Motivations, Expectations & Satisfaction of International Postgraduate Students in Australian Universities

Rachel Brisbane

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College of Business,

Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities

Victoria University

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ABSTRACT

International higher education is a significant industry globally. For many Australian universities, as well as the Australian economy overall, it is one of their largest revenue streams. Considerable literature exists on the motivations of universities to export education, especially offshore, and what they consider to be important, but less is known as to whether these considerations are equally valued and prioritised by students coming onshore. It was established that the perspective of international students, as one of the largest stakeholder groups, is often lacking and at best, considered only at a statistical level. Literature on student satisfaction indicated limitations in conceptual approaches, methodology and reporting of outcomes. Furthermore, satisfaction surveys that focus exclusively on academic and operational factors may exclude factors students consider important contributors to satisfaction, that are potentially useful for universities seeking a competitive advantage. An opportunity was identified to expand the current research to utilise a more student-centred approach to understand how students prioritise and other factors contributing to satisfaction that could valuably rebalance the current bias towards institutional perspectives. As many student satisfaction surveys include large numbers of undergraduate student responses, which effectively dilute the experience of other student demographics, this research focused on international postgraduate students.

The aims were to investigate nuances within the literature on students' motivations – for reputation, immigration and affordability. These were: how students prioritise these motivations in their decision making, whether there were other student determined factors important to satisfaction, if campus facilities contribute to greater satisfaction levels, how mobile students are in their study practices, and explore relationships between switching behaviours, and the resulting satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A qualitative survey of international postgraduate students, research and coursework, studying at Australian universities was conducted between June and December 2019, thematically analysed and supported with descriptive statistics.

For both research and coursework groups, it was found that reputation, affordability and immigration opportunities were secondary motivators for students, with the primary

motivation to improve employment opportunities. However, overall affordability often becomes an issue once studies are underway. Student-identified factors contributing to satisfaction included the experience of classroom diversity, social connections, the western learning environment and opportunities for professional work in conjunction with study. Regarding their preferences these students were less likely to take up options to study more flexibly, preferring to study where there are full campus facilities. It was found that switching behaviours were not a reliable indicator of satisfaction. They merely highlighted the effectiveness of structural barriers (such as administrative paperwork), a lack of alternatives offering significant improvement for the effort of changing and at best, students who were more or less satisfied but had already decided to change prior to enrolling as it was a route to the preferred university. However, when students were dissatisfied with their university, the universities' reputation became more important, becoming a critical motivator to persevere and complete the qualification. An area for improvement lies with international postgraduate research students whose experiences were more polarised.

Student Declaration

"I, Rachel Brisbane, declare that the DBA thesis entitled

Motivations, Expectations & Satisfaction of International Postgraduate Students in Australian Universities

is no more than 65,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work".

Rachel Brisbane

12 October 2020

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Motivations, Expectations & Satisfaction of International Postgraduate Students in Australian Universities

Index of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ABC – Australian Broadcasting Commission (media organisation)
CAPA – Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (student representative organisation)
CISA – Council of International Students Australia (student representative organisation)
GATS – Global Agreement for Trade Services
IBC – International Branch Campus, also known as offshore campus and sometimes satellite campus
RMIT Vietnam – Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Vietnam (university)
SERVQUAL – Service Quality Framework
TAFE – Technical and Further Education
TNE – Transnational Education
TNHE – Transnational Higher Education
UAE – United Arab Emirates
UK – United Kingdom
USA – United States of America
VET – Vocational Education and Training

1. Introduction

The development of Higher Education in Australia over the past three decades, mirrors the changes in the higher education sector in the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and elsewhere (Gallagher, 2000), connects in with the broader internationalisation processes (Fabricius, 2014) and expands the rich history tertiary education has of crossing borders between countries (Montgomery, 2016). Insight into the motivations and satisfaction of international students as they cross borders into Australia for their tertiary education is the impetus for this thesis.

Australia was an early adopter and is one of the success stories of higher education export (ABC, 2019). It has effectively leveraged its reputation for a high-quality education system – a legacy of British colonialization (Wilkins, 2010) – with seven of its universities presently ranked in the top 100 (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2020), and five making the top 50 list (Derwin, 2020). After decades of steady growth (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015), Australia continues to be one of the most active countries. When comparing offshore campus and distance enrolments, Australia ranks immediately below the UK and USA, however it could rank higher as the UK and USA also include enrolments in twinned, dual and joint programs in their statistics, and the Australian government does not (JISC Internet2, 2018). In addition, there are international students arriving in Australia to study onshore. According to the most recent statistics, international students to Australia come from 149 countries, with nearly 80% arriving from just ten countries (in ascending order of largest student numbers) – China (excluding Semi-Autonomous Regions and Taiwan Province), India, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019).

The export of higher education is the third largest overall export category within the Australian economy (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). In 2018, nearly half a million international students enrolled in Australia's higher education system, with the majority (77%) studying onshore ie. in Australia (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019). This far exceeds earlier forecasts of 171,000 international students enrolled onshore by 2025 (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). International students in Australia are estimated to

generate $7 billion in direct revenue for the universities (ABC, 2019) in a broader context of $32 billion to the overall economy (Universities Australia, 2018). However, with the impact of the pandemic, Universities Australia (2020) is forecasting revenue losses for Australian universities of between $3 billion and $4.6 billion for the remainder of 2020.

The transition towards more commercial and entrepreneurial perspectives in higher education has been a significant shift in the culture, operations and perceived role of many universities (Clarke, 2004). For many universities, income generated by enrolling international students has gone from being a financial lifeline replacing the substantial cuts to public funding made since the 1990's by successive federal governments, to high growth and high profit revenue streams (Middlehurst, 2013).

Arguably, some universities have been too successful in this endeavour, with recent and well-known examples reported in the media. One documentary levelled accusations at universities for admitting international students, without the required academic and language capabilities but willing to pay for student visas as an immigration pathway, in order to achieve revenue targets (ABC, 2019). Arguably, this practice is at the expense of the wellbeing of international students and the overall reputation of the Australian education system (ABC, 2019). Other media has focused on the inherent risk of collapse caused by such profit seeking tactics. One of the most prominent examples was the University of Sydney, who reported approximately one-fifth, or 20%, of its revenue was generated solely from Chinese students (Robinson, 2019). In 2019, amidst concerns raised that the university would likely collapse if Chinese students were suddenly unable to afford the fees or travel to Australia, the Australian government stepped in, directing universities to diversify their income sources (SBS, 2019). The swift and significant reduction in onshore international student numbers in 2020 due to border closures has focused the sector on stemming financial losses whilst operating under national and state health directives. Improved understanding of international students' motivations might contribute to more holistic institutional decision-making particularly as universities reconsider the next 3 to 5 years.

1.1. Global Impacts Transforming the Higher Education Sector

A seismic shift in higher education occurred in the 1990's. Until this point, universities identified strongly with their role as purveyors of knowledge, fostering research and innovation for the betterment of the 'public good' and social benefit (Grek & Lawn, 2009). The international aspect of a university education tended to be limited to research collaborations or exchanges to other countries for students or staff (Knight, 2016). In 1955, only 149,000 students travelled for their higher education (Naidoo, 2009) and prior to that, there were a few sporadic and solitary examples of campuses established in other countries (Lane, 2011).

What transformed higher education, was its inclusion into the GATS (Global Agreement for Trade Services) in the 1990's (Naidoo, 2009). This effectively took higher education from a public good and squarely made it a commodity to be traded between nations (Naidoo, 2009). This policy change was followed by changes to other bilateral trade agreements and a more liberal approach to many nations' trade policies (Hopkins, 2013). Indeed, it became a change to the perceived value of education from "aid" to "trade" (Naidoo, 2009) – a salient illustration of the inherent tension of a sector commodifying education for a customer base comprising large populations of students from developing nations.

At the same time, the broader internationalisation process was underway (Fabricius, 2014). This trend required a supply of education to support the multitude of industries and professions operating in an increasingly complex and dynamic global environment (Bolton & Nie, 2010). Demand increased for globally minded students, armed with communication and collaboration skills prepared to address various cross border challenges (Middlehurst, 2013) such as climate change, pandemics, counter terrorism and financial crisis (Hill et al., 2014). Foreign language skills, local area expertise, and civic and global awareness in understanding relations with other countries became both sought after and valued skills, particularly for US military and government roles (Middlehurst, 2013).

Whilst software and databases to centrally manage content were readily available in the 1990s, the accessibility and capacity for connection between campuses in different countries provided by the internet was an even greater enabler of change (Healey, 2015), allowing expansion to be more cost effective. The advances in technology over the subsequent ten

years, provided universities, with the tools to share data, processes and communicate with staff, students and partners around the world (Seah & Edwards, 2006). These also opened up opportunities for universities and institutions to use the internet to deliver content via online delivery, instead of setting up physical premises in other countries. In a short period of time, exponential growth across many delivery modes occurred and the sector became increasingly complex (Naidoo, 2009).

The close association of transnational education with the globalisation process (Fabricius, 2014); along with the hyper-connectivity of the internet accelerating the internationalisation process (Healey, 2015) changed the industry structure and dynamics, leading to the 'massification' of higher education (Smith, 2014).

1.2. Export Opportunities - Risk & Competition

The first stage of export, whereby universities offered full fee places to students who came onshore in the 1990s, was closely followed with the second stage of exporting offshore. Initially, governments from developing nations, who lacked their own education infrastructure or capacity, were keen to maximise the benefit of higher education's inclusion within the GATS and entice universities to establish prestigious campuses on their shores (Middlehurst, 2013). These first exporters of higher education were all universities from developed nations – the same whose governments had made significant cuts to the funding available to their universities (Hou et al., 2014) – who raced to secure as many of the lucrative offshore opportunities, with their vast and untapped numbers of full fee-paying students (Knight, as cited in Middlehurst, 2013) whilst enhancing their reputations (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001).

However, it was not long before universities from the developed nations - mostly Australia, the UK and USA, discovered that developing nations were often fraught with unanticipated risks and uncertain environments (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Navigating foreign political structures, bureaucracies, legal systems and regulatory environments, currency fluctuations and economic interdependencies within regions, different cultural and social norms to unpredictable environments prone to natural disasters, unstable infrastructure or civil unrest all became factors to potentially plan and mitigate against (Wilkins, 2016). In addition, there

were increased operational logistics to work through, such as time zone differences, problems with finding adequate supply of skilled local teaching and support staff versus the expense of flying in staff from their home country and helping them with the necessary cultural, language and social adjustments, and managing employment contracts across multiple legal jurisdictions (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Offshore campuses became known as volatile and high-risk investments (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Assessing and managing these challenges have been at the fore of institutional decision-making regarding establishing operations offshore (Wilkins, 2016), in particular, the financial investment required for a campus compared to other models (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), as well as a rapidly changing competitive environment (Russell, 2015). In short, most of the literature focuses on how universities from developed nations can best assess the business risks associated with these offshore campuses presumably, as these opportunities offer the promise of higher profits and greater prestige.

1.2.1. Universities from Developing Nations

In this context, another category of competitor emerged, the universities from developing nations (Altbach & Knight, 2007). These universities, often coming from countries with similar political, economic, legal and socio-cultural systems, were able to more effortlessly establish in another developing nation (Russell, 2015). Examples include universities and institutes from Russia operating in former soviet territories, such as Latvia and Bulgaria (Naidoo, 2009). This indicates the competitive interest and level of global participation in the industry today, which could, at first thought, be limited to only prestigious universities from developed countries.

1.2.2. Private Providers

In addition, it was not long before universities from developed nations also had to compete with private providers entering the marketplace (Lien & Wang, 2008). Examples include media companies (such as Pearson), professional associations, multinationals delivering internal qualifications and companies that own a university as part of their portfolio (such as Sunway Group in Malaysia whose investments include higher education as well as other diversified interests including entertainment, property and construction) (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). Many of these are able to operate without the university overheads of research facilities, scientific laboratories (Shams & Huisman, 2012) or full replica campuses.

Some universities subsequently focused on lower-cost-to-establish and higher profit qualifications offshore, such as IT or business in order to be financially viable (Wilkins et al., 2012).

In the above literature, it is noted that international students' perspectives are often absent in any critical decisions about assessing competitive markets and risk or areas where they could be beneficial. This is also noted as a gap by Knight (2016).

1.3. Models of International Higher Education

The higher education export sector includes transnational higher education and offshore export (Waterval et al., 2015). Both terms essentially involve students completing their higher education outside of their home country's education system with a foreign university or institution located outside of its home country education system (Machado dos Santos, 2000). Onshore export is where international students study in the home country of the institution. This thesis focuses on higher education - the post-secondary, or tertiary education, traditionally offered by the university sector – and does not include vocational education[1].

Commonly, transnational higher education is thought of as an institution or university replicating their home campus in a third country. These are known as offshore campuses or international branch campuses (IBCs) (JISC Internet2, 2018; Wilkins, 2010) that usually operate under the parent institution's brand, fly academic teaching staff in from the home campus, and offer as close to or equivalent of the entire academic program (Lane, 2011) as well as a comparable experience of the home campus's campus social life (Ahmad, 2015). Students who graduate receive qualifications bearing the parent institution's name. However, in the absence of a universal definition, there are equally examples of exceptions, such as branch campuses not owned by the home institution and that do not award qualifications

[1] VET or TAFE education in Australia typically finishes before postgraduate education and is attended predominantly by domestic students.

from the home institution, such as Yale University's campus in Singapore (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

IBCs are often firmly associated with the early stages of higher education export, as 50 offshore campuses were established in the 1990s (Lane, 2011). Yet, their popularity has been enduring, with some 230 offshore campuses established and operating by 2016 (Shams & Huisman, 2016). However, within this time period, awareness of the potential risk for losses also grew and alternatives emerged.

Investing in an offshore campus has become known as a high-risk and volatile investment (Shams & Huisman, 2012) with the potential for failure involving vast amounts of capital losses as well as reputational damage (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). The rapidly developing capacity of the internet and software, along with the broader internationalisation processes, enabled the present stage of international higher education – of almost endless flexibility for universities to export higher education without the burden of a campus and for students to study in a mode that more complemented their life.

The models used by universities have expanded to include:

- providing courses or content in classroom only facilities in another country, such as business and IT qualifications (Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012);

- using partnership agreements to outsource all or part of the education delivery to a third party (Smith, 2010). Contracted services often include various aspects of teaching, assessment, enrolment, marketing, finance, administration and operations, or housing provision to full outsourcing via franchising agreements (Hou et al., 2014; Lien & Wang, 2012; Naidoo, 2009). Branch campuses, alliances, co-founded organisations and joint ventures are all commonly underpinned by partnership agreements, many of which may not be obvious to students or those outside the contract and its management. Due to the financial investment required as well as what can appear as an insurmountable level of uncertain and unknown factors in a developing country, partners have become a popular way to access local know-how, experienced staff, systems and other benefits brought by third party providers;

- recognition arrangements - where studies in one institution count towards qualifications in another. Qualifications may be twinned, or students may complete a final year in a different university with qualifications awarded jointly or by multiple institutions (Heffernan & Poole, 2015; Knight, 2016; Ling, Mazzolini & Giridharan, 2014; Sidhu & Christie, 2015);

- offering distance – known as virtual, self-directed, remote or more commonly online courses (JISC Internet 2, 2018; Middlehurst 2013; Lien & Wang, 2012; Naidoo, 2009).

- varying combinations of the above (Lien & Wang, 2012; Naidoo, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2009; Wilkins, 2010)

Distance, partnerships and use of recognition arrangements in the UK steadily increased in popularity in the decade up to 2018 (Healey, 2019). In the 2017-2018 year, the UK had almost 120,000 (17%) of its offshore international students studying via distance and flexible learning, with nearly 400,000 (56%) further students studying towards UK qualifications via overseas partner organisations (Healey, 2019). In Australia, many universities have spent the past 5 years increasing their online delivery capacity, a fortunate decision in light of the travel restrictions now experienced by international students due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Caldwell, 2020).

The predominance of offshore models tends to overshadow the TNE discussion. Onshore export, whereby international students study at a university's home country campus, remains by far, the most popular in Australia (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019). For some Australian university campuses 30% of undergraduate students have been international, with even higher representation, up to 70%, in some postgraduate courses (Maslen, 2019). However, little is known as to what extent international students enrolled at Australian universities are utilising varying combinations of the above delivery models and study modes to achieve their qualifications.

1.3.1. Sector Complexity

International higher education quickly becomes a complex industry in which to analyse data in. It is a worldwide industry with institutions, students, staff, and programs all crossing borders at increasing rates (Naidoo, 2009). Students may transition between studying

onshore and offshore as well as online and could also be studying between multiple universities utilising various recognition arrangements within their qualification (International Education Association of Australia, 2016). When comparing statistics between countries, operating models may have different definitions, different data collection methods used or reporting periods measured, making it difficult to draw useful comparisons (JISC Internet 2, 2018; Naidoo, 2009). In addition, academics also use terms, such as cross-border education and transnational offshore education or branch campus, offshore campus and satellite campus interchangeably and inconsistently (Miller-Idress & Hanauer, 2011). As a consequence, very little is known statistically about the extent of the TNE phenomenon (Naidoo, 2009).

Students, who are often categorised as international or domestic, may report in both categories depending on the origin of the report. For example, although Vietnamese students studying at RMIT Vietnam may be categorised as international in the university's reporting, they would not be reported as international students by the Vietnamese government as they are citizens. Some operating models, for example branch campuses utilising partners to deliver outsourced academic services could fall into multiple reporting categories. Others, such as Yale University in Singapore (noted above, in section 1.3) or the American Universities of Cairo, Beirut, Dubai, Sharjah, Bulgaria and Paris which are not affiliated with any American universities operating in America – only the broader American education system (Naidoo, 2009) – could fall outside some reporting parameters. Evidence, of how significant this gap can be, occurs in China where 400 transnational higher education (TNHE) programs are officially reported, although more than 1,000 programmes are estimated (Naidoo, 2009).

Defining and quantifying almost any specific aspect of the industry, let alone its entirety, is hallmarked by ambiguity, complexity and shifting definitions (Miller-Idress & Hanauer, 2011), with a distinct lack of systematic, comparative data collection across the sector (Naidoo, 2009). This occurs despite widespread use of comparative rankings (Middlehurst, 2013).

1.4. Aligned and Conflicting Motivations

There are three stakeholder groups primarily involved in the industry: universities, governments and students. Each has different motivations for participating and there are

varying points of alignment and conflict between these stakeholder groups. In some cases, the motivations conflict *within* the stakeholder group. Gaps in the literature are identified.

1.4.1. Universities

Replacing the loss of public funding from their governments remains one of the most prominent motivations for universities from Australia, the UK and USA to begin and continue exporting higher education (Healy, 2015). This appears to be well aligned with the need of developing nations to increase their capacity to educate their own, often young, populations, usually by inviting foreign universities to establish operations within their country (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). As the sharing of knowledge along with research and innovation collaboration for the betterment of society has been a long-standing tradition underpinning the establishment of many universities, participating in the capacity building goals of developing nations is cited as one of the main reasons for exporting education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001).

However, this noble pursuit can harm reputations when universities are involved in questionable ethics exploiting disadvantaged populations in the pursuit of profits. These include: offering only financially profitable subjects in developing countries (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007), especially ones that are low in cost to establish and can sustain high enrolment numbers such as teaching business, management and IT subjects (Wilkins et al., 2012); choosing to establish in urban locations, where more affluent, privileged families are able to pay the high fees, over some of the poorest locations where education would truly be transformational (Hou et al., 2014) and closing overseas operations for making money, but not "enough money" (Smith, 2014, p. 123). In addition, there is an increasing prevalence of using for-profit "corporate speak" in university policy documents such as "mass higher education markets" and "forging alliances" of a global business with marketing strategies and worldwide branches (Hou et al., 2014, p. 300) and categorising international students as a revenue stream (Smith, 2014).

Universities are motivated by opportunities to enhance their levels of prestige and build their reputations (Russell, 2015). Reputation is generally accrued through internal quality systems that consistently deliver higher quality educational outcomes (Tayar & Jack, 2013). Exporting higher education, in particular, through the establishment of an offshore campus is

considered highly prestigious, further advancing reputation, (Lien & Wang, 2012) and worth the diversion of significant amounts of capital and resources from the home campus (Shah & Nair, 2011). Amassing institutional prestige and reputation assists universities in many ways. It makes attracting high quality students and teaching staff easier, and, tends to open more opportunities for research collaborations as well as invitations and funding contributions from foreign governments to establish offshore campuses (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Although the literature indicates universities expend considerable resources weighing up risks in various offshore campus opportunities (Wilkins, 2016), how the students, as the consumers of tertiary education, value and prioritise campus and reputation is considered less, if at all. Whether the importance of campus experience differs between student demographics is unstated.

1.4.2. Importing Governments

Invitations from governments of developing nations may include capital as well as other resources, such as advisory services, property or regulatory changes to incentivise the deal (Sidhu, 2009). Although it is widely accepted that this model is motivated by countries' need to reduce 'brain drain' (Shams & Huisman, 2012) – where a nation's best and brightest students head overseas for their tertiary education, never to return, inviting the best universities onto their shores may also not address the issue. Arguably, brain drain is reduced best by providing tertiary education good enough that graduates are able to find employment, but not so good that the education opens up immigration opportunities for the graduate (Lien, 2008). Developing nations are equally aware that when one, or a hub, of offshore campuses setup, the economic stimulation to the local economy is just as valuable and transformational (Lane, 2011). These campuses attract more than domestic students, with students arriving from the broader region as well as countries further afield, often that share a common language and culture (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). These students not only pay fees, they rent houses, buy food and spend money in the local economy (Shams & Huisman, 2012). This is a key strategy of the Philippines government (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). The outcomes are not dissimilar in Australia, a developed country: the clustering of students and the economic benefits.

However, it is unfair to assume all governments have adopted the American view of international education - where profit is the primary driver in a lucrative industry that is

heavily privatised and commercialised (Heffernan & Poole, 2005). There are equally as many examples illustrating a variety of contemporary attitudes to higher education trade. In Germany, international education is not viewed as an income generating business in its own right, but rather as supporting a broader economic view of export (Middlehurst, 2013); institutions entering the education zone in South Korea are forbidden from making a profit (Wilkins, 2016); and China was recently noted for taking a stand against the commodification of education (Hou et al., 2014). Singapore has policies and procedures to ensure quality and standards are upheld to home institution standards to avoid becoming a destination known for lower admission standards (Sidhu, 2009).

1.4.3. Students

Students, as the ultimate buyers or consumers of higher education globally, are one of the most significant stakeholder groups in the industry (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017).

The literature indicates that international students in general are motivated due to shortages in local supply as a means to gain employment and immigration (Middlehurst, 2013). Qualifications from a university with a good reputation (usually foreign and from an overall, highly regarded national education system) is perceived to be connected to increased and/or better-quality employment opportunities, often overseas (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; 2017). A range of personal factors is known to influence students, such as affordability, capacity of and location of family support, shared language and culture (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; 2017). There is a distinct alignment between the motivation of universities to build their reputation with the motivation of students to leverage this reputation to secure employment, however, the role of affordability for students appears to be in conflict with institutional profit objectives.

Despite the importance of students to the success of universities, students are often considered as homogenous and high-level statistics, rather than as the diverse sub-groups that they often comprise (Arambewela & Hall, 2008).

When deciding to pursue higher education with a foreign university, little is known as to how students are prioritising employment, immigration, reputation, other personal factors and the value of campus or other modes of study in their decision-making. It is yet to be explored

whether these priorities differ between sub-groups within the global international student population. It is equally unclear how these motivations subsequently influence students' satisfaction with their university qualifications.

1.5. Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is studied extensively, especially by governments and universities. Somewhat surprisingly, there are no agreed definitions as to what comprises satisfaction itself, other than a loose association between expectations, impressions, perceptions (Haman et al., 2010). Most studies agree that definitions are unclear or used inconsistently (eg Alves & Raposo, 2007; Burgess et al, 2018; Duzevic et al, 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al, 2015; Yusoff et al, 2014).

As a further consequence of surveys originating from governments and universities, is that the vast majority are underpinned by quality assurance frameworks, focusing on operational and academic matters within the university environment, such as content, punctuality of teaching staff, cleanliness of facilities and ease of enrolment processes (e.g. Burgess et al., 2018; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014). This widespread practice continues despite a lack of evidence that these measures are complete, relevant or connected to satisfaction (Griffioen et al., 2018).

Some researchers (eg Duzevic et al., 2018; Eddey & Baumann, 2009) have investigated whether a student's intelligence or personal motivation influences satisfaction. Other researchers (e.g. Arambewela & Hall, 2008; 2009) have undertaken studies that find the contribution of the broader environment, beyond the university, such as affordability of accommodation and safety, contributes towards creating a satisfying experience of study for students. Some satisfaction studies (eg Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mai, 2005) have noted the use of marketing indicators, such as switching behaviours (ie whether a student changes university) as a measure of loyalty, assuming that this is interchangeable for satisfaction in the context of higher education.

There is an absence of studies seeking to understand what factors the students themselves consider important determinants in satisfaction (Burgess et al., 2018).

Most studies collect data from undergraduate and postgraduate international students together and report results of these students as a homogenous group (Choi et al., 2012). This means that results tend to reflect the perspective of undergraduates or at best undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, who have vastly different skill levels, experience and motivations for study compared to research students (Choi et al, 2012). In addition, it could be argued that undergraduate students will generally have less comparative experience of the university environment than postgraduate students. Reporting results in this manner tends to dilute the perspective of other groups, such as postgraduates or international students who pay significantly more for their education (Burgess et al., 2018).

1.5.1. Opportunity

In discussing the motivations of students, it was established that little was known as to whether students were more motivated to enrol by employment, reputation, immigration or affordability and whether this could vary between different groups within the broader, global student population. Although institutional perspectives on the value of campus and the range of flexible study options are well documented, the student perspective, particularly postgraduate students, was largely absent.

The review of recent student satisfaction studies indicated an opportunity to expand knowledge of the factors to include those defined by the students themselves as contributing to student satisfaction (Arambewela & Hall, 2009), whilst focusing on specific student demographics (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Choi et al., 2012). These two opportunities led to the Research Question and aims.

1.6. Research Question and Aims

In order to amplify the voice of international postgraduate students, the following research question and aims have been identified for investigation.

The research question is "What is the interconnection between motivations, expectations and satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia?"

Hence the aims were to:

1. discover whether student motivations for study - reputation, immigration and affordability - are consistent with the existing literature and, importantly, how international students prioritise these in their decision to study in Australia.
2. discover whether there are other student determined factors that are important to the satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments
3. explore whether postgraduate students in the survey sample reflect the level of mobility inferred in the literature
4. explore whether studying in full campus settings is connected to an increase in level of satisfaction.
5. investigate the relevance of switching behaviours as a measure of loyalty, and satisfaction, in the Australian context

Based on the literature, the propositions for investigation are:

a) international postgraduate students will be motivated by immigration opportunities (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Smith, 2010) more than the reputation of the university (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010) or the national education system (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016).
b) there may be other factors important to students that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Burgess et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2014).
c) international postgraduate students will reflect low mobility levels compared to the levels inferred in the literature review (eg Healey, 2020; Lien & Wang, 2012; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Naidoo, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2009; Wilkins, 2010).
d) international postgraduate students studying at full campus facilities will have the highest levels of satisfaction. (This proposition comes from the institutional focus on the value of campus facilities in the literature rather than it being a stated student preference, e.g. Lien & Wang, 2012; Shah & Nair, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2012).

e) dissatisfied international postgraduate students would switch qualification and/or university *if it were easy to do so* (Duzevic et al., 2018).

1.7. Research Method

An approach using a pragmatic paradigm was selected to address the aims. The pragmatic paradigm allows the researcher to focus on what works and makes sense, rather than what is absolute (Babbie, 2015). Using the literature to inform key issues for exploration in the survey instrument and gaps in existing research studies, a self-administered, self-paced online survey tool was developed. This qualitative approach is suitable to collect a broad range of perspectives on the research question using an instrument that would be easy for participants to access, efficient and cost effective to distribute (Babbie, 2015).

International postgraduate students enrolled in Australian universities, in research or coursework studies, were sourced to participate in the survey through the two peak student representative bodies in Australia, who then distributed the survey through their networks.

Qualitative data was collected. Aligned with grounded theory methodology, a constant comparative method and variable-oriented analysis was followed to inductively develop the categories used in the thematic analysis. This analysis was supported by descriptive statistics that then integrated the demographic characteristics with the thematic analysis to develop insights and theory (Babbie, 2015).

The findings are presented in light of the investigation together with other insights gained regarding the research phenomena.

1.8. Contribution to knowledge

This research contributes to the literature by addressing some of the existing bias towards the institutional perspective of the exporting institution and/or country, rather than the importing government or student perspective (Knight, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011). The predominant focus from this perspective and adoption of strategic management analysis consistently reduces the valuable contribution of other stakeholders. Student satisfaction surveys tends to be biased towards operational and academic factors within the control of the

universities (Burgess et al., 2018). The prevalent treatment of students as a homogenous group effectively dilutes the experience of students who pay full fees, such as international students (Burgess et al., 2018), and variance between coursework and research postgraduates (Choi et al., 2012). This research aims to provide a student-centred contribution that enhances the existing knowledge about postgraduate international students.

1.9. Contribution to Industry Practice

This thesis places the student centrally in the higher education context. It amplifies the voice of international postgraduate students, highlighting their unique experiences that are often merged with undergraduate and domestic students in other research. In allowing the students to define satisfaction on their own terms and the factors they consider contribute to a rich and satisfying experience, it questions the validity of standard industry practices in surveying operational and academic factors as the sole or most important measures of satisfaction. This research heightens the need for factors valued by students to be considered by universities more comprehensively in their strategic planning, risk assessment, marketing and surveying activities.

1.10. Statement of significance

Given the value of international students to the financial sustainability of the higher education sector in Australia, universities may find it beneficial to their success to understand how students prioritise and consider various factors – from country level factors that attract international students, to affordability, or the relevance of campus facilities – and whether there are other factors important in international students' decision-making and satisfaction. This may lead to more holistic measures of student satisfaction, notably as new models of higher education for international students emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst students benefit from increased flexibility with options to complete qualifications onshore, offshore, online and in various recognition programs, it is unclear to what extent this has been adopted by international students in Australia. Focusing research within a single, national education system may increase the local validity and applicability of research findings, as compared to a narrow context across multiple countries.

These factors are the background to my research questions presented in section 1.6.

1.11. Chapter Summary

International students contribute significantly to Australia's economy. Yet, most of the international education literature is grounded in institutional perspectives with decision-making regarding export opportunities, especially offshore ones, focused on risk and competitors and lacking the input of students beyond enrolment forecasts. This institutional perspective carries through into student satisfaction surveys. A lack of understanding as to which factors influence international students in their initial decision-making and the factors students consider important to their satisfaction, indicate the need for further investigation. The research question, aims and propositions directly address this opportunity using a survey with international, postgraduate students studying in Australia.

Chapter 2 explores the motivations of importers and exporters of higher education in more detail and highlights the historical and contemporary importance of transnational education as a business.

Chapter 3 investigates the motivations of students who study with foreign universities and how this might connect with their satisfaction. Student satisfaction surveys are reviewed to understand previous research and gaps.

Chapter 4 begins with outlining critical insights from the literature before providing a detailed presentation of how the methodological decisions, with specific focus regarding the survey, were reached and implemented in this research study.

Chapter 5 thoroughly presents the data collected in the survey, using the research framework and method outlined in Chapter 4. New sub-themes are identified.

Chapter 6 utilises the data and new sub-themes and compares these results with previous research and themes in the literature. The chapter concludes by fully addressing the research questions and aims.

Chapter 7 integrates the earlier literature with the conclusions from this research and offers recommendations for implementation and further research.

2. Institutional and National Motivations and Success

This chapter continues to investigate the global perspective and delves further into the institutional and national motivations – as exporters and importers - for trading higher education across the globe. Where available, the focus is on the Australian experience within this context. Consideration is given to how well the motivations are aligned between the groups, in particular, how well aligned the motivations of universities are with those of the students.

The literature is then examined more closely to understand the factors universities consider improve their success when exporting higher education offshore. Gaps as to where students' perspectives intersect and remain unexplored are identified. The validity of treating students as a homogenous a group within the literature is questioned.

Although not explicitly stated in the literature reviewed, it was observed that the literature in section 2.1 (Universities' Motivations to Export), section 2.2 (Importing Government's Motivations) and section 2.3.3 (Investment in Campus) was commonly presented from an institutional theory perspective. Institutional theory asserts that institutions often influence each other more than market forces, and describes the processes used by firms to copy each other in order to gain legitimacy in an industry (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The power of this influence could perpetuate norms and assumptions that are no longer valid. An example of this could be the continuing and prevalent notion as to the value of offshore campuses discussed in more detail in this chapter.

The literature in section 2.3 (Success Factors for Exporting Universities) adopts conventions common in strategic management, such as the assessment of risks and opportunities in markets with the view to applying an organisation's capabilities in order to create exceptional profits known as competitive advantage (Porter, 1998). This perspective, grounded in rational economic theory, and focusing on tools to exploit financial gain (Jenkins, Ambrosini & Collier, 2007; Peteraf, 1993), tends to decrease the role of non-financial stakeholders. Other limitations of this theoretical construct is the broader applicability to non-profit models

(Santos, 2012), opportunities resulting from market failure (Bryson et al, 2007) (rather than market imperfection eg Barney, 1991) or where competition is primarily for government funding (Arya & Lin, 2007; Backman et al, 2000; Chew & Osborne, 2009; Desa & Basu, 2013; Kong, 2007). Customers who cannot pay the full value of the product or service offered (Seelos & Mair, 2005) and complex networks of stakeholders (Jeffers, 2010; Lepak et al, 2007; Wu, 2013) are generally poorly handled by strategic management tools based on rational economic theory.

In contrast, stakeholder theory stresses the interconnected relationships around an organisation more holistically and prioritises the need for organisations to create value, rather than financial profits, for all parties with a 'stake' (Freeman, 2015; Freeman et al, 2020; Wu, 2013), such as suppliers and communities. Stakeholder theory appears to be poorly represented in the literature reviewed yet offers a perspective that has great applicability to the broader export context most Australian universities operate within.

2.1. Universities' Motivations to Export

The academic literature discussing the drivers for expansion into foreign higher education markets has traditionally focused on the perspective of universities and institutions from developed countries – specifically, the UK, USA and Australia (Hou et al., 2014), mainly because these countries were the first to export.

The most well-known motivation for these universities to start exporting education into developing nations was the opportunity for income and profit (Gallagher, 2000; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001) – grounded in the dire need to replace the loss of funding removed by their own governments (Hou et al., 2014). Following on, and connected to this, was the idea that universities were generally developing a broader awareness of themselves and their value internationally, often developing more entrepreneurial outlooks (Clarke, 2004).

However, beyond this initial response to the changed political and funding environment, researchers found a multitude of motivations that fall into two themes - the furthering of institutional values, especially involving altruistic goals about the role of education in creating positive social and economic change in developing countries (Gallagher, 2000; Machado dos Santos, 2000; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Russell, 2015; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford &

Taylor, 2016; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012); and the interdependent relationships between prestige, reputation and quality were identified (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013).

Despite the risks of establishing in unknown foreign countries, universities and institutions have continued to be motivated by the opportunity to secure increased and diversified revenue streams and increased international reputation and prestige in particular (Gallagher, 2000; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001). The three themes of revenue generation, institutional values and reputation are explored in the next three sub-sections.

2.1.1. Replace Lost Government Funding

Just after the changes to policy and regulation via the GATS and other trade agreements in the 1990s, universities from developed nations in general experienced significant cuts from their governments' national programs in public tertiary education funding (Hou et al., 2014). In Australia, since the 1990s, successive governments have continued the funding cuts leaving its 39 universities, although predominantly still government owned, on minimal public funding (Hopkins, 2013). Universities from developed nations were not only highly motivated to replace the lost funding, but also able to leverage their well-regarded national education systems (Wilkins, 2010) to create opportunities for themselves (Hou et al., 2014), such as offering international students onshore places or exporting education offshore. This allowed these universities to seek out and replace the significant revenue lost through continued cuts in public funding of education (Hou et al., 2014). This change also forced many of the other universities within these education systems, to also adopt a more entrepreneurial approach towards diversifying and increasing their sources of revenue (Clarke, 2004).

At a similar point in time during the 1990s and consistent with the broader changes in global trade policies and national education funding policies in other developed countries such as the UK and USA, the Australian higher education sector also began internationalising (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006; Gallagher, 2000; Sidhu & Christie, 2015). Locally, the political and macro-economic drivers that resulted in significant reductions in public funding for university places (Gallagher, 2000; Shah & Nair, 2011; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016), were combined with favourable domestic visa and immigration policy that saw the first wave of internationalisation with places at Australian universities offered to international students.

These students came to Australia to complete their education 'onshore', paying the full cost of their education as well as what was usually a comparatively high cost of living expenses in Australia (Gallagher, 2000; Parsons & Fidler, 2005; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Tayar & Jack, 2013). This phase began to coincide Australian universities becoming increasingly aware of the level of unmet demand from substantial overseas student populations, mostly within the nearby Asia-Pacific region countries, seeking access to high quality and prestigious western education (Chapman & Pyvis, 2003; Russell, 2015; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Shah & Nair, 2001; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Sidhu & Christie, 2015); and the potential to access a rapidly recovering 'Asian Tiger' economy, following the Asian financial crisis in 1997 (Sidhu, 2009).

For Australian universities, this motivation to replace the significant reduction in public funding of university places (Gallagher, 2000; Shah & Nair, 2011; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016) by embarking on various global expansion programs has continued to be a primary focus for the past three decades (Middlehurst, 2013).

2.1.2. Exporting connects with Institutional Values

The opportunity to enter foreign markets may initially appear as an entrepreneurial activity, driven primarily by the desire for profit. However, researchers have found that in general, there was a reasonably good alignment between the altruistic goals of universities to participate in knowledge sharing, research collaboration, innovation across the globe and higher education export opportunities (Gallagher, 2000; Machado dos Santos, 2000; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013). In the case of exporting to developing nations, there is a very specific alignment between the more altruistic goals of universities, and participation in national capacity building or developmental objectives (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

Several studies specifically investigated this. Russell (2015) and Poole (2001) found universities from developing nations utilised this opportunity to reinforce, or further their values and objectives, featuring this prominently in their motivations to export. The chance to specifically contribute to the social and economic development of foreign countries has been articulated in other studies (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) - even to the extent where some universities when

faced with poor financial performance of an existing, overseas operation reframe their objectives as quasi-aid projects rather than profit-centred entrepreneurship (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007).

This phenomenon is consistent within the Australian context whereby foreign governments began inviting selected Australian universities at the turn of the twenty-first century, to assist with their economic and developmental goals by establishing campuses overseas (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016). Initially, this included a focus on locations within closer proximity; and with shared language (Tayar & Jack, 2013), historical and educational contexts, such as other former British colonies (Smith, 2010), which include Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, as examples.

To note however, is the inherent tension between the motivation to progress what is essentially social responsibility, and profit (Middlehurst, 2013). Although foreign governments, may invite universities to assist them with their developmental goals, the paying customers that universities rely on are the same individual students they are 'helping' – often those who can often least afford it (Knight & Altbach, 2007). In addition, the greatest impact of higher education is often to deliver it in rural and impoverished areas. Yet, most universities and higher education institutions charge high fees that are disproportionately even higher for those in rural and impoverished areas. Consequently, universities and institutions often choose to establish in wealthy, often urban, locations, offering popular qualifications (such as business and information technology) and targeting higher income demographics who are able to pay these fees (Hou et al., 2014; Lien & Wang, 2012). In these circumstances, universities and institutions are potentially perpetuating notions of the privilege of access to education (Hill et al., 2014; Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013) and assisting their own profits, rather than truly assisting with developmental goals.

2.1.3. Enhances Reputation and Prestige

Universities desire to attain and enhance both their reputations and their levels of prestige (Chee et al., 2016; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins, 2010). Interestingly, these are also considered essential capabilities for universities as they underpin, and are tightly entwined in a symbiotic relationship, with a university's rate of opportunity (Wilkins, 2010) and success with prestige

supporting and intensifying entrepreneurial culture (Clark, 2004) by fostering internal competition (Sidhu, 2009).

From the academic literature available there are two components initially, that build a universities' reputation – the universities' capacity to deliver consistent educational results (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013); and the national education system it belongs within (Wilkins, 2010). Internal quality systems are integral for universities and institutions to deliver educational outcomes consistently and reliably. Whilst quality systems are costly to maintain, they are entangled with the reputation of the institution, so they are essential (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Consistently delivering a high standard of education leads to a higher reputation. Consistently associating a university's brand reputation with high quality educational outcomes and research collaborations then leads to greater levels of prestige (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013).

Enhancing reputation and prestige is important as it attracts students, research and academic staff, and wider opportunities in a cyclical and symbiotic fashion. Increased reputation and prestige support a university in attracting quality students (Chee et al., 2016). Universities anticipate that as these students graduate, they form an increasingly growing international alumnus, who are predicted as loyal sources of referral of new students; and exemplars and ambassadors of the brand who potentially, will bring future business transactions of economic value to the university's host country (Hou et al., 2014). In addition, a good reputation helps universities and institutions to attract top teaching and research talent from beyond the immediate local area of the university. Researchers with higher levels of mobility and exposure to different ways of thinking may be more likely to generate greater cross pollination of knowledge within their area of expertise and pursue new and unexplored research topics (Hopkins, 2013). Academics also strive to acquire a reputation and enjoy the company of productive teams and departments (Clark, 2004) often through internal competitiveness (Sidhu, 2009). Thus, research underpins prestige, as it is how academics gain reputation, which in turn universities leverage (Clark, 2004).

Offering a high-quality education at its home campus improves a university's reputation (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013) and, combined with being situated within a well-regarded national education system (Wilkins, 2010), enables a university to attract a higher standard of

students (Chee et al., 2016), teachers and researchers from across the world. This in turn further enhances its reputation and prestige.

Another way to reflect and extend the reputation and prestige of a university or institution is by establishing an International Branch Campus (IBC) that both enables and represents this success (Lien & Wang, 2012). Unsurprisingly, reputational and prestige motivators, ranked highly as reasons universities justifying entry into foreign markets (Machado dos Santos, 2000; Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013).

Paradoxically, although expanding into international markets improves a university's prestige and brand, a university needs to have a good reputation and to be positioned within a well-regarded national education system to maximise the benefits assigned to it when entering foreign markets (Shams & Huisman, 2012). Universities from developed countries, for example England and Australia, have generally been able to attract even greater export opportunities as they benefit from the well-regarded education systems that they originated from (Wilkins, 2010).

Institutions with this level of reputation can possess more parts of the market and exert more influence in the market once they have entered (Clark, 2004). This is then further helped along by the English language, which has become both the lingua franca - the language currency - of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Wilkins, 2010) and international business.

Due to the mutually beneficial relationship between universities' reputations and the reputation of the overall education system they originate from, it has been in the interests of governments to safeguard the quality of international education, as the reputations of nations as well as institutions are at stake (Middlehurst, 2013). Higher education is a significant export sector and its reputation "adds to a nation's stature" (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016, pp. 174)

Drawing this together, for universities to attain all the benefits of enhanced reputation and prestige, it is in their interests to maintain the integrity of their quality systems across their entire education offering from admissions criteria to assessment, and not just the teaching, curriculum and student administration. Rapid growth of the higher education sector, however, has put strain on quality and assurance including transparency of schemes, protection of home institution branding, and reputation of the host country as a quality

provider (Hill et al., 2014) with researchers noting that poor quality education can be "reputationally and financially detrimental" (Smith, 2010, p 794) as results from quality audits can form significant weight in marketing the overall university's brand (Smith, 2010). The research aims should expose a student perspective on these matters.

2.2. Importing Government's Motivations

Higher education is imported by developing nations, which, as a term now includes rapidly developing countries such as Qatar, China, Malaysia and Singapore as well as Mexico, Spain and Ireland (Naidoo, 2009). These nations have complex, multi-faceted motivations for importing higher education.

After higher education became clearly articulated as a tradeable commodity in the GATS (Naidoo, 2009), developing nations were keen to participate in a newly formed industry whilst at the same time, working towards some of their own developmental goals (Middlehurst, 2013). As such, many developing nations responded positively with favourable changes to their own regulations as well as providing support and incentives to encourage universities and institutions to invest in and establish offshore operations (Lien & Wang, 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Sidhu, 2009).

Those changes included enabling and/or incentivising foreign institutions to enter their borders. Examples of how governments achieve this include: changing policies and other regulations to allow foreign education providers to legally enter and provide higher education services, providing incentives such as direct investment or tax relief, creating education zones, other assistance such as planning or advisory in set up, and finding suitable property in order to facilitate the entry and establishment of foreign providers (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Lien & Wang, 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Sidhu, 2009). To illustrate, Singapore provides assistance via grants, loans and practical assistance in acquiring suitable campus sites (Sidhu, 2009); Abu Dhabi (UAE) provided $50M to New York University to setup an offshore campus (Lien & Wang, 2012). The favourable regulatory conditions have made the UAE, Qatar, Singapore and Malaysia, some of the most attractive countries to establish operations in (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Whilst the UAE was initially the top hosting country with 37 offshore campuses (Wilkins et al., 2012), since 2014, their number has dropped to 31 offshore

campuses, with China now surpassing the UAE at the top hosting country with 32 offshore campuses (JISC Internet2, 2018).

The motivations for developing nations to provide favourable regulatory conditions and incentives to foreign education providers is comprehensive as education improves many aspects of their own public policy initiatives.

At a national level, the academic literature outlines three main motivations as to why developing nations create favourable conditions that help them import tertiary education to improve the local supply. Firstly, it is capacity building (Lien, 2008; Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Smith, 2010) increasing domestic social welfare (Lien & Wang, 2012). Secondly, it lessens brain drain (Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013; Shams & Huisman, 2012). Lastly, it is financially beneficial, stimulating the local economy by generating flow-on income (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Shams & Huisman, 2012). For most developing nations, importing higher education is seen as a critical component of meeting the above (Lien, 2008; Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Smith, 2010). These three motivations are now explored.

2.2.1. Builds Capacity

Developing nations are motivated to increase the supply of higher education into their countries because it builds capacity. Improving the general level of education of their citizens is so important to them that many developing nations including those in Africa and the Middle East, cite capacity building in their top five priorities (Middlehurst, 2013). Capacity building through education achieves two interconnected and important outcomes. Firstly, as opportunities are created for lower socio-economic groups to participate in higher education, those groups improve the quantity and quality of their own job opportunities and become productive members of society (Wilkins, 2010). This in turn reduces the social issues that often stem from the inequality of access to education, such as underprivileged groups participating in civil unrest (Middlehurst, 2013; Wilkins, 2010). Nations that improve the supply of higher education, and thus, improve access for the lower socio-economic groups, start to address these social issues (Middlehurst, 2013).

These nations recognise they do not have enough local institutions to meet the demand (Lien, 2008; Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Smith, 2010). Without positive intervention and action, this gap is exacerbated as these nations often have large, and growing, youth populations. Continuing advancements in technology and increasing globalisation, further fuels consumer level demand for tertiary education (Lien, 2008; Poon-McBrayer, 2011).

2.2.2. Reduces "Brain Drain"

Developing nations are motivated to address the common issue of 'brain drain'. 'Brain drain' happens when students head overseas for their tertiary education, then use their education as an immigration pathway to remain abroad rather than returning to their home country to bring back the benefits of their education (Shams & Huisman, 2012). It is prevalent in Asia, especially in the Philippines and Indonesia (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). Unfortunately, students who remain abroad once completing their university education, are usually over-represented by the privileged classes who can afford to fund their children's education in another country (Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013). By default, the population remaining at home then disproportionately represents low education demographics. Therefore, increasing the supply of locally available tertiary education assists developing nations stem the outflow of educated citizens. Retaining educated citizens then flows on to support their capacity building goals.

However, there is a balance to be achieved. If the quality of education provided by the foreign university or institution to local students is high enough it is likely students will still leave to pursue overseas job opportunities after graduating (Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2012). Consequently, Lien (2008) concludes the best way to reduce brain drain in developing countries is with low-quality offshore campuses. He argues this reduces local citizens dependency on welfare by increasing their employability in the local market, but not by so much that they can leave their country.

2.2.3. Benefits Local Economy

Developing nations have other good reasons to create favourable conditions to entice universities and institutions to accept their invitations to invest in providing higher education in their countries. Towards the end of last century, international students would travel towards the well-regarded education systems from English-speaking and Western European

countries such as USA, UK, Australia, Germany, France for an onshore education (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). Education hubs or zones attract an influx of students from other countries in the nearby region who want to study closer to home (Lane, 2011). This creates indirect flow-on benefits for the local economy as these students not only pay tuition fees to foreign institutions - they also rent houses; buy food; exchange and spend money in the local economy for the duration of their studies. This in turn, creates jobs and generates local investment (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Shams & Huisman, 2012). As an initiative, this not only stems the outflow of citizens and funds from the developing nation but uses higher education as a way to create an inflow of students from other nearby countries, or further afield, into their own economies (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). In Malaysia, 50% of international students now arrive from outside that region – coming from Nigeria, Yemen and Iran (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) – and there are significant student flows towards the UAE (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). So much so, that the USA, which once attracted many international students, it is no longer a destination of choice for international education (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016).

Staying within a local region may be appealing for students too who may prefer the additional support provided by studying close to family (Lien, 2008; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012), lower cost of living (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016) and / or living in a similar cultural and religious environment (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016).

Given the motivations of universities to export and the incentives made available by importing governments to encourage this, the next section explores which factors universities consider that lead to success in higher education export offshore.

2.3. Success Factors for Exporting Universities

The extant literature is all related to offshore exporting. It indicates that prior to establishing themselves offshore to export higher education, universities focus on broadly understanding the external environment of developing nations, their competitors within it and whether or not they should invest in a campus to enhance their reputations and prestige. This industry level and risk analysis approach to the external environment and market entry structure is similar in approach to other global organisations and is not unique to the higher education

sector (Shams & Huisman, 2012). However, some of these factors may also be factors that are important to students and influence their decision making – and the perspective of students is unique to this sector. Yet, in general, the literature indicates the perspectives of students is not considered.

2.3.1. Country Factors

The literature indicates that universities focus their attention on capturing and analysing perceived common areas of risk and difference (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). These are the different political systems, structures, policies and relationships; a need to understand the broader regional economic zones; differing social expectations of organisations and their products or services; infrastructure and technology issues; and unknown risks in the broader physical environment (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Shah & Nair, 2011; Sidhu, 2009; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins, 2016). Whilst quantifying risks and developing contingency plans are necessary (Wilkins, 2010), the types of risks make it difficult, if not impossible, to have plans to adequately manage all the possible risks.

The stability of the political system (Lane, 2011) along with higher chances of unpredictable or radical changes to regulation, policy and tax incentives, can leave a business model unviable at short notice. As an example, a change to immigration and visa regulation may suddenly mean universities are unable to secure the foreign teaching staff they require to deliver the 'western education experience' (Chapman & Pyvis, 2003; Ling et al., 2014; Russell, 2015; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Shah & Nair, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Sidhu & Christie, 2015). Policy changes may suddenly throw the higher education sector into flux (Lane, 2011). The local economic context may differ in the extent of currency fluctuations that erode profits, exchange rates or inflation (Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Wilkins, 2016) and the need to understand how to operate within the context of the broader regional economy (Wilkins, 2016). Although one country may be politically and economically stable, there is potential for social unrest or conflict with neighbouring countries reducing the appeal for staff and students (Wilkins, 2016).

Managing stakeholders is considered a key capability for success as relationships in the context of developing nations are often more challenging. Stakeholders may include: governments (as an investor and facilitator), audit bodies who stipulate quality control

standards (Smith, 2010), intermediaries providing governance functions between home and foreign contexts (Sahlin et al., 2015) as well as other universities, institutions and higher education agencies, especially in hub environments, and industry groups and businesses seeking qualified students to employ (Bolton & Nie, 2010). Students and their parents may have very different expectations of the university (Bolton & Nie, 2010). Sometimes there are higher expectations of offshore campuses to engage with the local community or to represent the broader home country in a quasi-diplomatic, or emissary style, role (Lane, 2011).

In addition, universities must consider the impact of the natural environment which may include a higher prevalence of natural disasters and extreme climate (Wilkins, 2016). These may disrupt operations by damaging buildings and infrastructure that in turn disrupts physical teaching or internet connectivity necessary to support digital content (Wilkins, 2016). Extreme temperatures and climatic conditions or a higher risk of natural disaster may reduce the appeal for students and staff to go there (Wilkins, 2016).

Whilst universities do examine the broader external environment in a developing nation quite extensively, it is observed in the literature, that their research does not consider if there are specific country level factors attracting international students that may be worth considering. In the next chapter (see section 3.1.3, Affordability and Personal Circumstances) the literature provides examples of students who are motivated to choose a study destination based on reducing culture shock and providing easier access to visas. Country factors such as political systems and socio-cultural norms that may be treated as uncertain and high risk to universities, may hold significant appeal to students. For example, from an institutional perspective, establishing in some Asian or Middle Eastern countries may make it difficult to entice western staff to relocate due to limitations placed on academic freedoms, restrictions on course content or historically poor performance in human rights (Wilkins, 2016). At the same time, a tertiary education in a conservative foreign country may hold appeal to students of similar backgrounds (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). In general, understanding the priority of country level factors to international students and their decision making, would be beneficial for universities whether they are offshore or onshore.

2.3.2. Competitors

The literature indicates that universities also focus on understanding the competitive environment. In offshore export contexts, this is primarily universities from developing nations and private providers.

Developing nations now commonly export and import higher education between themselves (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Russell, 2015; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) with institutions from Spain and France, offering programs in Mexico; and Pakistan, which now has foreign institutions from Ireland, Malaysia and Singapore (Naidoo, 2009). Mexico and Russia both import and export offshore campuses (Lane, 2011). Russell (2015) found that these institutions had unique capabilities that went beyond an offer of education, seeing opportunities to succeed in areas that universities from developed countries could not. Russell (2015, p. 263) found these institutions actually had superior abilities and could enter other developing countries "more easily, as their experience helps them quickly overcome problematic political systems, poor infrastructure or governance" that institutions from developed nations find so confronting and difficult. Using Malaysia as an example, its own recent experience with transitioning towards becoming a developed nation, means it understands training needs of other neighbouring countries in earlier stages of transition (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). These competitors navigate the "high-risk external environment" far more efficiently and effectively than universities and institutions from developed countries.

In addition, changes in regulation enticed private providers to offer higher education (Lien & Wang, 2008). Whilst they may not have the reputations of universities to attract students, they do not have the cost burden of research activities nor the requirement to offer replica campuses and can focus on low-cost to establish ICT or business qualifications. Universities, by definition, are required to provide both teaching and research (Shams & Huisman, 2012) and may be under pressure from foreign governments and local partners to do so (Wilkins, 2010). Private providers may be for profit or not-for-profit (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Examples include media companies (such as Pearson or Thomson); professional associations; multinationals who deliver internal qualifications; and private companies who own a university as part of their investment portfolio (Naidoo, 2009; Wilkins, 2010) such as, Al Ghurair University in UAE, which is owned by the Al Ghurair group who also owns a bank,

shopping mall and cement business (Wilkins, 2010); or Sunway Group in Malaysia who is involved in higher education as well as other diversified interests from construction, property development to healthcare, leisure, entertainment, hospitality and toll concessions (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). In some countries, these providers are significant – in the UAE between 2001 and 2006, degrees awarded from private institutions rose from 26.9% to 54.6% (Wilkins, 2010). Some attributing the growth of the overall sector directly to the expansion of private higher education (Hill et al., 2014).

Whilst the literature indicates universities focus on competitors, this literature is limited in its understanding as to how students are responding to competitor offers. The literature on student motivations covered in a section 3.1 International Students' Motivations, indicates that students are motivated by the reputation of the university itself and that for some affordability or the capacity to reduce culture shock would be an important personal consideration. However, little is known about how these factors interact and which of these factors are most important to international students when making choices.

2.3.3. Investment in Campus

A vast amount of literature is devoted to the considerations for universities in deciding whether to invest significant financial capital in establishing an offshore campus that will enhance their reputation and prestige, as compared to other types of partnerships. Yet, the options available to a greater or lesser extent, will be influenced and limited by the host country as part of their terms of invitation (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017), such as a condition for contributing significant capital, facilitating with favourable policy, re-zoning or other assistance (such as site selection, language or cultural advisory services).

(For completeness, it is noted that although some offshore campuses are a wholly-owned subsidiary of the parent institution (Naidoo, 2009), the majority are part owned by the parent institution and utilise a partnership agreement – such as a joint venture - with two or more other independent entities (Hou et al., 2014; Lane, 2011; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Usually, offshore campuses are underpinned by a set of complex partnership or contractual agreements between multiple partners (Lien & Wang, 2012; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Naidoo, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2009; Wilkins, 2010) who may be contributing anything from investment capital to advisory; leasing or building expertise to establish the campus).

The offshore campus model has been extremely popular. The rate of adoption underpins assertions that offshore campuses comprise the majority of the growth in the transnational higher education sector in the past two decades (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Almost half of all offshore campuses belong to institutions from the USA, Australia and the UK (Lane, 2011) – the same countries whose governments significantly reduced the availability of public funding to them from the 1990's (Hodson & Thomas, 2001; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). In the past decade, these three countries are consistently the top three exporters of offshore campuses (Middlehurst, 2013), with a recent Transnational Education Data Report (JISC Internet2, 2018) noting the UK as having the most branch campuses (40), located in 18 countries. Several reasons have been presented to explain the popularity of the offshore campus model: availability of financial and other incentives (Lien & Wang, 2012; Sidhu, 2009; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Wilkins, 2010) as most universities receive financial support to establish an offshore campus (Wilkins, 2010), enhancement of reputation and prestige through a very visible representation of significant investment and commitment on a global level (Lien & Wang, 2012). In acknowledgement of role of education as a social and interconnected experience (Wilkins et al., 2012), these reasons indicate education is substantially more than the successful delivery of subjects and qualifications alone.

However, even after incentives from host countries are factored in, it still profiles as a highly volatile and risky investment (Shams & Huisman, 2012). The investment required for an offshore campus requires diversion of funds from core, home campus activities and poses significant risk to the financial viability of the overall university (Shah & Nair, 2011) as evidenced by the examples of failure (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Even if financially viable, it can be difficult to control all risk as often in hubs, reputational damage can become collective with one institution bringing the others into disrepute through scandal (Wilkins, 2016). Due to these factors, offshore campuses are often outside an institution's accepted financial risk profile (Tayar & Jack, 2013) and other options should be considered, such as partnerships, as detailed in the paragraphs below.

Universities often consider partners and partnerships as a viable alternative to establishing an offshore campus (Altbach & Knight, 2007). There is growing recognition that exporting higher education offshore, demands an increasingly sophisticated capability to deal with language and cultural barriers; diverse and shifting power relations at local, national and global levels

(Bolton & Nie, 2010) in a context of growing demand and increasing need for flexible delivery (Hou et al., 2014). Partners are valuable in helping to mitigate some of the risks associated with entering and operating in a developing nation. If and when things do not go to plan – which is inevitable given the multitude of external factors, most of which are near to impossible to plan for (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), partners with local know-how, intelligence and connections (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) can help navigate the nuanced landscape of foreign countries, language and culture and clear the path for greater successes. Experienced, third party partners are often better at adapting to the local conditions (Stafford & Taylor, 2016), providing institutions with flexibility and agility in responding to the environment of a developing nation. Finding the right partner with good connections and strong local knowledge is often a stepping-stone to learning the market before embarking on more significant investment (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Technology, increasing in its prevalence globally (Lien, 2008), has improved the availability of communication and systems for sharing processes and data (Seah & Edwards, 2006).

The benefits of partnership arrangements are that they reduce the institutions' exposure to risk. These reasons have contributed to the increasing significance and prevalence of partnerships (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Montgomery, 2016) and solidified the attractiveness of partnerships as the preferred market entry method for Australian universities (Heffernan & Poole 2004). Especially in the initial phases of entering a new country and establishing operations progress, partners may contribute resources from capital funding; to physical infrastructure, such as buildings; to access to specialised staff, processes or systems reducing the capital investment necessary from the institution (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

Back in 1998, "Australian universities had more than 2,800 active agreements with universities overseas" and these agreements were noted as including "student and staff exchanges, research collaboration, qualifications recognition and information sharing" (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 1999, p. 17). Since then, the growth has continued, indicating the breadth of activities and services covered, usually by third-party agreements.

However, selecting partners and managing partnerships can be equally difficult and risky. Aligning competing objectives between diverse and multiple stakeholders (Middlehurst, 2013) from a national level (Hill et al., 2014), to industry and operational levels is difficult and

challenging (Middlehurst, 2013). Decanting and reflecting them in a contract, even more complex. Most universities use western constructs of partnership, contract and competition which tend to perpetuate the notions of colonialism and historical inequality; and prioritise the western partner in conflict with collaborative objectives (Montgomery, 2016). On a practical level, contracts usually require the development of relevant and dynamic quality improvement frameworks with evaluation and measurement outcomes (Bolton & Nie, 2010) so that the university can ensure partners are meeting the contract and external audit requirements (Smith, 2010). Third-party partners who deliver poor quality or engage in ethical malpractice under a prestigious university's name can quickly become public relations disasters for the university involved. They consume resources, damage its brand reputation and bring the university to the attention of the external auditors or other regulatory bodies. Unethical practices causing reputational damage are often associated with the subsequent high rates of offshore program closures (Healey, 2015; Shah & Nair, 2011).

As such, the capacity for institutions to utilise robust due diligence in their selection of partners (Shah & Nair, 2011) then maintain relationships with third parties whilst adequately monitoring performance under the contract or agreement, either through direct management or external audit (Shah & Nair, 2011) is seen as essential capability for success (Heffernan & Poole 2005; Russell, 2015; Poole, 2001; Sidhu, 2009) and avoiding controversy (Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Heffernan & Poole, 2005).

A great deal of literature discusses how universities consider how operating models will balance financial profitability and commercial viability of a venture with equally sought-after reputation, prestige, and control. A small amount of literature discusses the conservative options of bypassing or avoiding physically entering a foreign country by using distance/online delivery to teach international students (Middlehurst 2013; Lien & Wang, 2012; Naidoo, 2009) or alternatively, the traditional approach of collaboration through exchange and conference programs. As an example, Warwick University decided against the financial risk of establishing operations in Singapore. Instead, it opted for encouraging its individual schools to establish alliances that encouraged research collaborations and exchanges (Sidhu, 2009).

Very little of the literature considers the option of not participating at all. Yet, Yale University and University of Pennsylvania both declined to open offshore campuses, citing concerns over controlling their brand name reputation and quality assurance, particularly around recruitment of quality academics (Olds, 2008 as cited in Wilkins, 2010). Other universities cite similar concerns with controlling quality as the reason they do not participate in global expansion (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012).

As demonstrated, there is extensive literature available on the factors that universities contribute to successful exporting of higher education, often focused on the offshore context: from the unfamiliar and unpredictable nature of a developing nation, their competitors, and especially, how they can best establish their operations in a manner that ideally maximises income and enhancement of reputation. Although the motivations of international students intersect with these considerations in some areas, it is not clear how students prioritise them in their decision making and whether this perspective could further contribute to universities success. For example, it is not known if some country level factors are more important to international students; whether reputation of the university is more important than affordability or reducing culture shock; and what preferences international students may have regarding how and where they study. It is generally considered at this point, that the perspective of students is yet to be explicitly connected as a valuable contribution to the success of universities in their decision making.

2.4. Chapter Summary

The chapter establishes some alignment, as well as some tensions between the motivations of importers and exporters, and the tension between the financial and altruistic motivations of universities. No literature was found that explored how well the motivations of international students align with those of the universities.

As offshore export opportunities, especially establishing a campus overseas, have the greatest potential to attract high levels of profit and prestige for universities, a significant proportion of the literature is dedicated to how universities weigh up risks of entering a country and the likely competitive environment there (Wilkins, 2016). The lack literature indicates there is an opportunity to learn more about how international students' value some

of these specific factors. For example, whilst universities consider specific country-level risks, less is known as to whether there are specific country-level factors valuable to international students and whether these are more important than for example, employment and immigration opportunities, reputation or affordability. Similarly, universities spend considerable resources deciding on campus facilities as a way to build reputation and prestige (Lien & Wang, 2012), however, it is not clear if the provision of full campus facilities is something international students' value above other considerations and whether a campus is correlated to a more satisfying experience of education than other modes of study, such as online. Whether there is any difference in how these are valued between different student demographics is unstated.

Through this review, it is concluded that international students' perspectives which are largely absent from the literature (Altbach & Knight, 2007) and could offer valuable insight where they intersect with factors focused on by universities. These student perspectives may enhance success and reduce risks for universities.

The next chapter, Chapter 3 Students' Motivations and Satisfaction, completes the review by investigating the literature on students' motivations for study and how this is connected with their subsequent levels of satisfaction.

3. Students' Motivations and Satisfaction

This chapter contrasts the macro, global level of the industry (the exporting universities and importing governments) considered previously in Chapter 2, with the micro level of international students (the many consumers who ultimately, 'buy' higher education) (Altbach & Knight, 2007). International students are a large and significant stakeholder group (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017), and the largest source of international education revenue for many foreign universities (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Although the literature on the global trade of higher education pays less attention to the perspective of students (Knight, 2016; Miliszewska and Sztendur, 2011), the discussion is enhanced with their perspective.

This chapter contrasts the success from the university perspective with success from the student perspective - as 'student satisfaction' (Arambewela et al., 2005). The purpose of the chapter is twofold: firstly, to broadly overview a selection of relevant research on students' satisfaction. Where available, this was narrowed to studies focusing on international students. Further exploration of satisfaction studies focusing on postgraduate international students was undertaken to understand potential research opportunities. Secondly, to critically review the frameworks used to consider how they may be useful to this research project. In selecting research studies for reference in this section, the education system, frameworks, sample demographics, methodology and limitations were all considered.

3.1. International Students' Motivations

The literature indicates that students are motivated in three areas: a general lack of access to higher education in their own country or a lack of access to a particular type of higher education in their own country (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Wilkins, 2010), increasing their chances of employment, specifically as an immigration pathway, and lastly, affordability and other personal circumstances.

Although students are a large and important stakeholder group (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) and the largest source of funds in international education (Altbach & Knight, 2007), the bias towards the perspective of exporting institutions and their countries remains in the academic literature (Knight, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011). Literature that does consider the

perspective of students in any scale, often discusses students as a homogenous group (Burgess et al., 2018). The emerging literature shows an opportunity for the deeper and more complex variations of human nature to be explored using the very personal and individual basis from which students decide to pursue foreign education.

3.1.1. Lack of Access to Local Higher Education

In the previous chapter (see section 2.2) it was noted that many developing countries were unable to supply enough higher education (Lien, 2008; Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Smith, 2010), thereby enticing foreign providers to enter and meet the demand (Lien & Wang, 2012; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Sidhu, 2009). In considering the student perspective and their individual circumstances, a more detailed understanding of the term 'adequate supply' can be formed.

Students may not be able to access higher education within their home country for various reasons (Altbach & Knight, 2007). They may not meet various criteria to access their desired education; local institutions may not offer the course they wish to do; places may be limited or local institutions may not offer flexible modes of study such as online, intensive, part time or evening classes (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Wilkins, 2010). All of these considerations often relate to very personal circumstances in individual students lives.

In some cases, local education is available however, there is a common perception that foreign education is better than a local "second or third tier" university. That perception can motivate students to select more expensive, foreign providers of higher education (Hill et al., 2014) in order to gain access to more reputable and prestigious qualifications. In contrast, the Malaysian government limits access to quality government-run universities to some social, ethnic and racial groups within the population which drives demand for private and foreign education both locally and abroad (Cheong et al., 2016; Rao, 2009).

As such, students may be motivated by a general lack of higher education within their home country or very specific individual requirements such as a need for flexibility in how the qualification is delivered or a particular qualification.

3.1.2. Employment and Immigration Opportunities

The younger demographics of developing nations may be very aware of the high youth unemployment rates in their home country. Whilst education can be seen as crucial to avoid becoming a statistic within their own country (Middlehurst, 2013), most international students also cite improving their broader job prospects as their primary objective (Wilkins et al., 2012). The value of a foreign institutions' reputation to students is frequently acknowledged. Students feel comforted that the reputation will help them access employment, or superior job opportunities, in the global job market (Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010).

Most students believe they are further improving their chance of gaining employment in the overseas job markets when they undertake their higher education in a western style and English-speaking learning environment (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Smith, 2010). This is reinforced given the hegemonic role of English as a global language (Hou et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2010) in education and business. The high value students place on this, correlates with the high demand for courses taught in English (Middlehurst, 2013). Students see value in learning about other cultures as this further prepares them to work in a global environment (Hopkins 2013; Middlehurst, 2013). This includes learning from each other as well as their teachers and the overall experience of western teaching and their learning methods (Ling et al., 2014; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Shams & Huisman, 2016), applicable regardless of whether study is at a foreign university within their own country, their local region or the university's home campus.

The reputation of the institution itself, or the anticipated future job opportunities, may open up immigration pathways (ABC, 2019; Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). These immigration opportunities are valuable to many citizens of developing nations, although they are usually in conflict with the objectives of their home country's government to reduce brain drain.

For students, immigration opportunities are often linked to employment opportunities (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) and students perceive these employment opportunities are enhanced and improved by undertaking their tertiary education in a western style, English speaking learning environment where they can learn about and from other cultures (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Hopkins 2013; Ling et al., 2014; Middlehurst, 2013; Miliszewska & Sztendur,

2012; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Smith, 2010) at a university or institution with a good reputation (Chee et al. 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010) from a well-regarded national education system (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). Australian universities, like their English and American counterparts, leverage both their own reputation and that of the overall national system they originate from, in order to appeal to international students (Shams & Huisman, 2016; Wilkins, 2010).

3.1.3. Affordability and Personal Circumstances

When considering options for higher education qualifications, students must consider a range of personal factors, from the affordability of the qualification to the broader affordability once living arrangements, employment and scholarships are factored in. Affordability is then factored in with a myriad of components including proximity to campus, family, social networks, age, safety, language and culture which all influence students' decision-making.

The personal economics of students' choices in education cannot be overlooked, however, decisions around affordability are tightly entwined with other factors in the life of the individual student. Although the foreign higher education sector now caters to affordability for the masses rather than to the prestige needs of affluent families (Hill et al., 2014), students continue to mostly originate from developing nations and the cost of higher education from foreign providers continues to be expensive (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Studying towards a foreign qualification closer to, or without leaving, home (such as an offshore campus) helps many students maintain employment with the added benefits of being able to stay in closer proximity to their families and social networks for support (Lien, 2008; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012). Studying at an offshore campus within the students' local region can also effectively bypass complex visa processes, significant associated additional costs and restrictions that apply to developed nations (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Middlehurst, 2013).

Affordability of qualifications further from one's region may be limited to lower cost qualifications only or qualifications located near where the student can access a support network, such as extended family with whom they can stay without paying rent. Even in these circumstances, students must still have access to either employment, family funds and/or a scholarship from the institution to participate in foreign higher education as the cheaper cost

of living and tuition only goes so far towards making ends meet (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Lien 2008; Lien & Wang, 2008).

There are deeply personal considerations influencing students' choices. Family opinions about the reputation of the university or its originating education system weigh heavily (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). Perceived safety of locations and compatibility with the general way of life (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017). Some countries may provide a more desirable lifestyle; fit better with a students' religious or cultural background; or simply be in the same time zone permitting easy communication with friends and family. As an example, Malaysia has many students from China, India and Indonesia - not only because they are the largest student markets in the region but because they share language and cultural similarities with Malaysia's Chinese, Indian and Malay communities (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). Reducing culture shock can assist students feeling supported as they transition through tertiary education and improve retention. This is even more valuable in the context of undergraduate students, many of whom may only be 17 when commencing their tertiary qualification studies (Hou et al., 2014; Lien, 2008).

The high volumes of students flowing into Malaysia, India and the UAE in particular from the nearby regions (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Altbach & Knight, 2007), would indicate that affordability and the benefits associated with proximity, such as shared time zone, culture, religion or language, are significant motivations in student decision-making (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016).

In a more focused study, Choi et al. (2012) investigated the motivations of international PhD research students. The two essential factors motivating international research students were provision of a scholarship and a high-quality research opportunity, specifically noting that the reputation of the research group was more important than the overall reputation of the university. This is contrary to an earlier theme in the literature outlining the high value students place on the reputation of the overall education system and / or the university and is evidence that assumptions cannot necessarily be shared throughout student demographics. Other motivations they noted included a genuine enthusiasm for their field; life experiences including destination country experiences and echoed earlier comments regarding opportunities to improve and refine English language skills.

The literature generalises that students from developing nations are motivated to seek out higher education from foreign universities and institutions due to a lack of local supply and this is usually sought to improve their employment and subsequent immigration opportunities. However, there are many other factors - from affordability, to the need for family support (Lien, 2008; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012), ease of obtaining a visa (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Middlehurst, 2013), the age of student (Hou et al., 2014; Lien, 2008) or desire to study within a shared time zone, language or culture (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016) – that combine in idiosyncratic ways for each individual students' decision making and further illustrating the vast heterogeneity of students as a group. Having considered their motivations, what determines student satisfaction is now investigated.

3.2. Studies into Student Satisfaction

The studies on student satisfaction reviewed, were grouped by the researcher into three common areas of investigation – factors within the student, factors within the university, and factors connecting beyond the university, with some research emerging utilising more holistic approaches and integrating across all three areas. It was noted that the bias of institutional and national perspectives continued, with most student satisfaction surveys focusing on factors within the university's control, such as measuring academic or operational indicators.

3.2.1. Factors Within the Individual Student

In section 3.1, the literature indicated that students were motivated to pursue education at foreign universities due to a lack of access to local higher education; employment and immigration opportunities; affordability and a range of other personal circumstances. Whilst some studies investigated factors within the student – such as motivations, qualities, capabilities, intelligence (Duzevic et al., 2018; Eddey & Baumann, 2009; Griffioen et al., 2018) – to understand how they might influence students' overall satisfaction with higher education, these were limited in number.

The first study in this theme investigated whether satisfaction was influenced by motivation more than academic ability. Griffioen et al. (2018) investigated whether students who were more able or gifted were less easy to satisfy in higher education. In their research, they received online surveys from 733 undergraduate students at the Amsterdam University of

Applied Sciences. They found that ability contributed only a small effect in student satisfaction, however students' motivation yielded a higher impact on satisfaction. A higher score on intrinsic motivations resulted in higher satisfaction with the programme, lecturers and feeling prepared for the future.

A possible flaw is that the study described intrinsic motivations as existing within the academic context. For example, "I want to understand the content of my education as thorough as possible" (sic) rather than perhaps life context motivations, such as immigration pathways, that may apply to students were not included. It is unclear if the conclusions would differ if the students surveyed were postgraduate students.

The second study in this theme investigated whether satisfaction was influenced by greater knowledge gains. This study by Duzevic et al. (2018), proposed that 'students who acquire more knowledge and skills are more satisfied with the provided service' (Duzevic et al., 2018, p.610), however this was linked to the belief held by students that the knowledge and skills would help them more readily gain employment (Duzevic et al., 2018). This study was built on concepts of satisfaction based on perceptions and expectations.

The third study in this theme investigated whether satisfaction was influenced by their location finding that American business schools graduated students with higher satisfaction levels. Mai (2005), investigated satisfaction in two postgraduate cohorts, finding that postgraduate business school students in the US expressed higher levels of satisfaction than those in the UK. Postgraduates have more experience of higher education environments to draw upon, yet the discussion of the results simply suggested that personal or cultural factors could be the reason for the UK students experiencing lower satisfaction, without further elaboration. Importantly, although the international students were reported as less satisfied than the domestic students, this was not examined further.

These few studies were the only ones identified investigating how factors within the student, such as motivations for study or other personal circumstances, may be contributing to their level of satisfaction. In these studies, it is unclear how well postgraduate and international students are represented, if at all.

3.2.2. Factors within the University Environment

In the previous section discussing motivations (see 3.1.2 Employment and Immigration Opportunities) it was acknowledged that one of the motivations of students to study at a university outside their national education system, was to leverage the reputation of the university to secure improved job opportunities (Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010). Universities from developed nations were also motivated to enhance their reputations and one of the ways this is achieved is through campus facilities. Although it was briefly noted that a campus environment embraced the broad notions of the social benefits of education to students, the literature largely focused on the financial and reputational risks for universities.

This review found far more studies investigating various factors within the control of universities and their relationship to student satisfaction (Ahmad, 2015; Arambewela et al., 2005; Garcia-Aracil, 2008; Burgess et al., 2018; Dixon & Scott, 2003; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014). The two themes identified were operational and academic; and marketing concepts, such as reputation, loyalty and switching (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mai, 2005). In some studies, the purpose was to determine which factors were important to students and influenced satisfaction (Arambewela et al., 2005; Santini et al., 2017; Yusoff et al., 2014), in others, perceptions and expectations of the above were explored (Conant et al., 1985; Haman et al, 2010). Nearly all of these factors are underpinned by quality assurance systems within the universities themselves (Burgess et al., 2018; Douglas et al., 2006). Some studies collected new data, mostly by survey, others used secondary data sets.

3.2.2.1. Operational and Academic

The use of operational and academic indicators in assessing student satisfaction is prevalent (Arambewela et al., 2005; Burgess et al., 2018; Dixon & Scott, 2003; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014) regardless of whether researchers undertake their own data collection or use sets of secondary data.

Yusoff et al. (2014), based their research framework on the 'service-product bundle' by Douglas, Douglas & Barnes (2006) arguing its applicability to the higher education sector albeit largely due to an absence of criticism and their improvements to the SERVQUAL framework, which measures five dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance

and empathy) believed to represent service quality. Their questionnaire was completed by 823 undergraduate students from four institutions in Malaysia in order to identify underlying dimensions driving student satisfaction. From their analysis, Yusoff et al. (2014) concluded there were 12 factors applicable to the Malaysian higher education environment: all of which were factors within the control of the university. These factors were professional, comfortable environment; student assessments and learning experiences; classroom environment; lecture and tutorial goods; textbook and tuition fees; student support facilities; business procedures; relationship with teaching staff; knowledgeable and responsive faculty; staff helpfulness; feedback; class sizes. Importantly, their final comments reflected the concerns of Burgess et al. (2018), noting the need for institutions to start monitoring value for money in terms of fees paid for tuition. As the study focused on factors within the university, it is not clear what other factors may be contributing to students' satisfaction.

In research using a secondary data set, Mikulic et al. (2015), analysed 23,804 student questionnaires from the Faculty of Economics and Business in a university in Zagreb (Croatia). Using a slightly different perspective, they focused on lecturer and course characteristics that either increased or diminished student satisfaction. What was unique, was that they found that there are attributes that can be hybrid (with a balanced potential to cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction) and dissatisfiers or frustrators, which contribute to dissatisfaction, but not particularly, to satisfaction. This enhanced the findings of Arambewela et al., (2005) who found poor standard of facilities, such as computer labs and libraries, frustrated students and was strikingly visible to them due to the amount of time they spent in them studying, and the findings of Garcia-Aracil (2008) who found poor teaching materials and a lack of research projects created dissatisfaction. However, these surveys generally focused on a narrow range of factors within the control of the institution: either teaching characteristics, such as attitude towards students, or course characteristics, such as clearly defined course objectives and requirements.

Contrary to the above, Duzevic et al. (2018, p.609) in surveying more broadly between social integration, academic and non-academic factors in Croatian universities, found that the "academic and non-academic service quality dimensions were not found to be significantly related to student outcomes and satisfaction". Their study, supporting findings by Garcia-Aracil (2008), found social integration (or social connection) was far more important,

positively influencing student satisfaction. Studies, such as these, further challenge the relevance of quality assurance indicators (Griffioen et al., 2018).

3.2.2.2. Reputation and Brand

In the studies reviewed in this section, researchers explored other marketing concepts. These focused on brand loyalty, how that influences student satisfaction and commonly utilised switching as an indicator to measure loyalty, with loyalty reflecting satisfaction with the brand (or reputation) (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Alves & Raposo 2007; Arambewela et al., 2005; Mai, 2005; Duzevic et al., 2018). The connection between operational and academic factors, and brand loyalty is largely based on the following argument. Maintaining a standard of operational and academic factors is important and relevant to delivering consistent academic outcomes (Tayar & Jack, 2013). Higher standards will deliver higher academic outcomes that in turn, build a universities' reputation (Russell, 2015; Shams & Huisman, 2012). A good reputation attracts more students and better students (Chee et al., 2016). This connection between quality systems and reputation, is then linked to consumer marketing concepts. Consumer devotion (i.e. loyalty) to a brand is considered favourable as it drives repeat business and referrals (Arambewela et al., 2005). The level of switching (or drop out) behaviours is used as an indicator of loyalty to brand, with a lack of switching then interpreted to represent a customer who is satisfied (Duzevic et al., 2018; Mai, 2005).

In a highly competitive higher education market in Portugal, due to declining student numbers, researchers Alves & Raposo (2007) proposed that the reputation of the university had a significant influence on students' expectations, satisfaction and loyalty as well as perception of value. In surveying 2,687 students at various universities, they found a positive correlation. This is built upon by Ahmad and Buchanan (2016; 2017) who found that students considered first the reputation of the university when making decisions as to where to study. Their results indicate that reputation could be important to universities for more reasons than outlined in the earlier literature – higher rates of satisfied students. However, the argument is somewhat circular as reputation is built in part by the quality systems that deliver educational outcomes consistently. It stands to reason that increased rates of satisfaction would flow as a consequence of these systems consistently delivering higher standards of education. This outcome appears to run contrary to the study in section, 3.2.1, that more academically

capable students were not necessarily likely to be more satisfied (Griffioen et al., 2018) as a better reputation is also associated with attracting a higher standard of students (Chee et al., 2016).

It was not clear from the study by Alves & Raposo (2007) whether there was any variation in satisfaction levels between student demographics. Specifically, it was not disclosed whether any of the student demographics paid more for their education and whether this affected their perception of value and satisfaction. This is aligned with other academics observations that student satisfaction is often reported without reflecting the heterogeneity of the student population (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Choi et al., 2012) and is silent as to whether student demographics who pay higher course fees are more or less satisfied than other student demographics (Burgess et al., 2018).

Other researchers have preferred to apply loyalty and switching behaviours (Duzevic et al., 2018) to studies of student satisfaction. Mai (2005) noted that unlike other models of customer satisfaction that measure consumer sentiments such as loyalty, repeat purchases, brand switching and personal recommendation that mostly personal recommendation and switching (ceasing enrolment with a qualification in one institution and enrolling in another institution) or dropping out were the most readily transferrable to the higher education sector. However, the studies based on marketing concepts reviewed, were also underpinned by quality frameworks such as SERVQUAL or Total Quality Management systems. It is noted these frameworks measure satisfaction against operational and academic indicators within universities.

Mai's (2005) field research into the satisfaction levels of postgraduate students at 20 business schools each in the US and UK tested the theory that Satisfaction = Perception – Expectation using a questionnaire to measure expectations-to-service, based on the SERVQUAL framework. The analysis indicated that the only factors considered were all operational, academic or administrative factors all within the universities control. The study found that 'overall impression of the school' and 'overall impression of the quality of education' were significant predictors for the 'overall satisfaction of the education' (Mai, 2005 p.873). Mai (2005) noted that international students, who were 55% of respondents, generally expressed significantly lower levels of satisfaction than domestic students, despite receiving the same

quality of education. It was suggested that perhaps cultural factors may have influenced results (Mai, 2005), rather than perceptions about value for money. To date, it appears that Mai's finding that international students were less satisfied has not been thoroughly examined, other than noting that value for money is an area worthy of further investigation (Burgess et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2014).

Building further on the integration of marketing concepts into frameworks for understanding and measuring student satisfaction undertaken by Mai (2005), Duzevic et al. (2018) extended Duque's 2014 Total Quality Management and Business Excellence framework to also include loyalty or switching parameters within their focus. They collected data from 1,545 students at 93 higher education institutions in Croatia. In the context of their study, loyalty or switching was deemed an important factor connected to satisfaction as dissatisfied students in Croatia were able to freely exercise choice and leave an institution either after admission or between semesters. The study confirmed a significant and positive relationship between student satisfaction and loyalty, with the most significant service quality factor being the reputation of the university impacting learning outcomes and satisfaction. Given that reputation is in part built by quality systems (Russell, 2015; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Tayar & Jack, 2013), the relationships is understandable. If switching is to be considered an important indicator, this study highlighted the relevance of being able to easily effect the decision to switch university.

Most of the studies reviewed in this section utilised surveys to collect data from several hundred, if not thousands of students, most commonly including factors that are all underpinned by quality assurance systems within the university (Burgess et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014). Whilst some of the studies appear to contradict others, the relationships identified included the positive correlation between impressions and reputation to satisfaction (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mai, 2005); satisfaction and loyalty (by avoidance of switching) (Duzevic et al., 2018); and suitable academic and operational services to satisfaction (Yusoff et al., 2014). Researchers generally noted the opportunity for further discussion on value for money concepts (Burgess et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2014) and investigating differences between student demographics (Mai, 2005).

3.2.3. Factors Beyond the University Environment

Whilst many of the studies mentioned earlier in this chapter focused on either factors within the student or within the university and their relationship to student satisfaction, the studies reviewed in this section offer a more comprehensive contribution, as they integrated many of the earlier concepts, as well as expanding to investigate factors beyond the university.

Arambewela and Hall (2008) in their field research, surveyed postgraduate students about study destination acknowledging that there were personal factors; institution factors as well as country factors, influencing selection. They then studied 36 of the variables to evaluate how they influenced satisfaction using the SERVQUAL framework. 573 international postgraduate students (from Asia) from five Victorian universities participated in the survey.

Their findings were that

- it was critical for universities to recognise the importance of other non-educational factors impacting international students' satisfaction. These included issues around accommodation, safety, affordability and recommended that services such as counselling and support services had a big role in assisting international students to settle in and adjust to a new cultural environment.
- there was a positive relationship between finding suitable part time employment in Australia, that was reflective of international postgraduates' experience, and overall satisfaction.
- affordable accommodation as an important factor contributing towards student satisfaction.
- the social environment and cultural diversity played an important role in enriching the student experience. They noted that many university programs and services were not tailored to international postgraduate students.

In a follow up study, Arambewela and Hall (2009) refined their earlier research, testing the key variables in satisfaction for international postgraduate students from Asian countries studying in Australian universities using focus group methodology. They found the variables influencing student satisfaction could be grouped into education, social, technology, economic, accommodation, safety, prestige and image (refer Table 1 – Student Satisfaction

Variables). These appear to align with many of the key motivations of international students outlined in the literature reviewed earlier – reputation, or image and prestige; improved employment and immigration opportunities; and some of the affordability and personal factors noted such as cost of living, safety and lifestyle.

Table 1 – Student Satisfaction Variables

Latent Variable	Measured Variable
Teaching	Valuable feedback from lecturers Good access to lecturers High standard of teaching with quality lecturers
Social Orientation	Counselling services Social activities Close working relationships with all students International orientation programs
Economic Considerations	Casual jobs Cost of living Opportunities for migration
Safety	Safety Lifestyle
Image & Prestige	Image and prestige internationally Image and prestige in Australia Image and prestige in home country
Technology	Access to computer facilities Availability of modern facilities
Accommodation	Reasonable cost Good standard

(Arambewela & Hall, 2009, p.132)

It appears that some aspects of both Arambewela and Hall's studies, contrast with the findings from Duzevic et al. (2018) who found in their investigation of an extended framework

for higher education performance, that academic and non-academic quality dimensions did not significantly affect student outcomes and satisfaction.

Ten years later, Ahrari et al. (2019), interviewed ten international postgraduate students about their adjustment experiences to studying impacting on their satisfaction and experience. They found that three themes emerged: psychological adjustment; academic adjustment; and sociocultural adjustment. They noted past studies were concerned with the difficulties faced by students rather than the benefits; and the bias towards studying how non-western students adapted to western institutions.

The studies in this section appear to acknowledge the value of a more comprehensive approach for student satisfaction as well as reflecting some potential connection to the motivations noted in earlier chapters that international students have for pursuing studies at foreign universities.

3.3. Limitations within Existing Studies

In reviewing the existing studies on student satisfaction, several limitations were identified. These were limitations in clear and consistent use of definitions; biases in the research methodology and data collection instruments; the capacity of respondents to assess satisfaction; and the reporting of outcomes. Understanding these limitations will inform the research method adopted to investigate the Research Question as outlined in Chapter 0 Methodology.

3.3.1. Definitions

The literature reviewed suggests that the satisfaction of students is important to obtain (Alves & Raposo, 2009; Arambewela et al., 2005) and is comprised of varying levels of relationship between previously held expectations, impressions, perceptions (Haman et al., 2010), an overall feeling that is ground in an understanding of norms and consistency of delivery which occurs through quality systems over a time period – yet a lack of clear and consistent definitions as to what comprises satisfaction in the existing studies is generally noted (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Burgess et al., 2018; Duzevic et al., 2018; Garcia-Aracil, 2009; Mai, 2005;

Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014). Operational definitions are further elaborated in Key Insight #3 in Chapter 4.

3.3.2. Research Methodologies and Data Collection Instruments

There are several limitations identified with the research methodologies and data collection instruments. This includes a bias towards who collects data; which factors are tested; which frameworks these are based upon; and from how many university settings data is collected.

A large portion of student satisfaction surveys are undertaken by, or on behalf of, universities or governments. Whilst this may seem understandable, a limitation is that this tends to focus data collection on factors within the universities' control – operations and administration, curriculum, teaching and assessment. There is an inherent assumption that these criteria are the best measures of satisfaction; the only measures of satisfaction; and agreed by students as important in measuring their satisfaction.

Burgess et al. (2018), reflecting upon their analysis of the 10-year English NSS data set on student satisfaction, noted that no comprehensive review had been done to ascertain if the factors determining student satisfaction when the survey commenced in 2006 (and presumably developed by government), were still relevant and current. Several other studies note the prevalence of operational and academic indicators (Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014) often confined to service outcomes such as course administration or punctuality of teaching staff (Coates & Koerner, 1996), often derived from quality system frameworks (Mai, 2005), and concern that these are assumed to be either accurate measures of overall quality systems or presumed to lead to student satisfaction (Griffioen et al., 2018). This assumption is a significant limitation of the data collection practices embedded within the existing research. Mai (2005) even indicated a lack of conclusive confirmation between previous studies.

One of the conclusions made by Burgess et al. (2018) was that perhaps the conventional concepts of student satisfaction used by the English government, were yet to reflect concepts such as value for money, an extremely important factor for students paying full fees. This was considered by Yusoff et al. (2014) in their reflection on opportunities for further research from their study. Although Mai (2005) found that the full fee-paying students were less satisfied in

her study, cultural factors were suggested as a possible explanation, rather than a lack of opportunity to assess of value for money.

Smaller survey-based studies, often undertaken by researchers, investigate the relationship of a much wider range of factors as potentially relevant to student satisfaction. These include the academic capabilities of the individual student (Griffioen et al., 2018), marketing concepts such as reputation (Alves & Raposo, 2007) or loyalty and switching (Duzevic et al., 2018; Mai, 2005), to variables outside the control of the university, such as broader affordability issues, country level factors, image and prestige (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; 2009).

One significant limitation of the studies undertaken by researchers, however, is the capacity to study student satisfaction phenomenon as widely as governments are able to when they are benchmarking across their national education system (Burgess et al., 2018). Most researcher led data collection focuses on a single university setting or comparing 2 to 3 universities (Arambewela & Hall, 2008) which may limit the applicability of results to a wider context.

In general, all satisfaction surveys are essentially reflective of a single point in time (Mai, 2005). A single student may have varying levels of satisfaction over a longer period. Other researchers observe that many satisfaction surveys do not include employment outcomes (Burgess et al., 2018; Mai, 2005) and a better indicator of satisfaction when students may be to survey students in the years after the graduate when they are able to better assess the value of their qualification in the workplace (Burgess et al., 2018; Coates & Koerner, 1996). This supports earlier chapters (see 3.1.2) where the desire to improve their employment opportunities was a key motivation for international students. Such a survey is carried out in Australia, known as the Graduate Outcomes survey. However, this survey is designed to measure employment outcomes of students who have completed a qualification in the previous 4 months. Reporting primarily focuses on employment outcomes after completion of undergraduate qualifications. Although some postgraduate data appears to be collected, the demographic details of participating postgraduates is not readily available (Social Research Centre, 2019).

3.3.3. Respondents

Mostly, there is a bias towards surveying satisfaction in undergraduate students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008). One consequence is that undergraduate students, may not been fully able to accurately assess their satisfaction as their experience of higher education is likely limited to one university or institution, where they are currently enrolled and therefore rely on perceptions or impressions (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mai, 2005) rather than lived experience. One of the peak student representative bodies in Australia, Council for Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), noted this phenomenon in a 2019 press release, "anecdotally, we hear feedback from students thrilled about improvements made by their university, who are unaware that conditions at their university remain sub-standard compared to others" noting that "student satisfaction does not necessarily indicate quality" (Council of Postgraduate Associations, 2019).

In an offshore context, whilst students expected universities to provide comparable learning, social and cultural experiences regardless of whether they are studying on the home campus or offshore campus (Wilkins, 2010). Interestingly, they often thought this expectation was being met and that the offshore campus was "similar in terms of reputation, image, perceived quality and brand equity" (Chee et al., 2016, p. 97). Although some academics questioned whether this was realistically even possible for a university to achieve (Altbach, 2010), it is also wondered to what extent students would be able to assess this comparison.

3.3.4. Reporting

Building upon the limitation that most respondents to student satisfaction surveys are undergraduate students, and may be less able to assess satisfaction, several researchers have noted that the reporting of student satisfaction assumes students are a homogenous group. As undergraduate students are usually the largest cohort within student populations, themes or statistically valid relationships in minority cohorts are likely to be diluted by the vast numbers of undergraduate students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008).

As an illustration of the dilution phenomenon, Burgess et al. (2018), found that during the ten-year period of the UK's National Student Survey data they analysed, one demographic of students had experienced a triple-fold increase in fees, however, whether these students experienced higher or lower levels of satisfaction was not known as satisfaction is reported

more broadly. Choi et al. (2012 p.309) observed the "heterogeneity of international students at postgraduate level is simply ignored or vaguely expressed as diversity in higher education" noting that the perspectives of the minority of highly competent international students engaged in research are effectively diluted.

The limitations in the literature reviewed indicates opportunities in many areas for further research and studies.

3.4. Chapter Summary

Although less is written from the perspective of international students at foreign universities and institutions (Knight, 2016), the available literature indicates that students in general are motivated by a lack of access to, and availability of, higher education within their home country (Altbach & Knight, 2007); to improve their employment and immigration opportunities (Middlehurst, 2013); and by affordability and other very individual circumstances (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016, 2017). Whilst students are often discussed as a single group, international students are far from homogenous (Choi et al., 2012).

When reviewing success from the perspective of students in the context of satisfaction surveys, most previous studies focus on investigating factors in one or more of three themes: factors within the student, factors within the university and factors beyond the university environment. Some studies contradicted earlier studies. The majority of studies primarily focused on factors within the university with most using quality assurance frameworks focusing on either academic and operational factors (eg. Burgess et al., 2018; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014) or marketing factors, such as brand loyalty and switching behaviours (eg. Alves & Raposo, 2007; Duzevic et al., 2018). Despite the literature focusing on the value of reputation and campus in earlier chapters (see 2.1.3 Enhances Reputation and Prestige), there is little evidence in the studies reviewed suggesting how these are prioritised by students in their decision making and how they contribute to their satisfaction. Studies spanning the environment beyond the university add a significant contribution towards expanding understanding factors influencing student satisfaction (eg. Ahrari et al., 2019; Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Arambewela & Hall, 2009). These included the importance of affordable housing, lifestyle, migration opportunities, availability professional employment during study; the

possibility of immigration opportunities; computer access; general safety, well-being, and lifestyle (eg. Arambewela & Hall, 2008; 2009). These studies appear to offer a more comprehensive framework and holistic approach to understanding student satisfaction, with some of these factors, such as immigration opportunities, possibly related to students' motivations for initially pursuing higher education with foreign universities (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Choi et al., 2012).

Significant conceptual and methodological limitations were identified in many of the surveys reviewed. This included a lack of any clear or consistently used definitions and an over reliance on quality assurance frameworks measuring operational, academic, and marketing indicators that are within the control of the universities (Burgess et al., 2018). These indicators have little or no supporting evidence of being a complete, accurate or relevant set of factors as agreed by students (Burgess et al., 2018) nor established as leading to satisfaction (Duzevic et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018). Despite the importance of the role of international branch campuses in the earlier literature, there was little to no evidence that this was a significant factor investigated in the surveys reviewed, nor to what extent it was important to students.

Furthermore, assumptions about the capability of the student cohort to assess satisfaction (or quality systems within universities) was concerning, as most satisfaction studies include high percentages of undergraduates who have limited comparative experience of higher education. The dilution of perspectives from those students who pay full fees (Burgess et al., 2018; Mai, 2005), coursework and research postgraduates (Choi et al., 2012) in reporting, often follows because of this practice.

It was concluded that there was an opportunity to balance identified biases by developing a wider understanding of satisfaction using student-defined factors (both positive and negative), investigating further the relationship between students' motivations and satisfaction, and finding out whether switching is a useful measure of satisfaction in the Australian higher education context. Focusing on a specific student demographic from a broad perspective within a single national education system, was considered an approach more likely to provide important insights for the university sector.

Chapter 0 takes a practical turn as it assesses the method and creates a tool to investigate the research question, aims and indications from the literature. This chapter commences by drawing together the limitations and insights provided in Chapter 2 which investigated national and institutional motivations and success, and Chapter 3 investigating the literature regarding students' motivations and satisfaction, into four key insights. These key insights from the literature are the foundation for the research questions, aims and methodology proposed.

4. Methodology

This chapter begins by consolidating the key insights from the literature that inform and underpin the research question and aims of this study. A qualitative approach to investigate the phenomena is outlined and justified along with details demonstrating how the survey instrument and data collection process support the study. The chapter concludes by considering how the selected cohort supports the aims of the study and works towards balancing the existing biases in research to make new contributions to knowledge.

4.1. Key Insights from Literature

Four insights are drawn from the literature and are followed by an explanation in each case.

Key Insight #1 – Whilst the motivations for the universities of developed nations to pursue export opportunities in international education are well researched, institutional decision making regarding these opportunities appears to focus on assessing financial and reputational risk through an institutional theory and strategic management lens, rather than considering the preferences of international students.

The literature reviewed indicates that universities are motivated by the opportunity to replace lost public funding and increase their revenue (Gallagher, 2000; Hopkins, 2013 Hou et al., 2014; Shah & Nair, 2011; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), pursue social objectives (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) and build reputation (Lien & Wang, 2012; Machado dos Santos, 2000; Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013) by exporting higher education through onshore and offshore activities. The literature indicates reputation is built in multiple ways: by leveraging the national education system the university is situated within (Shams & Huisman, 2012; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Wilkins, 2010), systems and processes that underpin and consistently deliver higher quality educational outcomes (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013), through international research collaborations (Hopkins, 2013) and by investing in offshore campuses (Lien & Wang, 2012). Some tension is noted between the social and financial objectives of universities (Middlehurst, 2013) aiming to improve the educational outcomes to

some of the poorest student demographics but perpetuating notions of privilege by focusing on the most affluent in order to raise significant income for the university (Hill et al., 2014; Hou et al., 2014 Knight & Altbach, 2007; Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013).

The literature indicates that universities expend considerable resources in deciding on whether to invest in offshore campuses, as these are notoriously volatile investments (Shams & Huisman, 2012). This decision making process appears to prioritise assessment of the foreign country (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Lane, 2011; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Shah & Nair, 2011; Sidhu, 2009; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Stafford & Taylor, 2016; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins, 2016) and competitive environment (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017 Naidoo, 2009; Lien & Wang, 2008; Russell, 2015; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Wilkins, 2010) in terms of financial and reputational risk (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013; Shah & Nair, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Smith, 2010; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). However, balancing financial and reputational risks appears to be an ongoing challenge for universities, regardless of whether they are exporting and operating offshore or onshore (ABC, 2019; Altbach, 2010; 2012; Bolton & Nie, 2010; Smith, 2014; Wilkins, 2010).

This focus, of considering export opportunities from the perspective of existing industry norms and assessing the broader environment from a strategic management perspective, reduces the contribution of other stakeholders including students. Consequently, little is known about how reputation and the experience of campus influences international students in their decision to pursue studies, whether they are taking up flexible study options at the rate indicated in the literature (for example, Healey, 2019) and whether there are significant country-level factors influencing students' decision making. This further reflects the bias towards the perspective of developed nations and their universities (Knight, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011), as opposed to the international students who are the "customers" of higher education and one of the biggest stakeholder groups, that has been identified (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017).

Key Insight #2 – The motivations of international students are less well researched and generally do not explore differences within the demographics of this group.

The literature indicates that international students are motivated to pursue higher education with foreign universities as: the options are not readily available in their home country (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Wilkins, 2010), a pathway for immigration (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017), to leverage a foreign university's reputation and western learning environment to improve their employment opportunities (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Chee et al, 2016; Hopkins, 2013; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Middlehurst, 2013; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Smith, 2010; Wilkins, 2010; Wilkins et al., 2012), affordability and other individual factors (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016, 2017; Choi et al, 2012; Hou, Montgomery & McDowell, 2014; Lien, 2008; Lien, 2008; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012).

Despite being a large stakeholder group in both global higher education (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017), a significant revenue stream for Australian universities (ABC, 2019) and a prominent export sector to the Australian economy (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015), less is known about the motivations and priorities of international students enrolling in Australian universities. Understanding this could help universities improve their decision making.

Key Insight #3 – Many student satisfaction surveys are conceptually limited as they often loosely and inconsistently define satisfaction, largely rely on measuring quality assurance indicators within the control of the university or assume notions of loyalty are interchangeable as indicators of satisfaction.

Satisfaction is not well defined (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Burgess et al., 2018; Duzevic et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014), with many researchers relying on notions of expectations and perceptions. Whilst one issue is that researchers do not share a common definition of satisfaction, a further problem is that it is unknown whether students agree with the definition of satisfaction used in the surveys they are completing. For example, it is possible that based on a definition of satisfaction provided in a survey, that the student is

dissatisfied, however, if using their own definition, they would agree they were in fact, satisfied. This effectively skews results. For example, if students are presented with a definition of satisfaction oriented to quality of teaching or campus facilities, they may not be satisfied. However, if the student was motivated by the opportunity to study as a means of immigration, the quality of the teaching or campus facilities may not influence their level of satisfaction at all.

Existing satisfaction surveys commonly focus on measuring academic and operational factors often derived from quality assurance frameworks (Burgess et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014) and / or marketing concepts that use switching behaviours as an indicator of loyalty and representative of satisfaction (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Duzevic et al. 2018). Although this is understandable as many student satisfaction surveys originate from government or the university, there is a tendency to focus on factors within the universities' control, usually academic and operational factors (Burgess et al., 2018). There is, however, little evidence to support the completeness, accuracy or relevance of these indicators and frameworks to satisfaction (Burgess et al., 2018; Duzevic et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005). Equally, student satisfaction is not necessarily a reliable or proven indicator of quality (Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, 2019). The extent to which these factors are shared by students as suitable indicators to measure satisfaction is equally unclear (Burgess et al., 2018). An opportunity to include student-led definitions and factors was identified.

Emerging evidence from studies indicates that other factors less commonly surveyed contribute to satisfaction. These include the capacity to make social connections within the university experience (Duzevic et al., 2018; Garcia-Aracil, 2008), the broader environment beyond the university and other student identified factors (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Arambewela & Hall, 2009) as well as the role of dissatisfiers or frustrators (Arambewela et al., 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015). Understanding a more student-centric view of satisfaction and delving into the factors the students themselves consider important determinants to satisfaction or dissatisfaction is not well understood. This knowledge may assist universities to prioritise initiatives.

Key Insight #4 – Narrowing sample parameters to a single country within the broader context of this international topic will ensure practical research findings that will be useful and readily applicable within that context. Existing student satisfaction surveys fail to adequately represent some student demographics, potentially missing the opportunity to identify broader patterns relevant to these specific groups.

The global industry of higher education export has evolved since its introduction into the GATS in the 1990s to now include not only students and staff crossing borders, but programs and institutions (Knight, 2016; Lane, 2011; Montgomery, 2016; Naidoo, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Wilkins, 2010) with qualifications offered onshore, offshore, online, through partners and recognition programs or any combination of the above (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Hou et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2009). Each exporting (or home) country and importing (or host) country often use different definitions, reporting periods, laws and regulations (International Education Association of Australia, 2016; Drew et al, 2006 cited in Smith, 2014; Sahlin et al., 2015). Whilst this makes comparing the available data sets difficult, if not impossible, it also influences the types of study options available to students, for example the practicalities of various visa conditions (Lane, 2011; Naidoo, 2009; Poon-McBrayer, 2011).

A research topic that spans multiple national education systems, could result in findings that are so broadly generalisable that they are difficult to apply in practice and thus offer less significance to industry. However, focusing too narrowly, on only one to three universities within a system may provide insight that is not representative enough (Arambewela & Hall, 2008).

Research that explores the topic broadly and within a single national education system context is more likely to offer findings that are widely useful to the higher education providers within that context. In a global context, Australia was one of the first exporters (Hopkins, 2013; Hou et al., 2014) and continues to be a significant exporter of higher education (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015) and one of the most popular destinations for international students (ABC, 2019). Research undertaken in Australia would provide a large student population and a mature context.

Researchers often collect data from only a few universities (Arambewela & Hall, 2008) with most surveys open to all higher education students. These surveys are likely to collect data from a majority of undergraduate students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008), who are more likely to be poorly equipped to assess satisfaction as they have no comparative experience (Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, 2019) and rely on perceptions or impressions (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Mai, 2005) over experience. The practice of treating students as a homogenous group when reporting outcomes, rather than analysing data to understand differences between undergraduates and postgraduates, domestic and international students, effectively dilutes data from minor demographics, such as postgraduate students, international students or research students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Burgess et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2012).

4.2. Research Issues

Given the insights highlighted, it is likely that universities would benefit from an improved understanding of

- the motivations of international students enrolling in Australian universities as compared to the themes identified in the available global data,
- whether satisfaction surveys adequately reflect the dimensions of satisfaction that are important to students, such as affordability or social-cultural experiences,
- whether students value reputation and campus facilities over other factors such as affordability,
- the impact of student dissatisfaction on universities.

These four points are the basis of my Research Question.

4.2.1. Gaps in Existing Research Studies

Business research can be heavily influenced by the discipline of rational economics and financial drivers often viewing statistics through easy-to-apply models for analysis and commercial decision-making. This approach misses the rich social inputs influencing decision-making that have been expanded through insight from behavioural decision economics, social or qualitative research disciplines. The qualitative approach utilised in this research contributes a rich understanding of social decision making.

From the literature reviewed in the preceding chapters regarding student perspectives in higher education, the following limitations were considered in developing the research parameters to ensure new insight is developed through investigating my Research Questions.

- There is opportunity to consider in more detail, the perspective of non-institutional stakeholder groups, such as international students who form a large stakeholder group (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) and are a significant contributor to the revenue of Australian universities (ABC, 2019; Altbach & Knight, 2007).
- In institutional decision-making to export higher education particularly in the context of offshore campuses, the research indicates that a deeper understanding of student preferences is often absent, and this knowledge could be beneficial to universities.
- When students are a factor in higher education decision-making, they are often treated as high-level statistics (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) and as a homogenous group. This trend continues in student satisfaction surveys (Arambewela & Hall, 2008) where the differences in satisfaction between various student demographics are not well understood and the perspectives of postgraduate and international students in particular, are diluted by the responses of undergraduate and domestic students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Burgess et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2012)
- Student satisfaction is traditionally measured
    - with indicators generated by governments or universities, rather than ones developed by students (Burgess et al., 2018),
    - using indicators that are within the control of universities such as operational and facilities indicators; curriculum, teaching and assessment indicators (Burgess et al., 2018; Dixon & Scott, 2003; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014) or marketing frameworks that measure switching behaviours as an indicator of loyalty to brand reputation (eg. Duzevic et al. 2018). It is questioned whether switching is a useful measure as changing university or qualification may not be an option for all students, depending on either their personal context or the conditions associated with their enrolment, such as visa status.

4.3. Research Context and Aims

Using the literature reviewed and limitations in existing research studies, the current study is set within the following context and specific aims.

4.3.1. Context

- Australia – this context offers consistency with the global themes identified in the literature review as well as fewer factors potentially influencing results in an offshore environment. An offshore context could pose distracting issues arising from establishing a new campus and / or programmes or broader infrastructure reliability which can influence students' perceptions of satisfaction.
- International postgraduate students – focusing on this specific demographic of students addresses biases and gaps within the literature and research. Increasing knowledge of international student perspectives reduces the bias towards institutional perspectives in higher education export literature. Postgraduate students have more comparative experience of higher education to draw upon in assessing satisfaction and honing in on a specific demographic prevents dilution from undergraduate student views.

4.3.2. Aims

The research question is "What is the interconnection between motivations, expectations and satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia?" To address this question, the aims are:

1. To discover whether student motivations for study – reputation, immigration and affordability – are consistent with the existing literature and, importantly, how international students prioritise these in their decision to study in Australia.
2. To discover whether there are other factors important to students that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments
3. To explore whether postgraduate students in the survey sample reflect the level of mobility inferred in the literature.
4. To explore whether studying in full campus settings is connected to an increase in levels of satisfaction.

5. To investigate the relevance of switching behaviours as a measure of loyalty, and satisfaction, in the Australian context.

The following propositions will be investigated:

a) That international postgraduate students will be motivated by immigration opportunities more than the reputation of the university or the national education system.
b) That there may be other factors important to students that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments.
c) That international postgraduate students will reflect low mobility levels compared to the levels inferred in the literature review.
d) That international postgraduate students studying at full campus facilities will have the highest levels of satisfaction.
e) That dissatisfied international postgraduate students would switch qualification and/or university *if it were easy to do so*.

4.4. Frameworks

Theoretical and research frameworks were considered to develop an appropriate methodology for the research question.

4.4.1. Theoretical Framework

The literature indicates a bias towards theoretical constructs from institutional perspectives and strategic management paradigms based on rational economic theory. This skews the literature towards industry assumptions and norms and is noted as particularly biased towards the universities and institutions of developed nations or their national education systems (Knight, 2016; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011).

A bias exists within business theory as it is frequently built on a fundamental assumption of profit maximisation (Gyves & O'Higgins, 2008; Husted, Allen & Rivera, 2010; Klein et al, 2013), which does not apply to all organisations and stakeholders within an industry, especially those for whom profit maximisation is secondary to a social mission or where the market has failed rather than create an imperfection.

As mentioned in section 2.1.2 (Exporting connects with Institutional Values), universities often experience some tension integrating their traditional social values of knowledge sharing and betterment of society with profit maximisation objectives in the face of lost government funding. This is exacerbated by the present pandemic which has seen revenue from international students fall drastically (Davies, 2020b).

A significant opportunity exists to widen the perspective offered through the lens of Stakeholder Theory to include the rich and diverse experience of the students. Stakeholder theory broadens the theoretical view beyond the linear value chain that prioritises profits for the shareholder to a view that encompasses a value network. This includes stakeholders that are impacted by the organisation but may not contribute financially (e.g. industry regulators), may contribute less financial resources (e.g. students families), or may influence decisions (e.g. government) to the university and places them as a central focus of an organisations decision making (Freeman et al., 2020). Stakeholder theory supports placing international students at the forefront of this research.

This research takes the perspective of stakeholder theory and then develops it in the context of grounded theory in order to identify a suitable fit with the overall aims of the research question under investigation.

The potential for any researcher to become biased towards interpreting data in the context of pre-existing theoretical frameworks is an important acknowledgement. Whether the data ultimately reflects, supports, extends or refutes existing theory can be considered once the data has been analysed. This reversal of deductive to inductive approach is a hallmark of grounded theory established primarily to avoid excessive bias towards existing theory (Glasner & Strauss, cited in Egan, 2002).

For this research, it was considered that stakeholder theory supported the placement of international students at the forefront of the research. Utilising a data collection and analysis approach founded within grounded theory would provide a robust framework that reduced the propensity for bias to existing theory.

4.4.2. Research Framework

To address the research aims, the key research issues emerging from the literature were consolidated into the table below. Refer Table 2 – Research Issues. These research issues informed the development of the fieldwork (survey) and were pursued through the survey questions, detailed in the following sections.

Table 2 – Research Issues

Key Issues	References
Relevance of campus facilities to student satisfaction	(Lien & Wang, 2012; Wilkins et al., 2012)
Prevalence of student mobility	(Lien & Wang, 2012; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Naidoo, 2009; Shams & Huisman, 2009; Wilkins, 2010)
Priority of reputation, employment and affordability factors motivating international postgraduate students to pursue studies	(Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2011; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010)
Priority of immigration, research opportunities or other personal factors motivating international postgraduate students to pursue studies	(Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Lien, 2008; Lien & Wang, 2008; Middlehurst, 2013; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012)
Relevance of quality assurance frameworks to satisfaction; Identification of other student determined positive factors contributing to satisfaction	(Griffioen et al., 2018) (Arambewela & Hall, 2009)
Relevance of satisfaction; Identification of other student determined negative factors contributing to dissatisfaction	(Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Mikulic et al., 2015)
Relevance of switching compared to other factors such as affordability or reputation	(Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Mai, 2005)
Relevance of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as useful measures for international postgraduate students at Australian universities	(Griffioen et al., 2018; Mikulic et al., 2015) New contribution from this thesis
Student characteristics and demographics that can be used for further analysis to determine other trends and relationships between data potentially leading to new insights For example, university and study location, type and level of qualification, study mode, or financial support	(Arambewela & Hall, 2009)

In the next section, the justification for using a qualitative approach is presented, outlining how it supports the investigation of the phenomenon under research. The qualitative

components of the research are then detailed along with the process for developing the survey instrument, distributing the survey and analysing the data collected with the support of descriptive statistics. The rationale for the selection of the sample cohort based on the total population cohort is fully discussed.

4.5. Research Paradigm

The pragmatic paradigm accepts that values play a role in interpreting results and the role of external reality shaping a need for explanations that best produce the desired outcomes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The pragmatic paradigm was selected for this research as it is best suited for providing stronger inferences by combining breadth and depth to understand complex social phenomena. It also provides a space for divergent viewpoints to be expressed (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Inductive logic allows the researcher to analyse patterns and relationships within the data to generate meaning and build theory from the ground up. This is an alternative to a top down or deductive approach that begins with the theory or generalisation to categorise or test data in the context of an existing theory (Babbie, 2015; Egan, 2002).

Inductive logic was selected for this research to thematically group the qualitative data in an iterative fashion, until sense-making was achieved. This aligned with a conceptual framework based on grounded theory, to better understand the student perspective.

One source of relevant expertise in the development and justification of qualitative methods in research is Babbie (2015). Use of a qualitative approach is related to the pragmatic paradigm. This is whereby qualitative methods are used to collect data and both deductive and inductive logic is utilised to best understand the research problem.

4.6. Research Method and Justification

A qualitative approach was selected, and a survey tool created. The survey tool included closed-option statistical data collection and selected open-ended qualitative questions. The descriptive statistics contribute to identifying patterns across a broad cross section of respondents in the cohort (Patton, 2015). The selected qualitative questions allow

respondents to share thoughts and feelings (Hall & Winchester, 1997**)** to deepen insight into the research question (Neuman, 2006).

4.6.1. Rationale for Selecting a Qualitative Approach

Utilising a qualitative approach assists in balancing the limitations of quantitative methods that are prevalent in the discussion of student satisfaction surveys as well as institutional biases inherent in these surveys. Limitations of quantitative methodology include the focus on the how many, how much or how often, that can result in generating models that are neither remarkably accurate nor practical (Hall & Winchester, 1997). Qualitative data collection provides a rich source of data that can deepen understanding of the feelings and issues that drive behaviour (Hall & Winchester, 1997). The resulting data provides the capacity to generate meaning and theory, gain insight, and explore a topic (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Winchester & Winchester, 2011) leading to a deeper and more thorough understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Neuman, 2006).

A self-administered, self-paced survey tool was considered suitable to collect a broad range of perspectives on the research questions in a manner that would be inclusive, efficient and cost effective (Babbie, 2015), in particular, as input from students Australia-wide was being sought and many international students use English as an Additional Language.

Since international students may receive multiple requests to participate in high-level surveys, interviews and various data collection activities from government, industry, universities and other bodies (possibly due to importance of international students to the financial sustainability of universities and institutions, as well as the Australian economy), a short "snapshot" survey was considered appropriate. Postgraduate students were considered to have more responsibilities competing for their time than, for example, undergraduate students and narrowing data collection to one single collection point was considered the approach most likely to increase participation rates and the overall success of data collection.

This approach assisted in ensuring the data is both broad and deep enough, across differing viewpoints in its collection, so that inferences made are stronger and the research question is better answered (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

4.7. Development of the Survey Instrument

The intention of developing a survey was to explore the five aims in section 4.3.2, noted as to

1. discover whether student motivations for study - reputation, immigration and affordability - are consistent with the existing literature and, importantly, how international students prioritise these in their decision to study in Australia.

2. discover whether there are other student determined factors that are important to the satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments.
3. Explore whether postgraduate students in the survey sample reflect the level of mobility inferred in the literature.
4. explore whether studying in full campus settings is connected to an increase in level of satisfaction.
5. investigate the relevance of switching behaviours as a measure of loyalty, and satisfaction, in the Australian context.

Using the issues identified in previous research as a foundation (see Framework in section 4.4) and the Research Method and Justification (see section 4.6), a survey instrument was developed. The survey instrument covered information to participants, qualifying questions and a consent page as well as four areas: motivations and influences in their initial decision to study; expectations and satisfaction; dissatisfaction and switching; and respondent characteristics and demographic data. The survey was sequenced to create a flow of thought that respondents would be able to follow in answering questions (Kinnear & Taylor, 1996) without compromising the succinctness required to hold the attention of respondents.

Previous surveys were reviewed for suitability of question format and content including student satisfaction survey tools used in the studies selected for Chapter 3 (see 3.2 Studies into Student Satisfaction); those utilised at Victoria University and a broader survey tool used by Universities Australia (2018) on student finances.

A new survey instrument was developed as no specific survey instrument existed and the survey instruments reviewed did not

- investigate how international students prioritised various factors in pursuing postgraduate studies.
- utilise student determined factors in assessing student satisfaction.
- investigate student priorities in decision-making in switching.

4.7.1. Parameters

According to Babbie (2015), the survey instrument was developed with the following parameters in mind:

- be no more than 15 questions, ideally 10 questions long
- take no more than 10 minutes to complete
- focus on selections from a list or short answer questions wherever possible
- be distributed digitally with the survey compatible on a range of devices including mobile phone, computer and tablet

4.7.2. Survey Content

The survey has five distinct sections.

4.7.2.1. Section 1 – Qualifying Criteria and Characteristics

The first eight questions were developed to ensure only qualifying respondents continued with the survey. In this section, data relating to the university and qualification was collected including university; level of postgraduate qualification; present year of study; mode of study, such as online; type of classroom environment; and the level of transfer between countries and qualifications relevant to this qualification.

Although the first question would ascertain if respondents met the qualifying criteria, these other questions were included for the purposes of validating that respondents qualified for the survey, creating flow for respondents to start focusing on the survey topic broadly, and providing enough detailed data that can be used to investigate the research aims as well as potentially identifying other patterns as the data is analysed.

(See APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT, Qualifying Criteria)

4.7.2.2. Section 2 – Motivations and Influences

This section contained two questions. The first asked respondents to consider a set of external factors, specifically relating to the university of qualification, that may have influenced their decision to enrol in postgraduate study. The second question asked about other factors, such as personal or broader external factors, in their decision making. The two questions had up to eight factors for respondents to prioritise. The majority of factors included were drawn from the literature review with some new additional factors mixed in from the stakeholder pre-test activity, recent media coverage or the researchers own experience teaching international postgraduate students.

Respondents were asked to select *up to three* factors from the list. Although a Likert scale had been considered for this question, it was assessed as not suitable as respondents could potentially 'strongly agree' with all factors, rather than being required to select those three factors most important in their decision making.

(*See* APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT, About your motivations for commencing postgraduate studies)

4.7.2.3. Section 3 – Expectations and Satisfaction

This section was designed to capture student led and defined determinants.

It asked respondents whether the university and qualification had overall met their expectations. It then followed with two questions designed to encourage respondents to briefly reflect on their experience as an international postgraduate student. These questions were designed as free text fields to capture qualitative data about the best and most difficult aspects, or 'impressions' (Mai, 2005), of postgraduate study from the perspective of international students. They were purposefully phrased to sound like a question from a friend to solicit quick, stream-of-thought responses, rather than a considered response to a formal question.

(See APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT, Expectations)

4.7.2.4. Section 4 – Dissatisfaction and Switching

Rather than focusing on the various quality assurance factors other surveys have assumed to be relevant to satisfaction, this section focused on whether respondents had experienced dissatisfaction levels high enough to consider switching qualification or university and how they had prioritised factors influencing their decision making. Further validation of the importance of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as a measure was sought by asking those students who experienced a high level of dissatisfaction if the process for switching was easy, whether this would influence and change their decision-making regarding switching.

(*See* APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT, Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction).

4.7.2.5. Section 5 – Respondent Profile

This section collected data personal to the respondent, rather than their university or qualification. It collected year of birth; nationality (as per enrolment); gender; personal circumstances; and collected some further brief information about the respondents' level of financial support whilst completing postgraduate study. A portion of demographic questions in this section of the survey were aligned with the survey tool used by Universities Australia (2018) to ensure comparable data points were collected, as this may be useful in future research and other applications of the data. The final question in the survey provided the only identifiable question asking respondents to provide an email address for follow up.

(*See* APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT, Respondent Characteristics & Demographic Data).

4.7.3. Pre-Test

A trial survey was developed on a web-based survey platform, SurveyMonkey. This survey was designed and then run in test mode to issue with a sub-group of students representing the broader cohort. Five key students were approached for their input as to the suitability and applicability of the parameters above and to assess strengths and weaknesses generally. These students were all involved in postgraduate student representation and advocacy; they were drawn from across Australia. All aspects of the survey including clarity, style, meaningfulness, ease of completion, language, cultural norms, were tested to be confident the survey was ready for release (Kinnear & Taylor, 1996). The testers shared similar

backgrounds to the target respondents as either postgraduate students or international postgraduate students.

Based on the results of the feedback, minor modifications were made, mostly to the formatting to ensure the survey operated smoothly and was easy to navigate on a variety of devices. Some minor amendments were made to ensure phrasing was in simple English and not open to misinterpretation. This was considered very important as it was anticipated that English would be an additional language for many international postgraduate students. Self-paced was deemed important so that non-native speakers of English could relax and answer as fully as they desired. Instructions regarded timing were amended to read as indicative only.

The process ensured that the survey was clear and well-understood by potential respondents.

4.8. Total Population & Sample Selection

International postgraduate students were selected for the sample cohort on the basis that they will address:

- the identified bias in previous research that includes a majority of undergraduate and domestic students, resulting in the dilution of postgraduate and international student views in research studies.
- the lack of comparative higher education experience of other universities and institutions prevalent with undergraduate respondents.
- interpretation issues would be reduced as postgraduate students are considered to be more likely to have higher levels of literacy than undergraduate students and would be less likely to misinterpret survey questions.

To support the research context and aims, the cohort included only international students enrolled in postgraduate studies at Australian universities, coursework students and research students.

4.8.1. Total Population of Cohort

Higher education student enrolment statistics are compiled by the Australian Government, via the Department of Education (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019). Depending on release dates, these data sets can have a lag of approximately 18 months. A greater limitation of this data is that most tables (such as international students by university or onshore/offshore status) report postgraduate and undergraduate students as combined figures. The only table whereby postgraduates can be easily separated is by the qualification level they are enrolled in.

The 2018 Student Summary created by the Australian government 28 October 2019 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019), reports that

- a total of 479,987 international students are enrolled in preparatory/enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate higher education qualifications. Of these,
    - 77% of these students classified as onshore. As the Australian government only classifies students as onshore or offshore, the remaining 23% are all offshore.
    - Approximately 61,185 (or 13%) of international students are enrolled with private or non-university higher education providers, with the majority (87%) enrolled at universities. This figure is noted as variable as numbers in the Australian Capital Territory are estimated if below 5 students or for the multi-state provider category, not published. For the purposes of this thesis, 61,185 will be the figure used for the total international student population enrolled outside of the university sector for the purposes of making broader assumptions about sampling and data collection. Therefore, it is estimated that there are 418,666 international students enrolled at Australian universities. (Refer to Table 3 - Estimated International Students Enrolled, by Australian University)

Table 3 - Estimated International Students Enrolled, by Australian University

State/Institution	All International Students by Australian university	Percentage of Total (International Students)	Estimated International Postgraduate Students by Australian University
New South Wales			**53,807**
Charles Sturt University	10,800	2.58%	4,784
Macquarie University	11,730	2.80%	5,196
Southern Cross University	4,931	1.18%	2,184
The University of New England	1,472	0.35%	652
The University of Newcastle	5,825	1.39%	2,580
The University of Sydney	26,042	6.22%	11,535
University of New South Wales	23,148	5.53%	10,253
University of Technology Sydney	15,273	3.65%	6,765
University of Wollongong	15,096	3.61%	6,687
Western Sydney University	7,159	1.71%	3,171
Victoria			**66,980**
Deakin University	14,326	3.42%	6,346
Federation University Australia[b]	8,940	2.14%	3,960
La Trobe University	9,834	2.35%	4,356
Monash University	38,336	9.16%	16,981
RMIT University	31,531	7.53%	13,967
Swinburne University of Technology	10,431	2.49%	4,620
The University of Melbourne	26,606	6.35%	11,785
University of Divinity	151	0.04%	67
Victoria University	11,059	2.64%	4,899
Queensland			**26,316**
Bond University	3,346	0.80%	1,482
CQUniversity	7,505	1.79%	3,324
Griffith University	8,550	2.04%	3,787
James Cook University	6,104	1.46%	2,704
Queensland University of Technology	8,945	2.14%	3,962
The University of Queensland	18,074	4.32%	8,006
University of Southern Queensland	2,846	0.68%	1,261
University of the Sunshine Coast	4,041	0.97%	1,790
Western Australia			**15,011**
Curtin University	13,163	3.14%	5,831
Edith Cowan University	6,010	1.44%	2,662
Murdoch University	9,081	2.17%	4,022
The University of Notre Dame Australia	238	0.06%	105
The University of Western Australia	5,398	1.29%	2,391
South Australia			**11,052**
Flinders University	5,311	1.27%	2,352
The University of Adelaide	7,840	1.87%	3,473
Torrens University Australia	6,080	1.45%	2,693
University of South Australia	5,719	1.37%	2,533
Tasmania			**3,243**
University of Tasmania	7,322	1.75%	3,243
Northern Territory			**873**
Charles Darwin University	1,972	0.47%	873
Australian Capital Territory			**6,193**
The Australian National University	10,596	2.53%	4,693
University of Canberra	3,385	0.81%	1,499
Multi-State			**1,971**
Australian Catholic University	4,450	1.06%	1,971
TOTAL	**418,666**	100%	**185,447**

(b) Previously University of Ballarat.

(Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019)

- 213,158 (44%) international students are postgraduate, enrolled both onshore and offshore in doctorate, masters' and graduate certificate qualifications.
    - As a more detailed breakdown of this data was not available, the same ratios determined from the combined (preparatory/enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate) data were applied to the international postgraduate students to limit the total population to exclude those international postgraduate students not enrolled at Australian universities. This assumes that international postgraduates enrol at universities (as opposed to non-university higher education providers) at the same rate as the total international student population i.e. 87% enrol at universities and 13% enrol at private and non-university providers. Utilising this method, it was estimated that the total population of international postgraduate students enrolled at Australian universities (onshore and offshore) was 185,447. (Refer to Table 4 - International Students Enrolled in Doctoral, Masters and Graduate Certificate Qualifications at Australian Universities)

Table 4 - International Students Enrolled in Doctoral, Masters and Graduate Certificate Qualifications at Australian Universities

Level of Course (Postgraduate)	Number of International Students Enrolled in Australian Higher Education	Percentage of Total
Doctorate by Research	**21,589**	10.13%
Doctorate by Coursework	**117**	0.05%
Master's (Extended)	**1,300**	0.61%
Master's by Research	**1,472**	0.69%
Master's by Coursework	**184,856**	86.72%
Graduate Certificate	**3,824**	1.79%
Total	213,158	100.00%
Number of international postgraduate students enrolled in qualifications with Australian universities	185,447	87%

(Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019)

Using a similar methodology, the rate of enrolment for international postgraduates at each university was assumed to be consistent with the general rate of enrolment of the wider international student population at each university. Although some universities do publish statistics on international postgraduate students on their websites, as this is not a consistent practice across the university sector and with potentially varied reporting periods and definitions, it was considered to be a more reliable approach, to work with one consistent data set and apply assumptions consistent with the broader trends identified across the entire international student data. (Refer Table 3 - Estimated International Students Enrolled, by Australian University)

4.8.2. Sample Population of Cohort

The purpose of sampling is to ensure the responding cohort are representative of a greater population when drawing conclusions. The sample selected should have a specific purpose related to the research question in either knowledge of, or personal experience with the topic (Cleary, Horsfall & Hayter, 2014).

There are varying viewpoints as to the correct sample size for qualitative research. Patton (2002, p.184) suggests that a "sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources".

A survey response rate of 150-200 completed surveys was considered a target deemed both manageable and useful. Regardless of the number of survey responses received, the findings are interpreted cautiously and are not generalisable.

A data collection methodology was developed to ensure that data collected represented international postgraduate students studying at Australian universities to avoid conclusions that could be skewed to a particular state or university.

4.9. Data Collection Process

Distribution and analysis are considered in the following sections.

4.9.1. Distribution of Survey Instrument

A self-administered, self-paced online survey was considered appropriate for the research study as it is an efficient and cost-effective method for collecting data and reaching potential respondents Australia-wide.

Students in postgraduate representative roles the two main peak national bodies, Council for Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) and Council of International Students Australia (CISA), were contacted to seek their support in distributing the survey. This was followed up by an email that included the ethics approved survey information, an invitation link to the survey and suggested social media content for distribution out to their networks.

Student representative organisations from within these two peak body networks supported and promoted the survey requesting completion via their networks. From this point, the survey link was included in various communications - not all of which the researcher was a party to – such as messenger chats, online boards, email distribution, newsletters and individual calls. Some requests for participation in the survey were very generic, others more personal calls made by individuals within the postgraduate student representative network.

This approach, of distribution via the student representative organisations at national levels and then cascading out through the postgraduate and international student representative bodies at each university to reach the target population of international postgraduate students, was considered an appropriate and useful way to ensure a wide distribution of the survey to Australian universities. A further benefit of this approach is that student representation tends to attract divergent views with distribution through the official and personal networks of student leaders considered more likely to ensure a wide range of perspectives were captured in the data collected.

The survey completion results were monitored during the data collection phase. Where gaps in participation were identified, for example, with low responses received from international postgraduate students at universities in the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, follow up contact with specific student representative organisations at universities within those states and territories, was made several times in an attempt to increase participation in the survey. This process was undertaken to provide the

best chance of collecting data that was representative of the total international postgraduate population enrolled across the Australian university sector and avoid data that were skewed towards only a few universities or states.

This reflects a purposive, rather than random approach, to seek out groups, settings and individuals where the phenomena being studied is most likely to occur (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research studies to ensure a manageable amount of data is collected, as high volumes of data can result in descriptions of aggregated details over richer, interpretative analysis (Ames et al., 2019).

Requests for participation were re-initiated each fortnight and month through the peak bodies and various networks. As an example, this included the fortnightly news bulletin issued by the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), monthly meetings and student representation conferences.

With the two peak bodies as the main distribution channel for the survey to the various student representative associations at each university, it is not possible to know how many international postgraduate students were aware of the online survey but did not participate. The survey was considered to be at response saturation when requests for participation returned zero responses more than three times. This occurred after approximately 6 months.

The survey remained open online from July 2019 to December 2019. At the close of the survey, 165 responses were received.

4.9.2. Data Analysis

The online survey platform provided some initial analysis of the responses received. Further analysis was undertaken using Microsoft Excel including identification of themes and storage of quotes. Quotes were identified first, clustered under emerging themes and re-organised in a reiterative basis until sense making was complete. Descriptive statistics were undertaken and prepared using Microsoft Excel.

Section 1 of the survey produced descriptive statistical data enabling tallies and counts of characteristics of the sample group.

Section 2 produced descriptive statistical data that enabled motivation reasons to be tallied and counted.

Section 3 produced qualitative data on positive and negative experiences of postgraduate study requiring a thorough thematic analysis. Although qualitative data processing is not an exact science, a standard methodology was adopted (Babbie, 2015). Qualitative data was coded (open coded) and then ordered into underlying concept themes (axial coding) until a structure was resolved (selective coding). Grounded theory method starts with observations and pattern discovery to develop theories on an inductive basis, that is building theory from data (Babbie, 2015) using constant comparative method. In short, patterns identified in qualitative data are cross referenced with characteristics and the theory is continually refined to include or exclude elements (Babbie, 2015).

Section 4 (optional) further explored dissatisfaction only with respondents who indicated they were not satisfied. This data was qualitative, supported with descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics were tallied and counted, consistent with the approach used in section 2. The qualitative data responses were analysed consistent with the method used for qualitative data outlined for analysis in the prior section of the survey.

Section 5 produced further descriptive statistics such as demographic data which was tallied and counted and compared with other response categories. This variable oriented analysis identified demographic patterns in responses and decision making (Babbie, 2015) that could be used to inductively build theory. Participants were additionally provided with the option to add a further open-ended response and where these were received, this qualitative data was analysed consistent with the approach used in section 3 and 4.

4.10. Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was granted for this research by Victoria University – ref HRE18-215.

The survey instrument only collected identifiable information at the last question – an email address to allow further contact. This question was optional as was anticipated that some international students may feel that providing data that could potentially identify them could jeopardise their visa status.

(See APPENDIX 2 – CONSENT STATEMENT)

4.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter started with four key insights from the literature. These insights, together with the issues and gaps identified in previous research studies, provided the foundation for the research investigation. A qualitative approach, with some descriptive statistics, to investigate these research aims was then fully detailed and justified. The data analysis methods used were outlined.

Chapter 5 presents the data analysis that lead to the discussions raised in Chapter 6 and conclusions presented in Chapter 7.

5. Data Analysis

This chapter presents the results from the survey responses and analysis of that data including information regarding the sample size and insights arising from the indications from the literature regarding links between international students' motivations, expectations, satisfaction and experiences of campus and study mobility.

5.1. Sample Size

For the purposes of this study, the international postgraduate student community at the time was estimated as 185,447. Refer to Table 3 - Estimated International Students Enrolled, by Australian University. The 165 survey responses were received from international students at 16 of the 41 universities in Australia. Refer to Table 5 - Survey Responses (Useable) by Australian University. Although these 16 universities are 39% of the 41 universities in Australia, the estimated number of international postgraduate students enrolled at these universities is 112,903. This is approximately 61% of the total estimated international postgraduate student population enrolled at all 41 Australian universities.

The survey response data was cleaned to remove unusable responses for example, those who did not consent or who consented but did not meet the validation questions to qualify for the survey. Of the 165 responses, 138 were usable. Refer to Table 5 - Survey Responses (Useable) by Australian University. As less than 150 useable responses were received, statistical validity is questionable.

Table 5 - Survey Responses (Useable) by Australian University

State/Institution	All International Students by Australian university	Percentage of Total (International Students)	Estimated International Postgraduate Students by Australian University		Usable Survey Responses	
New South Wales			**53,807**	**29%**	**29**	**21%**
NSW Uni 1	10,800	2.58%	4,784		0	
NSW Uni 2	11,730	2.80%	5,196		0	
NSW Uni 3	4,931	1.18%	2,184		22	
NSW Uni 4	1,472	0.35%	652		0	
NSW Uni 5	5,825	1.39%	2,580		0	
NSW Uni 6	26,042	6.22%	11,535		6	
NSW Uni 7	23,148	5.53%	10,253		1	
NSW Uni 8	15,273	3.65%	6,765		0	
NSW Uni 9	15,096	3.61%	6,687		0	
NSW Uni 10	7,159	1.71%	3,171		0	
Victoria			**66,980**	**36%**	**94**	**68%**
Vic Uni 1	14,326	3.42%	6,346		3	
Vic Uni 2	8,940	2.14%	3,960		0	
Vic Uni 3	9,834	2.35%	4,356		2	
Vic Uni 4	38,336	9.16%	16,981		46	
Vic Uni 5	31,531	7.53%	13,967		1	
Vic Uni 6	10,431	2.49%	4,620		25	
Vic Uni 7	26,606	6.35%	11,785		4	
Vic Uni 8	151	0.04%	67		0	
Vic Uni 9	11,059	2.64%	4,899		13	
Queensland			**26,316**	**14%**	**2**	**1%**
QLD Uni 1	3,346	0.80%	1,482		0	
QLD Uni 2	7,505	1.79%	3,324		0	
QLD Uni 3	8,550	2.04%	3,787		0	
QLD Uni 4	6,104	1.46%	2,704		1	
QLD Uni 5	8,945	2.14%	3,962		0	
QLD Uni 6	18,074	4.32%	8,006		1	
QLD Uni 7	2,846	0.68%	1,261		0	
QLD Uni 8	4,041	0.97%	1,790		0	
Western Australia			**15,011**	**8%**	**6**	**4%**
WA Uni 1	13,163	3.14%	5,831		5	
WA Uni 2	6,010	1.44%	2,662		0	
WA Uni 3	9,081	2.17%	4,022		0	
WA Uni 4	238	0.06%	105		0	
WA Uni 5	5,398	1.29%	2,391		1	
South Australia			**11,052**	**6%**	**1**	**1%**
SA Uni 1	5,311	1.27%	2,352		1	
SA Uni 2	7,840	1.87%	3,473		0	
SA Uni 3	6,080	1.45%	2,693		0	
SA Uni 4	5,719	1.37%	2,533		0	
Tasmania			**3,243**	**2%**	**0**	**0%**
Tas Uni 1	7,322	1.75%	3,243		0	
Northern Territory			**873**	**0%**	**0**	**0%**
NT Uni 1	1,972	0.47%	873		0	
Australian Capital Territory			**6,193**	**3%**	**6**	**4%**
ACT Uni 1	10,596	2.53%	4,693		6	
ACT Uni 2	3,385	0.81%	1,499		0	
Multi-State			**1,971**	**1%**	**0**	**0%**
MSU 1	4,450	1.06%	1,971		0	
TOTAL	**418,666**	100%	**185,447**	**100%**	138	**100%**

The international postgraduate student population is enrolled primarily at universities in the eastern states of Australia. Victoria has the largest population, with 36% of international postgraduate students enrolled at Victorian universities. This is followed by New South Wales with 29% of international postgraduate students, then Queensland with 14%. Similarly, the most survey responses were received from international postgraduate students in Victoria and New South Wales. The detailed comparison is as follows,

- Victoria - Whilst 36% of international postgraduate students were estimated as enrolled at Victorian universities, a far higher portion of useable survey responses (68%) were received from international postgraduate students in this state.
- New South Wales - Whilst 29% of the international postgraduate student population was estimated to be enrolled at Australian universities in this state, 21% of the useable survey responses were received from international postgraduate students in this state.
- Queensland – Whilst 14% of the international postgraduate student population was estimated to be enrolled at Australian universities in this state, a far lower portion of useable survey responses (only 1%) were received from international postgraduate students in this state.
- Western Australia - Whilst 8% of the international postgraduate student population was estimated to be enrolled at Australian universities in this state, 4% of the useable survey responses were received from international postgraduate students in this state.
- South Australia - Whilst 6% of the international postgraduate student population was estimated to be enrolled at Australian universities in this state, 1% of the useable survey responses were received from international postgraduate students in this state.
- Australian Capital Territory - Whilst 3% of the international postgraduate student population was estimated to be enrolled at Australian universities in this territory, 4% of the useable survey responses were received from international postgraduate students in this territory.
- Tasmania, Northern Territory and Multistate (Australian Catholic University) - No survey responses were received from international postgraduate students. It is estimated that international postgraduate students enrolled at universities in this state, territory and Australian Catholic University are approximately 6,088 together and no more than 3% of the total international postgraduate student population within Australia.

Refer Table 5 - Survey Responses (Useable) by Australian University.

Note - As the statistics provided by the Australian government on the enrolment of international students at Australian universities include preparatory, undergraduate and postgraduate international students, the figures used for international postgraduate students are estimated based on the assumption that this demographic of students enrols at the same universities in the same ratios as the total international student population.

In another recent survey of university students in Australia, the Universities Australia (2018) Student Finances Survey attracted 18,500 responses from a total student population of 1,513,383 higher education students (1.22%), illustrating the challenges of returning significant responses even with corporate resources and a recognised profile behind the research. The 138 responses received for this survey were considered representative and adequate, given the limitations of a solo researcher project, saturation (according to Babbie, 2015) and the reach of the two peak bodies involved in distributing this survey. The interpretations are treated cautiously and reflect a conservative approach.

5.2. Profile of Respondents

The descriptive statistics collected in section 1 and section 5 of the survey are presented in this section. Further discussion of these variables is undertaken throughout the next chapter. Further discussion of student mobility occurs under Research Aim #3 – Mobility Levels in section 6.3 of the next chapter.

5.2.1. Year Level and Type of Qualification

Responses were received from international postgraduate students across all qualification levels - graduate certificate (6%), masters (62%) and doctoral level (32%).

Table 6 - Year of Study and Qualification Profile of Respondents

	Research or Coursework	Year				Total
		First Year (F/T or P/T)	Second Year (F/T or P/T)	Third Year (F/T or P/T)	Fourth Year (F/T or P/T)	
PhD	Research	16	7	14	5	42
Professional Doctorate	Research	2	0	0	0	2
Masters by Research Thesis	Research	6	1	0	0	7
Masters by Coursework with Thesis	Coursework	6	6	1	0	13
Masters by Coursework	Coursework	29	32	2	3	66
Graduate Certificate	Coursework	5	3	0	0	8
Total						**138**

However, there was a higher than anticipated response rate (37%) received from research students (PhD, Professional Doctorate and Masters by Research Thesis) as research students are a proportionately smaller percentage of the overall international student postgraduate population (approximately 11%). This higher response rate may be because research students tend to engage more frequently than coursework students with student representative organisations, associations and groups to offset the solitude of isolated research habits and therefore may be more likely to respond to the survey. (Refer Table 6 - Year of Study and Qualification Profile of Respondents)

5.2.2. Experiences of Study, Campus and Mobility

These questions sought to understand where respondents were completing their qualifications and where they spent the majority of their contact hours. This will underpin later analysis to understand whether there is a link between the type of campus students experience and a lack of satisfaction. The intention of mobility was explored in the data collection to compare whether international postgraduate students in Australian universities were as mobile as broader trends indicated in the literature reviewed. The majority, 126 (or 91%) of respondents were intending to complete their qualification on campus in Australia. The other 12 respondents intended to complete their qualifications on campus in Australia with a portion of their qualification completed either in overseas campuses (1% of respondents), online (4% of respondents) or a combination (3% of respondents). To understand if there were any other consistent demographic characteristics of those not undertaking their entire studies on campus, the qualification level was explored further. Refer Table 7 - Students Anticipated Mobility During Qualification.

Table 7 - Students Anticipated Mobility During Qualification

Which best describes how you will complete your qualification?			
Only on campus in Australia		126	91%
On campus in Australia and online		6	4%
Masters by coursework	*3*		
Masters by coursework with thesis component	*1*		
Masters by research	*1*		
PhD	*1*		
Other combinations of the above		4	3%
Masters by coursework	*2*		
Masters by coursework with thesis component	*1*		
Graduate Certificate	*1*		
On campus in Australia and other countries eg RMIT Vietnam		2	1%
Masters by coursework	*2*		
Total		138	100%

In a following question, 89 respondents (64%) described their studies as taking place in a full campus setting complete with classrooms and spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising. This indicates, that the majority of international postgraduate students are experiencing their qualification in a full campus setting that provides the broad social context of higher education including spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising as well as the learning environment.

Few respondents, (25, 18%), described their studies as taking place in classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising on campus. This response was mixed across 8, or half, of the universities and included students in all qualification types and years. It is predicted this reflects the city campuses of the universities, whereby delivery of qualifications is primarily by classrooms in city buildings.

Even fewer respondents, (13, 9%) described their contact hours as online. The variation in response between this question and the one prior may be attributed to how students are understanding the amount of time spent online completing subjects taught in classrooms versus the designation of some subjects which are entirely delivered online.

A similar number of respondents, 11 (7%) indicated they were in work placements. All but one, were in research qualifications, with 9 respondents in varying years of PhD qualifications, one enrolled in the first year of a masters by research thesis and the last respondent, who was not

in a research degree, enrolled in the first year of a coursework masters. Refer Table 8 - Majority of Contact Hours.

Table 8 - Majority of Contact Hours

Where are your contact hours mostly for this qualification?	
In a full campus setting, complete with classrooms and spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising	89
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising on campus	25
Online	13
In a work placement	11
Total	138

To consider the level of mobility within the international postgraduate student population in Australia and whether there were significant numbers transferring in or out of qualifications before completing.

The majority of respondents, 127 (or 92%), stated they started in their present qualification and intended to complete the qualification.

Very few respondents (7, 5%) stated they started in their present qualification but intend to *transfer out* to another qualification. Of these, four were studying online.

Even fewer, respondents (4, 3%) stated they had transferred to their present qualification. Interestingly, 3 of these were in a full campus setting and 1 was in a work placement. Refer Table 9 - Students Intended Level of Transition to and from Current Qualification.

Table 9 - Students Intended Level of Transition to and from Current Qualification

Mobility - Intention to commence and complete within the existing qualification			
Intention to commence AND complete this qualification		127	92%
Intend to transfer out of this qualification to another qualification		7	5%
Online	*4*		
In a full campus setting	*2*		
In classrooms in a building	*1*		
Transferred in to this qualification from another qualification		4	3%
In a full campus setting	*3*		
In a work placement	*1*		
Total		138	100%

5.2.3. Personal Demographics

On completion of the survey, 98 of the 138 respondents provided varying levels of information about their personal circumstances, with not all 98 providing information for every question.

5.2.3.1. Gender Identification

From those respondents who chose to provide information, the data indicates the balance of genders may be quite even between male and female. Refer Table 10 - Gender Identification of Respondents.

Table 10 - Gender Identification of Respondents

Gender Identification		
Female	47	34%
Male	47	34%
Gender Fluid	1	1%
Prefer not to say	43	31%
Total	138	100%

5.2.3.2. Relationship Status

The responses to relationship status provided some insight to the responsibilities and support that postgraduates may be receiving: 57 (41%) postgraduates indicated they were single, which may mean they have both less support and less responsibilities to others; 33 (24%) indicated they were partnered, with the majority of these (25) in a relationship that predated moving overseas for postgraduate study. A small number of these postgraduates (6) indicated they were also living with their children. One postgraduate student indicated they were separated and provided the additional information that they were also separated from their children who remained in their home country. One third of respondents (47, 34%) preferred not to divulge information about their relationship status. Refer Table 11 - Relationship Status of Respondents.

Table 11 - Relationship Status of Respondents

Relationship Status			
Single		57	41%
Partnered		33	24%
With a partner met before moving overseas	*19*		
With a partner met after moving overseas	*8*		
Living with a partner and children	*6*		
Other (separated)		1	1%
Prefer not to say		47	34%
Total		138	100%

5.2.3.3. Financial Support and Resources

The most frequently selected financial support and resources utilised by international postgraduate students enrolled at Australian universities was parents and extended family assisting with either money or accommodation (27%) and a scholarship from the institution (27%). The next most common means of support was to work as many hours as possible (22%). Refer Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources.

Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources

Financial Support and Resources	**Selected**	**Total**	**Percentage**
My parents and/or extended family help me with money or accommodation	37	138	27%
I have a scholarship from my institution *	37	138	27%
I work as many hours as possible	31	138	22%
I rely on my savings	26	138	19%
I live in basic accommodation such as room share	23	138	17%
My partner supports me financially	17	138	12%
I skip meals regularly and/or use food welfare services	8	138	6%
I have a scholarship from my home government *	7	138	5%
I avoid paying rent by couch surfing / staying with friends / living rough / house sitting	0	138	0%

* further analysis below

With regards to scholarships, five respondents received a scholarship from their home government (5%), with two respondents receiving both types of scholarship. Another student responded that in addition to a scholarship from their institution they also had an Endeavour Postgraduate Award. Two students who did not select having either of the scholarship types listed noted that they received an Australia Awards Scholarship or a Tuition Fee Scholarship. In total, 46 international postgraduate students received some type of scholarship with three

of these students receiving a second scholarship. This indicates that of the respondents, only 33% received a scholarship. Refer Table 13 - Scholarships Received.

Table 13 - Scholarships Received

Scholarships	Selected	Percentage
I have a scholarship from my institution *	35	
I have a scholarship from my home government *	6	
I have a scholarship from my home government and my institutuion	2	
I have a scholarship from institution and Endeavour Scholarship	1	
I have an Australia Awards Scholarship	1	
I have a Tuition Fee Scholarship	1	
Total Respondents Receiving Scholarship Support	46	33%
Total Respondents	**138**	

* Differs from totals above as respondents with dual scholarships are separated

Of the 26 respondents who said they relied on savings, 4 of these students (3 who identified as male, and 1 who identified as female) did not receive scholarships and did not receive financial support from their parents, extended family or a partner. One of these four said they worked as many hours as possible, lived in basic accommodation and regularly skipped meals and used food welfare services – this was the female respondent.

One student advised in their comments that they reduced expenditure on public transport and leisure costs wherever possible and relied on free food events. Another student commented that they used Airbnb to rent out accommodation in their home (which they live in as a family) to help make ends meet.

Many international postgraduate students were using multiple strategies to make ends meet financially (as illustrated in the example above), with 8 respondents (6%) regularly skipping meals or using food welfare services. Of these 8 respondents (6%), 2 (one student who identified as male and one who identified as gender fluid) were also receiving a scholarship from their institution, 3 others said they lived in basic accommodation such as room-share and this included one student who said she received financial support from her partner.

None of the respondents said that they were using strategies such as couch surfing, staying with friends, living rough – which is a term for sleeping on the streets or being homeless, or house sitting in order to avoid paying accommodation costs. Refer Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources.

However, there was a noticeable difference in the types of financial support experienced between postgraduates who indicated they were single and those who indicated they were partnered. Postgraduate students who indicated they were single (41% of respondents), were far more likely to rely on their parents or family for help with money or accommodation (47% of single respondents) and far less likely to be relying on their savings (18% of single respondents). Whereas, postgraduate students who indicated they were partnered (24% of respondents) were far less likely to rely on their parents or extended family for help with money or accommodation (27% of partnered respondents) and far more likely to be relying on their savings (42% of partnered respondents). Partnered students were far more likely to receive financial support from a partner (36% of partnered respondents). Refer to Table 14 - Relationship Status and Financial Support.

Table 14 - Relationship Status and Financial Support

Relationship Status & Financial Support				
Single			57	41%
My parents and/or extended family help me with money or accommodation	27	47%		
I have a scholarship (institution, home country and/or other)	26	46%		
I work as many hours as possible	17	30%		
I rely on my savings	10	18%		
I live in basic accommodation such as room share	17	30%		
My partner supports me financially	0	0%		
I skip meals regularly and/or use food welfare services	5	9%		
I avoid paying rent by couch surfing / staying with friends / living rough / house sitting	0	0%		
Partnered (with a partner met before or after moving overseas/living with partner and children)			33	24%
My parents and/or extended family help me with money or accommodation	9	27%		
I have a scholarship (institution, home country and/or other)	17	52%		
I work as many hours as possible	11	33%		
I rely on my savings	14	42%		
I live in basic accommodation such as room share	4	12%		
My partner supports me financially	12	36%		
I skip meals regularly and/or use food welfare services	2	6%		
I avoid paying rent by couch surfing / staying with friends / living rough / house sitting	*0*	0%		
Other (separated)			1	1%
Prefer not to say			47	34%
Total			138	100%

5.2.4. Summary

The information provided by respondents indicates

- The responses were mostly received from international postgraduate students enrolled at Australian universities in the eastern states and this is approximately consistent with the broader population, with the majority only studying on campus in Australia (91%), in full campus environment (64%) and with the intention to start and complete their current qualification (92%). This would suggest that international

postgraduate students are not as mobile as the broader trends may indicate and appear to be less likely to transfer in and out of qualifications or take subjects in other countries or online with most studying in a traditional campus style environment.

- Research students responded at a higher than anticipated participation rate.
- Where identified, gender appeared to be evenly divided between female and male in the response rate.
- Approximately one-third of respondents indicated they received some form of scholarship (33%), with the majority of these being research students. It is somewhat concerning as to the level of students indicating they were living in basic room-share accommodation, skipping meals or using food welfare services and combining these with multiple other tactics to survive financially.

5.3. Motivators and Influences for Postgraduate Study

In this section, two sets of factors motivating and influencing international students' decision to enrol in postgraduate studies are explored: factors relating to the university and qualification and factors relating to the personal circumstances of the student.

Further discussion of these motivators and influences occurs under Research Aim #1 – Students' Motivations in section 6.1 of the next chapter.

5.3.1. Factors relating to the University and Qualification

International postgraduate students were asked to select up to three factors relating to the *qualification and university* influencing their decision to enrol in postgraduate study. The responses are shown in Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies.

Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies

Factors relating to the university and qualification that influenced the decision to enrol in postgraduate study			Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Survey Respondents
This qualification will help me change / improve my employment opportunities			114	83%
Female	*40*	*35%*		
Male	*42*	*37%*		
Other - Gender Fluid	*1*	*1%*		
Prefer not to say	*31*	*27%*		
In a full campus setting	*73*	*64%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising	*20*	*18%*		
Online	*11*	*10%*		
In a work placement	*10*	*9%*		
Research	*40*	*35%*		
Coursework	*74*	*65%*		
Australian qualifications are well regarded in general			63	46%
Female	*20*	*32%*		
Male	*29*	*46%*		
Other - Gender Fluid	*0*	*0%*		
Prefer not to say	*14*	*22%*		
In a full campus setting	*47*	*75%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising	*11*	*17%*		
Online	*3*	*5%*		
In a work placement	*2*	*3%*		
Research	*20*	*32%*		
Coursework	*43*	*68%*		
I received an important research opportunity and / or scholarship offer			51	37%
Female	*16*	*31%*		
Male	*23*	*45%*		
Other - Gender Fluid	*1*	*2%*		
Prefer not to say	*11*	*22%*		
In a full campus setting	*31*	*61%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising	*5*	*10%*		
Online	*7*	*14%*		
In a work placement	*8*	*16%*		
Research	*39*	*76%*		
Coursework	*12*	*24%*		
This qualification had excellent online rankings			39	28%
Female	*14*	*36%*		
Male	*12*	*31%*		
Other - Gender Fluid	*1*	*3%*		
Prefer not to say	*12*	*31%*		
In a full campus setting	*23*	*59%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising	*9*	*23%*		
Online	*5*	*13%*		
In a work placement	*2*	*5%*		
Research	*8*	*21%*		
Coursework	*31*	*79%*		
This qualification is NOT available in my home country			18	13%
I could afford the fees for this qualification			16	12%
I received an offer into this qualification, although it was not my first choice			12	9%
None of these are my main reason			2	1%
Total Survey Responses				138

5.3.2. Factors relating to personal circumstances

International postgraduate students were asked to select up to three factors relating to their own *personal circumstances* influencing their decision to enrol in postgraduate study. The responses are shown in Table 16 - Personal Circumstances Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies.

Table 16 - Personal Circumstances Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies

Personal circumstances that influenced the decision to enrol in postgraduate study				Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Survey Respondents
I need the points for Permanent Residency (PR) in Australia				49	36%
	Female	*16*	*33%*		
	Male	*19*	*39%*		
	Other - Gender Fluid	*0*	*0%*		
	Prefer not to say	*14*	*29%*		
	In a full campus setting	*32*	*65%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising		*8*	*16%*		
	Online	*3*	*6%*		
	In a work placement	*6*	*12%*		
	Research	*17*	*35%*		
	Coursework	*32*	*65%*		
I wanted to improve my English and / or learn in a Western teaching environment				47	34%
	Female	*21*	*45%*		
	Male	*16*	*34%*		
	Other - Gender Fluid	*0*	*0%*		
	Prefer not to say	*10*	*21%*		
	In a full campus setting	*26*	*55%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising		*11*	*23%*		
	Online	*5*	*11%*		
	In a work placement	*5*	*11%*		
	Research	*18*	*38%*		
	Coursework	*29*	*62%*		
None of these are my main reason				46	33%
	Female	*10*	*22%*		
	Male	*16*	*35%*		
	Other - Gender Fluid	*1*	*2%*		
	Prefer not to say	*19*	*41%*		
	In a full campus setting	*32*	*70%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising		*6*	*13%*		
	Online	*4*	*9%*		
	In a work placement	*4*	*9%*		
	Research	*19*	*41%*		
	Coursework	*27*	*59%*		
Online reviews of the city eg World's Most Liveable City				40	29%
	Female	*12*	*30%*		
	Male	*19*	*48%*		
	Other - Gender Fluid	*0*	*0%*		
	Prefer not to say	*9*	*23%*		
	In a full campus setting	*20*	*50%*		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising		*11*	*28%*		
	Online	*4*	*10%*		
	In a work placement	*5*	*13%*		
	Research	*11*	*28%*		
	Coursework	*29*	*73%*		
Studying overseas allowed me to leave my family home				31	22%
I have family / friends here				14	10%
Study is NOT my main motivation eg I moved to be with a partner				5	4%
Total Survey Responses					138

The highest priority within the university or qualification that motivated international postgraduate students to enrol in Australian universities was the perception that the qualification would help improve their job / employment opportunities with 83% of respondents indicating this was one of their top three motivations influencing their decision.

The highest priority within their personal circumstances that motivated international postgraduate students to enrol in Australian universities was the need for PR (Permanent Residency) points with 36% of respondents indicating this was one of their top three motivations influencing their decision. This was followed closely by the motivation to improve their English and / or learn in a western teaching environment (34%).

The analysis within each factor was mostly consistent with the overall demographics of the survey sample. However, whilst research students were 37% of the survey sample, they were disproportionately less likely to indicate they were primarily motivated by the online rankings of a qualification (21%) and online reviews of the city, such as 'world's most liveable city' (28%). Research students were more likely to indicate they were motivated by an important research opportunity and / or scholarship offer (76%).

5.4. Expectations and Satisfaction with Postgraduate Study

Postgraduate students were asked two qualitative, free text response questions in this section. Both questions were deliberately kept short and simple and avoided using any terms that could be overly analysed by the reader. The aim was to solicit quick, stream-of-thought responses about both positive and negative aspects of postgraduate study at Australian universities. The responses for each question were analysed and grouped into common themes. Some responses included multiple comments covering different themes. Where this occurred, the response was split up and then sorted into themes. Where a response could be interpreted as relevant to two themes one only was chosen with the context driving the selection. For example, a response such 'communication difficulties with my supervisor' it was categorised as in within the university theme rather than in the within the individual - social connection theme. Three themes were identified. The themes and sub-themes are summarised as

- Within the Student

- Social connection
- Self-Development and Wellbeing Support

- Within the University
  - Reputation
  - Content and Knowledge
  - Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements
  - Academic Skill Development and Assessment
  - Western Teaching and Learning Environment
  - Campus Social and Cultural Life

- Connecting Beyond the University
  - Adjustment to a New City and Country
  - Professional Work and Research Opportunities

Refer to Table 17 - Themes and Sub-Themes.

Table 17 - Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme & Sub-themes	"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative)
Within the Student		
- Social Connection	11 comments	8 comments
- Self-Development and Wellbeing Support	20 comments	23 comments
Within the University		
- Reputation	10 comments	0 comments
- Content and Knowledge	16 comments	4 comments
- Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements	14 comments	15 comments
- Academic Skill Development and Assessment	17 comments	27 comments
- Western Teaching and Learning Environment	10 comments	14 comments

- Campus Social and Cultural Life	7 comments	5 comments
Connecting Beyond the University		
- Adjustment / Orientation to a New City and Country	6 comments	11 comments
- Professional Work and Research Opportunities	17 comments	12 comments

Examples of comments within each theme and sub-theme are provided below. Further discussion of these themes and sub-themes occurs under Research Aim #2 – Important Factors Identified by Students in section 6.2 of the next chapter, where they are accompanied by characteristic details of the respondent.

5.4.1. Within the Student Theme

The 'Within the Student' theme was broken down into two sub-themes. Table 18 - Examples of Comments under "Within the Student" Sub-Themes provides examples of the types of comments in each sub-theme. For the full list of comments, refer to APPENDIX 3 – Full Thematic Analysis of Responses.

Table 18 - Examples of Comments under "Within the Student" Sub-Themes

5.4.1.1. Social Connection (Theme: T1)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Meeting new people everyday, from diverse backgrounds and understanding their interests (T1P) *Being immersed in the local Australian environment (T1P)* *Another important aspect is that we have made good friends.* (T1P)	*A PhD research degree is a very lonely degree. (T1N)* *Research is such a lonely process and it's hard to maintain life balance. (T1N)* *Cultural differences in communication. (T1N)*
5.4.1.2. Self-Development and Wellbeing Support (Theme: T2)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)

Experiencing life in a new country with a new culture and adapting to it. Also my independence where I get to manage my own life and achieve things on my own. *(T2P)* *Freedom* *(T2P)* *I think my horizons are higher than before.* *(T2P)*	*Constant assignments with no breathing space.* *(T2N)* *finding work to pay the bills, finding enough time to complete assignments while working and maintaining a household* *(T2N)*

5.4.2. Within the University Theme

The 'Within the University' theme was broken down into six sub-themes: Reputation, Content and Knowledge, Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements, Academic Skill and Assessment Tasks, Western Teaching and Learning Environment, and Campus Social and Cultural Life.

Table 19 - Examples of Comments under "Within the University" Sub-Themes, provides examples of the types of comments in each sub-theme. For the full list of comments, refer to APPENDIX 3 – Full Thematic Analysis of Responses.

Table 19 - Examples of Comments under "Within the University" Sub-Themes

5.4.2.1. Reputation (Theme: T3)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
The overall experience. From studying in an international environment with quality education to the Australian culture. *(T3P)* *Learning from genius people Renowned university* *(T3P)* *High ranking university* *(T3P)*	*No comments recorded*
5.4.2.2. Content and Knowledge (Theme: T4)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
My research field is on AI and I think it's cool. *(T4P)*	*Not up to date curriculum as per industry standards. For example, in the Master of Data Science course, there is no mention of cloud computing, whereas in industry everything is cloud based*

Enjoyment that was given by doing something that I like *(T4P)* *The syllabus and content is most I appreciate.* *(T4P)*	*(T4N)*

5.4.2.3. Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements (Theme: T5)

"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Constant support from your supervisor and team members. They understand what you need and what you want to do in your life. *(T5P)* *The research environment is splendid. The guidance of the professors and the supervisors along with assistance provided by the library and the laboratory support staff to support the research is commendable.* *(T5P)*	*The fucking bureaucracy. It's insane here. And having to deal with universities that really don't understand the experiences of HDR students. I had a much better experience in Canada for my Masters.* *(T5N)* *Not having any classes to attend. I wish we were offered classes which could help our research.* *(T5N)* *Lack of structure* *(T5N)* *Maintaining the relationship with supervisors* *(T5N)* *Lack of interest/communication from my supervisor.* *(T5N)* *The problems I had with my supervisor also made my life quite difficult.* *(T5N)*

5.4.2.4. Academic Skill Development and Assessment Tasks (Theme: T6)

"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Education system 24/7 library. Good collection of books Activities of English teaching workshop *(T6P)* *books are available from original resources* *(T6P)* *It has been very supportive and there was flexibility in shaping your programme* *(T6P)* *Improved my learning experience and study skills.* *(T6P)*	*Writing documents, thesis, lit. reviews etc* *(T6N)* *Writing my thesis* *research skills and writing skills at the beginning of the program* *(T6N)* *Some academic knowledges are harder than I think* *(T6N)* *Writing lengthy reports on topics I probably won't be using in the work place.* *(T6N)*

5.4.2.5. Western Teaching and Learning Environment (Theme: T7)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
The teaching and learning methodology is more open and has much less hierarchy in academic structure (T7P) *Exposure to new environment which understands needs and doesn't ridicule shortcomings. Non-judgemental in said shortcomings and providing aid to overcome them. (T7P)*	*Settling to a new environment whose education system is very different from home country (T7N)* *Change of study method (T7N)* *the change of learning pattern and teaching styles. (T7N)*
5.4.2.6. Campus Social and Cultural Life (Theme: T8)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Interacting with people from different backgrounds in my course and understanding aspect of the course from their point of view. (T8P) *Diversity in school (T8P)* *Interaction with other country students (T8P)*	*Adapting to the new culture and to the language. (T8N)* *Cultural difference (T8N)* *Sometimes communication between your peers can be lost in translation. (T8N)*

5.4.3. Connecting Beyond the University Theme

The Connecting Beyond the University theme was broken down into two sub-themes. Table 20 - Examples of Comments in Connecting Beyond the University Sub-Themes, provides examples of the types of comments in this theme. For the full list of comments, refer to APPENDIX 3 – Full Thematic Analysis of Responses.

Table 20 - Examples of Comments in Connecting Beyond the University Sub-Themes

5.4.3.1. Adjustment / Orientation to a New City and Country (Theme: T9)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Exposure to ta totally different culture and country, (T9P)	*Everything, settling in (T9N)*

Good culture, work climate and hospitable environment. *(T9P)* *Getting to live in another country and experience the culture.* *(T9P)*	*Resettling in a new country with no support and learning new tools in order to improve my studies* *(T9N)* *Leaving home country family friends job and my comfort zone* *(T9N)* *Adjusting to the weather.* *(T9N)*
5.4.3.2. Professional Work and Research Opportunities (Theme: T10)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
The people I meet will be part of the personal and professional network I grow while my career grows in Australia. *(T10P)* *I think being able to study without working (because of scholarships) was the best part.* *(T10P)*	*Very few internship opportunities in return for the amount of fees paid.* *(T10N)* *Hard to get an internship* *(T10N)* *The short span of study which is not providing the real value for money.* *(T10N)* *the fees here are so high.* *(T10N)*

5.5. Overall Expectations and (Dis)Satisfaction

In this section of the survey, respondents were asked to consider whether the university and qualification had met their expectations overall. The 25 respondents (18%) who indicated their expectations were not met, were considered to be dissatisfied. Refer to Table 21 - Expectations and (Dis)Satisfaction. Using variable-oriented analysis (Babbie, 2015), these responses were analysed further to identify whether the campus environment was connected to their dissatisfaction (refer to

Table 22 - Campus Type and Rate of Dissatisfaction) or whether there were any demographic characteristics of the group (refer to

Table 23 - Demographic Characteristics of Dissatisfied Respondents). The majority of data collected in this section was statistical, allowing tallies and counts to be performed. Respondents had the option to add qualitative data in an open-ended response field at the

end of this section of the survey. These data were analysed using the same approach for the other qualitative data, as outlined in section 4.9.2 Data Analysis.

Further discussion of satisfaction and dissatisfaction occurs under Research Aim #5 – Switching and (Dis)Satisfaction in section 6.5 of the next chapter.

Further discussion of the experience of campus and its relevance to satisfaction occurs under Research Aim #4 – The Value of Campus to Satisfaction Levels in section 6.4 of the next chapter.

Table 21 - Expectations and (Dis)Satisfaction

Expectations and (Dis)Satisfaction	No of Responses	Percentage	No of Responses	Percentage
University and Qualification did NOT meet expectations			25	18%
Dissatisfied enough to consider changing	15	60%		
Not dissatisfied enough to consider changing	10	40%		
Total Students			138	

Table 22 - Campus Type and Rate of Dissatisfaction

Campus Type for Contact Hours and Rate of Dissatisfaction	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
In a full campus setting, complete with classrooms and spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising			89	64%
Overall Dissatisfied (Qualification & University)	17	19%		
In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising on campus			25	18%
Overall Dissatisfied (Qualification & University)	3	12%		
Online			13	9%
Overall Dissatisfied (Qualification & University)	4	31%		
In a work placement			11	8%
Overall Dissatisfied (Qualification & University)	1	9%		
Total	25	18%	138	100%

Table 23 - Demographic Characteristics of Dissatisfied Respondents

Characteristics of Dissatisfied Respondents	Number of Responses	Percentage
Intention Transfer/Pathway		
Intention to commence AND complete this qualification	23	92%
Intend to transfer out of this qualification to another qualification	2	8%
Transferred in to this qualification from another qualification	0	0%
Relationship Status		
Single	12	48%
Partnered	11	44%
Prefer not to say	2	8%
Financial Resources		
My parents and/or extended family help me with money or accommodation	11	44%
My partner supports me financially	5	20%
I have a scholarship (any type)	9	36%
I rely on my savings	8	32%
I live in basic accommodation such as room share	8	32%
I work as many hours as possible	7	28%
I skip meals regularly and/or use food welfare services	1	4%
Gender		
Female	13	52%
Male	9	36%
Gender Fluid	0	0
Prefer not to say	3	12%
Total Dissatisfied Students	25	100%

This group of 25 was asked a further question to find out if their level of dissatisfaction was high enough for them to consider acting on their dissatisfaction by changing to a different institution or course. Of the 25 respondents, 15 indicated they had been dissatisfied enough to consider this option. When asked to select up to four motivations influencing their decision to continue with present qualification from a list, the most commonly selected reasons were that they were close to finishing the qualification (67% of the group) and that the reputation of the university was important (53%). Refer Table 24 - Factors Influencing Dissatisfied Students Decision to Continue.

Table 24 - Factors Influencing Dissatisfied Students Decision to Continue

Factors Influencing Decision Not to Switch	No of Respondents	Percentage
I am close enough to finishing the qualification	10	67%
The reputation of the university is worth continuing with the qualification	8	53%
All qualifications and universities have similar problems	5	33%
I prefer to talk to the course management about the issues	4	27%
I prefer to leave poor ratings on ranking websites	1	7%
It is not my culture to complain	2	13%
The issues were resolved	0	0%
Other	3	20%
I have a full scholarship and workplace connections with my current institution.		
No better choice in my current location Too expensive to change or continue another degree Time and age constraints		
Its not in my hand to improve Australian Education quality.		
Respondents		15

The next question focused on the 15 respondents who had indicated they had been dissatisfied enough to consider changing university of qualification to identify barriers preventing them from actioning their dissatisfaction by switching institution. Refer to Table 25 - Barriers to Switching.

Table 25 - Barriers to Switching

Barriers to Switching	No of Respondents	Percentage
There is too much paperwork / administration involved	9	60%
It would create visa problems	5	33%
The fees at other institutions are more expensive and I can not afford more	6	40%
I would need to move and this would be too stressful	7	47%
It would look bad to others who are important to me	4	27%
Other	4	27%
Univesity should create value by aiding studnets in making them job ready and having tie-ups with job agencies so that student can work as well while studying their post graduate degree.		
I did move institutions (but didn't change qualifications). The worst parts where the paperwork, dealing with visa issues and the stress of moving cities. I lost a lot of productivity because Swinburne couldn't manage the transfer.		
Too expensive to start all over again; not much good choice around Australia at all; Aus degrees are losing their value		
I am close enough to finishing that it was not worth the effort and potential of not getting cross course credits		
Respondents		15

Within this group, the main response (9, 60% of these respondents) indicated there was too much paperwork involved. The one respondent who did manage a change of university had the following insight to share,

'I did move institutions (but didn't change qualifications). The worst parts where the paperwork, dealing with visa issues and the stress of moving cities. I lost a lot of productivity because [Vic Uni 6] couldn't manage the transfer.'
(Fourth year, PhD student)

The same 15 respondents were then asked if they would change qualification or institution if it was easier to do so. 11 (or 73% of this group) said they would.

Table 26 - Switching Potential with Lowered Barriers

If it was easier to change qualification or institution, would you have done this?	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	11	73%
No	4	27%
Respondents		15

Although 18% (or 25 respondents) of the total (138) respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their university and qualification, 11% (or 15) of the total respondents were dissatisfied enough to consider taking action on their dissatisfaction and changing qualification or institution. Although most of this group identified structural barriers preventing them exercising change, such as paperwork and visa issues), an even smaller percentage 8% (or 11 respondents) would consider doing so if it was an easier process. These students were willing to act upon their dissatisfaction.

5.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter has thoroughly presented the data analysis. The descriptive statistics were tallied and used to support variable-oriented analysis to identify patterns between themes and aspects of the demographic data. The qualitative data was prepared using the constant comparative method, a key component of inductive theory building used in grounded theory methodology. The patterns identified by the qualitative analysis of the data are presented as the themes and sub-themes.

Chapter 6 continues with in-depth interpretation and discussion of the findings as related to the Research Question and Aims.

6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the research question in context of the data collected and analysed. It considers the findings and compares them with other researchers' findings and themes identified in the literature reviewed in earlier chapters. It considers the implications of the data in the context of the research question, the research aims and literature.

6.1. Research Aim #1 – Students' Motivations

The purpose of this aim was to discover how student motivations for study - reputation, immigration and affordability - are more nuanced than the existing literature and, importantly, how international students prioritise these in their decision to enrol in postgraduate studies at an Australian university.

6.1.1. Reputation

Respondents were asked about reputation at multiple points in the survey – as a factor influencing their initial decision and then provided with the opportunity to elaborate further in the open-ended question for thematic analysis.

6.1.1.1. National Education System

Analysis of the data indicated that the overall high regard of Australian qualifications – as a broad indicator of the reputation of the national education system - was an important factor motivating many international postgraduate students in their decision to enrol in postgraduate studies, but not the most important. This was the second most frequently selected motivation with 63 (46%) respondents selecting this. There was no discernible difference in the selection of this factor based on gender, campus type or between research or coursework students. Refer to Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies.

In contrast, the literature indicates that universities consider their own reputation as well that of the national education system that they belong to is very important to their success (Russell, 2015; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins, 2010) with international students finding a

universities' reputation generally important (Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010). The data analysed from this survey indicates that international postgraduate students studying at Australian universities are less motivated by the reputation of the overall national education system and / or qualification than the literature suggests. However, the lower priority given by students to the reputation of the national education system and / or the qualification offered by the university may be because students have responded to reputation as a secondary or indirect factor, that enables other outcomes, such as improving a students' employment opportunities (discussed later in this chapter), which *are* a higher priority to them. If this is the case, this would validate other research indicating students perceive that a university's reputation (Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010) or that of the national education system (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016) contributes to improving their success in the employment market (Chee et al., 2016; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Sidhu & Christie, 2015; Wilkins, 2010).

6.1.1.2. University and Qualification

The reputation of the qualification - as the indicator used to reflect reputation at university level - was a weaker motivation with only 28% of respondents indicating this was one of their main motivations. This was selected the fourth most frequently and although there was no discernible difference in responses between genders or campus type, there was a considerable difference in how coursework and research students responded. Of those responding to this motivation, the majority were coursework students (79%) compared to 21% of research students. Refer Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies. This would indicate that postgraduate coursework students are far more likely to be influenced and motivated by online rankings than research students.

The difference in how reputation is important to different student demographics provides greater granularity to the themes discussed in the literature.

Later in the survey, when provided with the opportunity to freely articulate positive and negatives about their postgraduate study experiences, only 10 comments relating to reputation were recorded. Although these were all positive and included comments such as:

> *'…renowned university'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T3P)*
>
> *'the level and ranking of my university around the world'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T3P)*

it was considered that reputation was not a theme strongly articulated compared to other themes or sub-themes.

Interestingly, of the 15 respondents (11%) who were dissatisfied enough with their qualification and institution to consider changing institutions, 53% of this group indicated that the reputation of the university influenced their decision to persevere with the qualification. Refer to Table 24 - Factors Influencing Dissatisfied Students Decision to Continue. This was one of the strongest responses to the value of institutional reputation in the survey data collected. This is another important illustration of how nuanced data analysis can offer unique insights.

The role of reputation influencing (or moderating) switching behaviours when students experience dissatisfaction will be discussed in section 6.5 towards the end of this chapter in Research Aim #5.

6.1.2. Immigration

The most frequently selected personal factor motivating international postgraduate students' decision to enrol in study was the need for 'points for permanent residency (PR) in Australia' (36% of respondents). Of those that selected this response, there was no discernible differences between gender, campus type and whether the student was enrolled in research or coursework compared to the overall response rate in the survey. The motivation to attain points towards immigration was as important to all demographics of international postgraduate students.

As other factors listed in the survey questions, such as those relating to the university or qualification, or a students' personal motivations, may have prompted further positive and

negative comments in the open-ended question fields provided later in the survey, it was anticipated that some comments relating to the value of immigration may have been recorded by respondents. However, when reviewing the open-ended comments data from the survey, there were no comments, either positive or negative, explicitly discussing immigration recorded. This was considered unusual as, for example, comments relating to other factors such as reputation, did receive comments.

The high response rate to this question could be interpreted as strengthening the priority international students place on creating immigration pathways. This would support themes identified in previous research (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017) and potentially validate assertions in the ABC documentary, 'Cash Cows' (ABC, 2019) that loop holes in regulations allowed admission of international students without the necessary academic and language capabilities, but motivated by a student visa as an immigration pathway. However, further in-depth analysis of the current data set does not support this connection.

Although this study did not explicitly investigate the relationship between immigration and job opportunities, the connection and overlap between the two has been recorded in the literature reviewed in Chapter 3.1.2 (Employment and Immigration Opportunities) as immigration pathways are often enabled by employment in a global context (Hopkins 2013; Middlehurst, 2013). This is different to enrolling in a qualification primarily to achieve an immigration outcome, which was the process detailed in the documentary (ABC, 2019). It was considered that if students were primarily motivated by immigration that respondents would have selected the need for permanent residency points at a much higher rate than the 39% recorded and that being motivated by employment opportunities (83%) would have been at a much lower rate by comparison. However, respondents selected that they were far more motivated by changing / improving their employment (83%) than by the need to obtain points for permanent residency (36%).

This would indicate that motivations for immigration are potentially a secondary outcome of securing employment aligned with a postgraduates' research and professional interests. This connection could be explored further in future research.

6.1.3. Affordability

Respondents were asked about affordability in various ways throughout the survey. Firstly, as whether the affordability of the qualifications' fees and / or the provision of a scholarship were a motivating factor in their decision, the open-ended questions for thematic analysis and in the demographic data collected.

The results indicate that affordability of the qualification was one of the least selected factors motivating respondents' decision to enrol in a postgraduate qualification at an Australian university (12%). This supports the earlier findings that postgraduate students were making selections aligned with improving their career or employment prospects (83%) and research interests or scholarship availability (37%) in preference to the overall affordability of the qualification. In this context, fee affordability may be perceived as a short-term constraint that is less important than the long-term benefit of improved employment opportunities.

Although 37% responded that they were initially motivated by an important research opportunity or scholarship offer, a slightly lower percentage (33%) of respondents were in receipt of a scholarship at the time of completing the survey. Refer Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies and Table 13 - Scholarships Received. This may be because some of the 37% were motivated by the research opportunity regardless of whether a scholarship was provided or it may be because their scholarships had run out ahead of completing their qualification, as indicated in some of the comments in the thematic analysis. Whilst the majority of scholarships were held by research students, there was a small portion, of scholarship holders who were enrolled in masters by coursework qualifications, such as a Masters of Business Administration or Masters by coursework with a thesis component, who received scholarships from their institution (8) or scholarships from their home government (7).

The importance of scholarships to research students was reinforced in some of the comments in the thematic analysis, for example:

> *'I think being able to study without working (because of scholarships) was the best part.' (Fourth year, PhD student – T10P)*
>
> *'Scholarship with no conditions'*

(Third year, PhD student – T10P)

and the additional difficulty of managing when scholarships did not continue through to the end of studies, for example:

'Balancing work and study especially after my scholarship ended.'
(Third year, PhD student – T2N)

Even though the affordability of the qualification was not a major factor in influencing the initial decision to study, the reality of balancing study and work in order to manage the overall expense of studying in Australia - from fees to the reality of Australia's higher rent and cost of living – became more apparent in subsequent sections of the survey with many of the comments in the thematic analysis either as a negative comment either directly about fees or more generally about managing the cost of living including fees, for example:

'Juggling through studies and work, the fees here are so high'
(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T2N, T10N)

'salary being low for an expensive city, no postgraduate travel concessions'
(First year, PhD student – T10N)

Combining analysis of various sections of the survey would indicate that the general affordability of studying in Australia was difficult for many international postgraduate students once their studies were underway.

In considering the demographic responses, the broader financial landscape of the respondents showed interesting patterns. Approximately one third of students relied on family for financial support or to provide accommodation (27%) during their studies and 19% relied on savings (refer Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources), however, there was disparity in these responses based on the relationship status of students. 41% of respondents in the survey indicated they were single. Nearly half of the single postgraduate students (47% of this group) were more likely to be reliant on their families for financial support and accommodation. Single postgraduate students were less likely to be relying on savings (18% of this group) compared to partnered postgraduates. Conversely, partnered postgraduates were more likely to rely on their savings (42% of this group) and receive support from a partner (36% of this group) but less likely to receive support from their parents and extended family (27% of this group). There were no discernible differences between single and

partnered students responded in utilising scholarships and the 'desire to work as many hours as possible' as their financial strategies. Refer to Table 14 - Relationship Status and Financial Support.

Nearly one-fifth of respondents were living in basic accommodation, such as room-share arrangements (17%) and a small percentage indicated they were regularly skipping meals and / or using food welfare services (6%). Refer to Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 3 indicated students considered affordability (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Lien 2008; Lien & Wang, 2008) in their decisions about studying at foreign higher education providers. However, the findings from this survey indicated that only a small portion of international postgraduate students (12%) were influenced by the affordability of the fees associated with their qualification when making their initial decision. This may be due to a lack of information about the cost of fees in a broader context of cost of living at the time of decision making, or a perception that the cost of fees is a short-term constraint that would likely be offset by the longer-term benefit of improved professional work or research opportunities.

Whilst other researchers recommended that value for money and cost of fees should be included in student satisfaction surveys (e.g. Arambewela et al., 2005; Burgess et al., 2018; Yusoff et al., 2014), direct comments regarding fee affordability in the thematic analysis did not suggest this was a significant issue with the respondents. However, analysing multiple data in the survey including demographic data indicates that most respondents were using multiple strategies to make ends meet, with single students more likely to be relying on their parents and / or extended family to help them with money or accommodation (47% of single respondents) and the benefit of scholarship support limited to approximately one-third of all respondents (33%). The 6% of respondents including those with partners, who skipped meals regularly and / or were using food welfare, is a concerning reality of managing the high cost of living and high cost of fees in Australia. Future questions could be framed around the importance of access to suitably paid professional employment and adequate financial support generally during studies rather than only questioning the affordability of fees. Refer to Table 12 - Financial Support and Resources and Table 14 - Relationship Status and Financial Support.

6.1.4. Summary of Findings for Research Aim #1

Findings from this study indicate that neither reputation, immigration nor affordability are the top priority motivating international postgraduate students in their decision to pursue studies in Australia.

Reputation is more likely to be a secondary motivation or associated with other higher-ranking priorities, such as employment or research opportunities. Those respondents influenced by the online rankings (reputation) of a qualification were more likely to be coursework students than research students.

Immigration appears to be more likely associated with outcomes of other higher-ranking priorities, such as employment.

Whilst fee affordability was a low-ranking motivation in the decision to enrol in their qualification, financial considerations appear to increase in importance over time with many students using multiple tactics to adjust to the reality of the Australia's high cost of living and the difficulties of balancing study commitments with financial responsibilities.

6.2. Research Aim #2 – Important Factors Identified by Students

The purpose of this aim was to discover if there are other, student determined factors that are important to the satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia.

International postgraduate students participating in this survey were able to freely identify positive and negative aspects of their studies, rather than rely on pre-determined options. This was to ensure that student identified factors were considered as part of the research, which had been identified in other studies as a gap (Burgess et al, 2018). These open-ended qualitative responses were coded and inductively grouped. The pattern of this coding and classification organically emerged into three themes – factors within the student, factors within the university, and factors beyond the university environment. This thematic pattern is consistent with the themes identified in the studies on student satisfaction reviewed in Chapter 3 and are distinctly well aligned with those identified by Arambewela & Hall (2009). Understandably, many overlap and are interconnected, reflecting the interconnected and social experience of university especially in a campus environment (Wilkins et al., 2012), which

was applicable to the majority of the sample (91%). These were considered further to identify how universities might be able to utilise this knowledge to contribute to the satisfaction of students.

6.2.1. Factors Valued at Individual Student Level

Two sub-themes emerged within this theme. Respondents indicated "Social Connection" and "Development of Self and Wellbeing Support" was important to them.

6.2.1.1. Social Connection

Many positive comments (11) were recorded in the thematic analysis illustrating the joy of being immersed in a different social context, such as:

> *'Meeting new people everyday, from diverse backgrounds and understanding their interests'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T1P)*
>
> *'Experience in new country, new culture, meeting new people'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T1P)*
>
> *'Another important aspect is that we have made good friends.'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T1P)*

Although a few students (8) noted social connection as a negative aspect (8), some commenting that difficulties with English, cross cultural communication and the Australian accent were the worst aspects of their studies, half (4) of the comments related to the social isolation experienced by research students, for example:

> *'Primarily working alone, sometimes self-motivation is difficult.'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T1N)*
>
> *'A PhD research degree is a very lonely degree.*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T1N)*
>
> *'Research is such a lonely process and it's hard to maintain life balance.'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T1N)*

With research students comprising 51 of the respondents (37%), the 4 comments indicating about 8% of the research cohort considered social isolation to be the worst aspect of their study experience.

Although the majority of students identified that they were initially motivated to enrol in postgraduate studies at an Australian university in order to improve their employment or research opportunities (83%), a portion then found the social connections made during their

studies to be the best aspect of their experience. This indicates the value of the experience beyond the academic and vocational focus. This supports the findings by other researchers (Duzevic et al., 2018; Garcia-Aracil, 2008). These findings indicate that social isolation was experienced by the research student participants only, with 8% rating it as the worst aspect of study.

6.2.1.2. Development of Self and Wellbeing Support

The thematic analysis indicated a strong area of response was the contribution of the overall postgraduate study experience to a students' self-development and wellbeing. There were 20 positive comments and 23 negative comments. Whilst the positive comments would inspire almost anyone to enrol in postgraduate study noting benefits to self, such as:

> *'Experiencing life in a new country with a new culture and adapting to it. Also my independence where I get to manage my own life and achieve things on my own.'*
> *(Third year, Masters by Coursework with thesis component student – T2P)*
>
> *'My view about many things become wider and richer . Beside knowledge, I gained higher confidence and strength and learned how to fight with challenges in my life.'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T2P)*
>
> *'I think my horizons are higher than before.'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T2P)*
>
> *'Freedom'*
> *(Second year, PhD student – T2P)*
>
> *'Independence'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T2P)*

The complexity of juggling the realities of juggling the additional life responsibilities as a postgraduate student was very evident in the negative comments, for example:

> *'As a full time student, I had to finish my unpaid 1000 hours work placements. Therefore, I spend two full semester period at my placement at 9-5 from Monday- Thursday. Then, I had my theory lectures on Fridays. Saturday Sunday I had to do paid work to survive on financially, leaving me very stress period as I had to work continuously without any break for nearly five months. At the end of each semester this huge work load impacted me heavily to my mental well-being.'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T2N)*

The toll of managing time to fit in competing priorities was evident in the comments noting the pressure and weight of additional responsibilities felt and the negative impact on overall well-being, for example:

'Constant assignments with no breathing space.'
(Second year, Graduate Certificate student – T2N)

To gain a fuller understanding, some aspects of the demographic characteristics of the sample were investigated within this theme. As relationship status was rarely discussed in the literature reviewed earlier and may be a possible point of differentiation between postgraduate students compared to the broader student population, some further qualitative analysis was undertaken to understand how relationship status may be influencing their experience. The data was sorted by relationship status and the comments reviewed to understand how the experience of single students differed to those in a relationship.

However, the data collected in this research would indicate that relationship status was an important consideration to the type of support available to international postgraduate students and their responsibilities (Refer to Table 11 - Relationship Status of Respondents) with 24% indicating they were in a relationship. Whilst this may provide more emotional support to adjust to a new city, it may also increase responsibilities for the settling in experience of a partner and reduce time for study when children are involved, for example:

'It is very difficult to manage time and obligations soon as I am mother of two kids (8 and 12 years old) and also a wife'
(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T2N)

Single respondents (41% of the sample) were less likely to have emotional support available to them when they experienced difficulties in adjusting to a new city, for example:

'Being far away from family (having little family support)'
(Second year, Masters of Coursework student – T9N)

'Resettling in a new country with no support and learning new tools in order to improve my studies'
(Third year, PhD student – T9N)

Comments such as the ones above in a context of respondents' individual circumstances suggest that postgraduates have many factors to juggle outside of the study that influence their experience of study. Recognition of this complexity in international postgraduate students' personal circumstances and the challenges of these as well as the benefits appears to be important to the respondents.

Further research to compare these trends with undergraduate students may offer more insights as to how postgraduate students differ to undergraduate students in the level of

support they have access to and how their well-being may be increased so that the personal benefits of study is overall, a more positive for more students.

6.2.2. Factors Valued within the University Environment

Understandably, the majority of comments about the positives and negative experiences of postgraduate studies related to factors within the university environment. Six sub-themes emerged within this theme: reputation (which has been covered in the previous section 6.1.1 Reputation), content and knowledge, research environment and supervision arrangements, academic skill development and assessment tasks, western teaching styles and learning environment, and campus social and cultural life. As found in the earlier section regarding the value of campus, few comments directly relating to the physical environment were recorded with no themes on campus facilities emerging from the analysis of the student identified factors component of the survey.

6.2.2.1. Content & Knowledge

Comments about content and knowledge were four times more likely to be positive (16 comments compared to 4 comments that were negative), with most respondents expressing a joy from the content and development of their knowledge, such as:

> *'Learning from people with a lot of experience in the field. It created a passion for me to do research and further my studies after this degree as well.'*
> *(First year, Masters by Research Thesis student – T4P)*

> *'Enjoyment that was given by doing something that I like'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T4P)*

> *'The syllabus and content is most I appreciate.'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T4P)*

There was no pattern within the negative comments on content. One student indicated the curriculum in their Master of Data Science course was outdated:

> *'Not up to date curriculum as per industry standards. For example, in the Master of Data Science course, there is no mention of cloud computing, whereas in industry everything is cloud based'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T4N)*

This tends to support the findings by Duzevic et al. (2018) that students who gain more knowledge and skills reflect a higher level of satisfaction with their education. The comments indicated a general high regard for the content and knowledge provided in postgraduate

qualifications in Australia. This could be due to previous student satisfaction surveys that focus on factors within the universities control (Burgess et al, 2018) being effective in improving the experience for students or may be reflect the observations made by the peak representative body that many students lack adequate comparative insight as to standards for content in qualifications at other universities (Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations, 2019).

6.2.2.2. Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements

A higher percentage of research students completed the survey (37%) than was estimated to be in the general international postgraduate student population. Refer to Table 6 - Year of Study and Qualification Profile of Respondents and Table 4 - International Students Enrolled in Doctoral, Masters and Graduate Certificate Qualifications at Australian Universities. This is interesting as other studies have noted the tendency for postgraduate students to be diluted in other studies (Burgess et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2012; Mai, 2005) and research students more so (Choi et al., 2012), as they are an even smaller percentage of the overall student population.

The positive and negative comments recorded were almost equal – although the comments appeared to be quite polarising, either very positive or negative. This may be due to the relatively limited factors (with greater weight individually) in a research students' environment influencing their experience compared to a coursework students experience. For example, if a supervision arrangement is not working well, this is a large aspect of a research students' experience that lasts many years. However, if a coursework student is unhappy with a teacher, that teacher is more likely to not be part of the students' environment the next semester. Examples of the strong polarity in comments include

> *'The research environment is splendid. The guidance of the professors and the supervisors along with assistance provided by the library and the laboratory support staff to support the research is commendable.'*
> *(Second year, PhD student – T5P)*
>
> *'The problems I had with my supervisor also made my life quite difficult.'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T5N)*
>
> *'The fucking bureaucracy. It's insane here. And having to deal with universities that really don't understand the experiences of HDR students.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T5N)*

Negative comments about supervision arrangements were approximately one-quarter (3). If the comments discussed earlier regarding social isolation were included in this discussion, the balance of comments would indicate that the research environments and supervision arrangements experienced by international postgraduate students are largely not meeting expectations with social isolation, supervisory arrangements and a lack of structure and support, key areas of concern - and aligned with other researchers' findings (Garcia-Aracil, 2009).

This area is important to international research students and may be an area that is presently overlooked in student satisfaction surveys, effectively masking factors that are important to students from improvement by universities.

6.2.2.3. Academic Skill Development and Assessment Tasks

Comments about academic skill development and assessment tasks were more likely to be negative than positive, with 27 negative comments compared to 17 positive comments. This would indicate that this area is important to students and is an area that could be a more wide-spread dissatisfier or frustrator – a term used by Mikulic et al (2015) to reflect factors that actively reduced satisfaction. Comments that were positive, related to learning new skills and the resources and learning materials to do so, for example:

> *'Improved my learning experience and study skills.'*
> *(Third year, Masters by Coursework student – T6P)*
>
> *'books are available from original resources'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T6P)*
>
> *'…24/7 library Good collection of books'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T6P)*

and practical, relevant assessment tasks, such as:

> *'My course is praxis-oriented with group assignments and report writing and presentation.'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T6P)*

Negative comments mostly related to a lack of support to learn the skills required to do the assessment (as opposed to the content), for example:

> *'There is low support for post graduate because they expect that we are able to do everything by ourselves. There is no tutoring available, no Mentoring available. The support that we have it is related with the final stages of our assignments and possibly exams.'*

(First year, Masters by Coursework student- T6N)

'There is no support to help in the process of writing essays, preparing for exams, etc.'
(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T6N)

and then the irrelevance of assessment tasks, for example:

'Writing lengthy reports on topics I probably won't be using in the work place.'
(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T6N)

In contrast to other factors within a universities' control, such as campus facilities, content and knowledge or reputation that attract far fewer comments, this factor appears to be important to students and a cause of frustration or dissatisfaction.

6.2.2.4. Value of Western Learning & Teaching Environment

Forty-seven respondents (34%) indicated they were motivated by the opportunity to improve their English and learn in a western teaching environment. This is consistent with themes identified in the literature and research applicable to all international students (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Ling et al., 2014; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2012; Shams & Huisman, 2016; Smith, 2010). In this study, research and coursework students selected this motivation in similar ratios to their participation in the overall survey, indicating that this was not more important to one group over the other. This was supported by the comments in the thematic analysis, with nine positive and nine negative comments. Of the positive comments, examples include:

'The teaching and learning methodology is more open and has much less hierarchy in academic structure'
(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T7P)

'Exposure to new environment which understands needs and doesn't ridicule shortcomings. Non-judgemental in said shortcomings and providing aid to overcome them.'
(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T7P)

'Back in my home country it was very necessary that whatever we study is based on what was there in books alone. No articles or journals were refered and there was very little opportunity to gain general knowledge. Over here it is really great that there is a vast platform for learning and expanding knowledge. More than blindly reading what's in the book, understanding is far more important here.'
(First year, Graduate Certificate student – T7P)

Of the negative comments (14), approximately one-third (5) could be interpreted as difficulties with adaption to a western environment, rather than the environment itself, for example:

'I am studying CyberSecurity and had a different mode of teaching back where I did my undergraduate course and it was hard to adapt to the teaching style in Australia'
(Third year, Masters by Coursework student – T7N)

'Settling to a new environment whose education system is very different from home country'
(First year, PhD student – T7N)

'The difference in the education system compared to my previous defrees'
(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T7N)

'the change of learning pattern and teaching styles.'
(First year, Masters by Research Thesis student – T7N)

with the remainder comments about the teachers, their capabilities or very general comments (9).

The findings are that the western style of teaching is one of the main motivations for international students deciding to pursue postgraduate studies in Australia and reinforced as something students consider of benefit once they are underway with their studies, although a small percentage of students have difficulty adjusting to it. Addressing the dissatisfier or frustrators (Arambewela et al., 2005; Garcia-Aracil, 2008; Mikulic et al., 2015), outlined earlier regarding academic skill development and assessment tasks may improve the experience of the western teaching environment for those having difficulty adjusting.

6.2.2.5. Campus Social & Cultural Life

Interconnected with the importance of social connection for individual students and the western teaching and learning environment, is the value respondents placed upon the campus social and cultural life. The value of education and campus life as a social and interconnected experience is often absent in much of the literature discussing campuses in the earlier literature chapters. Particularly for students arriving in Australia from mono-cultural environments in their home country, the experience of diversity is valued and an important contribution of the Australian lifestyle to their personal and professional development.

In the thematic analysis, of the positive comments (7), three directly discussed diversity, such as:

'Interacting with people from different backgrounds in my course and understanding aspect of the course from their point of view.'
(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T8P)

'Diversity in school'

(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T8P)

'Interaction with other country students'
(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T8P)

with other comments generally positive about the being involved in university activities, clubs and sports to meet people, developing networks and having fun.

Similar to the negative comments in the above section on the western teaching and learning environment, some students found adapting to cultural differences difficult and reported this as one of the difficulties they experienced and as a negative aspect of their experience (5).

This study finds that international postgraduates value the social experience of campus life and the cultural diversity within Australian classrooms. Universities that have limited local students within specific courses, programmes and qualifications could consider strategies, such as professional networking and social events, to promote connections between international students and Australians.

6.2.3. Factors Connecting Beyond the University Environment

Two sub-themes emerged within this theme. Respondents indicated "Orientation to a New City and Country" was important to them, along with "The Value of Professional Work and Research Opportunities".

6.2.3.1. Orientation to New City and Country

The fourth most common motivation influencing international students to enrol in postgraduate studies in Australia, were online reviews of the city, such as 'worlds' most liveable city', a ranking derived by The Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Index (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2020). Of the total respondents, 29% were motivated by these types of reviews, with coursework students far more likely to be influenced by the experience of the city (73% of responses in this group) than research students (28% of responses of this group). Further analysis of this response demonstrated that the majority of respondents who selected this reason (35 of the 40) were enrolled in universities in Melbourne – the capital city of Victoria. Melbourne has consistently been in the top five of the world's most liveable cities list (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2020), potentially indicating the influence of city-based marketing initiatives on students' choices

and that universities may be attracting students based on broader regional factors, rather than university or qualification specific factors, which may form part of a shorter term study experience or a longer term immigration plan. This would support the possibility that students are responding to country level factors, beyond the reputation of the national education system, university or qualification.

Comments in the thematic analysis (17) provided further evidence of the value of the broader experience beyond the qualification with positive comments (6), such as:

> *'Originally I moved to [NSW Uni 1] in [Town 1] and it was fantastic to experience regional Australia.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T9P)*
>
> *'Exposure to ta totally different culture and country,'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T9P)*
>
> *'Good culture, work climate and hospitable environment.'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T9P)*

In a consistent manner to some of the earlier themes, many of the negative aspects commented on (11), related to difficulties adjusting, such as:

> *'Being away from home…'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T9N)*
>
> *'Initial 3 months were a bit difficult, moving in from a different country, adjusting to new climatic conditions and habitat.'*
> *(Second year, PhD student – T9N)*
>
> *'Leaving home country family friends job and my comfort zone'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T9N)*

The findings from the study indicate that the broader city influences coursework students' decisions to study more so than research students and contributes to a richer experience once studies have commenced. However, if Melbourne was not a city in the survey catchment, it is unclear whether the broader city would influence as many students' decisions.

6.2.3.2. The Value of Professional Work and Research Opportunities

The overwhelming reason that respondents selected for pursuing studies was to improve or change their employment opportunities (83%) with the response consistently selected by research and coursework students. Whilst an important research opportunity and / or scholarship offer was the third reason most frequently selected (37%) as a main influence for

study, this was understandably, selected mostly by research students who comprised 76% of this group.

Comments in the thematic analysis responded strongly to the value of work opportunities, whether they were internships, actual work or a perceived future opportunity or the value of scholarships in enabling research, including:

> *'Under my Masters degree, University has arranged me to have 1000 hours work placements with two different agencies which was a really worth work experience. Even though it was unpaid work, that exposure was a really worth professional experience for me as it is hard to achieve in my country work setting.'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T10P)*
>
> *'It will benefit my career as a researcher in my home country. I can get opportunity to build international networking with my supervisors and colleagues during and after finishing my study in Australia.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T10P)*
>
> *'The people I meet will be part of the personal and professional network I grow while my career grows in Australia.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T10P)*
>
> *'The opportunity to improve my chances of getting a higher professional career.*
> *The opportunity to have better chances to compete with other applicants in the job seeking market.'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T10P)*
>
> *I think being able to study without working (because of scholarships) was the best part.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student – T10P)*
>
> *'Internship opportunities'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T10P)*

One-third of respondents (33%) had access to a scholarship (refer to Table 13 - Scholarships Received), which partially or fully alleviated the need to gain paid employment. This is slightly less than the percentage of respondents motivated to pursue studies by a scholarship or research opportunity (37%) (Refer to Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies) and slightly lower than the overall percentage of research students (37%) who responded to the survey.

The availability of internships and relevant, professional work opportunities contribute to a rich experience of study, utilising skills and building professional networks.

The negative comments indicated the value for money proposition was not being satisfied and the general financial difficulties with expensive fees and overall cost of living, such as:

> *'Very few internship opportunities in return for the amount of fees paid'*
> *(Second year, Graduate Certificate student – T10N)*
>
> *'Finding part time work and experience in the field that I am doing my masters'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student – T10N)*
>
> *'Hard to get an internship'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T10N)*
>
> *'Salary being low for an expensive city, no postgraduate travel concessions'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T10N)*

In this regard, the theme of professional opportunity and work culture is interconnected with a students' personal circumstances. This may include variation in financial resources and support available and challenges to personal well-being arising from juggling multiple responsibilities. The prevalence of students utilising food welfare (6% of all respondents) and basic accommodation, such as room share (17%) indicates that these postgraduate students are stretched financially. The findings of this study support the findings of the study by Arambewela & Hall (2009) that postgraduate study is a holistic experience beyond a qualification.

6.2.4. Summary of Findings for Research Aim #2

The findings from this study, highlight that Australian universities using quality assurance indicators focusing on facilities and academic factors may be missing factors that are important to students including: the quality of personal connections developed (with staff and other students in particular), the diversity within classrooms including local students, availability of scholarships for research students, adequate levels of internships, work placements and enabling connection to professional work, the western teaching and learning environment with specific development of academic skills for assessment tasks, the research environment and supervision arrangements, and facilitating adjustment to new academic expectations, a new city and new country.

These findings illustrate the richness gained from stakeholder perspectives and the limitations arising from over reliance on the institutional lens to understand the sector.

6.3. Research Aim #3 – Mobility Levels

The purpose of this aim is to explore whether postgraduate students in the survey sample reflect the level of mobility inferred in the literature.

6.3.1. Mobility – Flexibility and Transfer

Two aspects of mobility were explored in the survey. Firstly, flexibility in how postgraduate studies were being undertaken and secondly, the level of transfer occurring between qualifications in education pathways.

6.3.1.1. Flexibility of Study - Where and how international postgraduate students intend to study

Of the 138 respondents to the survey, 126 (91%) indicated that they intended to complete their qualification only on campus in Australia. As this was the majority of respondents, the demographic patterns in this response category reflected the overall sample characteristics. A small number (12) indicated they intended to study on campus in Australia as well as completing a portion of their qualification: online (6 respondents or 4% of the sample), in campuses in other countries (2 respondents or 1% of the sample) or other combinations of the above (4 respondents or 3% of the sample). Although a high number, 10, these 12 students were masters level students and 10 were also coursework students, this was considered reasonably consistent with and representative of the overall characteristics of the broader sample due to the low numbers in this response category. Refer to Table 7 - Students Anticipated Mobility During Qualification.

Based on the level of options now available to students discussed in the earlier literature – to study online, in campuses around the world, and through various partnership arrangements (Healey, 2015; Healey, 2019) - it was anticipated that a higher level of flexibility in how and where studies were undertaken might be reflected in the sample.

In general, the sample population from this study indicates that international postgraduate students in Australia are utilising less flexibility in how and where they study compared to the global trends emerging in the literature (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Caldwell, 2020; Healey,

2019; Hou et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2009), with quite low levels of uptake for studying online or in other campuses around the world. This may be because postgraduate students are better able to identify the type of environment that best supports their professional and research objectives, with this being a priority over exploring other options.

The results of this survey would support studies indicating that trends within international postgraduate student demographics are often diluted by the broader student demographics that include undergraduate students (Arambewela & Hall, 2008; Burgess et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2012).

6.3.1.2. Transfer - Pathways Between Qualifications

Of the 138 respondents to the survey, 127 (92%) commenced in their present qualification and intended to complete the qualification. Fewer students indicated they intended to transfer out of the qualification into another qualification (5%) and even less had commenced in a different qualification and transferred to their current qualification (3%). Although the four respondents who were studying online and intending to transfer out of their current qualification and into another were twice as prevalent as those intending to in a full campus setting (two respondents), the low numbers were not a reliable predictor of an overall pattern. It is restated that these responses indicate an *intention* to do so in the future, (and it is possible respondents may not see the intention through) whereas the other four respondents had already completed a transfer into their qualification. Refer to Table 9 - Students Intended Level of Transition to and from Current Qualification. The four students who had transferred into their present qualification, three were research students (two masters by research and one doctoral level student) and the other was a masters by coursework student. The PhD student recorded in the open-ended responses that they had transferred to a different university in order to follow their supervisor.

Based on the options available to students discussed in the earlier literature – to transfer from various preparatory courses or to utilise various recognition and other pathways to combine courses or move between qualifications (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Hou et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2009) and the difficulty in capturing this level of mobility (International Education Association of Australia, 2016; Drew et al, 2006 cited in Smith, 2014; Lane, 2011; Naidoo, 2009; Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Sahlin et al., 2015) - it was anticipated that a higher level of transfer between

qualifications (either into their current qualification or from their current qualification into another) would be reflected in the sample.

In general, the sample population from this study indicates that international postgraduate students in Australia represent low levels of transfer between qualifications, compared to the global trends indicated in the literature (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2017; Healey, 2019; Hou et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2009), with quite low levels of transfer affected or intended between qualifications.

The low levels of transfer between qualifications may be because: postgraduate students are more purposeful about their professional work and research objectives for study, reflective of the significant commitment already undertaken to relocate and experience studying on campus in Australia or reflective of the administrative difficulties in undertaking a transfer when responding to a change of circumstances. The connection between transfer as a switching behaviour, and satisfaction will be discussed in the next section.

The responses in the sample indicate that international postgraduate students in Australian universities mainly undertake their studies on campus, in full campus settings with very low levels of intention (9%) to undertake portions of their studies online or in other campuses.

Similarly, international postgraduate students in the majority (92%), appear to select their qualification with the intention of starting and finishing it, rather than as a pathway to or from other qualifications.

6.3.2. Summary of Findings for Research Aim #3

The responses in the sample indicates that international postgraduate students in Australian universities are unlikely to utilise the level of flexibility in study locations and pathways between courses available. This is far lower than the levels inferred in the literature (e.g. Healey, 2019).

It is acknowledged that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has meant that many students are now studying more or all of the 2020 year online.

6.4. Research Aim #4 – The Value of Campus to Satisfaction Levels

The purpose of this aim is to explore whether studying in full campus settings is connected to an increase in level of satisfaction experienced by students. The literature indicates institutions have a longstanding belief that campus is important to the higher education export, particularly offshore export (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013; Shah & Nair, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Smith, 2010; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) and routinely survey satisfaction with facilities including campus when assessing student satisfaction (Burgess et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014).

6.4.1. Value of Campus

Respondents were asked about how they were experiencing campus at multiple points in the survey – firstly, whether they were studying mostly in a campus as opposed to online, then by asking them where they spent the majority of their contact hours. The open-ended question provided a further opportunity to comment on campus.

As mentioned in the section above, most respondents were studying only on campus in Australia (126 or 91%). When asked where the majority of their contact hours were spent, most respondents (89 or 64%) were in full campus settings with facilities and spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising. 25 (18%) were in city style campuses with classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising. Much smaller numbers of respondents were doing the majority of their contact hours online (13 or 9% which approximately aligns with the earlier numbers of students indicating they were undertaking a portion of their qualification online compared to contact hours) or in a work placement setting (11 or 8%).

When asked whether they were overall satisfied with the qualification and university, 25 (or 18%) said they were dissatisfied. In general, where respondents spent the majority of their contact hours, did not appear to be connected to their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with 19% of those in a full campus setting indicating dissatisfaction, 12% of those in city style campuses indicating dissatisfaction and 9% of those in a work placement setting indicating

dissatisfaction. However, there was a discernible difference with those doing most of their hours online, with 31% indicating they were dissatisfied. Whilst the findings would indicate that international postgraduates studying online are far more likely to be dissatisfied, the small number of respondents in this group (4) is noted as a limitation to draw broader conclusions from.

In reviewing the comment responses to the open-ended questions, there were only five responses that were interpreted as relating to the campus environment – all positive comments, with the last three relating specifically to facilities in the research environment, such as:

> *'College ambiance'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T3P)*
>
> *'24/7 library'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student – T6P)*
>
> *'Facilities provided by [Vic Uni 6] and other institutes.'*
> *(Third year, PhD student – T5P)*
>
> *'Good institute and working environment'*
> *(First year, PhD student – T5P)*
>
> *'The research environment is splendid. The guidance of the professors and the supervisors along with assistance provided by the library and the laboratory support staff to support the research is commendable.'*
> *(Second year, PhD student – T5P)*

The findings from this survey would indicate that the style of campus is not strongly connected to higher levels of student satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In general, the facilities or style of the campus of the university drew very few comments either positive or negative. This is in contrast to literature reviewed whereby universities place a high value on decisions about investing in campus, especially in offshore contexts (Bolton & Nie, 2010; Heffernan & Poole, 2004; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Lien & Wang, 2012; Middlehurst, 2013; Shah & Nair, 2011; Shams & Huisman, 2012; Smith, 2010; Tayar & Jack, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) and the focus on measuring facilities and academic factors as indicators of student satisfaction (Burgess et al., 2018; Griffioen et al., 2018; Mai, 2005; Mikulic et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2014). It is possible that the high focus in the past by universities on quality assurance relating to campus facilities in student satisfaction surveys, has now meant that campus facilities are now operating at a standard where they have become somewhat invisible to students. Or it

may be that there are other factors that are important to students, such as the quality of content, teachers and supervision, cultural diversity within classrooms with the value of these experiences offering a greater contribution to overall satisfaction.

6.4.2. Summary of Findings for Research Aim #4

The findings from this survey indicate that the style of campus is not strongly connected to higher levels of student satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This may be connected to findings in research aim #2 that international postgraduate students value social and professional connections – which could be achieved through a variety of mechanisms.

As most students in 2020 have spent some or all of the year studying off campus, it would be valuable to initiate a follow up survey in 2021 to investigate whether the value of campus to satisfaction has changed.

6.5. Research Aim #5 – Switching and (Dis)Satisfaction

The purpose of this aim is to investigate the relevance of switching behaviours as a measure of loyalty and satisfaction, in the Australian context.

6.5.1. Switching and Loyalty

Data were collected at various points in the survey about intentions to switch qualifications or universities. Initially, respondents were asked to select whether they had transferred to or intended to transfer from through their current qualification to establish potential educational pathways being utilised. As illustrated in the previous section, 92% of respondents intended to start and complete within their current qualification, which would indicate a high level of intended loyalty to the institution and commitment to completing the qualification.

Of the qualitative data available on the 3% (4 respondents) who had already switched institution, the reason provided by one PhD student indicated a strong – but different - connection between switching and loyalty. This student had transferred to another institution to follow a supervisor. This could indicate that research students' loyalty lies with research topics and supervisors, over an institutional brand – and would support the study by Choi et al., (2012) that research students are motivated by research opportunities and connect with the findings from this study that research students are more likely to be motivated by

important research opportunities and scholarships than online rankings. Refer to Table 15 - Factors at University and Qualification Level Chosen by Respondents as Motivating and Influencing their Decision to Enrol in Postgraduate Studies.

In general, the results of this survey indicated that the students who responded to the survey indicated low levels of intended switching behaviours and higher levels of commitment to the qualification and institution. However, it is important to note that those students who indicated switching as part of their intention when starting their current course may be not be displaying a change in their loyalty to an institution. These students may be following a predetermined pathway through higher education or a research interest that would not be greatly influenced by the institution.

6.5.2. Switching and (Dis)satisfaction

Those respondents who indicated they were overall not satisfied with their current qualification and institution (18%), were asked additional questions to understand whether a lack of satisfaction would increase their likelihood of switching and what factors may facilitate or prevent switching.

Of the 25 respondents who indicated they were not satisfied (18% of all respondents), 15 (60% of this group) indicated that their dissatisfaction level was high enough that they had considered changing to another institution or qualification and 10 (40%) indicated that it was not. Refer to Table 21 - Expectations and (Dis)Satisfaction. This result could indicate that studies using switching as an indicator of loyalty, and thus satisfaction, may well be over stating the satisfaction rate.

Of the 15 respondents who had considered changing to another institution but chose to continue, a majority indicated that the length of time to go in the qualification had influenced their decision to continue (67% of this group) and that the reputation of the university was worth persevering with (53%). This would be one context, where the reputation of the university appears to increase its influence in students' decision-making behaviour by moderating the desire to leave the institution. One-third (5 respondents) acknowledged that all universities have similar issues, which could be interpreted that changing institution would not necessarily result in an improvement from the effort made to switch (refer to Table 24 -

Factors Influencing Dissatisfied Students Decision to Continue) as illustrated by the comment below:

> *'No better choice in my current location Too expensive to change or continue another degree Time and age constraints'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student)*

When asked specifically about the reasons, or barriers, that they faced which either prevented or made it difficult to change institutions, 9 (60% of this group) indicated the volume of paperwork and administration was too great, for example:

> *'The worst parts where the paperwork, dealing with visa issues and the stress of moving cities. I lost a lot of productivity because [Vic Uni 6] couldn't manage the transfer.'*
> *(Fourth year, PhD student)*
>
> *'Too expensive to start all over again; not much good choice around Australia at all; Aus degrees are losing their value'*
> *(Second year, Masters by Coursework student)*
>
> *'I am close enough to finishing that it was not worth the effort and potential of not getting cross course credits'*
> *(First year, Masters by Coursework student)*

Of the 15 respondents in this group, 73% (11 respondents in this group) selected that if it was easier to do so, they would have switched. Refer to Table 26 - Switching Potential with Lowered Barriers. This would indicate that the barriers preventing students from switching are effective.

Although other studies reviewed in the literature, utilised marketing concepts of switching as an indicator of loyalty and brand satisfaction in higher education (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Duzevic et al. 2018), in a context, such as Australia, where international students switching capacity is constrained by a high administrative burden, visa restrictions, sunk costs of considerable commitment and investment and the prospect of effort not resulting in improvement, measuring switching is unlikely to be an accurate indicator of satisfaction and may be a more reflective indicator of sunk costs, the effectiveness of barriers to switching or a perception that there are no alternatives that offer an improvement.

6.5.3. Characteristics of Dissatisfied Students

In order to consider whether there were other factors influencing the responses of the 25 respondents (18%) that indicated that the qualification and university had not met their

expectations, the characteristics of this group were compared to the overall sample. The 25 respondents were consistent with the overall sample, with the exception that these students had a higher percentage of female students (52% against 34% of the total sample), partnered students (44% against 27% of the total sample), and had access to more financial resources (as an example 44% had support from family over 27% of the total sample, despite a higher rate of partnership in this sample) although utilising multiple financial resources at higher rates could also be a sign of poverty and needing to secure funds from multiple sources). The patterns of could be further explored further in future research in a larger sample to understand whether there are any meaningful demographic patterns. Refer to Table 23 - Demographic Characteristics of Dissatisfied Respondents.

6.5.4. Summary of Findings for Research Aim #5

The findings from these results are that switching, or more specifically, a *lack of* switching, does not exclusively reflect loyalty to, nor satisfaction with an institution. This is contrary to earlier studies supporting a connection between brand loyalty and satisfaction (eg Arambewela et al., 2005; Duzevic et al., 2018). Switching may reflect loyalty to a predetermined educational pathway or, in the case of research students, loyalty to a research topic over loyalty to the institution. Studies that measure a lack of switching as an indicator of brand loyalty and thus, satisfaction may well be overstating satisfaction levels if respondents that are unable to easily affect change are included. In addition, the reputation of a university may increase in value in the context of influencing dissatisfied students to continue with their qualification at the university.

6.6. Assessment of Propositions

There were five propositions arising from the literature and leading from the aims. They are assessed below, in consideration of the preceding discussion.

a) That international postgraduate students will be motivated by immigration opportunities more than the reputation of the university or the national education system.
   The current study concluded this was not the case.

Immigration and reputation were found to be secondary to the primary motivation of improving employment opportunities.

b) That there may be other factors important to students that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments.
The current study concluded this was the case.

Other factors identified as valuable to international postgraduate students were quality of personal connections developed (with staff and other students in particular), the diversity within classrooms including local students, availability of scholarships for research students, adequate levels of internships, professional connections and opportunities, experiencing the western teaching and learning environment, the quality of the research environment and supervision arrangements, and support to adjust to new academic expectations, a new city and new country.

c) That international postgraduate students will reflect low mobility levels compared to the levels inferred in the literature review.
The current study concluded this was the case.
International postgraduate students responding to this survey indicated they had very low levels of mobility.

d) That international postgraduate students studying at full campus facilities will have the highest levels of satisfaction.
The current study concluded this was not the case.
As most respondents were at full campus facilities and the majority indicated satisfaction, there was no apparent link between satisfaction or dissatisfaction and studying at a full facility campus.

e) That dissatisfied international postgraduate students would switch qualification and/or university *if it were easy to do so*.
The current study concluded this was the case.
Yes, if easy to do so, respondents indicated they would change university. However, it is not easy to do so, and respondents indicated there would need to be a much-improved alternative offering.

6.7. Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 has discussed the research question through the research aims and propositions using the data analysis presented in Chapter 5. As outlined above, this study concluded that three of the five propositions were upheld and two were not upheld. Further discussion regarding each proposition and unique data insights are detailed in the conclusion.

Chapter 7 brings this thesis to a close by drawing together how the literature frames and integrates with the methodology before detailing further insights from the data and discussion. It concludes by acknowledging the limitations of the study and making recommendations for further research.

7. Conclusion

The question under investigation in this thesis is "What is the interconnection between motivations, expectations and satisfaction of international postgraduate students in Australia?"

Regardless of the best and worst experiences of postgraduate study, whether international postgraduate students responding to the survey studied on campus or not, and their motivation for enrolling in postgraduate studies, expectations were met, and overall satisfaction was a consistent outcome in 82% of responses. Students appeared more than readily able to assess their own level of satisfaction regardless of how they defined it or the factors contributing to it.

New insight was revealed as less than half (40%) of the 18% of students who responded they were dissatisfied were not dissatisfied enough to consider changing university or qualification. The reputation of the university often motivates dissatisfied students to continue and finish their studies. A challenge for universities is understanding whether satisfaction and dissatisfaction are relevant measures at all, if only a small portion of dissatisfied students are likely to act upon their dissatisfaction.

Surveying satisfaction in a (post)graduate outcomes study (Burgess et al, 2018) may reveal whether students who were motivated by employment or research opportunities and were unable to secure these; were less satisfied with their qualification in hindsight.

7.1. Review of Chapters and Findings

In the current context of a global pandemic, resulting in falling international student enrolments, major disruption to operating campuses and sector uncertainty, many Australian universities are being forced to question how they will remain financially viable (Marinoni & Land, 2020; University World News, 2020). The importance of understanding student perspectives is, now more than ever, crucial.

The scene setting of Chapter 1 highlighted that the international higher education industry has been the financial lifeline of Australian universities since the 1990's (Gallagher, 2000;

Healy 2015). Prior to pandemic, some Australian universities were generating up to 36% of their revenue from international students (Davies, 2020a). This is evidence of how important international students have become with some Australian universities now on the brink of collapse (Davies, 2020a). Although the export of higher education is often thought of in terms of teaching and researching at offshore locations, the overwhelming majority of students come onshore to Australia for their education. This means that these students not only make a significant contribution to the Australian university by paying full fees for their qualification, but the wider economy by living, working and spending money in Australia during their studies. These economic flow-ons, make higher education one of the largest overall export streams in the Australian economy, with many more businesses and individuals reliant on international students than just the universities.

Over the decades, higher education export has matured with universities now engaging in a wide selection of models to deliver programs in foreign countries and a multiplicity of flexible study options for students. One consequence of these options and flexibility is a near impossible challenge to synthesise various national data sets across the global sector.

Chapter 2 reveals that the literature is dominated by the perspectives of the main stakeholders – exporting universities and importing governments. There is a high level of focus on the motivations of each, where they are aligned, and their concerns which fixate towards offshore campuses and risks of establishing in developing nations.

Universities concentrate on satisfying their motivations, for revenue, to meet institutional altruistic goals and to build reputation and prestige. A higher level of reputation and prestige enables them to attract a higher standard of students, staff, research and export opportunities. Offshore campuses, which have the greatest potential to meet these needs receive significant attention in the literature. These campuses are equally popular with governments of developing nations, who are motivated to increase the education level of their citizens onshore to avoid losing them to 'brain drain' as well as encouraging students from the broader region to immigrate for study purposes as this stimulates the local economy. Developing nations provide substantial incentives to entice foreign universities and institutions to establish within their borders

The interest in offshore campuses arises as universities value them for the potential revenue and prestige they attract partially attributable to the significant levels of opportunity and investment received. Although an extremely popular way to export higher education, they have become known as volatile and high risk. They are volatile often as the developing nations present a lot of new, uncertain, unknown factors to address and they are high risk as when they fail significant capital is lost and reputations are damaged. Various partnership arrangements are looked upon favourably as a way to minimise the capital investment required and leverage local knowledge, resources and expertise.

Despite the fact that for Australian universities, most of the higher education is exported to international students arriving in Australia to study, the literature is dominated by business models and risk assessments in offshore environments. Here, students as one of the biggest stakeholder groups and ultimate end consumer, primarily feature only as top-level statistics. Far less is known as to whether students prioritise reputation, flexibility and campus to the same extent as the literature indicates universities do.

In order to complete the literature review, Chapter 3 investigated the student perspective to find out what is known about their motivations for studying with a foreign university, how success is measured for this stakeholder group. The literature establishes that students are motivated to study with a foreign university to improve their employment and immigration opportunities, often seeing the reputation of the university and its broader education system as complementary, affordability and a suite of other personal considerations. It is not known how these are prioritised in students' decision making to study and whether students value campus to the same extent as universities. Satisfaction surveys and frameworks from around the world were reviewed as these are the frameworks and measures of success for students. A few studies considered sets of factors located at the level of the individual, for example personal attributes. Many focused on factors the university, such as operational or academic factors. Some considered factors in the wider environment, such as safety and security. However, in most studies conceptual issues emerged. These included: unclear and inconsistent use of definitions resulting in no shared definition of satisfaction, methodology that relied heavily on quality assurance frameworks that were not proven to be complete, accurate or agreed by students as useful measures of satisfaction, measuring consumer marketing indicators such as loyalty and reputation, and reporting conventions that do not

differentiate between student demographics. Collecting data that is comprised mostly of undergraduate students who have little comparative experience of higher education or domestic students has led to reporting that often dilutes the experiences of other groups.

This led to understanding there was a gap to develop and undertake a survey that would allow students themselves to use their own definition of satisfaction and provide them with the opportunity to identify factors they considered contributed to their satisfaction, including those outside the immediate university environment. Collecting data about respondents' initial motivations for study and how they prioritise within these, would allow any patterns between motivations and satisfaction to be identified. At the same time survey responses could validate whether international students studying in Australia value campus and the ability to study flexibly to the extent indicated by the literature. Focusing on collecting data only in a specific student demographic, international postgraduate students enrolled at Australian universities, ensures results are not diluted by local and undergraduate perspectives or biased towards institutional objectives. This achieved an important step towards better understanding the student perspective.

Chapter 4 began with consolidating the literature review into four key insights which underpin the research investigation. The research question, aims and indications from the literature were outlined. The context of the study, international postgraduate students enrolled in Australian universities, was justified in line with the gaps emerging from the literature review. The literature was developed into a research framework to inform the survey questions and structure. The methodology was fully justified for its relevance to the research and benefits analysing the data. This included using a qualitative approach to develop the survey in order to address the knowledge required. Qualitative techniques aligned with a pragmatic paradigm and grounded theory were determined as a suitable method to analyse the data. Once developed, the survey was pre-tested and modified based on feedback. This online survey and distribution technique allowed data to be collected from international postgraduate students enrolled at Australian universities easily and efficiently. The survey was distributed via national peak bodies involved in international postgraduate student representation and was open for approximately 6 months to all international postgraduate students enrolled in Australian universities.

In Chapter 5, the cleaned data from 138 useable responses was presented for each of the five sections of the survey, following the methodology and techniques described precisely in Chapter 4. The descriptive statistics were tallied and presented in tables with summaries and percentages. The qualitative data was inductively categorised into themes and sub-themes. New themes identified were 'within the student' (sub-themes social connection, self-development and wellbeing), 'within the university' (sub-themes reputation, content and knowledge, research environment and supervision arrangements, academic skill development and assessment tasks, western teaching and learning environment, campus social and cultural life) and 'connecting beyond the university' (adjustment/orientation to a new city and country, professional work and research opportunities). Patterns between the qualitative data, research themes and demographic characteristics were recorded and summarised to support the discussion in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 6, the data presented, patterns and insights observed in the previous chapter were used to methodically address each of the Research Aims and then draw conclusions from the areas indicated for investigation in the literature.

Proposition (a) – That international postgraduate students will be motivated by immigration opportunities more than the reputation of the university or the national education system.

Findings from this study indicate that neither reputation, immigration nor affordability are the top priority motivating international postgraduate students in their decision to pursue studies in Australia.

Reputation is more likely to be a secondary motivation or associated with other higher-ranking priorities, such as employment or research opportunities. Those respondents influenced by the online rankings (reputation) of a qualification were more likely to be coursework students than research students.

Immigration appears to be more likely associated with outcomes of other higher-ranking priorities, such as employment.

Whilst fee affordability was a low-ranking motivation in the decision to enrol in their qualification, financial considerations appear to increase in importance over time with many

students using multiple tactics to adjust to the reality of the Australia's high cost of living and the difficulties of balancing study commitments with financial responsibilities.

It was established that international students enrolling in postgraduate studies at Australian universities were primarily motivated by employment and research opportunities, with reputation, immigration and affordability secondary motivations. This primary motivation to improve employment opportunities supports other studies suggesting that satisfaction may be best measured through graduate outcomes, well after the student has completed their studies with the university.

Proposition (b) – That there may be other factors important to students that have not been previously identified in surveys generated by universities and governments.

The findings highlight that Australian universities particularly those using quality assurance indicators focusing on facilities and academic factors may be missing factors that are important to students.

Factors valued by international postgraduate students included the quality of personal and professional connections. Connection with locals was a strong theme, whether this is with other students, staff or through professional employment, supports the overall Australian experience of a western teaching and learning environment and a new city and country. Although many students commented favourably as to the benefits of classroom diversity that included local students, it is noted that campus is not the only way of creating connections with locals or experiencing diversity, and this is explored further in the investigation (d).

The availability of scholarships, internships and other professional work opportunities supports an overall satisfying experience connecting study with employment outcomes and reducing the distraction to study of financial stresses.

Importantly, only coursework students were more motivated by the broader attractions of the city, with research students keenly motivated by the research opportunity itself. This is an important distinction between the two groups.

International postgraduate students reported high levels of stress caused by adding the workload of study combined with the financial burden of study (ie the complete cost of study

including fees for the qualification usually combined with a higher cost of living and a reduction in income) and other responsibilities in life, such as partners and children. This situation is more likely to be more prevalent for postgraduates and amplified for international postgraduates.

Proposition (c) – That international postgraduate students will reflect low mobility levels compared to the levels inferred in the literature review.

The responses in the sample indicate that international postgraduate students in Australian universities are unlikely to utilise the level of flexibility in study locations and pathways between courses available that are inferred in the literature.

The participants in this study are utilising less flexibility in how and where they study compared to the literature, with quite low levels of uptake for studying online or in other campuses around the world. This may be because postgraduate students are better able to identify the type of environment that best supports their professional and research objectives, with this being a priority over exploring other options.

The majority of respondents selected their qualification with the intention of starting and finishing it. The few that did move between courses were actioning pathways they had pre-determined before enrolling or in response to a change of circumstances, such as a supervisor moving university. In even fewer cases, this was reflective of a high level of dissatisfaction.

The low levels of transfer between qualifications may be because: postgraduate students are more purposeful about their professional work and research objectives for study, reflective of the significant commitment already undertaken to relocate and study on campus in Australia or difficulties, or reflective of the significant administrative barriers when pursuing a transfer.

With the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on campus study in 2020, this area would be an interesting research area to revisit.

Proposition (d) - That international postgraduate students studying at full campus facilities will have the highest levels of satisfaction.

Although most respondents preferred to study on campus, the campus experience was not connected with higher levels of satisfaction. This may be connected to findings in investigation (b) that international postgraduate students value social and professional connections, which could be achieved in a variety of ways, not just through campus life.

Proposition (e) - That dissatisfied international postgraduate students would switch qualification and/or university *if it were easy to do so.*

The findings show that switching, or more specifically, a *lack of* switching, does not exclusively reflect loyalty to, nor satisfaction with an institution. Switching may reflect loyalty to a predetermined educational pathway or, in the case of research students, loyalty to a research topic over loyalty to the institution.

Studies that measure a lack of switching as an indicator of brand loyalty and thus, satisfaction may well be overstating satisfaction levels if they are including respondents that: are unable to easily affect change, such as many international students whose visa conditions may add additional complexity, or perceive that the alternatives will offer an equally dissatisfying experience, particularly when faced with significant administrative barriers.

Importantly, it appears that the reputation of a university increases in value for dissatisfied students as this influences and motivates them to continue with their qualification at the university.

Aside from responding to the propositions, the data offered some additional insights. A specific area leading to dissatisfaction were frustrators (also identified by Mikulic et al., 2015) in the sub-theme of academic skill development for assessment tasks. Universities could potentially provide their teaching staff with professional development to explicitly teach the specific academic skills required for the assessment tasks related to their subjects. A second area was the polarity in the experiences of research students. These were either exemplary or well below standards and expectations indicating that more work in benchmarking the experience of research students nationally could be undertaken.

7.2. Significance of Research

The findings from this research support outcomes of previous studies but from a contemporary Australian viewpoint they identify some new priorities and insights for universities, as international students return to Australia following the pandemic disruptions.

- How students are prioritising motivating factors in their decision making.
- The appropriateness of student satisfactions surveys that focus on operational and academic factors, or switching behaviours, to the exclusion of a broader approach.

Data analysed in this research represents the views of international postgraduate students at 16 universities, which provides breadth and depth not found in other studies.

7.2.1. Implications for Australian Higher Education Institutions

Findings from this study indicate that universities could benefit by:

Expanding their survey tools to include factors this study indicates are important to students specifically in opportunities for social connection (especially for research students), and access to adequate supply of scholarships, internships and work placements during study.

Considering whether a quality assurance focus in surveys measuring academic and operational factors is the best way to measure satisfaction and whether switching behaviours are relevant measures of brand loyalty and satisfaction.

Assisting students with adjusting to academic skill requirements, especially for assessment tasks, would likely maximise students western learning experiences.

Facilitating the experiences of social connection and cultural diversity within the university.

Considering how benchmarking could be used to improve the experience of research postgraduates and reduce the polarity of experiences.

7.2.2. Implications for Business Research

This research supports the value of adopting a stakeholder perspective in business research to broaden the literature biased towards institutional perspectives. The student perspective

adds nuance to factors valued by students, such as the value of diversity in the classroom. This is one example that universities could consider in their marketing.

7.3. Limitations of Research

The limitations of the current research are now outlined, and recommendations detailed for future research.

7.3.1. Population Sample Size

It was anticipated that by going through postgraduate and international student representation networks, that international postgraduates with an interest in improving the experience and oversight of a broader context of both institutional quality and issues affecting international postgraduate students would be motivated to participate. However, respondents were generated mostly through the postgraduate student representation networks using mechanisms that may not be comparably achieving the same engagement rates. For example, one university postgraduate association distributed the survey through their student noticeboards on their software systems e.g. Blackboard or Collaborate noticeboards, which resulted in a high number of international postgraduates being aware of the survey. Other postgraduate associations emailed a shortlist of selected international postgraduates which resulted in far fewer surveys being completed at that institution. This means that some demographics of international postgraduates could have missed the opportunity to participate due to variation in communication channels used by their universities' representative bodies.

The limited number of survey responses received had an impact on the quantity and quality of the data collected. This low response number means that only descriptive statistics are relevant. This resulted in the loss of capacity to undertake more rigorous analysis using advanced quantitative techniques. The depth of the qualitative analysis and interpretation of data compensates. The findings are considered applicable only to the responding cohort.

7.3.2. Survey Instrument

A further limitation in this research and data collection is the number of survey questions that can be asked (and subsequently, the data collected) whilst maintaining a desirably short

survey experience - a target of 10 questions in less than 10 minutes. With the qualifying and personal demographic questions – which are useful for identifying patterns - taking up half of the survey, this limits how many questions directly related to the research question could be explored.

Ideally, these would be expanded to learn more about the motivations and satisfaction of international postgraduates. However, this would need to be balanced by ensuring the survey did not become too long and adversely impact participation rates.

7.3.3. Point in Time

This survey, like many, reflects a snapshot at a single point in time in a student's studies, which may span four years and may not consistently represent their views or satisfaction level.

7.4. Opportunities for Future Research

Postgraduate students should be researched as a separate cohort to undergraduate students and this study be expanded to include domestic students. To do so would provide a broad overview of the experiences of postgraduate students at Australian universities and allow for patterns to be identified within this cohort, for example, international versus domestic and benchmarking between universities, notably focusing on research students, whose experiences can be polarised.

Cohort differentiation would assist in ensuring that research is not diluted for issues impacting postgraduate students, for example the impact on stress levels and well-being due to competing priorities and responsibilities; or the value of research scholarships to international postgraduate students in research degrees. Further research into understanding how relationship status influences the experience of study at postgraduate level could be enriching.

Refreshing the study in the context of the current pandemic impacting international students onshore through the provision of teaching online in lieu of campus closures would provide an interesting comparison point on the value of campus and insight as to how students find this change in how they study.

7.5. Concluding Remarks

Business models and risk assessments may provide easy analysis at executive decision-making levels however they fall short of being a comprehensive model as they fail to incorporate the perspectives and needs for all stakeholders. In the case of international student education, the contribution of the student perspective, specifically expectations and motivations, creates a more holistic model of international postgraduate education in Australia.

Reputation, affordability and immigration opportunities appear to be secondary motivators for international postgraduate students in Australia, with the primary motivation improving job opportunities. As such, value for money is interpreted as improved employment outcomes for cost of course. Reputation becomes more important to dissatisfied students during their studies, as a motivation to continue and complete their qualification.

International postgraduate students responding to this survey were less likely to take up options to study off campus or transfer between qualifications.

Research students are far more likely to be influenced by research opportunities and scholarships, than online reviews of cities or rankings of qualifications.

Switching is more likely to measure students actioning pre-determined pathways, the effectiveness of structural barriers (such as administrative paperwork) and a lack of alternatives offering significant improvement for the effort of changing, and less likely to be an accurate measure of loyalty and satisfaction in this context.

The holistic experience of education is important – from personal growth to the connection beyond the university. Within the university, students value classroom diversity, including the experience of connecting with local students and the western teaching and learning experience. The value of scholarships, internships and professional work is an important part of both affordability as well as enriching the experience of learning and establishing an international professional network. Satisfaction surveys that focus exclusively on academic and operational factors are likely to exclude factors that students consider important contributors to satisfaction.

The polarity of research student experiences would indicate this is an area for improvement. Sector wide benchmarking specific to postgraduate research could be considered.

Providing capacity to interrogate the existing government data would assist in a more nuanced understanding of international student data sub-categories.

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APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Qualifying Criteria

This section is primarily created to ensure participants do not continue or complete the survey if they do not meet the study parameters.

Q1 - Which describes you best…? I am an international postgraduate student at an Australian University and I will complete my qualification (select one)

- on campus ONLY in Australia
- on campus in Australia AND online
- on campus in Australia AND in OTHER countries eg RMIT Vietnam,
- any combination of the above
- None of the above (end of survey)

Q2 - Which COUNTRY are you currently studying in? (open-ended question)

Q3 – Which Australian university or institution are you enrolled at for your postgraduate studies? (open-ended question)

Q4 - Which TYPE of postgraduate qualification are you enrolled in? (select one)

- graduate certificate
- masters by coursework e.g. MBA, MPA
- masters by coursework with thesis component e.g. MSC
- masters by research thesis
- PhD
- industry doctorate e.g. doctor of business, doctor of education

Q5 – I am now in my … (select one)

- first year (full or part time)
- second year (full or part time)
- third year (full or part time)
- fourth year (full or part time)

Q6 – My contact hours in this qualification are MOSTLY (select one)

- In a full campus setting, complete with classrooms and spaces for sport, recreation, hobbies, eating and socialising
- In classrooms in a building with some spaces for sport, hobbies and socialising on campus
- Online
- In a work placement

Q7 - My pathway in and out of this qualification is...(select one)

- I started in this qualification and will finish with this qualification
- I TRANSFERRED in to this qualification from another qualification
- I started in this qualification but WILL TRANSFER to another qualification

About your motivations for commencing postgraduate studies

This question asks you to consider the importance of factors related to the QUALIFICATION and UNIVERSITY that may have influenced you to enrol in postgraduate study at an Australian university. Please select UP TO 3 factors.

Q 8 - Do any of the following motivations apply to you?...(select up to 3)

- This qualification will help me change / improve my employment opportunities
- I received an important research opportunity and / or scholarship offer
- This qualification had excellent online rankings
- Australian qualifications are well regarded in general
- This qualification is NOT available in my home country
- I could afford the fees for this qualification
- I received an offer into this qualification, although it was not my first choice
- None of these are my main reason

Q 9 - This question asks you to consider the importance of OTHER factors related to your personal circumstances that may have influenced your decision to enrol in postgraduate studies at an Australian university. Please select UP TO 3 factors.

- I need the points for Permanent Residency (PR) in Australia

- Online reviews of the city e.g. World's Most Liveable City
- Studying overseas allowed me to leave my family home
- I wanted to improve my English and / or learn in a Western teaching environment
- Study is NOT my main motivation e.g. I moved to be with a partner
- I have family / friends here
- None of these are my main reason

Expectations

Q 10 - What has been the best thing about your decision to do postgraduate study so far? (open-ended question)

Q 11 - What has been the most difficult aspect of postgraduate study so far? (open-ended question)

Q 12 - Has the course and institution met your expectations overall? (select one)

- Yes (skips to demographic data)
- No (continues to next question)

Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

Q 13 - Have you ever been dissatisfied enough to consider changing to a different institution or course? (select one)

- Yes (continues to next question)
- No (skips to demographic data)

Q 14 - If yes - Select UP TO four (4) reasons that influenced your decision to continue with your current qualification and university rather than change

- The reputation of the university is worth continuing with the qualification
- I am close enough to finishing the qualification
- All qualifications and universities have similar problems
- I prefer to talk to the course management about the issues
- I prefer to leave poor ratings on ranking websites
- It is not my culture to complain
- Other (open-ended response field)

Q 15 – Please select ANY of the following reasons preventing you from changing qualification or university…

- There is too much paperwork / administration involved
- It would create visa problems
- The fees at other institutions are more expensive and I can not afford more
- I would need to move and this would be too stressful
- It would look bad to others who are important to me
- Other (open-ended response field)

Q 16 - If it was easier to change qualification or institution, would you have done this? (Select one)

- Yes
- No

Would you like to add anything else? (open-ended response field)

Respondent Characteristics & Demographic Data

This section seeks to understand a broad range of demographic data about respondents.

Q17 – My year of birth is (free numeric field limited to 4 digits)

Q 18 – My nationality is (open-ended response)

Q 19 - I identify my gender as

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other (open-ended response)

Q 20 - My personal circumstances are…(select one)
I am

- Single
- In a relationship with a partner I met *before* moving overseas to undertake postgraduate study
- In a relationship with a partner I met *after* moving overseas to undertake postgraduate study

- Living overseas with my partner and children whilst undertaking postgraduate study
- Prefer not to say

Q 21 - To pay my tuition and living expenses while I study…Please select as many of the following statements that apply to you

- I work as many hours as practical/possible
- My parents and/or extended family support me financially or provide accommodation
- My partner supports me financially
- I have a scholarship from my home government
- I have a scholarship from my institution
- I rely on my savings
- I live in basic accommodation such as room share
- I avoid paying rent by couch surfing / staying with friends / living rough / house sitting
- I skip meals regularly and/or use food welfare services
- Other (open-ended response)

Q 22 - May I contact you regarding your responses for a follow up interview?

- Yes (provide email)
- No

Thank you

APPENDIX 2 – CONSENT STATEMENT

About this survey

The survey will ask you about your motivations for undertaking postgraduate study as an international student and your overall satisfaction. It will ask you some questions about the personal and financial circumstances that support you through your postgraduate study.

It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You may save and continue your progress at a later point.

We do not expect any risks to participants, and it is not anticipated that the survey will cause anxiety or distress. The questions are intended to help us understand your overall study experience, factors influencing decision making and the role of your personal and financial circumstances on that experience. The questions are not intended to be intrusive or to make you feel uncomfortable.

If you do experience any distress, please contact your university's counselling and psychological services. The following websites also offer support and assistance: www.beyondblue.org.au; www.orygen.org.au; www.lifeline.org.au.

Your participation, confidentiality and use of your data

Your involvement in the survey is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Please be assured that the personal information you provide will be entirely confidential, subject to legal limits. No items that could identify individuals will be made public and individual survey responses will not be traceable to individual participants. De-identified data will be retained by the researchers and Victoria University and used only for comparison, should there be future iterations of the survey, to help researchers understand changes in student circumstances over time.

Research Team

The researchers are:

Rachel Brisbane, DBA Candidate - Rachel.brisbane@live.vu.edu.au

Dr Leanne White, Principal Supervisor - Leanne.k.white@vu.edu.au

Dr Maxwell Winchester, Supervisor - Maxwell.winchester@vu.edu.au

Ethics Approval

This research project has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Victoria University.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, VU Human Research Ethics Committee. Tel: +61 3 9919 4781 or email: researchethics@vu.edu.au

All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project, which is HRE 18-215.

We appreciate your time helping us with this important work.

If you consent to taking part, please press 'I agree'.

I agree

APPENDIX 3 – Full Thematic Analysis of Responses

Factors within the Student

Social Connection (Theme: T1)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Meeting new people everyday, from diverse backgrounds and understanding their interests (T1P) *Learning new culture (T1P)* *Experience in new country, new culture, meeting new people (T1P)* *International diversity (T1P)* *Being immersed in the local Australian environment (T1P)* *I have found new friends from different countries. (T1P)* *Meeting new people (T1P)* *Meeting great people (T1P)* *People you meet (T1P)* *Another important aspect is that we have made good friends. (T1P)* *A group of new found friends (T1P)*	*Primarily working alone, sometimes self-motivation is difficult. (T1N)* *A PhD research degree is a very lonely degree. (T1N)* *Research is such a lonely process and it's hard to maintain life balance. (T1N)* *No social network, working alone, being treated like a student (T1N)* *Cultural differences in communication.* *English (T1N)* *English (T1N)* *accent (not language) barrier (T1N)*

Self-Development and Wellbeing (Theme: T2)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Experiencing life in a new country with a new culture and adapting to it. Also my independence where I get to manage my own life and achieve things on my own. *(T2P)* *Having the opportunity to live and work in Australia with my family* *(T2P)* *Freedom* *(T2P)* *As my course has a diverse range of students I got to experience and understand different cultures. And also as I have written a thesis my academic writing as well as confidence in speaking and presenting my ideas have improved* *(T2P)* *My view about many things become wider and richer . Beside knowledge, I gained higher confidence and strength and learned how to fight with challenges in my life.* *(T2P)* *I think my horizons are higher than before.* *(T2P)* *but the quality of life is really good* *(T2P)* *It has helped me get out of my comfort zone and grow as a person.* *(T2P)* *improve my english, learn new culture* *(T2P)* *Freedom* *(T2P)* *Independence* *(T2P)* *I am exposed to a lot of global activities and culture. Studying at university has enhanced my soft and technical skills.* *(T2P)* *The challenge of doing my own research project.*	*<u>Pressure</u>* *Constant assignments with no breathing space.* *(T2N)* *At times it is too stressful when I have two or more submissions due in a week.* *(T2N)* *<u>Stress & Juggling Competing Priorities</u>* *It is very difficult to manage time and obligations soon as I am mother of two kids (8 and 12 years old) and also a wife .* *(T2N)* *Balancing work and study especially after my scholarship ended.* *(T2N)* *As a full time student, I had to finish my unpaid 1000 hours work placements. Therefore, I spend two full semester period at my placement at 9-5 from Monday- Thursday. Then, I had my theory lectures on Fridays. Saturday Sunday I had to do paid work to survive on financially, leaving me very stress period as I had to work continuously without any break for nearly five months. At the end of each semester this huge work load impacted me heavily to my mental well-being.* *(T2N)* *Juggling through studies and work* *(T2N)* *Managing the part time work along with the assignments.* *(T2N)* *Workload management* *(T2N)* *Back to back assigments* *(T2N)* *Work life balance is moderate.* *(T2N)* *Support for mental health of postgrads lacking.* *(T2N)* *Time Management* *(T2N)*

(T2P) *The idea to study MBA in Australia give me opportunity to live and meet this country. Moreover, teaching method in Australia is totally different than in my country which increase my knowledge in many different ways.* *(T2P)* *Finally gaining access to the desired program after many, many years of working toward it.* *(T2P)* *Well it opened doors for so many opportunities beyond my expectations and been challenging so far* *(T2P)* <u>*Other*</u> *simply best* *(T2P)* *The people I met and the opportunities I received during my studies. Especialy the teaching opportunity. I am very grateful for that experience.* *(T2P)* *Daring to express and develop my views* *(T2P)*	*The difficulty level of assignments and management of time among four units.* *(T2N)* *time management* *(T2N)* *Time management in regards of studies, social life and work* *(T2N)* *Dealing with job and assignments at the same time.* *(T2N)* *Assignments and multitasking* *(T2N)* *The running start into a better and faster world is quite challenging to keep up.* *(T2N)* *breaking the barrier of being a full-time student again after entering into the corporate world.* *(T2N)* *finding a job in my new field (working part time, studying part time), and a few classes have been difficult.* *(T2N)* *marking a balance between study and leisure* *(T2N)* *Time management* *(T2N)* *finding work to pay the bills, finding enough time to complete assignments while working and maintaining a household* *(T2N)*

Factors within the University

Reputation (Theme: T3)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
The overall experience. From studying in an international environment with quality education to the Australian culture. *(T3P)* *Learning from genius people Renowned university* *(T3P)* *The quality of education is good and the classes have been mostly interactive.* *(T3P)* *High ranking university* *(T3P)* *The level and ranking of my university around world* *(T3P)* *The rigorous course requirements and adequate teaching support.* *(T3P)* *My postgraduate study focus on practical skill through project and class exercise. Assignment standard are high, it require deep analysis and research.* *(T3P)* *Quality* *(T3P)* *Education system* *(T3P)* *College ambiance.* *(T3P)*	*(No comments recorded)*

Content and Knowledge (Theme: T4)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Doing scientific research is very interesting, it helps to improve my knowledge and understanding in my research field of interest *(T4P)* *My research field is on AI and I think it's cool.* *(T4P)* *The experience, the subject matter.* *(T4P)* *Amount of exposure to varieties of subjects and knowledge.* *(T4P)* *Learning from people with a lot of experience in the field. It created a passion for me to do research and further my studies after this degree as well.* *(T4P)* *Enjoyment that was given by doing something that I like* *(T4P)* *Enjoying my research experience* *(T4P)* *The opportunity to research cannabis* *(T4P)* *The syllabus and content is most I appreciate.* *(T4P)* *The knowledge gained on various SAP systems.* *(T4P)* *Application based knowledge. Strong fundamentals. A bit of everything in IT.* *(T4P)* *Gaining a deep knowledge of finance field* *My increase in understanding of the teaching of science around the globe.* *(T4P)* *I think the experience of getting access to new knowledge* *(T4P)* *Exposure to a higher degree of complexity and research for the relevant degree*	*Additional compulsory courses (GCRESIM) taking up a lot of time with little personal benefit,* *(T4N)* *Not up to date curriculum as per industry standards. For example, in the Master of Data Science course, there is no mention of cloud computing, whereas in industry everything is cloud based* *(T4N)* *We are too old for coursework modules* *(T4N)* *Some of my subjects* *(T4N)*

(T4P) *The opportunities for engagement I received at the university.* *(T4P)* *It has also been helping me in gaining much knowledge and exposure in my stream.* *(T4P)*	

Research Environment and Supervision Arrangements (Theme: T5)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Constant support from your supervisor and team members. They understand what you need and what you want to do in your life. *(T5P)*	*Lack of some specialized equipment that I need, and a limited budget to be able to access this at other universities* *(T5N)*
Learned a lot about interntional research area and getting work experience. *(T5P)*	*Reproducibility of scientific method described in published paper Lacking of necessary equipment* *(T5N)*
There are many opportunities for postgraduate positions in Australia and the environment is good with funding given from the government to invest in research. *(T5P)*	*The Australian research community is still growing, so I think the quality of research is not as high as other Universities overseas* *(T5N)*
Clear outline of expectations for the qualification such as milestones and deadlines, good support from supervisors, nice shared office space with other PhD students *(T5P)*	*Doing research is tough, you have to be faced with a lot of formulas that you don't quite understand and your professor may not help at this time.* *(T5N)*
Facilities provided by [Vic Uni 6] and other institutes. *(T5P)*	*Not having any classes to attend. I wish we were offered classes which could help our research.* *(T5N)*
Good institute and working environment *(T5P)*	*Lack of structure* *(T5N)*
The support that I get from staff members and my supervisors and fellow students *(T5P)*	*Maintaining the relationship with supervisors* *(T5N)*
Amazing learning environment, maximum support from colleagues and supervisors *(T5P)*	*Lack of interest/communication from my supervisor.* *(T5N)*
the supervisors are pretty good and I have learned a lot, especially some professional skills *(T5P)*	*The problems I had with my supervisor also made my life quite difficult.* *(T5N)*
The research environment is splendid. The guidance of the professors and the supervisors along with assistance provided by the library and the laboratory support staff to support the research is commendable. *(T5P)*	*My research is very unique compared to anyone else in my department. I need to work in a special lab 30 minutes away from my office desk where everyone else works. Yet my dept expects me to attend all these extraneous events that require and hour commute for me but only 5 minutes for everyone else.* *(T5N)*
Great colleagues, great research opportunities *(T5P)*	*Finding how to make an original contribution* *(T5N)*
High quality supervisor *(T5P)*	*Doing unique work* *(T5N)*
	Coning up with writing ideas.

Supportive supervisor *(T5P)* *Field trips, good supervisor* *(T5P)*	*(T5N)* *The fucking bureaucracy. It's insane here. And having to deal with universities that really don't understand the experiences of HDR students. I had a much better experience in Canada for my Masters.* *(T5N)* *Time limit of 3 years makes it so annoying* *(T5N)*

Academic Skill Development Support and Assessment Tasks (Theme: T6)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Education system 24/7 library Good collection of books Activities of English teaching workshop (T6P) *books are available from original resources (T6P)* *Publications (T6P)* *I learned a lot regarding research materials, communications and now I have started learning how to articulate a problem and its direction of studies (T6P)* *It has been very supportive and there was flexibility in shaping your programme (T6P)* *Improved my learning experience and study skills. (T6P)* *A better insight into the academic side of the work I currently do. (T6P)* *Learning new techniques (T6P)* *Improve research skills and research knowledge in the field. (T6P)* *The best thing till date I have come across in my Master's studies are various things like University, Faculty and studying units. Learning new methods of assessments such as Literature Reviews and most important culture diversified university. My course is praxis-oriented with group assignments and report writing and presentation. Which helps me build soft skills side by side. (T6P)* *Assignments are based on real study (T6P)* *Doing assignments on own and learn a lot*	*Writing documents, thesis, lit. reviews etc (T6N)* *Writing my thesis research skills and writing skills at the beginning of the program (T6N)* *The challenging part may be critical thinking and review (T6N)* *Conducting research independently (T6N)* *to be independent in planning and doing the pathway to pursue the degree successfully. (T6N)* *The initial readiness for the units! (T6N)* *Publications (T6N)* *English as the second language (T6N)* *Some academic knowledges are harder than I think (T6N)* *attending all classes and tutorials (T6N)* *Writing lengthy reports on topics I probably won't be using in the work place. (T6N)* *As it is more assignment based study rather exam based it was slightly difficult to cope up initially but now it is not a problem. (T6N)* *In my first year I struggled a lot with my assignments which were mostly academic papers (T6N)*

(T6P) *The assignments* *(T6P)* *The projects I have worked on* *(T6P)* *Practical Experience* *(T6P)* *Relevance* *(T6P)*	*Doing such big post grad assignments without any mentoring.* *(T6N)* *We used to have term tests every now and then in my bachelors which didn't serve much purpose . These tests were held and evaluated towards the cgpa in final semester. Over here it's assignments. Lots and lots of them which is a little difficult to handle as this is my first semester. I hope to get a hang of it soon.* *(T6N)* *There is low support for post graduate because they expect that we are able to do everything by ourselves. There is no tutoring available, no Mentoring available. The support that we have it is related with the final stages of our assignments and possibly exams.* *(T6N)* *There is no support to help in the process of writing essays, preparing for exams, etc.* *(T6N)* *The most important I have come across there is no proper pattern of teaching and no appropriate marking or examinations patterns for the coursework of Masters.* *I also find writing quite challenging.* *(T6N)* *Understanding of Assessments, As coming from another country it was a bit difficult initially but later it's fine.* *(T6N)* *As a postgraduate student, you can't expect help from your teacher. This is based on self study.* *(T6N)* *Understanding the assessment pattern* *(T6N)* *Assignment* *(T6N)* *The assignments* *(T6N)* *Assessments with 3000 plus words requirements* *(T6N)* *Paper writing...* □ *(T6N)* *Marking rubric for assignment* *(T6N)*

	The qualifications for graduate from my course (T6N)

Western Teaching Styles and Learning Environment (Theme: T7)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
The teaching and learning methodology is more open and has much less hierarchy in academic structure (T7P) *Exposure to new environment which understands needs and doesn't ridicule shortcomings. Non-judgemental in said shortcomings and providing aid to overcome them. (T7P)* *New type of learning method, interesting course material, being a part of a significantly larger uni than my undergrad (T7P)* *Back in my home country it was very necessary that whatever we study is based on what was there in books alone. No articles or journals were refered and there was very little opportunity to gain general knowledge. Over here it is really great that there is a vast platform for learning and expanding knowledge. More than blindly reading what's in the book, understanding is far more important here. (T7P)* *Widen knowledge Get to know different learning and teaching styles (T7P)* *The best thing is the different teaching techniques and a practical explanation and working environment. (T7P)* *Some great tutors, many people from other countries. (T7P)* *The best thing about this qualification is that it has only three units in one semester which is so cool, making it less stressful and also the fact that I have classes only three days in a week (T7P)* *Tutor (T7P)* *Kind teacher (T7P)*	*I am studying CyberSecurity and had a different mode of teaching back where I did my undergraduate course and it was hard to adapt to the teaching style in Australia (T7N)* *Settling to a new environment whose education system is very different from home country (T7N)* *Change of study method (T7N)* *The difference in the education system compared to my previous defrees (T7N)* *the change of learning pattern and teaching styles. (T7N)* *Cope up with the teaching system (T7N)* *No good lecturers and tutors (T7N)* *Understanding some tutors (T7N)* *Difficulties with understanding the lecturers because of their low English standards, lack of cultural diversity (too many students and tutors from China), not too many events for international students from other countries, unfair advantage of Chinese students over others (high level of cheating among them). (T7N)* *The university administration which made some things quite difficult. (T7N)* *Daily activities and to deal at professional levels. Compulsory on camus classes which have no recordings. (T7N)* *Enrolment processes can be made easier (T7N)* *the university administration (T7N)*

	Out of school teaching organizations (T7N)

Campus Social and Cultural Life (Theme: T8)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Interacting with people from different backgrounds in my course and understanding aspect of the course from their point of view. *(T8P)* *Diversity in school* *(T8P)* *Interaction with other country students* *(T8P)* *The people I have met and the fun times outside of class have been the most rewarding.* *(T8P)* *Able to meet so many new people and getting involved with University on various levels.* *(T8P)* *A great number of clubs and sports training services* *(T8P)* *Networks you build and social clubs and societies and career advice* *(T8P)*	*Adapting to the new culture and to the language.* *(T8N)* *Cultural difference* *(T8N)* *Language and cultural barrier* *(T8N)* *The lack of cultural understanding, lack of appreciation for creative thought or way of doing things that differs from the majority/ norm. There's a real pressure to conform to white dominant Australian culture and anything outside of that is feared, made fun of, and put down. I find it extremely difficult. People are always trying to make you the "other" and make an example of you like you're representing an entire country, a belief system, a history or your home country as well as the history of how that country related to Australia and the world in general. It's very xenophobic. By peers as well as professors and facilitators. Especially professors and facilitators. I feel like they're constantly putting down my home country, even to my face in an attempt to put me in my place, stomp on my head, and assert their dominance. It's been observed by my peers and after getting to know me my peers also recognise it for what it is and disagree with it. But I must prove myself to every person before this can happen.* *(T8N)* *Sometimes communication between your peers can be lost in translation.* *(T8N)*

Connecting Beyond the University

Adjustment / Orientation to a New City and Country (Theme: T9)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Originally I moved to [NSW Uni 1] in [Town 1] and it was fantastic to experience regional Australia. My supervisor got a job at [Vic Uni 6] so I moved with her. *(T9P)* *The city is very nice and quiet.* *(T9P)* *New city environment,* *(T9P)* *Exposure to ta totally different culture and country,* *(T9P)* *Good culture, work climate and hospitable environment.* *(T9P)* *Getting to live in another country and experience the culture.* *(T9P)*	*Everything, settling in* *(T9N)* *Resettling in a new country with no support and learning new tools in order to improve my studies* *(T9N)* *Being away from home* *(T9N)* *Initial 3 months were a bit difficult, moving in from a different country, adjusting to new climatic conditions and habitat.* *(T9N)* *Leaving home country family friends job and my comfort zone* *(T9N)* *I have to live away from home.* *(T9N)* *moved to a new city* *(T9N)* *being far away from home,* *(T9N)* *Staying far away from home and concentrating on studies* *(T9N)* *Being far away from family (having little family support),* *(T9N)* *Getting settled* *(T9N)* *Adjusting to the weather.* *(T9N)*

Finances, Professional Work and Research Opportunities (Theme: T10)	
"Best Things about Postgraduate Study" (Positive, P)	"Worst Things about Postgraduate Study" (Negative, N)
Under my Masters degree, University has arranged me to have 1000 hours work placements with two different agencies which was a really worth work experience. Even though it was unpaid work, that exposure was a really worth professional experience for me as it is hard to achieve in my country work setting. *(T10P)* *It will benefit my career as a researcher in my home country. I can get opportunity to build international networking with my supervisors and colleagues during and after finishing my study in Australia.* *(T10P)* *The people I meet will be part of the personal and professional network I grow while my career grows in Australia.* *(T10P)* *and to make industry connections* *(T10P)* *The opportunity to have better chances to compete with other applicants in the job seeking market.* *(T10P)* *The opportunity to improve my chances of getting a higher professional career.* *(T10P)* *The working environment is also very relaxed.* *(T10P)* *Being able to have 'flexible' work hours and dictate the research.* *(T10P)* *Internship opportunities* *(T10P)* *I learned various employability skills and technical skills.* *(T10P)* *Opportunity* *(T10P)* *Opportunities available*	*Very few internship opportunities in return for the amount of fees paid.* *(T10N)* *Finding part time work and experience in the field that I am doing my masters.* *(T10N)* *Hard to get an internship* *(T10N)* *Dealing with non relevant job and searching for a relevant job.* *(T10N)* *Also, for PhD's industry contact is less, less opportunities in Academic fields, less pay, less recognition.* *The short span of study which is not providing the real value for money.* *(T10N)* *the fees here are so high.* *(T10N)* *Expensive fees.* *(T10N)* *costs like fees and rent* *(T10N)* *salary being low for an expensive city, no postgraduate travel concessions* *(T10N)* *High spending* *(T10N)* *& lack of adequate financial support* *(T10N)*

(T10P) *Industry exposure* *(T10P)* *Networking* *(T10P)* *I think being able to study without working (because of scholarships) was the best part.* *(T10P)* *Scholarship with no conditions* *(T10P)* *I was able to receive a full Australian government scholarship in my second year* *(T10P)*	