

Student experiences of offshore
postgraduate study: case studies of
Australian international courses in
Singapore and Hong Kong

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Research question

How do international higher degree students experience studying for a degree delivered 'offshore' by an Australian university?

Case studies

- Singapore coursework masters
26 students
- Hong Kong coursework & thesis doctorate
21 students
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews
6 students each group
- Qualitative surveys all students

Conceptual framework

- Dimensions of identity:
 - negotiated experiences
 - community membership
 - learning trajectory
 - nexus of multi membership
 - relation between the local and the global

Research focus

- The reasons for choosing to enrol in this particular program
- The social practices of the educational program
- The integration of family, work and study

Reasons for choosing the program

- obtain a high quality, international education
- gain international perspectives on the theories and practices of their professions
- engage in academic exchange with Western lecturers
- have freedom to voice opinions
- experience 'foreign' curricula and teaching styles
- promote lifelong personal development
- enhance status through postgraduate study
- develop professional identity
- support work and family commitments while studying
- secure qualifications that are valid overseas

Social practices of the program

- avoidance of pre-reading to enable more time for family or work
- adaptability to different teaching styles and international curricula
- desire to establish rapport with lecturers and other students

Integration of family, work and study

- students had to cope with different roles at different times, and competing demands on their time
- need to prioritise family, work and study commitments
- little time for study during work
- students attempted to isolate a specific time period to study
- lack of time to fully engage with the course
- reading was the study task that suffered the most from lack of time
- identity of the offshore student involves reconciling and negotiating the various social roles in which the learner is simultaneously engaged

Propositions

- enrolling in a postgraduate international program is part of a long-term learning trajectory, where students define themselves by their educational history and established goals for success
- offshore students seek identity as members of the educational community through pursuing local ways of belonging, such as 'fitting in' to peer and cohort groups and developing fellowship with lecturers and supervisors
- offshore students deal with the demands of family, work and study by prioritising and compartmentalising roles and activities