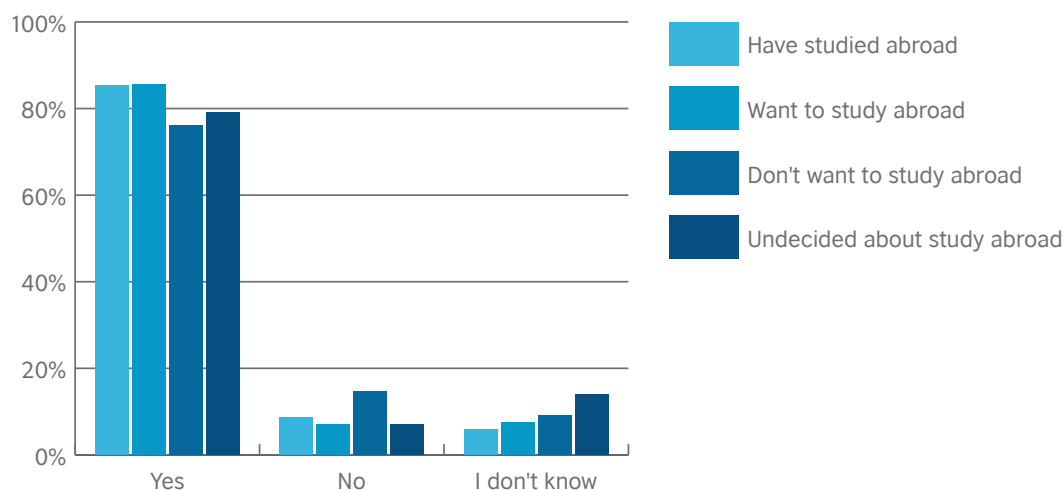
## Which statement do you most agree with?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

In order to understand, when faced with the choice, if students equate the overseas study experience with getting ahead academically and professionally or with a new cultural experience we asked them to select one of the above statements. Overall, UK students felt that the study abroad experience more worked to introduce them to new cultures, gave them a cosmopolitan identity and allowed them to travel.

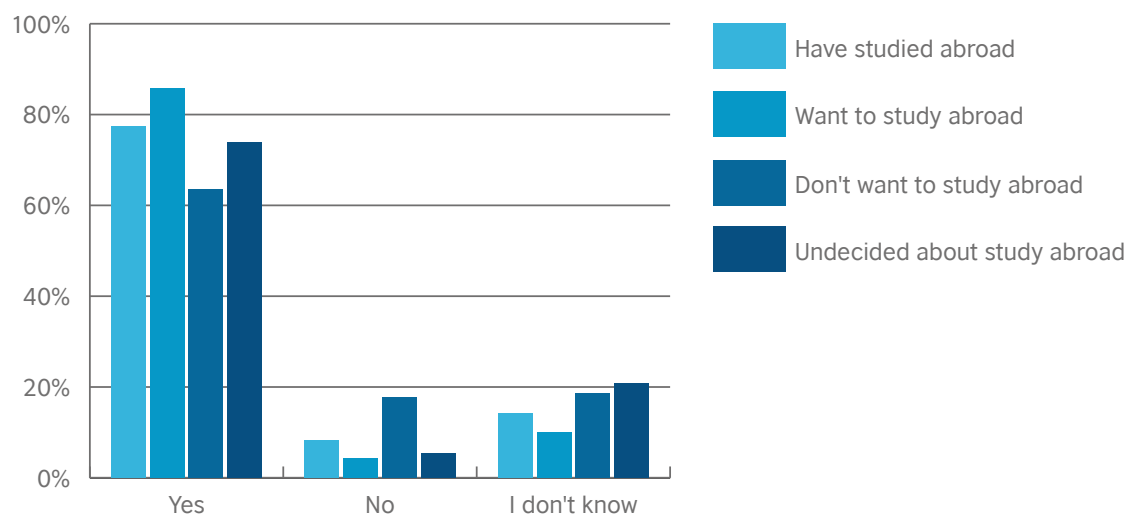
## When you graduate will you need more than your degree to stand out from the crowd and get the job you want?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

We asked students if they felt their degree alone would be enough to get them the job they want and respondents overwhelmingly stated that it would not. The majority of all four groups of students said they would need more than their degree to stand out, though 15 per cent of those uninterested in study abroad said their degree alone would be sufficient, as compared to nine per cent of those who had studied abroad and seven per cent of those who aspired to.

## Do you think an overseas study experience could give you the edge you need to stand out when applying for jobs?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

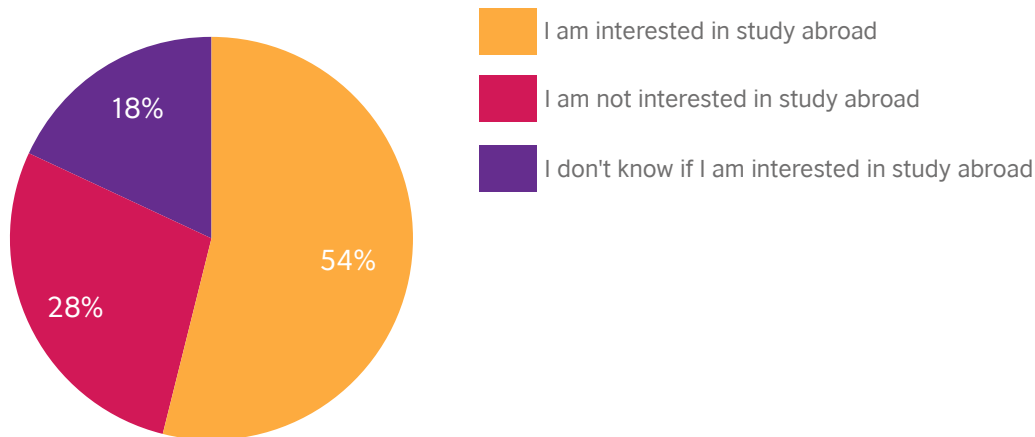
Respondents were then asked if an overseas study experience could work to give them an advantage in the job market. The majority of students stated that it would, with the highest proportion found in the students who aspired to study abroad. This indicates that those wanting to study abroad do see professional value in the experience, possibly more than those who have already studied abroad; this could be because those who had already studied abroad may have encountered issues in the job market post-overseas experience. Sixty-four per cent of people not interested in study abroad agreed that the experience could provide an edge in the marketplace. It seems students do understand that there is a career impact of study abroad, but perhaps do not understand its significance.

# US data analysis

## Student profile

The survey was completed by 4,625 US citizens and permanent residents who were studying full-time in early 2015. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2012 there were 20,642,819 students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, roughly 17.7 million of whom were at the undergraduate level (inclusive of associate degree programmes and vocational/technical programmes) and 2.9 million of whom were at the postgraduate level, including master's and doctoral degrees as well as specialised courses for law and medicine.<sup>20,21</sup>

### Are you interested in study abroad?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

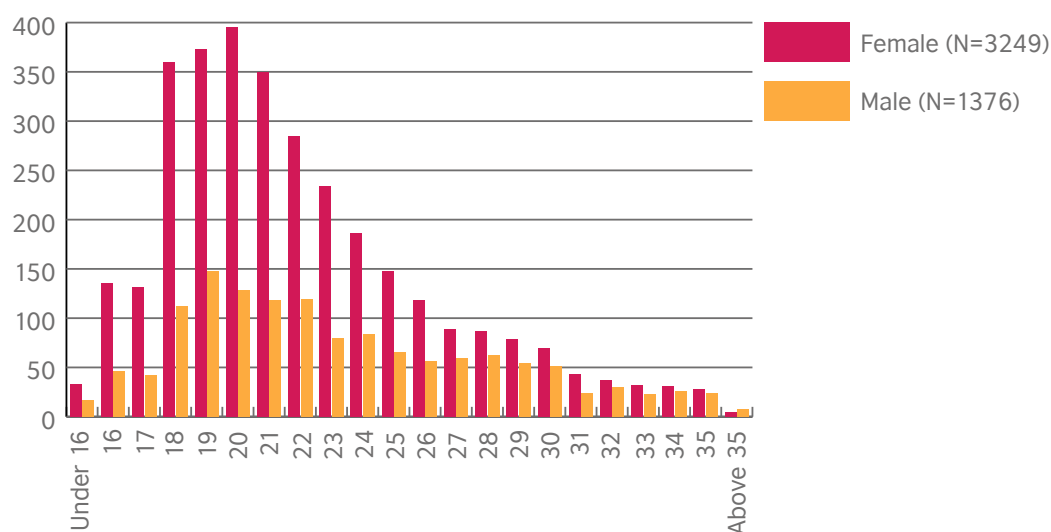
Fifty-four per cent of respondents stated that they were interested in study abroad, while 28 per cent indicated they were not interested in the experience and 18 per cent said they remained undecided. Of those who were interested in study abroad, 30 per cent had already completed one overseas study experience. This level of interest in overseas study is significantly higher than the actual proportion of students who study abroad; according to the Institute of International Education, nine per cent of US undergraduates study abroad.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Fast Facts." National Center for Educational Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

<sup>21</sup> "Glossary of NCES Definitions." National Center for Educational Statistics. Retrieved from <https://access.ewu.edu/Documents/Institutional%20Research/NCES%20Glossary.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Institute of International Education

## Age and gender of respondents



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The majority of survey respondents were female (70%), though the level of interest among male respondents was slightly higher (57% of males were considering study abroad as compared to 52% of females). In 2012-2013, 65 per cent of US students studying abroad were female and in the US there is a higher proportion of degrees conferred to females.<sup>23</sup> While the survey respondents ranged in age from under 16 to over 35, 64 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 24, inclusive.

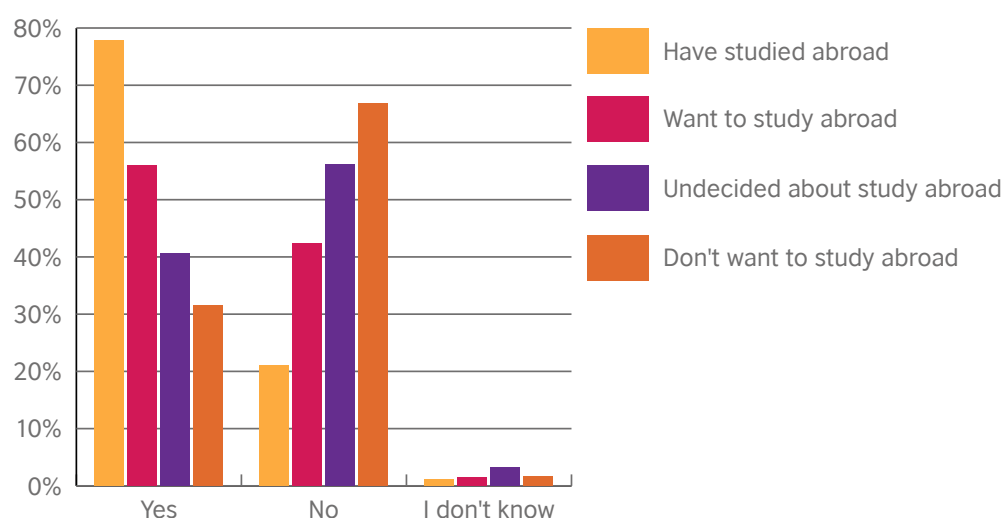
Respondents were from all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia, with the highest proportion of participants were from California, New York, Texas, Florida and Illinois. Currently, the top sending states in terms of numbers are California, Texas and New York, according to the IIE.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs, roughly 37 per cent of Americans own a passport, as of 2013. Our survey showed that 67 per cent of students aspiring to study abroad had a passport as compared to 47 per cent of those who are not interested – though this proportion is still higher than the national average.

<sup>23</sup> "Fast Facts." National Center for Educational Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>



## Do you speak more than one language?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

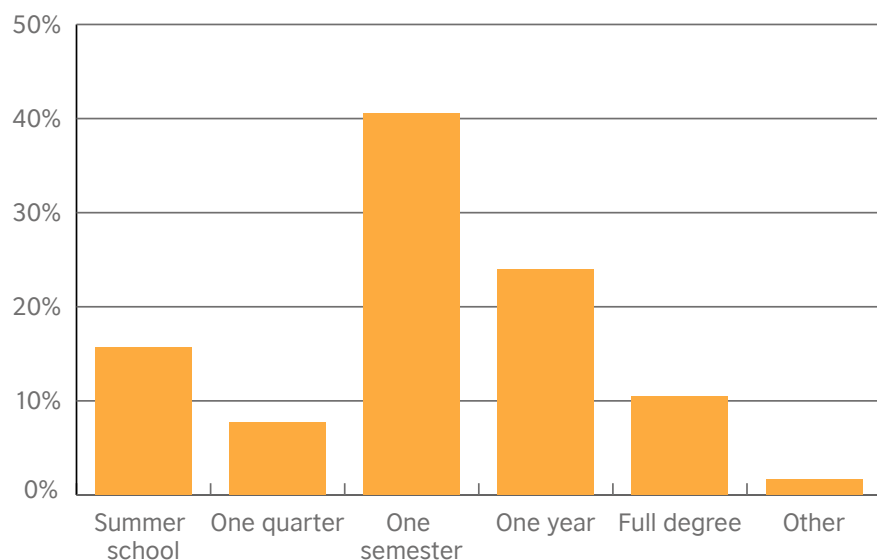
The 2015 survey showed a clear correlation between the ability to speak more than one language and the desire to study abroad: 78 per cent of those who had already completed a study abroad experience spoke more than one language as compared to 31 per cent of those uninterested in study abroad who spoke more than one language.

The survey results also revealed a relationship between one or more of the respondents' parents studying abroad and student interest in overseas study. Thirty-nine per cent of those who had already studied abroad had a parent that did the same, as compared to those aspiring to study abroad (13% had a parent who studied abroad) and those not interested or undecided (5%).

## Courses and destinations

Of the 2,480 students who indicated they were interested in study abroad, 1,733 had not yet undertaken the experience; we asked this group to share their desired courses and destinations for overseas study.

### Preferred duration of overseas study

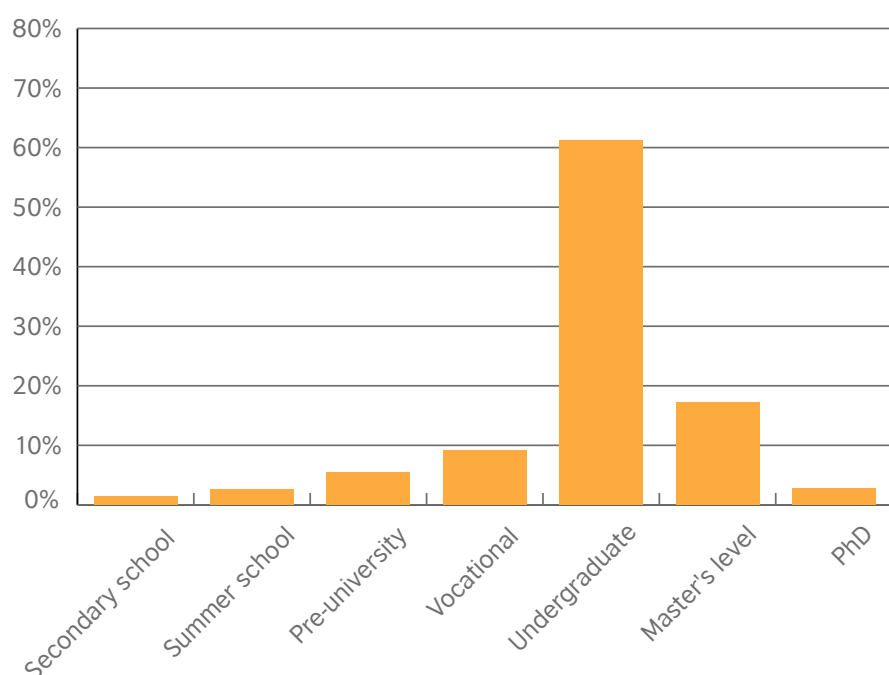


Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The highest proportion of students (41%) said they would want to go abroad for one semester, followed by those who selected one year (24%), summer school (16%) and a full degree (11%). Just eight per cent of respondents said they would want to study abroad for one quarter. Statistics show that of US students who study abroad, 38 per cent do so over the summer term, 34 per cent do so for one semester and 15 per cent do so for eight weeks or less during the academic year.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Institute of International Education

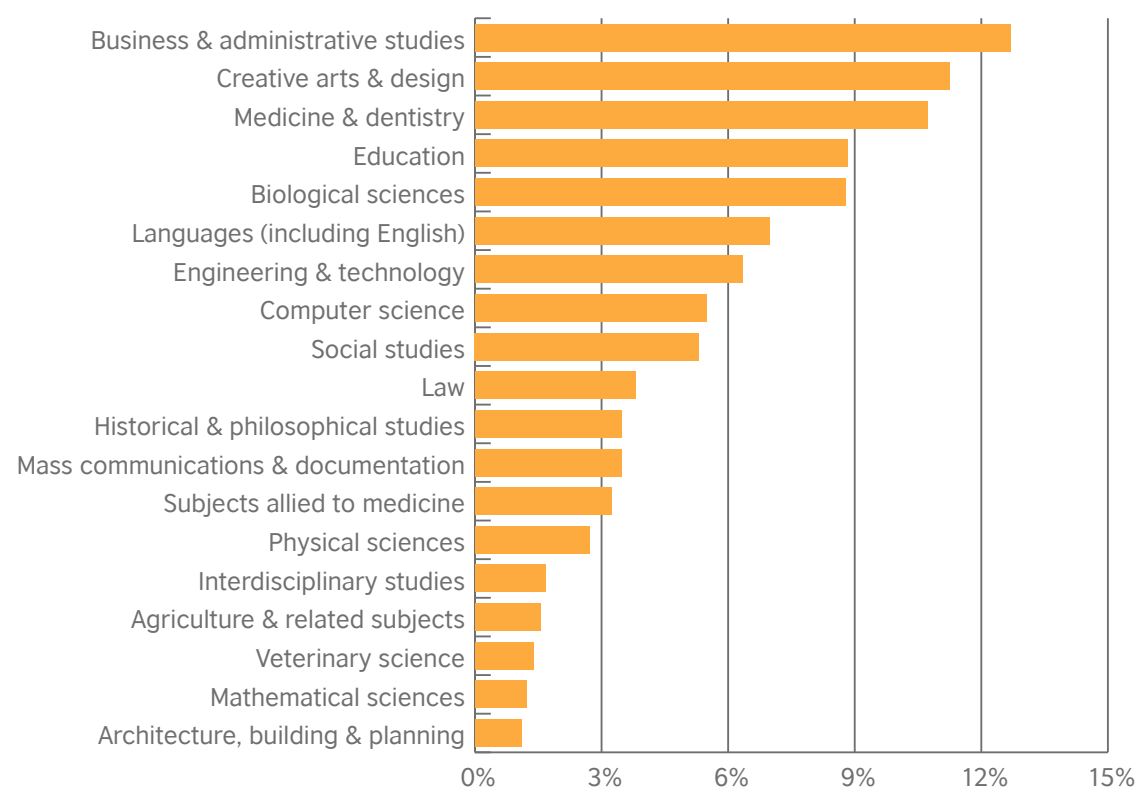
## Preferred level of overseas study



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The majority of respondents (61%) wanted to engage in overseas study at the undergraduate level. Other students planned for the experience at the master's level (17%), vocational level (9%) or at pre-university level (6%). Relatively small proportions of respondents were interested in overseas study at secondary school, for summer school or at the doctoral level. According to the IIE, of US students studying a full degree abroad in 2012, 58 per cent were at the postgraduate level.

## Desired courses for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

US students most wanted to study abroad for Business and administrative studies (13%), followed by Creative arts and design (11%), Medicine and dentistry (11%), Education (9%) and Biological sciences (9%). The top subjects varied with desired level of study abroad: those who wanted an overseas experience at the undergraduate level were mostly interested in Business and administrative studies, Creative arts and design, Biological sciences and Medicine and dentistry and those at the postgraduate level mostly selected Medicine and dentistry, Education, and Business and administrative studies.

Official statistics show that in 2012, 34 per cent of those studying abroad for a full degree were doing so in STEM subjects and the top fields of study for study abroad were Social sciences, Business and management, the Humanities, Physical or Life Sciences, and Fine or Applied Arts.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Institute for International Education*

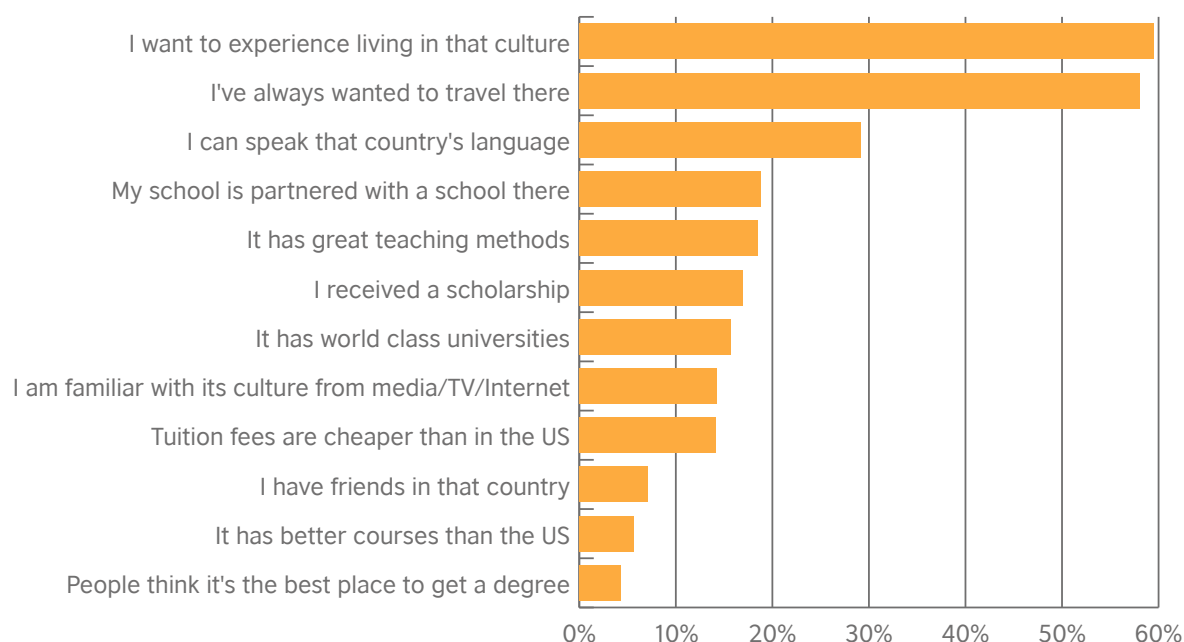
## Study abroad destinations

UK	21%
France	11%
Italy	9%
Australia	8%
Japan	6%
Spain	6%
Germany	5%
Ireland	3%
China	3%
South Korea	2%

Those aspiring to study abroad were asked in what country they would like to complete their experience. The highest percentage of students chose the UK (21%), followed by France (11%), Italy (9%) and Australia (8%).

The top destination countries for those who wanted to study abroad at the undergraduate level were the UK, Italy, France and Australia while the most desired locations for postgraduate study were the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Australia. According to the IIE, the top five destinations for US students studying for credit overseas in 2012-2013 were the UK (12.5%), Italy (10.3%), Spain (9.1%), France (5.9%) and China (5%). Australia dropped to the number eight spot (2.9%). Europe hosted 53% of American students, followed by Latin America (15.7%) and Asia (12.4%).<sup>26</sup>

## Most important factors when choosing a study destination



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

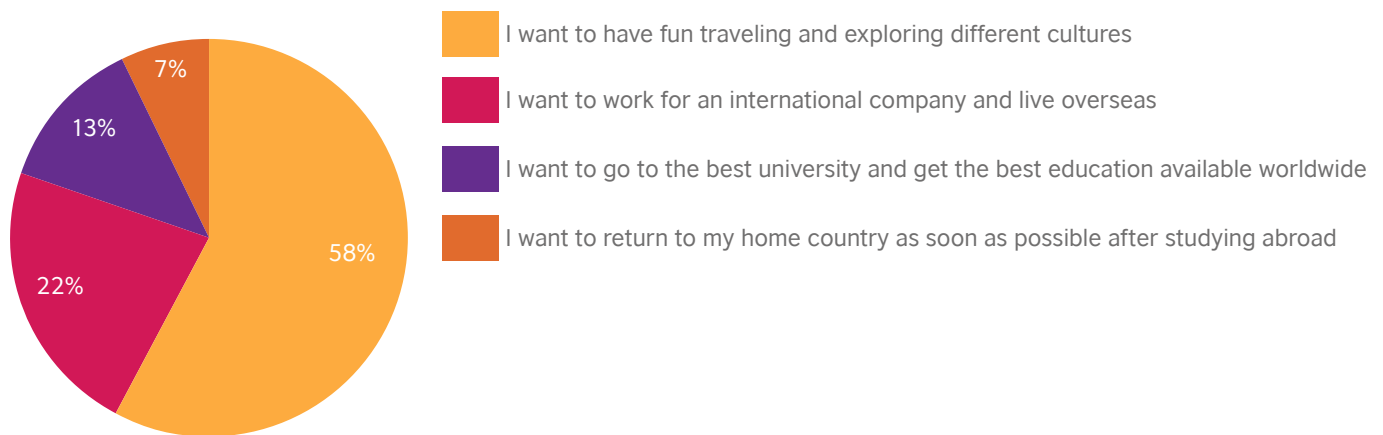
<sup>26</sup> Institute of International Education

Surveyed students were asked to select up to three main considerations when choosing a study abroad destination. Sixty per cent stated they wanted to experience living in the culture of their selected country and 58 per cent said they always wanted to travel there. The third most popular factor, selected by 29 per cent, was the ability to speak that country's language. Considerations related to the quality of the course, teaching and fees were all selected less frequently and the fewest number of respondents stated that anecdotal evidence of a high-quality education was the most important factor.

## Drivers of study abroad

The total number of survey respondents interested in studying abroad was 2,480, 727 of whom had already been internationally mobile during a course of study. This group was asked about the perceived and actual drivers for overseas study.

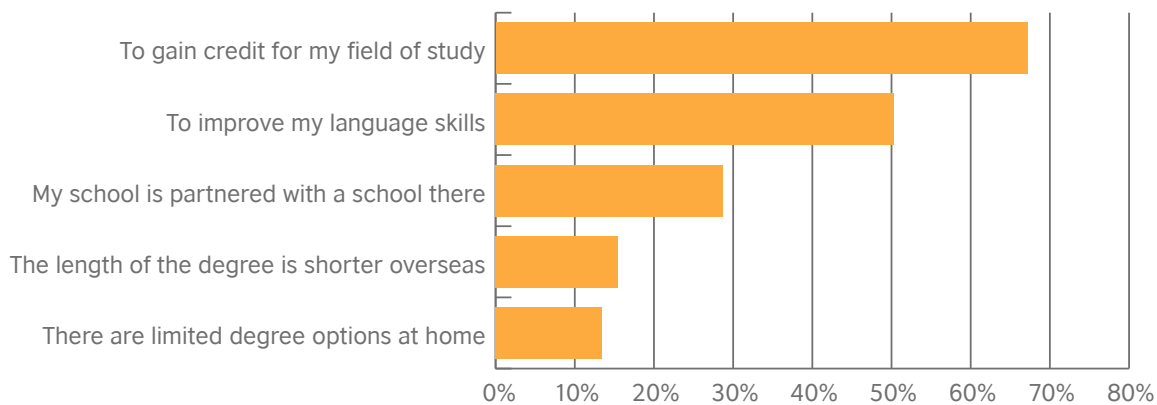
### Future aspirations



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Respondents were asked to choose which of the above four statements they most agreed with and the majority (58%) stated that they most wanted to have fun traveling and exploring different cultures. Just under one quarter (22%) wanted to work for an international company and live overseas whilst smaller percentages chose wanting to get the best education from the best university (13%) and wanting to return home as soon as possible after overseas study (7%). Interestingly, when the survey responses of the group of already-mobile students are isolated, the proportion of students who wanted to live and work overseas increases.

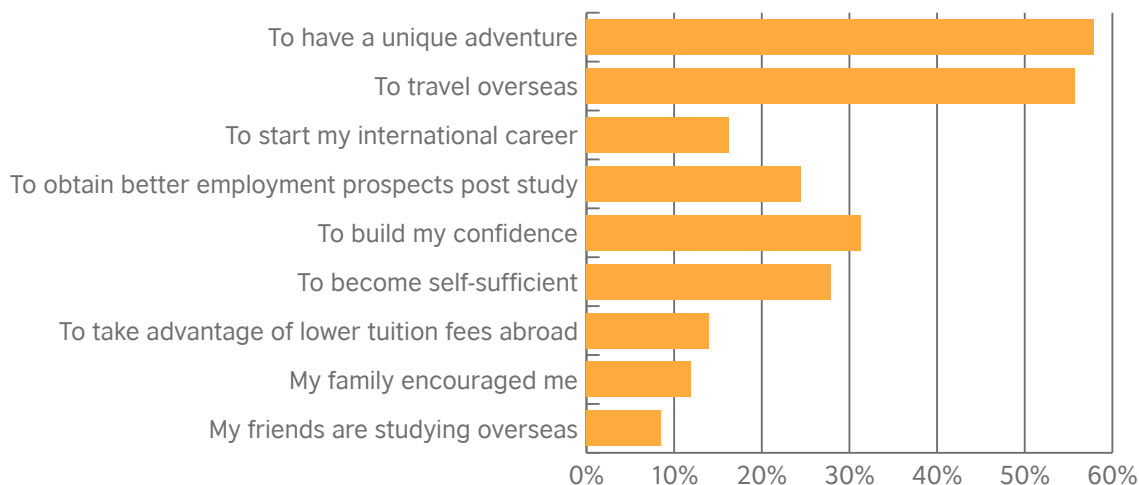
## Academic drivers for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Students interested in study abroad indicated that the most critical academic driver was gaining credit in their field of study (67%), followed by improving their language skills (50%). Other drivers were chosen with less frequency, including that their school was partnered with a school there (29%), the length of the degree may be shorter (15%) and there are limited degree options at home (13%).

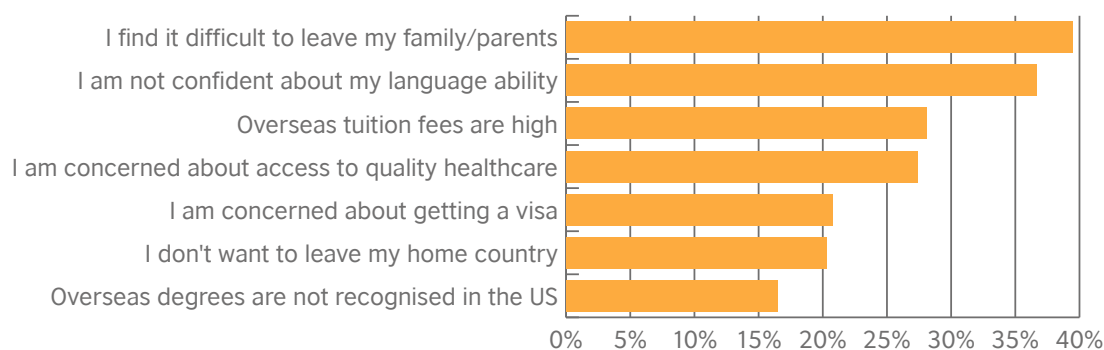
## Non-academic drivers for study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Similar to the main factors for choosing a destination, respondents largely said that the non-academic drivers for study abroad were to have a unique adventure (58%) and to travel overseas (56%). Respondents also stated that they valued the opportunity to build their confidence (31%) and become self-sufficient (28%). Some respondents stated that professional motivations came into play: 24 per cent said they wanted to obtain better employment prospects and 16 per cent said they wanted to start their international careers. Friends and family were the least important drivers, with 12 per cent and nine per cent respectively saying their encouragement was a main factor.

## Concerns regarding study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

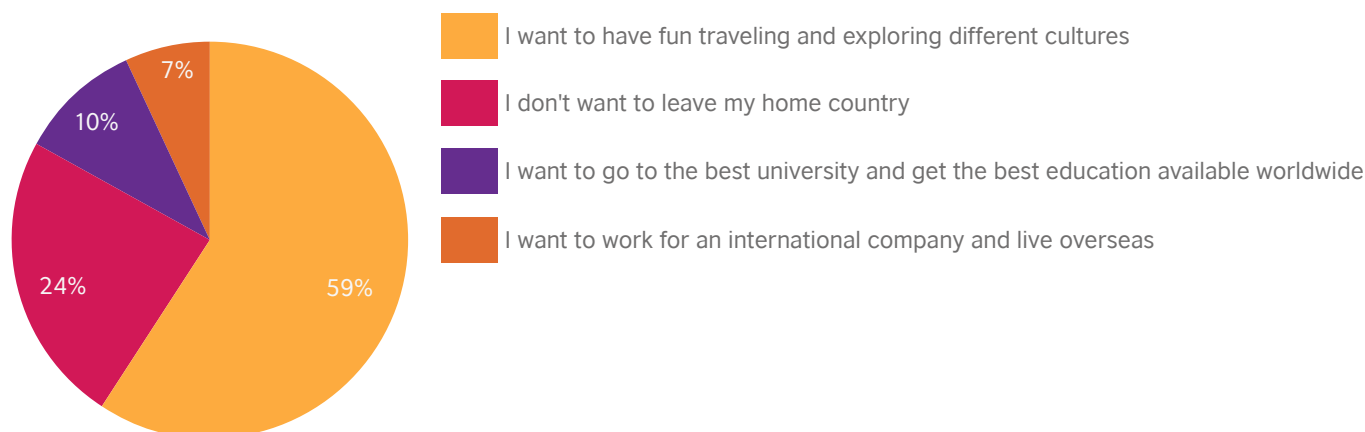
Students considering study abroad, some of whom had already been internationally mobile, were asked about their concerns regarding the experience. The highest percentage of respondents stated it would be difficult to leave their family (39%) followed by they were not confident in their language abilities (37%), overseas tuition is high (28%) and they may not have access to quality healthcare (27%). Less than a quarter of students were concerned about not getting a visa (21%), not wanting to leave the US (20%) and that overseas degrees may not be recognised in the US (16%). Respondents were allowed to select up to three answers.

Interestingly, those who had already studied abroad were least concerned about overseas tuition being high, perhaps indicating that concerns regarding costs may be more perceived than actual. However, when asked if the level of US tuition fees influenced their decision to study abroad, 58 per cent of respondents stated that it did.

## Perceived barriers to study abroad

Of the surveyed students, 1,297 said they were not interested in studying abroad and an additional 848 said they were undecided on the issue. In order to better understand these groups and how to possibly incentivise them to consider study abroad, these 2,145 respondents were asked about their perceived barriers to study abroad.

### What statement do you most identify with?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Despite the fact that 24 per cent of those who were not interested in or undecided about study abroad said they did not want to leave their home country, over half of students (59%) stated they did in fact want to travel and explore other cultures and an additional seven per cent stated they wanted to live overseas. Just 24 per cent of respondents stated they did not want to leave their home country.



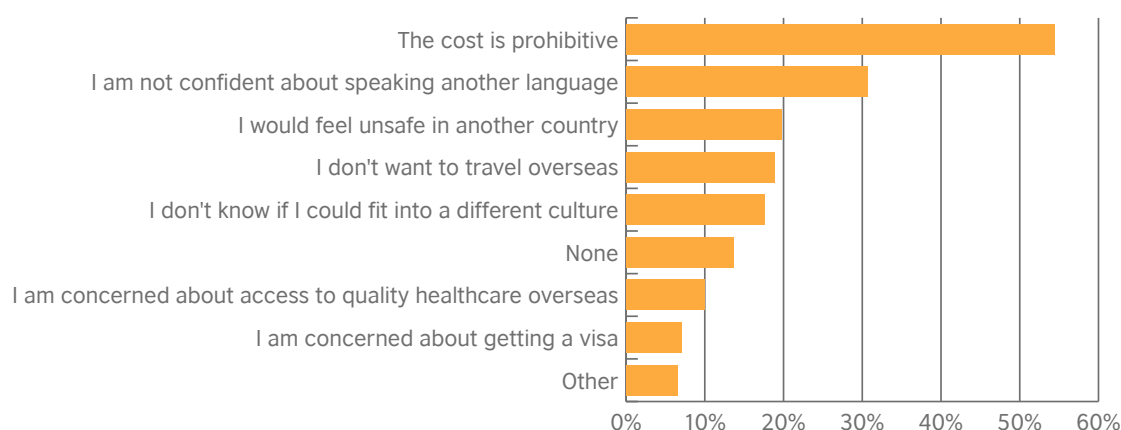
## Academic deterrents to study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

The lack of foreign language skills was cited by 45 per cent of US students as the top perceived barrier to study abroad. Just over one quarter (26%) stated there were no academic deterrents and fewer than one in five students said barriers included not gaining credit (16%), a lack of degree recognition (15%) and the difficulty of overseas programmes (12%). Eight per cent of students chose to state their own academic reasons.

## Non-academic deterrents to study abroad



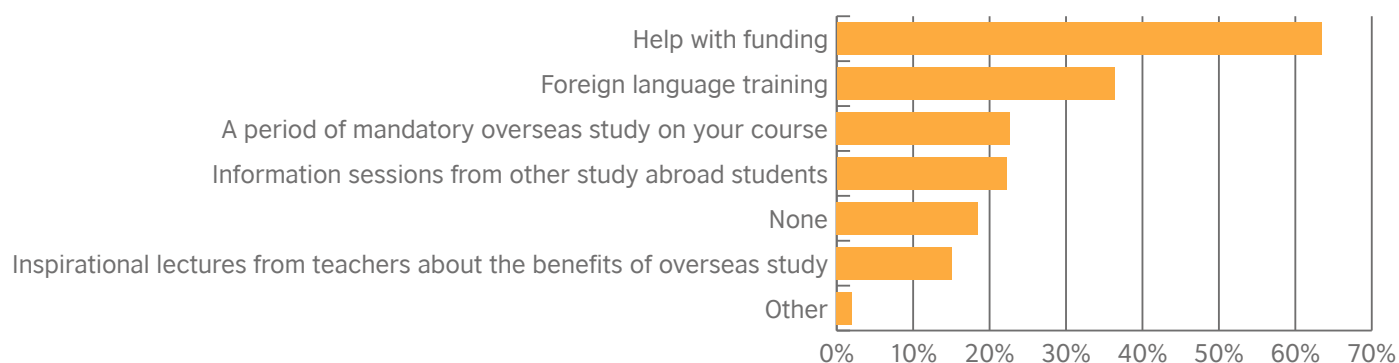
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Over half (54%) of students who were undecided about or uninterested in study abroad stated that a non-academic barrier to the experience was cost and almost one third (31%) said they were not confident speaking another language. Other concerns included not feeling safe in another country (20%), not wanting to travel overseas (19%) and fearing not fitting into another culture (18%). Seven per cent gave other reasons, which were predominantly about not wanting to leave family and loved ones.

Overall, the perceived barriers to study abroad for US students were cost and language, which was seen as both an academic and a non-academic deterrent. As mentioned earlier, costs were less of a concern for those who had already been mobile, perhaps indicating that the assumption of cost is a bigger issue than cost itself. According to the IIE, costs are one of the main barriers to overseas study and as such, study abroad is undertaken mostly by those from a higher socioeconomic background.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Institute of International Education

## Factors that could encourage consideration of study abroad



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

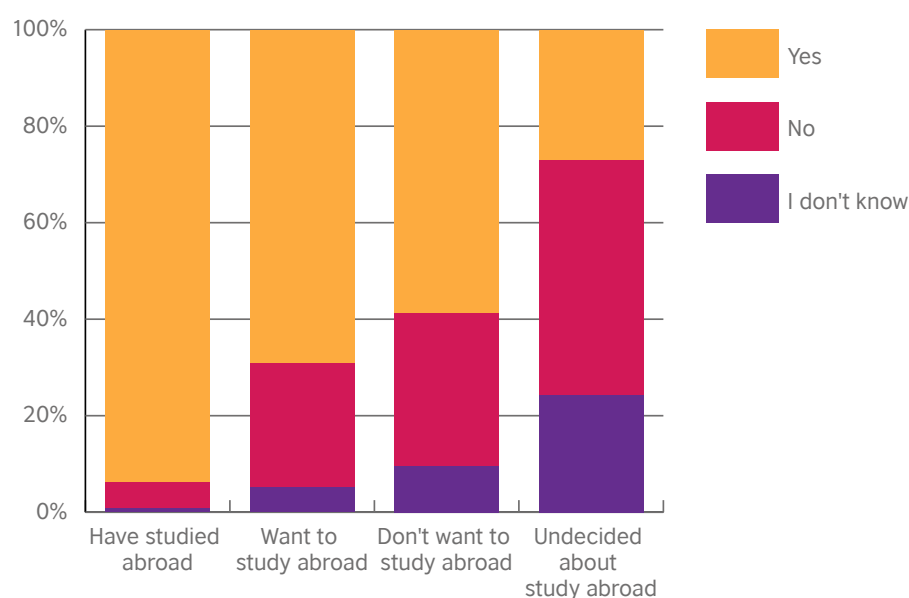
With cost as the main barrier to overseas study, help with funding was by far the most popular incentive chosen by students, selected by 63 per cent of students in this category. Thirty-five per cent of students said foreign language support would also motivate them and 23 per cent said they would be driven to study abroad if it was a compulsory part of their course.

Less than one quarter of people said that information sessions, either by other students (selected by 22 per cent) or teachers (15%) would incentivise them, indicating that they want more than anecdotal information as motivation. In order to understand the types of information most valued by students, respondents were asked about their awareness as well as their sources in the following section.

## Awareness of study abroad

Improved access to information is often one of the goals of outward mobility studies and initiatives so it is important to understand what sources students use and how satisfied they are with the amount of information they collect. All survey respondents, regardless of their sentiment about study abroad, were asked about their satisfaction with the information they used to make their decisions.

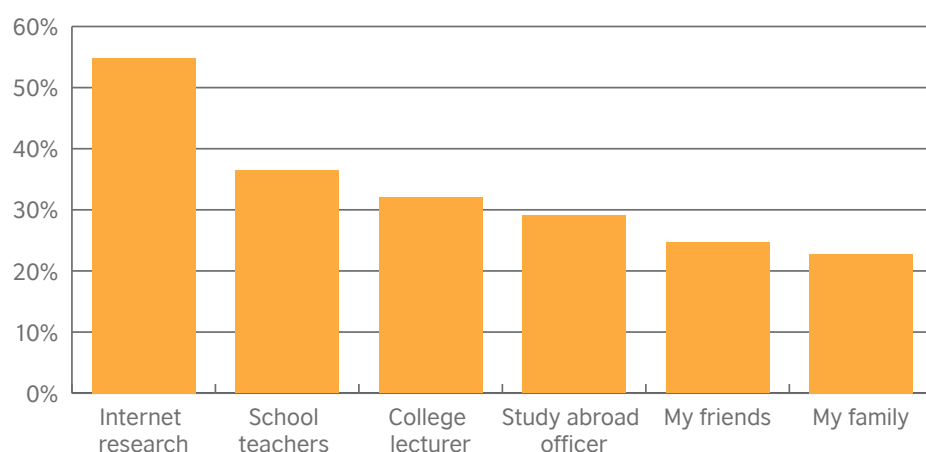
### Did you have enough information to make your decision?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Of those who already studied abroad, 94 per cent stated that they had enough information to make their decision. Of those who aspired to overseas study, 69 per cent said they did and of those who were not interested in study abroad, 59 per cent said they did. Just over one quarter (27%) of those who had yet to make a decision said they had enough information, despite being undecided. Nearly all students who were mobile prior to completing the survey felt happy with the amount of information they had.

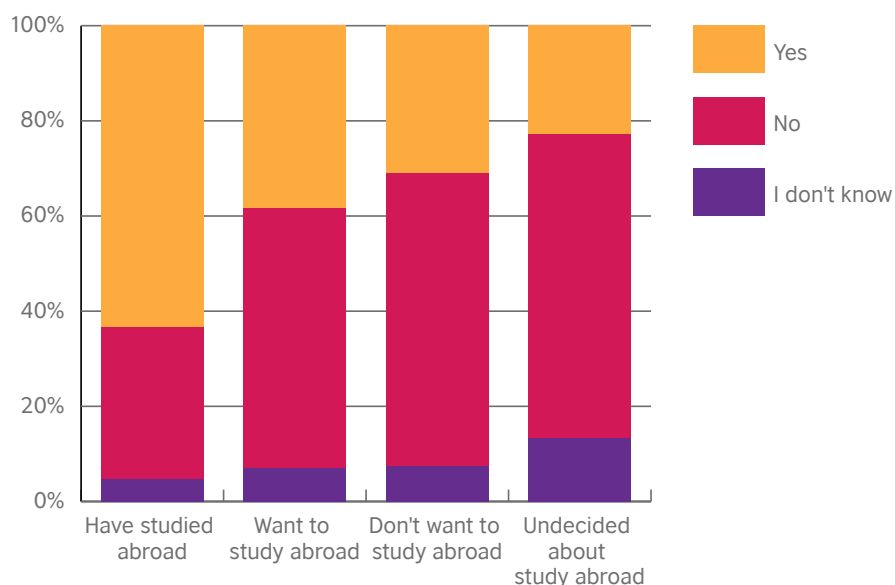
## Information sources



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Those who were interested in study abroad were asked about their information sources; students mostly used the Internet (55%), followed by their schoolteachers (36%), college lecturers (32%), study abroad officers (29%), friends (25%) and family (23%). Those who were uninterested in study abroad further stated that they would only be moderately incentivised by inspirational talks from teachers and study abroad ‘alumni’.

## Awareness of government sponsored programmes:



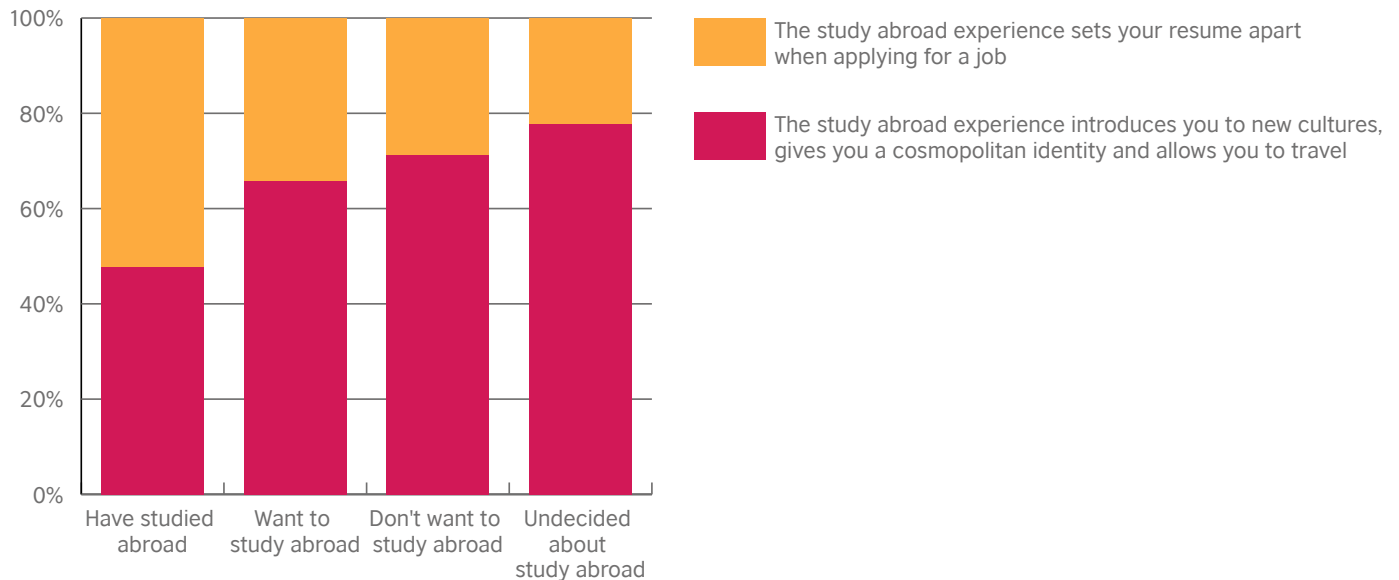
Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Given the launch of outward mobility initiatives in the US, we asked participants if they knew about government-sponsored programmes. Sixty-three per cent of those who have already been internationally mobile were aware of one or more government-sponsored efforts, though it is unclear if the initiatives were financial or programmatic. Awareness of government programmes was lower for those who aspired to study abroad (38%), those who were undecided (31%) and those who were not interested (23%), perhaps indicated an area in which those not interested in study abroad could be further informed.

## The value of study abroad

US policymakers have emphasised the need for American students to be globally skilled and aware in order to compete in an increasingly competitive market. Competencies ranging from intercultural understanding to foreign language skills and international market knowledge are increasingly in demand by employers inside the US and abroad; given that these skills are often learned whilst abroad, respondents were asked what they perceived to be the overall value of the overseas study experience.

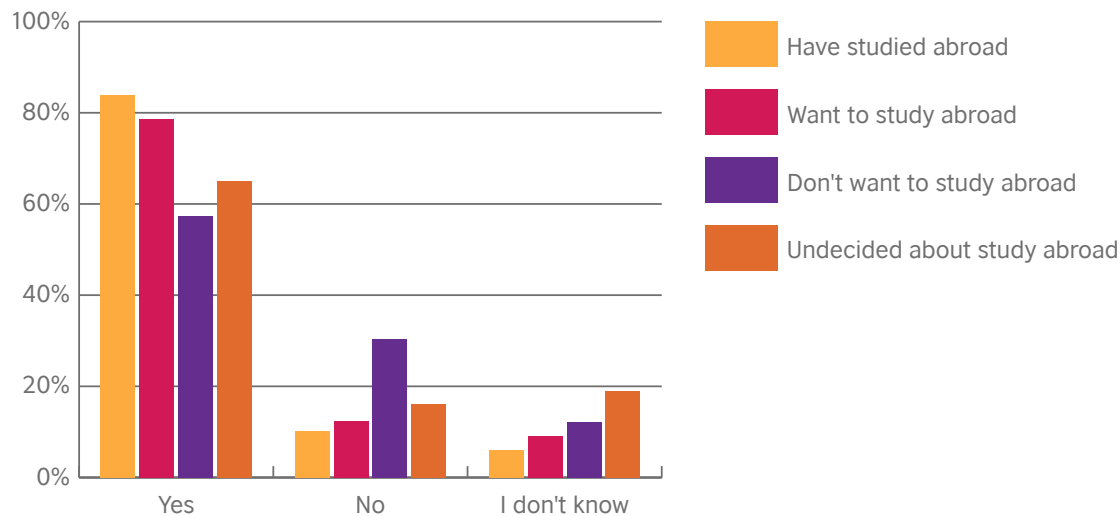
### Which statement do you most agree with?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Just over half of students (52%) who had completed a study abroad experience indicated that the experience sets one's resume apart when applying for a job, whereas the majority of respondents in all three other categories – including those who aspired to study abroad – stated that the study abroad experience introduced people to new cultures, giving them a cosmopolitan identity and allowing them to travel; seventy-eight per cent of students not interested in study abroad selected this statement. This trend illustrates the idea that knowledge of the links between employability and study abroad may be an outcome of the overseas study experience itself.

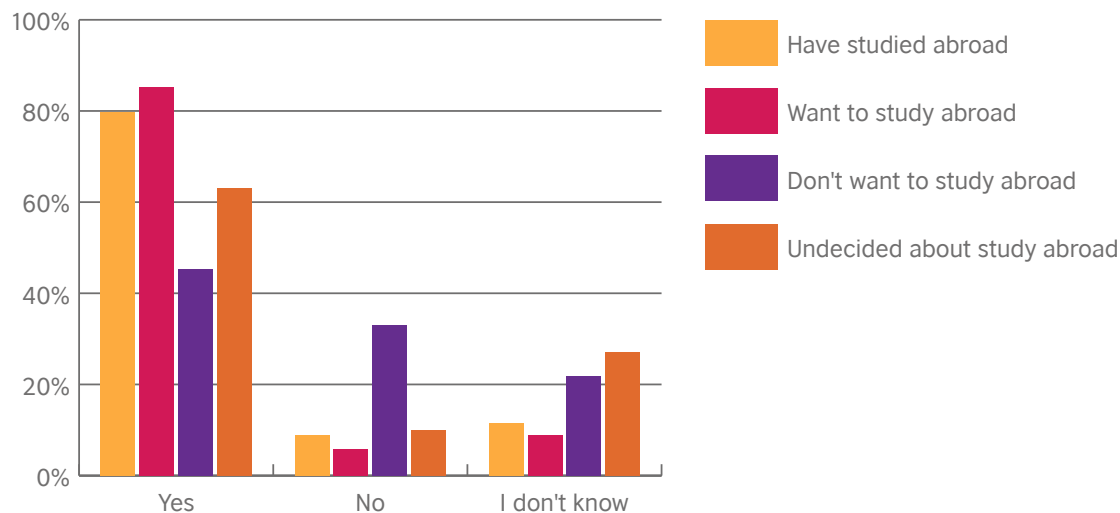
## When you graduate will you need more than your degree to stand out from the crowd and get the job you want?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

We asked respondents if they thought they would need more than their degree after graduation to stand out and get the job they want and the majority of students in all groups stated they would. Eighty-four per cent of those who had already studied abroad, alongside 79 per cent of those who aspired to indicated they would need more than just their degree. Fifty-seven per cent of students who were not interested in study abroad also agreed that they would need more than their degree to secure employment.

## Do you think an overseas study experience could give you the edge you need to stand out when applying for jobs?



Source: British Council Education Intelligence

Respondents were then asked if a study abroad experience could work to give them an advantage in getting a job. Forty-five per cent of those not interested in study abroad said that they thought the experience could boost their career prospects, alongside 63 per cent of those who were undecided. Interestingly, 85 per cent of those who aspired to study abroad thought the experience would give them the edge they needed, which was a higher proportion than the 80 per cent of already mobile students who agreed. This slightly elevated expectation could possibly be because some who already have completed a study abroad experience may have had difficulties in the job market, post-overseas study experience.

# UK-US comparative analysis

In broad strokes, UK and US students held similar beliefs, positive and negative, regarding overseas study with a few notable examples. In this section, we highlight the differences in order to better understand areas of excellence and for growth in each country.

## Student profiles

The profiles of the surveyed students in the UK and the US varied slightly. The sample of UK students skewed younger, with 31 per cent under the age of 18 and the majority of respondents between the ages of 16 and 21; seven per cent were above the age of 35. The US respondents, on the other hand, were mostly between 18 and 25, with 69 per cent of the sample falling in this age range. There were a higher proportion of female respondents in the US (70%) as compared to the UK (55%). US students were slightly more likely to speak a second language (50 per cent indicated they did as compared to 44 per cent of those from the UK). However, UK students were much more likely to have a passport, with 93 per cent of respondents saying they owned one compared to the 62 per cent from the US.

When asked if they were interested in studying abroad, 34 per cent of UK students stated they were, while 54 per cent of US students said they were. About equal proportions of students from each sample indicated they were unsure about study abroad. Of the students who were not interested or undecided about study abroad, 62 per cent of UK respondents and 66 per cent of US participants stated they want to travel or work overseas.

## Overseas study aspirations

Desired courses and destinations for UK and US students were somewhat similar, with some marked differences. UK students had a slightly higher preference (26 per cent as compared to 20 per cent) for studying abroad at the postgraduate level, inclusive of doctoral level programmes while US students were very slightly more likely to want to study abroad at the undergraduate level inclusive of vocational education (70 per cent of US students selected these options as compared to 64 per cent of UK students).

There were distinct differences in preferences regarding the duration of study abroad, with US students selecting shorter-term options such as summer school, one quarter and one semester in higher proportions and UK students indicating they more preferred one year and full-degree programmes. Forty-one per cent of US students desired a one-semester long overseas study experience and 47 per cent of UK students wanted one-year long course abroad.

## What course would you like to study abroad?

UK	US
Creative arts & design	Business & administrative studies
Social studies	Creative arts & design
Business & administrative studies	Medicine & dentistry
Languages (including English)	Education
Biological sciences	Biological sciences
Historical & philosophical studies	Languages (including English)
Engineering & technology	Engineering & technology
Medicine & dentistry	Computer science

Creative arts and design, Business and administrative studies, Languages, Biological sciences and Engineering and technology were top subjects of interest for both groups but US students were more likely to want to go abroad for Medicine and dentistry as well as Education, while UK students were more likely to go for Social studies or Historical and philosophical studies.

## Destination of choice

UK	US
US	UK
Australia	France
France	Italy
Germany	Australia
Canada	Japan
Spain	Spain
Netherlands	Germany
Japan	Ireland
Italy	China
New Zealand	South Korea
Sweden	British Virgin Islands
China	Brazil
Rest of world	Rest of world

The US and the UK each select the other as a top destination of choice when it comes to study abroad, though it seems US interest is slightly more diversified. Forty per cent of UK students wanted to study in the US and 21 per cent of US students wanted to go to the UK. The profiles of these students will be further explored.

While France, Australia, Germany, Spain, Italy, China and Japan are shared top destinations, UK students were slightly more amenable to Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden while US students were more likely to consider Ireland, South Korea, the British Virgin Islands and Brazil.



## Study abroad profiles

In order to understand if and how UK students profile study destinations, we examined how subject choice relates to destination choice. We found that preferred countries varied according to choice preference:

UK students interested in studying...	Were most interested in...
Creative arts and design	US, Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand
Business and administrative studies	US, Canada, Australia, Spain
Languages (including English)	France, Germany, US, Spain, Japan, China
Social studies	US, Australia, Canada, Germany
Physical and biological sciences	US, Australia, Germany, Norway
Medicine, dentistry and allied subjects	US, Australia, Sweden

With the exception of students interested in Languages (including English), the US was the top destination of choice for the top courses, with Australia, Germany and France showing up often. Japan and China were valued highly by those interested in Languages and Norway and Sweden came up as top destinations for those interested in the sciences and medicine.

In order to understand if and how US students profile study destinations, we examined how subject choice relates to desired destination and found that country choice varied according to course:

US students interested in studying...	Were most interested in...
Business and administrative studies	UK, Italy, Australia, France, Spain
Creative arts & design	UK, Italy, France, Japan
Medicine, dentistry and subjects allied to medicine	UK, Italy, France
Education	UK, France, Spain, Australia
Biological and Physical sciences	UK, Australia, France, Italy
Languages (including English)	France, Spain, UK, Japan
Engineering and technology	UK, France, China, Japan

With the exception of students interested in Languages (including English), the UK was the destination of choice and was often selected with Italy, Spain, France and Australia. China was the fourth highest destination for those who wanted to study abroad in Engineering and technology and the seventh choice for those interested in Business and administrative studies. Japan was also seen as an attractive destination for students of Creative arts and design, Languages and Engineering and technology.

*Looking closer at the profiles of the UK students interested in studying in the US, we found that they were most likely to be on a one-year course (46%) at the undergraduate level (56%), studying Creative arts and design (17%), Business and administrative studies (13%), Social studies (11%), Law (8%) or Biological sciences (8%). We found the top reasons that UK students select the US were wanting to travel there (63%), wanting to experience living in American culture (55%), the world class universities (38%) and the ability to speak English, widely spoken in the US (31%).*

*US students who want to study in the UK most likely want to do it for one semester (40%) at the undergraduate level (59%), studying Business and administrative studies (14%), Creative arts and design (12%), Education (10%), or Computer science (8%). The main drivers to want to study in the UK include wanting to travel there (58%), wanting to experience living in that culture (51%) and being able to speak English, the main language in the UK (39%).*

## Similar drivers and barriers

UK and US students were inspired to study abroad for a number of similar reasons, though to different degrees.

### Top sentiments regarding study abroad were similar for UK and US students who were interested in study abroad:

	UK	US
<b>What are your academic drivers for wanting to study abroad?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To gain credit for my course</li> <li>To improve my language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To gain credit for my course</li> <li>To improve my language skills</li> </ul>
<b>What are your non-academic drivers for wanting to study abroad?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To travel overseas</li> <li>To have a unique adventure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have a unique adventure</li> <li>To travel overseas</li> </ul>
<b>What are your concerns regarding study abroad?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to quality healthcare</li> <li>Difficulty leaving family</li> <li>Overseas tuition fees are high</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty leaving family</li> <li>Lack of confidence in language skills</li> </ul>

The main academic and non-academic drivers for study abroad were largely the same for UK and US students with the exception that UK students showed a higher level of consideration with regards to the employment prospects that are related to study abroad; UK students were more likely to be motivated by overseas study bettering career prospects and starting an international career as compared to their US counterparts. UK students who were interested in study abroad were more likely to be concerned about tuition fees and access to healthcare while their US counterparts were more uneasy about their language skills.

The top perceived barriers to and concerns regarding study abroad were identical for UK and US students who were interested in study abroad. A perceived lack of foreign language skills as well as concerns about cost were the main barriers to overseas study and help with each of the issues would incentivise UK as well as US students uninterested in study abroad to consider overseas study. A higher percentage of UK students indicated that they could be incentivised by inspirational talks by peers and teachers, while a higher percentage of US students stated they could not be motivated to consider study abroad.

## Differences of opinion

As the barriers and drivers to study abroad were similar for both UK and US students, it is important to examine top divergent opinions to better understand what may contribute to the difference in overall interest in study abroad.

*Links to employability:* The majority of both UK and US students interested in study abroad stated that the overseas study experience was a way to supplement their degree and obtain the job they want. Sixty-seven per cent of UK students and 52 per cent of US students not considering overseas study believed this to be true showing that UK students were more aware of the links, even if they were not interested in the international study experience itself.

*Living and working abroad:* While the highest proportions of both UK and US students defined themselves as people who wanted to have fun traveling and exploring different cultures, a higher percentage of UK students interested in overseas study wanted to live and work overseas as compared to their US counterparts (30 per cent as compared to 22 per cent for US students).

*Awareness of government programmes:* Respondents were asked if they were aware of their government-sponsored programmes to promote overseas study. A larger percentage of US students were aware of such initiatives: 37 per cent stated they knew about such programmes, while 55 per cent said they didn't and eight per cent indicated they didn't know. In contrast, 15 per cent of UK students were aware of government programmes and 80 per cent were not, with five per cent stating they did not know. It is likely that UK students do know about initiatives like Erasmus but do not realise that they are government-sponsored or offer funding.

*Access to information:* Knowledge of government programmes may be linked to access to information. Survey respondents were asked if they felt they knew enough information to make an informed decision about studying overseas. Sixty-three per cent of US students said they did have enough information, while 28 per cent said they did not and nine per cent said they were unsure. UK indicated they were less happy with their access to information, with 40 per cent saying they had enough as compared to 48 per cent who stated they did not and 12 per cent who said they did not know. Both UK and US students primarily used the Internet as an information source, but US students were more likely to use a wider variety of sources. However, UK students did indicate that they could be further incentivised by inspirational talks with peers and teachers about study abroad.

# Conclusion

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This year's *Broadening Horizons* research examined students who had previously studied abroad to evaluate how perceptions of drivers and barriers change with experience. While all students indicated that they were most motivated to study abroad by the idea of a unique adventure, the interests of those from the UK and the US who had previously studied abroad were more diverse. This group was comparatively more motivated to study abroad due to a country's language or because of existing friendships and were less concerned with costs associated with the experience. Perhaps most importantly, returning students indicated a higher level of understanding of the links between career prospects and their overseas experience.

The opportunity to speak a different language was both a driver as well as a deterrent to overseas study for both UK and US students. To be sure, the idea of isolation is a worry to many young people, compounded by the possibility of not being able to communicate. Our research shows, however, that fears about lack of language skills may be more perceived than actual, and that language is a compelling reason students who have studied abroad want to continue overseas study.

One of the most significant outcomes of the study abroad experience is student awareness that he or she has been able to gain personal and professional skills, alongside an academic education, to boost their career prospects at home and internationally. The majority of UK and US survey respondents did recognise that a study abroad experience could provide the edge they need to get the job they want, but this didn't translate seamlessly into a driver for the experience. However, those that did study abroad were more likely to want to work and live overseas, demonstrative of their global outlooks.

Costs associated with study abroad are not inconsequential, and the financial burden was a top barrier to overseas study for both UK and US students. This, however, was not true of those who had already been mobile for their studies: while the tuition fee necessary for study abroad was a concern, it was not a dominant one. Having been through the experience, this group of students had a deeper understanding of actual costs alongside their options, inclusive of scholarships and funding mechanisms. This information and their experience render the top barrier to overseas study surmountable.

Accessible information is a key to incentivising students and minimising anxieties regarding study abroad. One key difference between UK and US students, according to the survey, is that US students had a higher degree of satisfaction with the information they were able to access, and relied on a more diverse range of sources, leading to a broader knowledge of their options, including pursuing government-sponsored outward mobility programmes. UK students aspiring to study abroad indicated a desire to communicate more with students who had previously studied abroad in order to obtain first-hand knowledge regarding not only the logistics of study abroad, but the overall value – culturally, academically, and professionally – of the overseas study experience.