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Overseas Study Pilot: Scoping Report

Final Report

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Overseas Study Pilot: Scoping Report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

Acronym/Key word	Definition
BIS	UK Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India and China
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – German Academic Exchange Service
DHLE	Destinations of Leavers from HE Survey
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERASMUS	E uropean C ommunity A ction S cheme for the M obility of U niversity S tudents
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HEURO	The Association of UK Higher Education European Officers
IIE	Institute of International Education
NI	Northern Ireland
NUFFIC	Nuffic is an independent, non-profit Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SAAS	Student Awards Agency for Scotland
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UK	United Kingdom

UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
USA	United States of America
USP	Unique Selling Point
WG	Welsh Government
WISERD	Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods
YYGS	Yale Young Global Scholars Program

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2018, the Welsh Government appointed OB3 Research, in conjunction with the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) of Cardiff University, to undertake a scoping study for an overseas study pilot.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government is committed to running a pilot scheme to explore the practicalities of extending the new student support package being introduced in 2018/19 to students wishing to study beyond the UK and EU, as recommended by the Diamond Review. It is anticipated that the pilot will be launched in the 2018/19 academic year with activities focused on publicising the pilot and application process, with candidates applying to study from the start of the 2019/20 academic year. The pilot is scheduled to run for three years from 2019/20. The pilot would offer the opportunity to test the practicalities, potential benefits and risks of offering portability funding for overseas study.
- 1.3 The aim of the scoping study is to provide evidence to support the development of an overseas study pilot. The scoping study will also be used to support the development of an evaluation of the pilot itself.
- 1.4 The overall objectives of the scoping study are to:
 - review current numbers of Welsh-domiciled students studying overseas, their characteristics, funding sources and levels
 - undertake a literature review of worldwide practice in outward mobility funding schemes
 - explore the feasibility of identifying actual and latent demand for Welsh domiciled students studying their whole degree overseas
 - explore the characteristics of students studying overseas and those aspiring to do so
 - explore the barriers to and benefits of overseas study; and identify any issues that may affect the potential take up of funding
 - review current funding provisions in Wales and overseas, any gaps in funding provision or potential areas of duplication

- develop and appraise options and make recommendations for proceeding with the pilot in terms of targeting of support, funding levels and study destinations, criteria for the inclusion of institutions and the administration of the scheme.
- 1.5 The methodology adopted involved desk based research including a literature review of international student mobility, as well as a review of current funding provisions in Wales and overseas. It also included interviews with Welsh Government officials and representatives from key stakeholder organisations including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as well as a package of fieldwork with past and current overseas students and focus groups with individuals interested in studying overseas.
- 1.6 This report is presented in twelve chapters as follows:
- chapter one: this introduction to the report
 - chapter two: an outline of the study methodology
 - chapter three: provides the background to the overseas study pilot including the policy and strategic context
 - chapter four: reviews published data setting out current trends in overseas study mobility by Welsh-domiciled students
 - chapter five: explores the feasibility of identifying demand from Welsh domiciled students to full degree study overseas
 - chapter six: reviews the current funding available to support the outward mobility of Welsh-domiciled students
 - chapter seven: reviews international practice in terms of outward mobility programmes
 - chapter eight: considers the characteristics of students interested in or undertaking study overseas
 - chapter nine: explores the perceived benefits and barriers to overseas study

- chapter ten: provides the views of current sixth form students in Wales considering overseas study and the opinions of Welsh-domiciled students currently studying overseas
- chapter eleven: considers possible approaches to and models for an overseas pilot scheme for Wales
- chapter twelve: presents our conclusions and recommendations for the overseas study pilot.

2. Study Methodology

2.1 This chapter sets out the method deployed for undertaking the scoping study and offers a view about the strengths and limitations of the approach adopted.

Method

2.2 The scoping study, which was undertaken between January and May 2018, encompassed the following elements of work:

- an inception stage which included an inception meeting with Welsh Government officials and scoping interviews with relevant Welsh Government data officials regarding the available Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data
- desk based research which included a detailed literature review of Welsh Government policy and strategy documents, existing research into outward mobility of UK-domiciled students and a review of published sources of data covering current trends in overseas study. The findings are outlined in chapters three to nine of this report
- preparing research instruments to include three semi-structured discussion guides for use with a range of contributors including current sixth form students interested in overseas study, students who have recently or are currently studying overseas and key stakeholders
- interviewing five students who are currently studying or have recently studied overseas and organising and conducting two focus groups with 13 current sixth form students considering overseas study. The findings of which are found in chapter ten of this report
- conducting face to face interviews with 16 policy and strategic stakeholders (seven Welsh Government representatives and representatives from Universities UK International, HEFCW, British Council, Global Wales, Scottish Government, Fulbright Commission and three Welsh HEIs) to explore possible models for the overseas pilot
- facilitating an options appraisal workshop with Welsh Government officials to consider possible approaches and models for an overseas pilot. A

continuum of five options were discussed, that were based on the findings of the desk review and the opinions and ideas gathered during stakeholder and student interviews. Chapter eleven presents these options and provides a synopsis of the discussions surrounding each one

- preparing this scoping study report which sets out recommendations for the administrative arrangements for each option developed.

Methodological considerations

- 2.3 There are several issues that merit consideration in terms of what was possible within the scoping study. From the outset, it was apparent that there was a lack of data to enable full degree overseas study from Welsh-domiciled students to be quantified. This data is not currently captured at a UK level, and although there are some figures provided in OECD¹ datasets in relation to UK-domiciled students studying overseas, there were some questions about their validity when they were analysed in detail by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills in 2010 (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this report). Indeed the UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility itself, published in 2017, has identified this gap in data and knowledge and sets a specific objective to analyse data on outward mobility to provide improved qualitative and quantitative data so that policy-makers have the means in future to scrutinise and evaluate such information in a more detailed way.
- 2.4 However, this report does include an analysis of four years of HESA returns on Welsh-domiciled students studying in the UK who have undertaken a period of study abroad. Whilst this does not provide any direct data on full degree study abroad, it does provide a profile of Welsh-domiciled students who decide to study abroad for any duration up to one year, as part of their UK-based degree programme. The issues relating to the data are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this report.
- 2.5 Another methodological challenge facing this research study was how to access individuals with experience of full degree study abroad or interest in studying a full degree abroad.

- 2.6 To find those students who were interested in or were currently studying their full degree abroad, a number of approaches were deployed. Firstly, we contacted each of the eleven regional hubs in the Seren network, a Welsh Government funded scheme which supports Wales' brightest sixth formers to gain access to leading universities². We asked each regional hub co-ordinator to send a link to any recent or current students involved with the hub who were interested in or were currently studying abroad, so that we could capture their contact details (via a hyperlink to a short contact information capture form) and request an interview. The hyperlink was also shared on the Seren network social media channels. A similar request was also shared by a contact at Yale University involved in student admissions and by contacts at the Sutton Trust and the Fulbright Commission. This process generated 19 contact details. However they were mainly US-based overseas students and therefore the findings are skewed to experiences of study in one particular country.
- 2.7 Schools and FE colleges were also contacted directly to request interviews or focus group discussions with sixth form students who were considering overseas study. In total, two large FE colleges (one based in North Wales and one South-East Wales) with substantial sixth form provision were contacted, but no students could be identified who were interested in overseas study. Similarly, a total of five comprehensive schools across Wales were contacted, but only one was able to identify any students interested in overseas study and a focus group was held at this school. In addition, a second focus group was held with Welsh domiciled students studying at an independent, residential sixth form college. This college was deliberately included within the sample on the basis of having a unique international outlook and as such the findings from this focus group may not reflect the wider sixth form population in Wales. However, the process in itself testifies to the current low levels of latent demand for full time overseas study.

3. Background and Policy Context

3.1 This chapter aims to set out the background and rationale for an overseas study pilot in Wales and considers the policy and strategic context for overseas study at EU, UK and Wales level.

EU Policy Context

3.2 In 1998 the UK, France, Germany and Italy signed the Sorbonne Declaration³ which established the framework for the Bologna Declaration⁴, signed the following year by 27 countries. This set in motion what is referred to as the 'Bologna Process', a set of shared principles for dialogue, collaboration and cooperation within Higher Education.

3.3 One of the key objectives of the Bologna Process was the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) which would encourage and facilitate Higher Education cooperation, through establishing a commitment to shared objectives in order to inform the basis for comparison and recognition of qualifications and a set of tools to support the process and ensure quality. Three key elements of the EHEA at the time included:

- European students and graduates would be able to move easily from one country to another with full recognition of qualifications and periods of study
- European HEIs would be able to cooperate and exchange students/staff on the bases of trust and confidence and also of transparency and quality
- Higher Education in the European region would increase its international competitiveness as well as enter into dialogue and improve cooperation with HE in other regions of the world⁵.

3.4 In 2010, the EHEA was formally launched, and by 2015 it included 48 countries covering more than 4,000 Higher Education institutions.

3.5 Over the past 15 years of the Bologna Process, the EHEA member countries have made significant changes to HE systems and mechanisms so that degrees become more comparable and mobility is facilitated. This has included the development of an overarching Framework for Qualifications, a

common credit system (ECTS)⁶ and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

- 3.6 Across the EHEA, governments and HEIs have agreed a collective target of 20 per cent of graduates undertaking a study or training period abroad by 2020⁷. To meet this goal, many countries are shifting their focus from the numbers of students participating in mobility, to the accessibility of opportunities for all.

UK policy context

- 3.7 The new UK strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-20 was launched by Universities UK International and outlines a commitment to ensure that 13 per cent of UK-domiciled, full-time, first degree students take part in an international placement as part of their HE programme by 2020 (doubling the current rate)⁸.
- 3.8 The strategy's vision is to 'create a new generation of global graduates and a higher education culture in which international opportunities are an aspiration for all students'⁹.
- 3.9 The strategy has six strategic objectives including promoting the benefits of study and work abroad. This will be achieved by co-ordinating a UK-wide campaign along the lines of the US's Generation Study Abroad to raise awareness of the benefits, and by promoting existing initiatives including HEI's own campaigns and Erasmus+. It also commits to collaborating with other initiatives such as the British Council's Generation UK China and the Fulbright Commission's US-UK awards¹⁰.
- 3.10 Another key strategic objective is to 'build capacity in UK higher education to facilitate outward mobility. In order to achieve this it commits to:
- '[securing] major investment to support outward mobility, including mobility grants
 - [securing] new mobility opportunities for the UK sector, either directly or via strategic partnerships
 - [working] with relevant stakeholders to provide support and guidance for the UK sector to widen participation in international opportunities

- [working] with the QAA¹¹ and university representative bodies including HEURO¹²...to provide guidance on interpreting and applying quality assurance frameworks related to student placements overseas and
- [promoting] existing sources of funding for outward mobility, including Erasmus+ and country specific scholarships¹³.

3.11 The strategy also includes a commitment to work internationally to ‘foster bilateral exchange with priority countries, and build partnerships and reciprocal agreements with new markets’¹⁴.

Implications of Brexit

3.12 At the time of drafting, the future of student mobility in the UK as a result of Brexit negotiations remains unclear. Erasmus has been one of the European Commission’s flagship programmes, and almost three million students have benefitted from the funding it offers them to study part of their degree in another European country. Whilst this has enabled many European Union (EU) students to study at UK HEIs, the UK HE sector has also collaborated with nearly 100 partner institutions across the EU.

3.13 Whilst Brexit is unlikely to signal the end of UK student mobility to the EU, it nevertheless could require an alternative approach to enabling student mobility to happen. One option currently being explored at a UK HEI level would be to develop a tandem programme that could be widened to include global opportunities according to one HEI.

Policy Context in Wales

3.14 Promoting student mobility is a key focus of the HE strategy in Wales¹⁵ as it ‘brings benefits to individuals, communities, universities, the economy and Wales as a nation’¹⁶. The policy statement on HE highlights the work of universities in Wales in ensuring curricula are flexible to allow students with appropriate mobility opportunities which are accredited¹⁷.

3.15 Welsh Government’s HE policy statement also discusses the important role of outward mobility schemes, including Erasmus, and identifies a need to ensure that the uptake of such schemes is more consistent across Wales-based Universities and that more support is provided to enable students

from 'widening access backgrounds to overcome barriers to participation in international learning experiences'¹⁸.

- 3.16 Welsh Government policy also states that studying overseas is beneficial to students as it can enhance their employability and personal development, offer opportunities to develop their linguistic skills and raise a 'global mindset' for Wales that can attract international business and encourage export¹⁹. However, the policy statement does not make any specific reference to the promotion of, or support for, full-degree study opportunities overseas.
- 3.17 Global Wales, a partnership between British Council Wales, Universities Wales, Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has been established to promote Wales' HE sector internationally. Although it is predominantly involved in attracting overseas students to study in Wales via outward missions to priority markets and promotion of the 'Study in Wales' brand²⁰, the HE institutions involved also work to develop partnerships with key Welsh business sectors to further develop international links.
- 3.18 The recent Diamond Review²¹ of HE funding arrangements in Wales made two specific recommendations on cross-border study (which are subject to relevant regulation) including that:
- 'Student support should be portable and available to Welsh domiciled students that choose to study anywhere in the UK or EU'²² and
 - Welsh Government to explore possibility of running a pilot scheme to establish whether it is possible or desirable to extend the student support package beyond the UK²³.
- 3.19 The second recommendation was in relation to Welsh domiciled students who choose to study their whole degree programme overseas, and it was suggested that the proposed pilot should only fund study at not-for-profit organisations with a track record for quality provision.

3.20 The Welsh Government fully accepted that student support should be portable and available to Welsh-domiciled students to study anywhere in the UK, but did raise concerns about the complexity of extending the support to those studying in the EU, particularly in the context of Brexit. As a result, Welsh Government wanted to consider the potential funding and administrative implications of operating such a scheme and gauge the potential level of demand from learners for such support and committed to run a pilot scheme ‘to explore the practicalities of extending the student support package beyond the UK and EU’²⁴.

4. Published Data on Overseas Mobility of Welsh domiciled students

- 4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the trends in terms of overseas mobility and includes detailed analysis of HESA data specifically for Welsh domiciled students. The data relates to Welsh domiciled students based at any UK HEI who are undertaking up to one year of study abroad. It does not include data on Welsh domiciled students undertaking their whole degree abroad as that information is not currently captured.

Analysis of HESA Overseas Student Database

- 4.2 In 2016/17, 91,850 Welsh domiciled students were studying at UK HEIs, 77,770 of which were studying at undergraduate level, with a further 14,075 at postgraduate level²⁵.
- 4.3 There has been a steady growth in the overall numbers of Welsh domiciled students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad over the last four years, with the numbers almost doubling from 795 in 2013/14 to 1,430 in 2016/17 at a time when the overall population of Welsh domiciled students studying at HEIs declined by 10 per cent²⁶. However, the number of Welsh domiciled students, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad remains low at under 2 per cent of the total Welsh domiciled student population.
- 4.4 Table 4.1 gives the gender and age breakdown of Welsh domiciled students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad during the four year period from 2013/14 to 2016/17. It shows that females consistently represent a higher proportion of individuals studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad, with the gap widening slightly in the last two years. However, with the exceptions being medicine and veterinary science, males represent a greater proportion of students of STEM subjects going abroad to study, volunteer or undertake work experience. Females, on the other hand, represent a greater proportion of those studying education, languages, law and arts based subjects.

4.5 The majority (70 per cent) of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad are aged 19 to 21, though over the four year period there has been a slight shift in the profile of students, with 20 year olds representing a declining proportion of the overall numbers going abroad and those aged 19 representing a growing proportion.

Table 4.1: Numbers and proportion of students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad by gender, age and year

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Total
Numbers	797	1076	1314	1432	4618
Proportion by Gender					
Female	58%	56%	59%	60%	58%
Male	42%	44%	41%	40%	41%
Proportion by Age					
18 years	-	-	3%	4%	2%
19 years	9%	13%	18%	17%	15%
20 years	45%	46%	34%	33%	38%
21 years	18%	16%	17%	16%	17%
22 years	10%	8%	9%	10%	9%
23 years	7%	6%	8%	6%	7%
24 years	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%
25 years	-	-	2%	2%	2%
26-29 years	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%
30-39 years	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
40-49 years	-	-	-	-	-
50-59 years	-	-	-	-	-
60 years and over	-	-	-	-	-

Source: HESA data (Welsh domiciled students)

4.6 The overwhelming majority (91 per cent) of Welsh domiciled students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad were white, with 4 per cent coming from Asian backgrounds, 3 per cent from mixed backgrounds and 1 per cent from black backgrounds. This is broadly in line with the proportion of Welsh domiciled students from non-white backgrounds studying in UK higher education²⁷.

- 4.7 The majority of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad had no disability, whilst 6 per cent had specific learning difficulties and 2 per cent had mental health. . In all, 13.7% of the 2016/17 cohort of Welsh domiciled students in UK higher education had a known disability²⁸.
- 4.8 Almost half (49 per cent) of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad have worked or have parents working in managerial or professional occupations. Some 14 per cent have worked or have parents working in intermediate, lower supervisory or technical occupations and some 11 per cent from routine or semi-routine occupations. Some 5 per cent were working for themselves. Less than 1 per cent of Welsh domiciled students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad have parents who have never worked or are long-term unemployed. Data for 21 per cent of students was not available.

Nature of study

- 4.9 Overall, 95 per cent of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad were studying at undergraduate level, whilst 5 per cent were studying at post-graduate level. Almost all (99 per cent) of those studying at undergraduate level were doing so on a full time basis, with 22 per cent of these undertaking sandwich courses. Some 80 percent of those studying at postgraduate level were doing so on a full time basis and 12 per cent on a part time basis.

Subject area of study

- 4.10 Table 4.2 shows the subject areas being studied by those choosing to study, volunteer or undertake work placements abroad between 2013/14 and 2016/17. It shows that 23 per cent of those going abroad were language students. A majority of these (811 or 78 per cent) were located in Europe, with 41 per cent of those located in France, 23 per cent in Spain, 15 per cent in Germany and 10 per cent in Italy.

Table 4.2: Number and proportion of students studying, volunteering or working abroad by subject area

Subject Areas	Student Numbers 2013/14 to 2016/17	% Total Students
Agriculture & related subjects	40	1%
Architecture, building & planning	215	5%
Biological sciences	295	6%
Business & administrative studies	325	7%
Combined	25	1%
Computer science	65	1%
Creative arts & design	355	8%
Education	105	2%
Engineering & technology	140	3%
Historical & philosophical studies	140	3%
Languages	1045	23%
Law	130	3%
Mass communications & documentation	55	1%
Mathematical sciences	45	1%
Medicine & dentistry	545	12%
Physical sciences	605	13%
Social studies	285	6%
Subjects allied to medicine	190	4%
Veterinary science	20	-
Total	4620	100%

Source: HESA data (Welsh domiciled students)

- 4.11 Of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience overseas, 13 per cent were physical science students. A majority of these (405 or 67 per cent) were located in Europe, with Cyprus and Spain being the most popular destinations. Some 16 per cent of those studying the physical sciences were located in North America, principally in Canada and the United States.
- 4.12 Some 12 per cent of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad were students of medicine or dentistry. Of these, 27 per cent were located in Oceania (mostly Australia and, to a lesser extent New Zealand), 23 per cent were located in North America (principally in Canada and the United States), 23 per cent were located in Asia and 17 per cent were located in Africa (principally South Africa, Tanzania and the Gambia). A far smaller proportion of medicine and dentistry students (at 7 per cent) than students of other subjects were located in Europe.

Duration

4.13 Table 4.3 shows the proportion of students studying, volunteering or working abroad by the duration of their stay overseas. It shows that just over half (51 per cent) of the undergraduates going abroad to study do so for periods of up to three months²⁹. Similarly, the majority (79 per cent) of undergraduates volunteering abroad also did so for three months or less. The duration of overseas work placements undertaken by undergraduate students was more varied.

Table 4.3: Proportion of students studying, volunteering or working abroad by the duration of their stay overseas

	Up to 3 Months	3 to 6 Months	6 to 9 Months	9 – 12 months
Undergraduate				
Study abroad	51%	18%	17%	14%
Volunteering	79%	9%	6%	6%
Work abroad	23%	18%	37%	22%

Source: HESA data (Welsh-domiciled students)

4.14 Study durations for postgraduate students showed shorter periods abroad overall. Almost four fifths (79 per cent) of postgraduates going abroad to study do so for periods of up to three months, with half of those going for periods of one or two weeks. All postgraduate students volunteering abroad and the majority (92 per cent) of postgraduates working abroad did so for three months or less.

Location

4.15 From the available outward mobility HESA data for 2015/16³⁰, UK student mobility covered 172 countries in total, with the US, Canada, Australia, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and China identified as the top nine countries for study.

4.16 Welsh domiciled students follow a similar pattern. As shown in Table 4.4, the largest numbers of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad do so in Europe, though the proportion of students going to Europe declined by some nine percentage points in 2016/17 to 50 per cent in that year. North America represents the second most popular location, with between 15 and 17 per cent of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience going to North America. The proportion going

to study, volunteer or undertake work experience in Asia increased from an average of some 11 per cent in previous years to 17 per cent in 2016/17.

Table 4.4: Numbers and proportion of students studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience abroad by continent and year

Continent	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Numbers				
Africa	45	45	90	75
Asia	80	120	140	240
Europe	455	630	775	720
North America	125	170	195	240
Oceania	55	85	90	120
South America	15	15	20	20
Total	797	1076	1314	1432
Percentages				
Africa	6%	4%	7%	5%
Asia	10%	11%	11%	17%
Europe	57%	59%	59%	50%
North America	16%	16%	15%	17%
Oceania	7%	8%	7%	8%
South America	-	-	-	-

Source: HESA data (Welsh domiciled students)

- 4.17 Of those choosing to study, volunteer or undertake work experience in Europe, 21 per cent did so in France, 19 per cent in Spain, 13 per cent in Germany, 8 per cent in Italy and 7 per cent in the Netherlands.
- 4.18 Some 57 per cent of those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience in North America did so in the United States and some 23 per cent in Canada. The remainder were distributed across a large number of Caribbean islands and Central American countries.
- 4.19 China was the most popular location among those studying, volunteering or undertaking work experience in Asia, with 19 per cent of those going to Asia opting for China. Some 13 per cent of those going to Asia went to India, some 11 per cent to Hong Kong and some 11 per cent to Malaysia.
- 4.20 The majority (57 per cent) of those choosing to study, volunteer or undertake work experience in Oceania did so in Australia and 22 per cent in New Zealand.

5. Feasibility of identifying demand from Welsh domiciled students to study full degrees overseas

5.1 This chapter sets out to address a key research question of the scoping study, namely the feasibility of identifying actual and latent demand from Welsh domiciled students to study full degrees overseas. The chapter explores the current data available on full degree mobility and highlights some of the issues surrounding the UK-level data and its applicability and transferability to a Welsh context.

Global Trends

- 5.2 As a global trend, the numbers of Higher Education (HE) students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has seen a fivefold increase over the past four decades, from 0.8m in 1975 worldwide, to 4.6 million in 2015³¹. International students however, only account for 5.6 per cent of total enrolments in tertiary programmes (but over a quarter of enrolments at doctoral level)³². Outward student mobility has seen an upward trend in the UK in recent years, with the mobility of under-represented groups also increasing during the same period³³. However, the UK remains a net inward mobility destination for international students³⁴ and is the second largest host country, after the United States, accounting for 14 per cent of all international students in the OECD area³⁵.
- 5.3 Overall, one-third of mobile students in the OECD areas are enrolled in STEM fields of study, with engineering (17 per cent), natural sciences and mathematics (10 per cent), and information and communication technologies (6 per cent) the most popular subjects overall. A further 28 per cent are enrolled in business, administration and law³⁶.
- 5.4 Some countries are more 'deeply engaged in brain circulation'³⁷ than others, with English-speaking countries like Australia and New Zealand working as regional educational hubs and counting 18 international students for every 100 national student at home and abroad.

UK domiciled students and full degree mobility

- 5.5 In terms of possible locations for full degree portability, the OECD data identifies five countries (in addition to the UK) that offers all or nearly all degree programmes in English, namely Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the USA. In addition, the countries of Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden are also noted as offering many programmes through the medium of English³⁸.
- 5.6 Interestingly, the OECD also looks at the tuition fee rates charged for international students, and although the impact of Brexit on this issue is currently indeterminate, it nevertheless offers an insight into the current situation. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States all charge higher tuition fees for non-domestic students, whilst higher tuition fees also apply for non-EU or non-European Economic Area students studying in a number of EU countries too³⁹. France, Germany, Italy and Spain all charge the same flat rate of tuition fees for both international and domestic students⁴⁰.
- 5.7 The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published a research paper in 2010 looking at the motivations and experiences of UK students studying abroad. The research acknowledged that international student mobility, and particularly students taking their entire degree outside the UK, has received very little attention from researchers. Although the research points to the need for greater clarity around the number of UK students enrolled in HEIs in other countries, it also clearly states that 'at present no clear consensus exists on this matter'⁴¹. The BIS research therefore looked to evaluate the scale and significance of full degree overseas mobility. It undertook a metadata analysis of statistics (including OECD data), surveyed 1,400 final-year pupils from schools in two English regions and surveyed 560 UK students currently enrolled for study at universities across the world.

- 5.8 In its conclusions the BIS research makes the following statement on the quality of data for UK domiciled students studying full degrees abroad:
- ‘There is no statistical or administrative basis for gathering data specifically on all diploma-mobile students who leave...the UK. International agencies appear to provide statistics on UK students by destination country, but the data is not based on a common set of definitions...currently data incompatibilities make it impossible’.⁴²
- 5.9 The BIS research looked at OECD data in 2010, and identified many problems with using international agency datasets, and believed that the statistics might over-estimate the true figure for UK full degree overseas students by more than 10 per cent. However, their ‘best estimate’ was that full degree study by UK domiciled students accounted for the equivalent of about 1.7 per cent of all UK domiciled students enrolled in higher education⁴³⁴⁴.
- 5.10 More recent OECD data from 2016 suggests that the total percentage of UK students enrolled abroad in tertiary education is just 1.4 per cent⁴⁵ which is much lower than both the OECD average of 5.9 per cent and the EU22 average⁴⁶ of 7.5 per cent⁴⁷. OECD data states that there were 12,335 outbound internationally mobile students (defined as students studying abroad for more than one year) from the United Kingdom. If this percentage is used as a basis for a crude estimation, it could be concluded that approximately 185 Welsh domiciled students enrolled in credit-bearing educational provision study abroad for more than one year of study.
- 5.11 The BIS research also looked at the educational background of students studying full degree study abroad, and concluded, from the school survey, that around 2.8 per cent of state sector pupils and 5.5 per cent of independent sector pupils apply to universities outside the UK. Of these, only a proportion are ultimately offered places to study abroad and choose to enroll. The total number (and educational background) of which is unknown. The survey also showed that many more pupils consider applying abroad, but end up not doing so⁴⁸. The reasons for deciding against are discussed in more depth in Chapter 8 of this report.

- 5.12 The Scottish Government has recent experience of setting up a portability pilot for full degree study abroad (further information is provided in Chapter 6). The take up for this pilot has been 10 students thus far, although the scheme had been set up to provide for up to 250 students. Our fieldwork suggested that the actual number of students from Scotland studying full degree programmes abroad (in any institution) to be low, and estimated it to be at less than a hundred at any one time.
- 5.13 Taking into account that Wales has a much smaller independent sector than the UK as a whole, it is likely that the number of Welsh domiciled students studying abroad is lower than the UK average. Factoring in the experience of the Scottish Portability Pilot (although no formal evaluation has been undertaken yet), we can conclude that although it is ultimately impossible to accurately quantify the total number of Welsh domiciled students studying abroad, the actual and latent demand is likely to be very low – and probably considerably less than 200 students per year.

6. Current funding available for Welsh domiciled students

6.1 This section explores the various grants and funding schemes that Welsh domiciled students can access to support overseas study (of any duration). It does not include bursaries and scholarships provided by individual HEIs across the UK. Students participating in study or work placements overseas as part of a course offered by a provider in the UK can apply to the Welsh Government support for fees and living costs. It is important to state that no Welsh Government funding is currently available for Welsh domiciled students to study a full degree overseas.

Erasmus+

- 6.2 Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support and fund education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It aims to provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad, and has a budget of €14.7 billion for 2014-2020⁴⁹. It is the successor to the Erasmus programme, a European Union student exchange programme established in 1987.
- 6.3 Erasmus+ aims to contribute to the European 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion as well as the aims of ET2020, the EU's strategic framework for education and training.
- 6.4 Each EU country has a dedicated national agency responsible for receiving applications and making awards of Erasmus+ funding to successful organisations. The Erasmus+ UK National Agency is a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.
- 6.5 Between 2014 and 2017 Erasmus+ awarded €500 million to allocated projects and activities across the UK. Of this, €29.3m was provided to 187 projects in Wales, with 7,595 participants taking part in various projects. €12.2m was awarded to 43 higher education mobility projects (Key Action 1)⁵⁰.
- 6.6 Under Key Action 1, charter-holding HE institutions can apply for funding to offer their students the opportunity to study in a partner university or carry out a traineeship abroad so that students can 'improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain valuable international experience'⁵¹.

- 6.7 Erasmus+ provides students with opportunities to study abroad in Europe for between three to 12 months (per university cycle) as part of their degree. Students can take part in study mobility at any time during their degree, apart from their first year, but it will ultimately depend on the structure of the degree course and the arrangements of the individual university with its partners. Partner institutions can be located in any of the 32 participating countries within Erasmus+.
- 6.8 Eligible students receive an Erasmus+ grant provided by the European Commission that is paid through the HE institution. The grant contributes towards the extra costs that can arise from studying abroad. For 2018/19 the grant can be up to €300-350 a month, depending on the country the student decides to visit. Additional funding can be provided to cover associated costs for students with a severe disability or exceptional special needs. UK students going abroad for the whole academic year may also qualify for a large contribution toward their UK tuition fees for the year they are away. This varies between UK countries, and is not currently available in Wales⁵².
- 6.9 The UK Government has committed to continuing full participation in the Erasmus+ programme up until the UK leaves the European Union.
- 6.10 The Erasmus programme is one of the best known exchange schemes, and over 14,600 UK students went abroad with Erasmus in 2014/15. The popularity of Erasmus+ means that it currently funds between 20-30 per cent of all overseas study by UK domiciled students⁵³.

Scholarships from overseas HEIs

- 6.11 Some European countries have dedicated websites providing information on scholarships available to students who wish to study there. For example the 'Study in Holland'⁵⁴ website provides information on 39 undergraduate scholarships across a range of subject areas. Similarly, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)⁵⁵ provides a database of scholarships for foreign students, which includes a total of 55 undergraduate scholarship options.

- 6.12 In the US, universities award around 1,000 scholarships to foreign students each year, ranging from partial scholarships, to ‘full-ride’ scholarships which cover all tuition fees and expenses⁵⁶. US universities can be considered as those who offer ‘merit based scholarships’ to applicants, and those who offer ‘needs based scholarships’. Merit-based scholarships are given for strong academic, music or sport achievement, and needs-based financial aid is provided (after assessing the family’s household income and ability to support the student)⁵⁷.
- 6.13 There are very few ‘merit based scholarships’ available, and these tend to only be available at the very prestigious, ‘need blind’ institutions such as Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Yale University etc. Once these have offered a place to a particular applicant, then money is no restriction for them to secure these students to their institutions. They will award a full merit scholarship to these students and these students will require no other type of financial support.
- 6.14 ‘Need aware’ institutions who offer ‘needs based scholarships’ to international students take into consideration how much of a financial contribution the students’ family can afford to make – they will then take into consideration how much financial contribution the university will have to make to support the student at that university. This contribution could be in the form of a grant, a low-interest loan or even in the form of ‘work’ contribution by the student whilst on campus. These universities have a limited pot of ‘needs based scholarships’ to offer so applicants stand a better chance of securing funding if they are able to bring a financial contribution to the table.
- 6.15 Our fieldwork discovered that the Fulbright Commission concentrates its efforts on supporting students to make applications to universities which offer ‘needs based scholarships’ (on the basis that the number of merit based scholarships are very few in number and are highly competitive in nature). In the case of Harvard, the submission rate is 4 per cent so it is very challenging to secure a study place there. There are around 4,500 HEIs in the US and the Fulbright Commission disregards any universities who do not

offer any funding scholarships when guiding applicants. The actual cost of a higher education degree in the US is \$250k or higher.

- 6.16 Many individual universities in other countries around the world offer scholarships to international students. Students need to consult the websites of these individual HEIs to find out if they are eligible for any schemes⁵⁸.
- 6.17 Every UK-based HEI will also have a number of scholarships and bursaries (which can vary in amount and conditions attached) to support the overseas study of their students, depending on the institution's specific internationalisation strategic priorities.

Fulbright Commission

- 6.18 The Fulbright Commission was established around 70 years ago as a joint initiative between the UK and US governments to support greater numbers of students to study overseas in their respective countries. The organisation provides a number of financial and advisory provisions for UK students interested in studying at accredited higher education institutions in the USA. As part of the US Department of State's Education USA network⁵⁹, they offer comprehensive information about opportunities to study with online guides on how to choose, prepare for and fund US-based education. Their website refers students interested in studying at the USA to a number of resources which will search for suitable scholarships including university-specific scholarships⁶⁰ and athletic scholarships.
- 6.19 The Fulbright Commission is also responsible for the Sutton Trust US-UK programme, which is aimed at helping underprivileged British state school students apply to American universities, by providing support, advice and a one-week summer school in the USA. In the past, these summer schools have been hosted by Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Yale University. It has recently engaged with Wales' brightest sixth formers via the Seren Network to promote the Sutton Trust's US summer programme. This year Sutton Trust reported a 150 per cent increase in the number of student applications from Wales for their US summer programme.

British Council

- 6.20 The British Council has a Generation UK-China scheme which provides for up to 30 students aged over 18 years, currently enrolled full-time at a UK university or having graduated within the past year, to spend eight weeks in China. The programme includes three weeks of intensive Mandarin language study at a leading university and a five week internship placement in an industry sector of the student's choosing (including IT, legal, marketing, accounting, engineering, pharmaceutical, finance, hospitality and more).
- 6.21 The programme runs between mid-October and mid-December each year. The funding covers all language classes, cultural activities, accommodation, travel insurance, airport pick-up and placement fees. Students must cover their day-to-day expenses (estimated at around £50 a week), flights, visa and any other expenses related to travel.

Scholarships provided by non-government bodies in the UK to study abroad

- 6.22 Various UK educational trusts and charities will support students studying overseas. One of the most well-known is the Commonwealth Scholarships for UK citizens. UK citizens are eligible to apply for scholarships and fellowships to study in other Commonwealth countries under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). However, these are primarily for Masters and PhD level study⁶¹.
- 6.23 Individual rotary clubs can sometimes offer scholarships for undergraduate or graduate study to anyone except Rotary members and their families, and eligibility requirements will vary accordingly. The Rotary Foundation also offers scholarships for college graduates to study peace and conflict resolution or water sanitation. These are for master's degree study at one of six partner universities, or 'Rotary Peace Centers'⁶².
- 6.24 Since 2007 Santander bank also provides scholarships, grants and awards to help students to achieve educational goals, including studying abroad. Awards are typically £1,000 and are made to cover travel related expenses such as accommodation, transport and visa costs. It provides funding for students from Spain, Portugal and Latin American countries to study in the UK, and also fund overseas study for UK-based students. This provision is

only open to students studying at partner institutions called 'Santander Universities' across the world⁶³.

- 6.25 There are a range of philanthropic foundations and voluntary sector organisations that offer support for outwardly mobile students – though rarely in the form of direct funding for programmes of study. Some of these organisations, such as the Institute of International Education (IIE),⁶⁴ provide a range of resources for both would-be students and organisations to share information and facilitate international movement of students and expertise.
- 6.26 Within the UK, the Sutton Trust is a significant sponsor of student mobility, particularly to the USA in partnership with the Fulbright Commission. Although the Sutton Trust does not fund studentships directly, it provides 'bright, state school students' with a 'taste of life' at a prestigious American university through sending them to the US for a summer school and supporting them through the application process for scholarships. These are highly competitive places targeted at students who would not normally be able to study abroad. The Sutton Trust claims to have invested nearly 50 million pounds over the last twenty years in supporting British students. As a result 15,000 state school students have benefited from the Trust's summer schools, and 120 state school students have gone on to study at a prestigious US university⁶⁵.
- 6.27 In addition to the kind of public-private partnerships found within Australia's Endeavour Mobility schemes (see more information in the next chapter), some companies, particularly in the USA, offer support to the children of their employees. Chevron, Chubb Corporation and Starr International Company all offer international scholarships for the sons and daughters (and sometimes the grandsons and grand-daughters) of employees.

Fees associated with Overseas Study

6.28 In addition to considering the scholarships available to study abroad, it is important to note that the fees charged for foreign students to study abroad can differ substantially from country to country.

Table 6.1 Available degrees through the medium of English and indicative fees for study overseas by UK students

Country	Undergraduate degrees in English	Institutions teaching in English ⁶⁶	Indicative Fees ⁶⁷
Denmark	179	29	0
Norway	10	5	0
Sweden	39	21	0
Finland	74	24	0
Netherlands	309	54	€1,951
Ireland	n/a	n/a	€3,000
United States	n/a	n/a	US\$5,000-58,500
Australia	n/a	n/a	AUD16,000-24,000
Austria	26	13	0
Belgium	19	10	€620-830
Italy	97	34	€690
Spain	237	40	€977-1,950
Germany	134	71	0

Source: A Star Future

6.29 A Star Future⁶⁸ provides more detailed financial information on the financial implications for undergraduate study at any European country and summarises the cost of public higher education, specific financial aid available to British students, cost of living, accommodation and housing benefits and more practical advice (e.g. how to open a bank account and obtain a study visa). The website also explains the various entry requirements and links to all Universities within the country. The Scottish Government utilised its expertise when deciding on its partner organisations for the overseas mobility pilot scheme.

Conclusions

- 6.30 The review of funding shows that there are several different funding sources which can be accessed to support overseas study, but it will vary depending on the institution at which the student is studying, the duration of planned study and destination country in which they wish to study.
- 6.31 Whilst there are many sources available, it is piecemeal and there is no clear one-stop-shop for information nor is there clear signposting to all available funding streams to be explored.
- 6.32 Study opportunities in Europe between 3 months to 12 months can currently be covered via Erasmus+, whilst shorter or longer study opportunities have less options of financial support currently available. The Welsh Government provides support for fees and living costs to eligible students who normally live in Wales to undertake a study or work placement abroad, of up to a year, as part of a course provided by a HEI in the UK. Scholarships and bursaries are available to cover full degree study abroad, but again this will vary depending on the destination and institution concerned with no guaranteed way of funding overseas study for Welsh domiciled students.

7. A review of international outward mobility schemes

7.1 This chapter considers a range of international outward mobility schemes currently being provided by countries other than the UK. It considers the structure and funding arrangements associated with the various delivery models and the motivations and drivers for the development of outward mobility schemes. As part of this scoping study, an academic literature review was undertaken using a key word search of relevant academic journals and government websites internationally. The literature review focussed mainly on examples of government-sponsored mobility schemes in developed countries, with a particular focus on European examples and English-speaking countries internationally.

Background

7.2 There is a long tradition of government-sponsored student mobility schemes. Conventionally these have involved attempts to improve the human resource capacity of developing countries. Poorer countries, without their own well-developed higher education systems, have traditionally sent their students overseas in the hope the graduates will return with their expertise⁶⁹.

However, while these kinds of schemes comprise the majority of outward mobility funding schemes, they are by no means the only ones. There has been growing recognition of the benefits of outward mobility for countries that might be considered to be 'human resource' rich and with their own well-developed higher education systems. As outlined in Chapter 3, the UK has set its goal, within the *UK Strategy for Outward Mobility* to develop and promote opportunities for overseas study in line with the European Union's goal of sending 20 per cent of its graduating students abroad by 2020⁷⁰.

7.3 Since its launch in 1987, the European Union's Erasmus programme has been a key mechanism for moving towards this goal, and has provided the principal support for outward mobility within Europe. In this chapter, some of the other models and forms of support that have been used to promote outward mobility are examined. The focus is predominantly on EU countries and others where higher education is largely delivered through the medium of English.

- 7.4 It should be noted that there are particular challenges in undertaking a desk-based review of these various schemes. Some of the difficulties arise from the sheer diversity of forms of support, which can range from small bursaries supplementing brief visits to fully-funded degree programmes. There is often patchy information on the scale and nature of support⁷¹. In addition, there is also a wide range of funders, from government-sponsored schemes, to philanthropic foundations to multi-national corporations. Last, but by no means least, are the different definitions of what counts as ‘overseas study’⁷². Some schemes cover study that comprises part (or all) of a qualification, other schemes provide resources for supplementary experiences and learning opportunities that do not contribute directly to a qualification. However, while this review may not be exhaustive of all the available schemes, it does provide an overview of the range of schemes.
- 7.5 It should also be noted that this review is unable to provide any significant evaluation of their costs and benefits. There is very little research into and evaluation of overseas mobility in general, let alone outward mobility schemes in particular. Such evidence as is available is usually provided by the sponsoring organisation and is largely anecdotal, comprising personal narratives of the benefits of the various schemes rather than any systematic attempt to evaluate the cost-benefits of these schemes – including the opportunity costs.
- 7.6 In the following section, a selection of government-sponsored outward mobility schemes are considered, as well as schemes offered by philanthropic foundations and businesses

Government-sponsored outward mobility schemes

- 7.7 There are wide variations across Europe, and even within the UK, in terms of national policies and support for outward student mobility.

Netherlands and Germany

- 7.8 These two countries are looked at together because they are often cited as the European countries with the highest levels of outward student mobility, and both have similar support mechanisms. In both countries, there is significant encouragement for the internationalisation of higher education. Germany, for example, has set a target of 50 per cent of students studying

part or all of their degree abroad⁷³. For outward-bound German students, favoured destinations are the Netherlands, the UK, Switzerland, and Austria – collectively accounting for over 60 percent of German higher education enrolment abroad in 2012⁷⁴. Netherlands also has a high degree of student mobility, with 24 per cent of students studying part of their degree abroad and 2 per cent studying all of their degree abroad⁷⁵. The top three receiving countries for full degrees are Belgium (Flanders), the UK and the USA. The top three receiving countries for part-degree study through Erasmus are the UK, Spain and Germany.

7.9 Within both countries, study abroad is just seen as an extension of student choice. However, the exercise of this choice is facilitated by two principal factors (outside of the Erasmus scheme). One is the low or non-existent fee regimes of some of the receiving countries. The other is the international portability of student loans and grants in the Netherlands and Germany – something which is relatively rare⁷⁶.

7.10 There is no doubt that the portability of loans and grants is an important facilitator of student mobility. However, it should be noted that the level of loans and grants provided for each student is much lower than in the UK. It is probable that many outwardly mobile students need to supplement their overseas study, particularly if they are in a destination country that charges higher levels of tuition fees.

Norway

7.11 Norway also allows the international portability of student loans and grants. In 2003, 7 per cent of the student population were enrolled at a foreign university⁷⁷ - a number which appears to have increased significantly since then. However, Norway additionally provides extra funding to support mobility to particular countries. In addition to a general belief in the benefits of internationalisation, this can be seen as part of an economic strategy. While the USA has traditionally been a favoured destination, in recent years Norway has chosen to prioritise the emerging economies of the 'BRIC' countries – Brazil, Russia, India and China.

- 7.12 The level of support provided is generous. In 2012/13, the Norwegian government provided the following support:
- US\$21,000 per year for tuition (a mixture of loans and grants)
 - US\$16,700 for study and living costs (in the form of a loan, of which 40 per cent can be converted to a grant when the student graduates)
 - US\$3,000 for language study (a grant) as well as additional support for two return trips to the study destination⁷⁸.
- 7.13 In addition, there is provision for extra resources to cover currency fluctuations and visits 'home'.

Scotland

- 7.14 As part of an EU Portability Pilot, Scottish domiciled students studying at eligible European universities can apply for the same bursary and loan support as they would receive attending university in the UK.
- 7.15 Six eligible universities have been chosen, that deliver a wide range of undergraduate courses. They include:
- Groningen University, Netherlands
 - Maastricht University, Netherlands
 - Malmo University, Sweden
 - Rhine Waal University, Germany
 - University of Southern Denmark, Denmark.
- 7.16 The scheme was set up as a Ministerial priority, in order to encourage and develop links between Scotland and the European Union. Specifically, Scottish Government was of the view that enabling more Scottish domiciled students to study at EU institutions would encourage and improve language skills and international job prospects for the individual, and would ultimately provide economic value to Scotland.
- 7.17 Scottish Government engaged with 'A Star Future' to help decide on the list of eligible Universities. These were chosen as they had many courses delivered in English; already had a high number of international students studying there (and would therefore have good support systems in place),

had a focus on STEM⁷⁹ and a good international reputation (higher ranking Universities).

- 7.18 The pilot was set up to support up to 250 students (although only 10 a year have taken up the scheme to date), and the funding application process is administered by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).
- 7.19 In addition to the bursary/loan support (which is dependent on family income levels), students can also contact the university they will be studying at to find out if there are additional bursaries or scholarships open to them. Students on the pilot scheme can also claim, in advance, the costs to get from their home to the institution and back, at the start and end of each year abroad. Medical insurance costs are also covered but students must arrange their own travel insurance.
- 7.20 Students taking up the pilot scheme do not apply to SAAS for their tuition fees. The tuition fee arrangements depend on the country they choose to study in as follows:

Table 7.1: Tuition fee arrangements of Scottish EU Portability Pilot Universities

University	Tuition fee arrangements
Malmo University, Sweden	No tuition fees
Southern Denmark University, Denmark	No tuition fees
Rheine Waal University, Germany	No tuition fees. Semester fees are approximately €250 (which covers different administration fees and free public transportation in Northrhine Westphalia)
Groningen University, Netherlands	Approximately €1,850 for EU students. Students can apply for a tuition fee loan from the Dutch Government
Maastricht University, Netherlands	Approximately €1,835 for EU students under the age of 30. Students can apply for a tuition fee loan from the Dutch Government.

- 7.21 Students are responsible for ensuring they have made an application to the eligible University and provided all required supporting documentation. Students are also responsible for arranging accommodation, tuition fees and additional costs.

Northern Ireland

- 7.22 Northern Ireland also supports outward student mobility for economic reasons. The British Council-supported *Study USA* provides funds for students' enrolled in Northern Irish universities to study abroad for one year. This initiative was put in place to address what was perceived to be some of the particular social and economic challenges facing the jurisdiction. The focus of the studentships is largely on employability skills, with the intention of building management and leadership capacity – as well as raising awareness of Northern Ireland in the USA.
- 7.23 The scheme annually provides funds for 50 to 60 students. Although it is largely about supporting business capacity, it is not confined to business studies students. Nor is it targeted at the most academically able. Applicants must have 'good' rather than 'exceptional' academic standing.

Nordplus

- 7.24 Nordplus⁸⁰ is an example of a very different kind of outward mobility scheme. The Nordplus Programme offers financial support for international study partners from eight participating countries and three autonomous regions in the Baltic and Nordic area. With an annual budget of around 9 million euros, Nordplus seeks to strengthen and develop Nordic educational co-operation and establish a Nordic-Baltic educational region. It places particular importance on the promotion of Nordic languages and culture, as well as mutual Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding. Although its significance has been slightly lessened since the introduction of Erasmus, many hundreds of students receive funding for exchanges of 1-12 months. What makes Nordplus particularly interesting is that it is based on international institutional collaborations (e.g. the development of joint degrees), rather than individual placements.

USA

- 7.25 The USA has many different schemes that are designed to promote both outward and inward mobility. Most famous of these is the Fulbright Programme which provides a range of scholarships for UK students to study in America. Although its outward mobility scheme is largely targeted at graduates and post-graduates, it has various summer schools with British universities.
- 7.26 US-based students can also apply for Benjamin A Gillman International Scholarships, which are specifically targeted at disadvantaged students, defined as those who have high financial need. Although financial criteria determine eligibility, this also means that many under-represented groups are included. And while no particular field of study is targeted, the programme encourages students to study languages, especially critical need languages (those deemed important to national security). However, as the maximum award is \$5000, there must be some questions as to how effective this programme is at reaching the most disadvantaged.
- 7.27 In general, issues of national security feature strongly in many of the US outward mobility schemes (e.g. the Boren Award for International Study and Project GO which is designed for the Reserve Officer Training Corps).

Australia

- 7.28 Like the USA, Australia has a range of initiatives that are collectively known as 'Endeavour Mobility Grants'. These cover a range of schemes, some of which are jointly funded with private partners (e.g. Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings) in order to study at particular universities in Asia and the Pacific. Of particular relevance for this review are the International Student Exchange Programmes (up to one year) and the Study Overseas Short-Term Mobility Programmes (up to six months). Examination of the outcomes of the 2018 round of funding indicates that they are not targeted exclusively at particular subject areas, contain awards in the broad fields of 'Society and Culture' and 'Creative Arts' as well as 'Engineering', 'Health' and 'Management and Commerce'.
- 7.29 What is interesting about these grants is that, like the Nordplus programme, it is the HE institution, rather than the individual, that applies.

Conclusions

- 7.30 There are a number of key issues that have emerged from this international review. The international review found that a wide variety of support is available for outward mobility from government-led schemes, although the majority of examples uncovered provide funding towards the cost of short overseas visits or for a small number of modules. Very few government-funded schemes cover the full cost of outward mobility. Overseas study is expensive and as a result the sustainability of 'free' higher education outward mobility schemes is an issue, with a number of examples found which had a relatively short lifespan. For example, Denmark's USA-Canada programme targeted at higher professional education only ran for two years from 2010-2012.
- 7.31 Unsurprisingly, countries which offer portable grants and loans for overseas study have higher levels of outward mobility. However, schemes are often related to study in nearby or neighbouring countries (particularly on mainland Europe). It is not clear, even in countries offering full grant and loan portability that this fully covers all the costs associated with overseas study.
- 7.32 Where countries have decided to invest in outward mobility schemes, there seems to be a clear rationale and specific motivations. These motivations result in more targeted outward mobility schemes and determine the destination countries. Some schemes, focus on economic capacity-building (such as the Northern Ireland example), whilst others aim to capitalise on emerging economies (Norway), strengthen cultural collaboration (Nordplus) or increase national security (USA).

8. Characteristics of students studying abroad

8.1 This chapter considers the profile and characteristics of students who consider and undertake periods of study abroad, and identifies distinct differences when comparing research into students undertaking shorter mobility periods abroad with findings in relation to students taking full degree study abroad. The chapter provides a synopsis of a series of research papers and publications that have looked at these issues in depth, over the past five years.

Overseas study students' profile – full degree mobility

8.2 The BIS survey of 1,400 final year pupils at secondary schools suggested that the most academically gifted pupils were most likely to apply to study full degrees at foreign universities, with pupils who had applied to the UK's top ten universities also more likely to apply to world-class institutions in other countries. This was part of a strategy on the student's part to access the best universities. The research also found that the application rate from the independent sector was three times that of state schools and that young people from white UK families with a strong history of engagement with international mobility were much more likely to have applied to study abroad⁸¹.

8.3 An international survey of UK domiciled students studying abroad, also conducted as part of the BIS research showed that those UK pupils who successfully applied to universities outside the UK were more likely to come from households where both parents had a university education. They were also highly likely to have excellent A-level results. Although a majority of UK-domiciled students studying abroad had attended state school (55 per cent), relative to its size, independent schools were over represented in the sample, suggesting that more applied and they had a higher chance of achieving entry to international universities⁸².

8.4 The BIS funded research showed that students who were looking at full degree mobility offered many reasons for choosing to study abroad. The main response was wanting to attend a 'world class university' (55 per cent), the opportunity for a unique adventure (50 per cent) and taking a first step in an international career (38 per cent)⁸³. Additional research by HEFCE

suggests that some students see overseas study as a 'second chance' to compensate for failure to get into Oxbridge. World class universities such as Princeton, Harvard and Yale are seen to be on a par with the target universities in the UK and are even considered easier to get in to⁸⁴.

- 8.5 Another pessimistic interpretation is that UK students studying full degrees abroad are 'accidental achievers' who are not overly concerned with their career development in the future, but rather that they see the opportunity to study abroad as something of an adventure and an opportunity to delay the onset of a career⁸⁵. Those studying at 'Ivy League' US universities however, are more likely to have been guided there by 'parental involvement in decision making, with their access to such universities facilitated usually by private schooling and wealthy backgrounds'⁸⁶.
- 8.6 Language is not a motivating force for full degree mobility, indeed, it is a constraining factor, with most UK domiciled full degree study students choosing English-speaking countries as their destinations. It is somewhat of a dichotomy that although students who study overseas are seeking something different, they also want a destination that they feel comfortable in, so choose destinations such as the US or European institutions with a strong English speaking 'bubble'⁸⁷.
- 8.7 The HEFCE research also showed that attitudes to future employment location and mobility trajectories did vary, depending on the destination of study. For those who had studied their full degree abroad, Australia was the destination most likely to attract students to settle. The USA attracted students due to the perceived excellence of certain universities and also because it was believed to offer facilitated entry into international labour markets. However, only 21 per cent of those surveyed in the BIS research had no intention of returning to the UK, and those who were less academically able were most likely to stay at their overseas destination. This seems to suggest that international mobility does not therefore cause a 'brain drain' of the brightest and most academically gifted students from the UK, as they are more likely to return than those less qualified in terms of A levels⁸⁸.

Overseas study students profile – credit mobility⁸⁹

- 8.8 Research by the British Council, undertaken with a sample of 2,856 full-time UK domiciled students suggested that 34 per cent were interested in undertaking some overseas study, with 47 per cent not interested at all and a further 19 per cent unsure. There was equal level of interest by both males and females⁹⁰.
- 8.9 A Destination Leavers HE (DHLE) survey of first-degree UK domiciled completers showed that females were more likely to study abroad than male students. For example 70 per cent of mobile language students were female and only 30 per cent were male. Similarly, 59 per cent of mobile non-language students were female and 41 per cent were male.
- 8.10 The British Council survey showed a positive relationship between second language acquisition and interest in study abroad, in those who were considering credit mobility (part time, rather than full degree study abroad). Only 44 per cent of respondents were able to speak more than one language, but they made up 60 per cent of those who were interested in studying abroad⁹¹. This research also asked those who had indicated an interest in overseas study but had not yet undertaken it about their preferred overseas courses and destinations and some interesting findings emerged, with 47 per cent of this cohort most interested in studying abroad for a one year period at undergraduate level followed by 26 per cent who would select a full degree and 14 per cent at one semester⁹².
- 8.11 The preferred level of overseas study was undergraduate (59 per cent) and the most popular courses for study abroad included creative arts and design (14 per cent), social studies (11 per cent), business and administrative skills (10 per cent) and languages (9 per cent)⁹³.
- 8.12 Analysis undertaken of 233,185 UK domiciled first degree completers in 2013 showed a slightly different picture with the same subject areas appearing high on the list of mobility students, but in a slightly different order – the analysis showed language students making up the largest proportion of mobile students (38 per cent) followed by business and administration students (11 per cent), social studies (8 per cent) and creative arts and design (6 per cent). STEM students were underrepresented in mobility

opportunities. Although 42 per cent of students were enrolled in STEM courses in 2012/13 only 16 per cent of all mobile students had studied such courses⁹⁴.

- 8.13 Of those who aspire to study abroad, the US was by far the most popular destination, with 40 per cent of respondents selecting this option, followed by Australia (11 per cent), France (7 per cent), Germany (6 per cent) and Canada (5 per cent)⁹⁵. However, in reality, the vast majority of mobility (70 per cent) takes place in Europe compared to 30 per cent to countries beyond Europe. Three quarters of mobility from UK domiciled students in 2012/13 took place in just 8 countries with France being the most popular destination (25 per cent) followed by Spain (17 per cent), USA (12 per cent) and Germany (9 per cent).
- 8.14 The main future aspirations for those interested in studying abroad for credit mobility was to have fun travelling and exploring different cultures (47 per cent) or wanting to work for an international company and live overseas (30 per cent) according to a survey of DHLEs⁹⁶.
- 8.15 The vast majority, at 97 per cent, of all graduates who are employed full time six months after graduating are working in the UK, however, students who have undertaken study overseas are four times more likely than their non-mobile peers to be working outside the UK⁹⁷.

Under-represented groups in overseas mobility schemes

- 8.16 Universities UK's Social Mobility Advisory Group found that graduate outcomes were influenced by a student's background and that there is evidence that students from lower socio-economic groups were less likely to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities that can boost employability including taking up opportunities to work or study abroad⁹⁸.
- 8.17 A report looking at widening participation in UK student mobility looked in particular at five groups that are under-represented in mobility:
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
 - Students from low participation neighbourhoods
 - Black and minority ethnic students

- Students with a disability
- Students who are care leavers⁹⁹.

8.18 It found that the above five demographic groups were all under-represented in terms of overseas mobility, that short-term mobility (1-4 weeks) was the most attractive option and that they were attracted to the same overseas countries when mobility was undertaken. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with multiple barriers had even lower participation rates.

8.19 The research also found that:

- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds were 65 per cent more likely to participate in outward mobility than their lower socio-economic background peers
- Asian, Asian British (Indian) and Chinese ethnic groups had participation rates that equaled those of the HE sector average (at 1.7 per cent) whilst Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi (0.6 per cent) or Pakistani (0.8 per cent) students had the lowest participation rates
- 1.5 per cent of students with a disability participated in outward mobility compared to the HE sector average of 1.7 per cent
- Care leavers had a very low participation rate at just 1 per cent.

8.20 Furthermore the research found that interestingly, HE institution-led mobility programmes proved more popular across all the target demographics than those provided by external providers.

9. Perceived benefits of and barriers to overseas study

9.1 This section provides a synopsis of the literature review undertaken of UK-based research into the perceived benefits and barriers associated with overseas study. It considers the findings in relation to benefits to both the home country and to the individual, and also looks at the most frequently perceived barriers to studying overseas.

Benefits to the home country

9.2 Research by the British Council and DAAD suggested that there were many reasons why countries implement scholarship programmes for outward mobility, but that the most common reason was ‘to enhance the human-resource capacity among their citizens’¹⁰⁰. In particular, countries were interested in enhancing their national knowledge base in specific areas of interest, often linked to economic development (and STEM subjects in particular). However the countries included in their research were all developing countries – BRIC and others such as Egypt, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Vietnam.

9.3 The majority of the countries provide such scholarship support at graduate level however, and the implication is that there will be a ‘multiplier effect’ with students returning to their home country and taking up some knowledge development related activity. British Council/DAAD research found very few examples of scholarship support for either non-STEM-related fields or for undergraduate research. Most of the scholarship schemes examined tend to fund ‘vertical’ mobility, i.e. students were provided with support to attend high ranking institutions in more highly developed countries.

9.4 Interestingly, the British Council/DAAD research found that most countries did not engage with their overseas students once they had returned to their home country. There were very few examples of returnees being consulted or involved in the ongoing improvement or promotion of scholarship programmes from which they had benefitted.

9.5 The research found that countries with outward mobility scholarship programmes experienced a positive correlation between education and prosperity. However, the underpinning evidence for this was questionable -

there was very little debate or evidence of the value of investing in the overseas education of a small number of citizens or the tangible, beneficial outcomes of these significant investments for either the individuals whose mobility was supported, the countries that funded them or the institutions either sending or receiving students.

- 9.6 OECD research suggests that host countries consider mobile students as an important source of income, and that they have a disproportionately positive impact on the economy and on innovation systems. In the longer run, they perceive highly educated mobile students as being ‘more likely to integrate into domestic labour markets, contributing to knowledge creation, innovation and economic performance’. Host countries therefore see attracting mobile students (especially if they stay permanently), as a way of tapping into a global pool of talent, often compensating for the weaker educational capacity of the host country itself. The OECD research concedes that for the countries of origin, mobile students can be viewed as lost talent, yet if they return home, they can ‘contribute to knowledge absorption, technology upgrading and capacity building’¹⁰¹.
- 9.7 The BIS research into international student mobility conceded that much more research is needed to understand whether outward mobility of UK students to other countries does drain some of the UK’s brightest young talents to other economies. Conversely, it was suggested that it is just as possible that the UK is not sending enough students abroad (given that the number of UK students studying abroad at high ranking HEIs is a very small proportion of all foreign students at these universities). As a result it argues that there is a danger that the UK is missing an opportunity to train its brightest young talent in world-leading skills that would be so essential for ‘the future vitality of the UK economy’¹⁰².

Benefits to the individual

- 9.8 UK domiciled students have a number of ‘academic’ drivers for studying abroad, including gaining credits for study (61 per cent) and to improve their language skills (45 per cent)¹⁰³.

- 9.9 Recent research by Universities UK suggests a correlation between outwardly mobility and improved academic outcomes, with 80 per cent of outwardly mobile students earning a first class or upper second class degree compared to 74 per cent who did not study overseas. Similarly, employment outcomes were found to have been improved (with 76 per cent of outwardly mobile students in a graduate-level job compared with 70 per cent of those who did not study overseas), and also earning [on average] 5 per cent more than their non-mobile counterparts¹⁰⁴.
- 9.10 Analysis undertaken of HESA and DHLE data in 2012/13 similarly suggest that academic outcomes are improved as a result of overseas study, irrespective of the subject studied. The analysis found that 87 per cent of mobile students achieved a 1st or 2:1 compared to 69 per cent of their non-mobile peers¹⁰⁵. The research also found that a consistently higher proportion of mobile students achieved a 1st compared to their non-mobile students in every discipline, with the exception of Medicine and Dentistry.
- 9.11 The benefits are even more prominent for students who are under-represented in overseas mobility. Graduates from more disadvantaged background who studied overseas during their degree were found to earn 6.1 per cent more than their non-mobile counterparts, whilst black graduates who were mobile were 70 per cent less likely to be unemployed, and Asian graduates 71 per cent less likely to be unemployed than their non-mobile peers¹⁰⁶.
- 9.12 Even though students who studied languages were much more likely to be mobile than students of any other discipline, the benefits of studying abroad were seen in the employment outcomes for all graduates irrespective of subject¹⁰⁷.
- 9.13 'Non-academic' drivers for individuals to study abroad include having the opportunity to travel overseas (52 per cent), experiencing a unique adventure (49 per cent), building their confidence (37 per cent) and improving their future career prospects (35 per cent)¹⁰⁸.

9.14 However, when students were asked which statement they agreed with the most – studying abroad ‘sets my CV apart when applying for a job’ or ‘introduced me to new cultures, gives me a cosmopolitan identify and allows me to travel’ they were more likely to opt for the latter, perhaps suggesting that the employability benefit is less strongly perceived¹⁰⁹. Having said that, of those who were considering or had studied abroad, between 70-84 per cent consistently thought that an overseas study experience would give them the edge and make them stand out when applying for a job, so students do understand that study abroad can impact on their future career, but perhaps do not fully understand its significance¹¹⁰.

Barriers to overseas study

9.15 The British Council survey of 1,873 students not currently interested in studying abroad were queried about the perceived barriers to studying overseas. Many of these individuals (47 per cent) wanted to travel and explore different cultures whilst only 20 per cent stated that they didn’t want to leave the UK. Some 15 per cent wanted to work for an international company and live overseas¹¹¹. This suggests that the barriers are not due to a lack of interest in going overseas but rather other factors such as a lack of foreign language skills (53 per cent) and concerns about the degree programme being too difficult (15 per cent) or that gaining credit for the study would be problematic (12 per cent).

9.16 It is often hypothesised that UK students choose not to study abroad due to the inflexible structures within UK higher education, in terms of subject requirements and exam timings¹¹². Whilst these concerns were raised, they were secondary to concerns around linguistic abilities.

9.17 Some ‘non-academic’ deterrents have also been identified as being barriers to studying overseas. Almost half (48 per cent) of those surveyed by the British Council who were interested in overseas study stated that the cost of studying overseas was prohibitive, with others concerned that they lacked confidence in language skills (36 per cent), wouldn’t be able to access quality healthcare (31 per cent) or wouldn’t feel safe in other countries¹¹³.

- 9.18 All students, regardless of whether they were interested in overseas study were asked about what would motivate and incentivise them to consider a period of overseas study. The overwhelmingly popular answer was 'help with funding' at 71 per cent followed by foreign language training (40 per cent). Respondents also thought that having a period of mandatory study as part of their course (33 per cent) or information sessions about the benefits of overseas study from students (30 per cent) or lecturers (25 per cent) would also help¹¹⁴.
- 9.19 An often cited barrier to studying abroad is a lack of information, and the British Council survey found a correlation between information and openness to the idea of studying overseas. Internet was by far the main source of information (71 per cent), with all other sources used at a much lower level be it family (24 per cent), study abroad officers (22 per cent), lecturers (22 per cent), teachers (19 per cent) and friends (19 Per cent).
- 9.20 Considering that initiatives such as the Erasmus programme have been in place for a number of years, it is perhaps surprising that awareness of government-sponsored schemes for overseas study was low. Only 35 per cent of those who had previously studied abroad, and 18 per cent of those who aspired to study abroad surveyed as part of the British Council research were aware of any funding schemes, suggesting that there is room to improve students' awareness of such programmes.

Conclusions

- 9.21 International student mobility is seen as a key aspect of the internationalisation of higher education, and provides enriching experiences for ambitious and talented young people. Outward mobility is seen as providing students with life-changing experiences and opportunities to develop new skills that will improve their career prospects.
- 9.22 The main drivers for individuals looking to spend time studying overseas is to improve future employment prospects and to gain new experiences. Whilst interest in overseas study is on the increase, barriers remain, and funding and information to enable overseas study remain the predominant reasons for these opportunities to remain elusive for some students.

9.23 The research suggests that outward mobility can provide benefits to the home country, particularly in terms of returning students bringing back knowledge, expertise and links to international networks. However this 'multiplier effect' and the actual impact on the home country's economy remains largely anecdotal at best. There is general agreement that more research is needed in this area in order to understand the trends and numbers of outwardly mobile students returning to their home countries following overseas study, and when they do so, whether there is a sufficiently positive impact on the economy to counteract the higher costs of study.

10. Views on overseas study from Welsh domiciled students

10.1 This chapter outlines the views and opinions of Welsh domiciled students who are either considering overseas study or who have undertaken full time study overseas. It draws on the findings of two focus groups with 13 sixth form students and telephone interviews with five students who were either currently or had previously studied overseas.

Background

10.2 Of the 13 sixth form students interviewed, 10 were still considering overseas study, with two having come to the conclusion more recently that they were most likely to stay in the UK and another having recently received confirmation of a place at a UK university next year. Seven of the students were studying at an international sixth form college, whilst the remaining six students were studying at five different comprehensive schools across Mid, West and East Wales (two were interviewed in a focus group and the others by phone).

10.3 All five of the students interviewed who were currently (or had previously) studied their full degree overseas had done so at US universities – two at Harvard University, one at Yale University, one at Skidmore College, New York and the other at Trinity College, Connecticut. Four of the five students had studied at comprehensive schools, and were from all across Wales – one was from the North West, one from North East Wales, one from the South East, one from Mid Wales and another from South West Wales. Two students had an international background – one had been born in Australia, whilst another had dual British-French citizenship. One student was a fluent Welsh speaker.

10.4 It is pertinent to note here that three other comprehensive schools and two larger FE colleges were also approached for inclusion in this part of the research, but each responded with the view that there were no students currently studying at the institutions who were currently considering overseas study. This was particularly true of North and South West Wales and suggests that the latent demand for overseas study is low.

Factors influencing decisions to study overseas

- 10.5 The sixth form students interviewed discussed how they wished to widen their horizons and taste different cultures. Another key point raised by students was how the different structure on offer in US institutions in particular was attractive to them. While some of the students had a clear indication of what they wanted to study overseas (e.g. Engineering and Botany), others had selected US universities because they did not have to specialise so soon in their academic life and could even 'pick up subjects that I'd dropped after GCSEs'. All of the students currently studying in the US had been attracted to the prospect of not having to concentrate (or major) in one particular subject, and valued the flexibility of the graduate system: 'Because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, I was happy that I didn't have to state my major when applying. Specific things appealed to me...the flexibility of it all was probably the main attraction however.' Another current student overseas also explained that there is much greater focus on recruiting well rounded students to US universities and added that it could be difficult for strong academic students to plan for the application if they didn't also have a range of outside interests and experiences.
- 10.6 A couple of current HE students also felt that institutions in America seemed to respect and give due consideration to the arts much more than seemed to be the focus in the UK, with the Liberal Arts of particular interest to both students. The flexibility and choice also appealed to several of the sixth form students: 'In America...you can continue to have passions outside your main area of study whereas in Britain, it's much, much harder to do that'.
- 10.7 Dutch and US universities clearly appealed to several of the sixth form students, due to the image that had been portrayed during talks that they had received whilst at school, although the school in question had a specific international outlook and values which the students felt did influence their decisions to consider studying overseas. At least three of the students had applied to the Sutton Trust. One of these students explained that a talk from a Yale Ambassador at one of the Seren Network events had been an important factor in his decision to apply as it had made the option more appealing.

- 10.8 The experiences and attitudes of parents was another factor that played a part in shaping the opinions of students on overseas study. Some of the sixth form students discussed how their multi-cultural backgrounds and the fact that their parents had international roles influenced their decision-making. One student described how a parent who spent a lot of time working in the Middle East had sparked an interest in them to travel to different countries and broaden her horizons. However, on the other side of the spectrum, another student mentioned how parental protectiveness was encouraging them to be more independent and look to study options further afield: 'I kind of need the independence and if going overseas helps to achieve that then it is an option'.
- 10.9 Some of the current overseas students from Wales also backed up these views through their own experiences. Although they stated that their decision to study overseas had been a personal one, many did give examples of close friends also studying overseas, or having members of the family living abroad: 'which made it less way out of reach'.
- 10.10 Three of the sixth form students knew that they would not end up studying overseas. They had been steered towards studying in the UK because they knew what courses they wanted to follow and had an idea of what they wanted to do afterwards: 'I considered France and the Netherlands but at the end of the day the university, and more importantly the course that I very specifically wanted to do, was in this country. Studying overseas seems an option for those who don't know specifically what they want to do'.
- 10.11 One student had decided very clearly not to study overseas as they felt that the UK had very good universities and could offer all that was needed. In addition his future career plans had an influence: 'One of my aspirations is to go into Welsh politics and so I am going to want to stay here [in Wales]'. The student also referred to the 'brain drain' in Wales and their concern that even going to university in England was 'detrimental' especially considering the low number of people coming back to Wales to live and work. Interestingly, some of the students would still like to follow a postgraduate course overseas and all the students would consider studying part of their degree

overseas if the option was available as part of their chosen undergraduate courses.

- 10.12 Overall, students didn't believe there was much demand from Welsh domiciled students to study overseas at all. Although several noted how activities via the Seren network, particularly their connections with the Sutton Trust had contributed to a recent 'spike in interest' in the number of Welsh students applying for overseas study, they thought that the numbers continued to be very small.
- 10.13 The feedback from students currently studying in US universities suggested that the majority of UK domiciled students studying at Harvard came from private schools. One Welsh domiciled student studying overseas genuinely believed that the knowledge and experience within these schools – with an admissions person employed to support the process – has been a significant factor in this trend. Another explained how the application was 'totally different' to UCAS and that there hadn't been much information from their school when they applied – 'The Head of Sixth Form and the teachers didn't know anything about overseas study'. On a positive note, the individual had since been asked to return to the school to discuss her experiences.

Benefits to overseas study

- 10.14 The sixth form students were very positive about the benefits that could be gained from studying overseas, including the confidence they would gain from being independent. Those who had an interest in overseas study believed that there could be increased opportunities in later years, especially in relation to future employability and believed that a decision to study overseas could have a positive impact on their future earnings. Students felt that their relatively unique experience would be a USP that would contribute greatly when competing in the job market.
- 10.15 Others however, referred to the 'brain drain' when discussing some of the factors holding them back from studying overseas: 'It would be Wales' loss and there are no guarantees. As much as we would like to be optimistic and say that we should go abroad and that I should come back, I mean talking for myself I think once I leave Wales to go to university I don't think I would come back here to settle for a job. I think that's mainly because of the job

opportunities we see here and the way in which, especially youth, view Wales in working terms'. The students studying overseas seemed uncertain about their future career aspirations, but despite this, they were satisfied that overseas study would 'open me up to the world'.

- 10.16 A number of the students currently studying overseas also explained that there was a more positive attitude towards part-time jobs in the USA compared to some of the more prestigious universities in the UK. For example it was suggested that Harvard University actively encouraged student involvement in part-time roles.
- 10.17 Generally speaking, students who were currently studying overseas felt that it wasn't the right option for everyone, especially if students were interested in law or medicine and wanted to practice in the UK. However, there was consensus that it was important for students to spend some time overseas however, whether as part of their degree course or during a period over the summer.
- 10.18 Interestingly, two of the current overseas students mentioned that they had applied (unsuccessfully) to study at Oxford University. While one mentioned that they had received offers to study at St Andrews, Durham and University College London (UCL), they eventually decided on the US study option at Harvard University due to the 100 per cent funding provided (which equates to £250k worth of support over four years).

Barriers to overseas study

- 10.19 When discussing the barriers to overseas study, the general lack of information relating to the application process and the perceived costs of studying overseas were considered to be the two main barriers. The level of information provided by schools and colleges was thought to vary greatly. Overall, interviewees took the view that there was a lack of awareness in schools with students explaining that their Head of Sixth Form and other teachers had minimal information about the process of applying for a place overseas. There also seemed to be a cultural barrier with schools focused on selling the idea of students attending Welsh and UK universities. Having said this, some of the students had picked up bits of information from the Seren Network conference. Some of the students were also in contact with

the Sutton Trust and were starting to receive information about the application process, summer schools, and so on. The information on offer through the Sutton Trust clearly put some students at ease when it came to barriers, particularly in relation to the costs of studying overseas.

- 10.20 One student mentioned how they had thought about studying overseas but had missed the deadline for application. The lack of knowledge of the process and the fact that the admissions test (SATs) for the overseas university in mind clashed with the test he was doing for a place in Oxford were the reasons for him having missed the deadline. This lack of awareness, coupled with the cost of studying overseas, were the main deterrents in this particular situation.
- 10.21 Several of the students (sixth form as well as overseas students) were of the view that teachers should be supported so that they could offer the full list of options available to their pupils. Some also talked about the stigma attached with even considering overseas study and that there needed to be a considerable cultural shift within schools before overseas study would be seriously considered alongside UK HE options: 'People don't talk about the opportunities back home [in Gwynedd].'
- 10.22 The potential costs of studying overseas was a common theme during focus group discussions, with specific concerns around the associated costs of healthcare in America also being raised. Healthcare costs had indeed proved to be an issue to those studying overseas. One student had suffered an accident whilst studying overseas, resulting in medical bills that totalled hundreds of thousands of dollars, although the liability had fallen on the University in this instance.
- 10.23 Uncertainty over Brexit proved to be another barrier for sixth form students currently considering overseas study: 'Looking at Europe at the moment, with the uncertainty of everything...I find that it really puts me off the idea of applying there because the time when we'll be leaving...to go to university at around about the date when all the changes come into play, [is] really making it a worrying prospect for me'.

10.24 Another barrier was concern about loneliness, with the thought of living and studying in another country for up to four years a concern for many. While students wanted to experience different cultures, they acknowledged that they would have to spend lengthy periods of time away from friends and family. Language barriers and cultural differences were less of a concern, mainly due to the fact that the majority wanted to study in the US. Loneliness was also raised as one of the main issues experienced by those who had gone to study overseas: 'I didn't factor in time differences and ability to pop home. Home sickness and living in different time zones has been an issue'.

Funding overseas study

10.25 Funding overseas study was not raised as a barrier by any of the Welsh domiciled students currently studying overseas. With the increase in fees to study in UK universities, some even suggested that it was cheaper to study in the US. A couple of the students went through a needs-based process for US study where they had to complete an extensive form providing a comprehensive financial breakdown of their (and their family's) position: 'I applied to the school, showed them different bank accounts and was given a financial aid of 100 per cent.' Another student had been required to pay the majority of the annual tuition/fee (\$73k) while another had a similar amount completely covered.

10.26 Year 13 students were aware of the current financial support that could be available if studying overseas and it seems the Netherlands and the US were options that were seriously being considered due to the scholarships available. There was strong knowledge that fees in the Netherlands were much less than in the UK and there was also a perception that it could be cheaper overall to study in the US. The rising tuition fees in the UK and the availability of funding support from elsewhere were now making overseas study a much more viable option for many of the students interviewed.

10.27 Other sixth form students could only estimate the cost of studying overseas and had not received any information about potential scholarships, application process and SAT requirements. In contrast, students who had been involved with the Sutton Trust were encouraged by the opportunities to study in the US and had greater knowledge of the application process and

the scholarships available through certain universities. The Sutton Trust US Programme¹¹⁵ in particular had played a key role in acting as a driver to at least three of the students from Wales currently studying overseas: 'I attended a summer school in Yale University and met people out there.' It became apparent that the Sutton Trust provided information on key dates, funding and the application process. This information was not readily available through the schools.

- 10.28 Generally, current students studying overseas did not have sufficient generic information to state whether there were any gaps in current funding. Having said this, several talked about the need to travel to take the SATs and the fee associated with each application. One of the students mentioned that the cost to apply to five universities was approximately £200 and they had no way of covering this cost.
- 10.29 The students also discussed the different types of scholarships, including the needs-based scholarships and merit-based scholarships (in relation to America study options). Several students mentioned that they would be dependent on a scholarship to enable overseas study.

Conclusions

- 10.30 The findings from these interviews with Welsh domiciled students generally concur with the wider literature reviewed. It suggests that those who are interested in overseas study are often academically able students, most often (though not exclusively) from higher income backgrounds with international experience within the family.
- 10.31 The US is a popular destination for full degree study abroad, and the broad range of subjects studied as part of undergraduate degree programmes there appeal to many students who are unsure about the subject in which they wish to specialise. Those who do go to study in the US do so primarily through undertaking their own research, although organisations such as the Fulbright Commission, and access to such support via the Seren network can provide much needed practical guidance. The majority of those who go on to study overseas do access scholarships (either merit-based or needs-based) which cover the vast majority of the costs associated with overseas study.

11. Options for an Overseas Study Pilot

- 11.1 During the fieldwork conducted for this scoping study a number of options for an overseas study pilot were discussed and explored during a series of interviews with key stakeholders and at a subsequent workshop with Welsh Government officials to test emerging ideas. At the workshop, the initial findings from the desk based research and the qualitative research with stakeholders was presented, followed by a discussion around five options for overseas study offered across a continuum. They ranged from an option that would require very little financial intervention to a model that would provide portability funding for full degree study. This chapter outlines these refined options in more detail and provides the background and the reasoning for each.
- 11.2 During the fieldwork, several stakeholders questioned the rationale behind developing a pilot project to provide overseas study opportunities for Welsh domiciled students. Whilst stakeholders were generally aware of the relevant Diamond Review recommendation, the basis on which the recommendation was made, both in terms of its fit with Welsh Government HE strategy and in terms of any evidence which currently exists that there is any latent demand for overseas study support was questioned.
- 11.3 Three stakeholders also felt that increasing student mobility, particularly through short-term experiences was already a UK-wide strategic objective that individual HE institutions were responding to, and that there were no major gaps in provision or funding.
- 11.4 Stakeholders generally conceded that the situation might be very different if Brexit impacted on the UK's ability to participate in EU schemes, and several stakeholders also therefore questioned the timing for any overseas study pilot, highlighting that any such pilot should only be implemented once the wider funding situation for overseas opportunities post-Brexit became clearer.
- 11.5 Two stakeholder organisations also pointed to the potential risks involved with funding any significant degree study abroad, in terms of losing the talent pool from Wales and also on a more practical level, losing funding from the higher education infrastructure in Wales and the UK. Some three

stakeholder organisations thought that the risks of funding of any full time study overseas outweighed the potential benefits to Wales.

- 11.6 Ultimately, several stakeholders raised the issue of needing to ensure that the Welsh Government had a very clear rationale for undertaking an overseas study pilot and that the investment decisions should be based on sound strategic objectives: 'We need to fundamentally agree on what it is this pilot scheme would set out to achieve and work from there'. Whilst the educational benefits for the students concerned were often seen as a given, stakeholders felt that any financial intervention from the Welsh Government should provide benefits to Wales itself. In this respect, many stakeholders saw merit in developing an overseas study pilot that linked directly with the Welsh Government's strategic economic and international trade priorities.
- 11.7 Stakeholders were very keen to explore different options and were comfortable with expanding the discussion to shorter term mobility pilot ideas rather than focussing solely on full degree portability. Stakeholders highlighted that relatively little was known about Welsh-domiciled students' mobility and welcomed the opportunity to consider how HE strategy in Wales could support and increase prospects for overseas study in the future. In this respect, four of the external stakeholders mentioned how they would be more than willing to work with Welsh Government over the coming months and offered to support and advise on the development of any planned pilot mobility approaches.
- 11.8 When drafting the various options, a series of guiding principles were followed, which acknowledge the general feedback received via the fieldwork:
- All options are in relation to **undergraduate level study** only - although a couple of stakeholders felt that there was merit in funding postgraduate schemes or FE study, the focus of this scoping study has generally only considered undergraduate study options
 - Options are **not restricted to 'full degree portability'** – although this is the Diamond Review recommendation, it was very apparent from the desk based review and the fieldwork that short mobility options

were able to achieve other important outcomes and could provide better and more equal opportunities

- All options would be able to be **funded by a grant or scholarship**, rather than a student loan covering tuition fees. This is because HMRC regulations do not allow for student loans to be adapted for overseas study
- Options should focus on providing overseas study opportunities **through the medium of English**
- Options are **not subject specific** – any student studying any discipline could apply. For some of the options, this could include FE and HE level study
- The options are **not means-tested** – all options would be open to all eligible students. However, the amount of financial support provided could differ (e.g. it could relate to the amount of maintenance grant that a student is eligible to receive)
- There is flexibility across several of the options to develop hybrid versions or to adapt the option depending on the strategic focus which the Welsh Government wishes to pursue.

11.9 On the basis of the discussion held during the options appraisal workshop the original five pilot options have been further refined. The figure below outlines the continuum of options developed for an overseas study pilot.

Figure 11.1 Continuum of options for overseas study pilot



11.10 The five options are outlined in more detail below:

Option 1: Raising awareness of existing funding opportunities

Brief Outline:	Raise awareness of overseas study options and signpost sixth form students in Wales to existing funding opportunities
Rationale:	Key existing barrier is lack of access to information on study opportunities and funding available (particularly for full degree study abroad)
Target Audience:	Sixth form students (via Seren Network)
Duration:	n/a
Location:	Promotion of overseas study as a concept. Does not preclude any study destination but could focus on the most prestigious e.g. US Ivy League or Top 20 International Ranking HEIs
Administration:	Seren Network

11.11 The desk-based literature and the qualitative discussions held with current and prospective students affirm the need for more support and information to be provided to those interested in studying overseas.

11.12 The discussions with students in particular, highlighted how an overseas study pilot should consider developing the following elements:

- awareness – there is a need to increase the level of awareness of the various opportunities available to students studying overseas in schools across Wales. According to the students, a cultural shift is needed: ‘People need to know about it [the opportunity]. We need people in schools to deliver talks ...for example’
- timing – consideration should be given as to when information is provided to students: ‘Often students are told too late’. It was generally felt that information should be provided during GCSE and/or Year 12, with the option raised at an even earlier age
- support and guidance with the application process - students clearly require more hands-on support and guidance from school

representatives with the application process, including support on passing the SATs

- funding additional costs – while scholarships often cover the cost of tuition fees and/or living costs, students found that they were spending approximately £70 per overseas university application (particularly for the US). They also have to cover travel costs to attend SATs at any two sites in the UK and pay for visas
- alumni to act as mentors – while providing more information and raising awareness was raised as a potential future objective, students wanted to hear first-hand from those who had experienced overseas study: ‘Ambassadors are important’.

11.13 The Seren network has recently established a partnership arrangement with the Yale Young Global Scholars Program (YYGS)¹¹⁶ which offers a summer academic experience for high achieving students from around the world to attend a two-week session at Yale’s campus in New Haven (US) or the Yale Centre Beijing in China. The programme provides an experience in one of seven subject areas including applied science and engineering, international affairs and security, politics, law and economics. As part of the partnership arrangement a total of 11 funded places on the programme has been made available to Welsh domiciled students for summer 2018 (provided they meet the selection criteria set by the programme). This has been part funded by YYGS, the Welsh Government and private sector sponsorship. Each successful student benefits from a £6k financial package which covers the programme’s fees, accommodation and travel costs. Some thirty applications were received across all but one Seren hub areas in its first year. This suggests that such opportunities could generate more interest in overseas study. However it is not possible to know at this stage whether such experiences would lead to an increase in the number of applications for overseas study nor whether such applications would ultimately be successful.

11.14 One stakeholder noted how aligning a pilot to the Seren network was crucial due to the fact that one of the fundamental objectives of Seren was to raise aspirations and broaden horizons, and that it also had the appropriate

structure in place. However, the Seren network works with specific students, identified as being the most academically gifted within Wales, and therefore there might be issues around parity of access and equality that would need to be considered. However, Seren is targeted on the basis of ability not background.

- 11.15 The first option for a pilot would therefore be to ensure that information was provided directly to schools and via the Seren network in order to improve knowledge and awareness of existing opportunities to study overseas. This could include a series of speakers, events and support mechanisms (digital or otherwise) to allow students interested in overseas study to access the necessary information in a timely manner. This option could also have a small fund to cover practical costs associated with preparing applications for such overseas study. If this approach was to be undertaken, one stakeholder suggested that it should be focused on a small number of the most prestigious universities in the world (e.g. the top 20 in the World University rankings).

Option 2: Short Term Study Model

Brief Outline:	Provide a scholarship for Welsh domiciled students to undertake short term study (less than 3 months) abroad to cover living costs
Rationale:	Supports UK-wide International Mobility Strategy target for increasing outward mobility Low cost per head enables a number of grants to be issued. Responds to current gap in funding support.
Target Audience:	Any Welsh domiciled student studying at undergraduate level at a UK HEI
Duration:	Up to three months study/volunteering/work experience abroad
Location:	Any location worldwide (depending on strategic priorities of Welsh Government)
Administration:	British Council? Relatively low administrative burden. No major governance/QA issues

- 11.16 The university sector in Wales and beyond generally welcomed the option to introduce an overseas mobility pilot as long as it provided tangible benefits to encourage more students from poorer socio-economic background to undertake overseas study as part of their HE course. In this respect it was strongly felt that the overseas study pilot should be wider than the Diamond Review's recommendation and this option accommodates this view.
- 11.17 The university sector was inclined to argue that an overseas pilot could help achieve the UK's target to increase overseas mobility. As such, it was suggested that smaller sums of funding, for shorter durations would provide a better return on investment and support a greater number of students. It was also less likely to preclude disadvantaged students (although such a scheme would not need to be means-tested in any way) as the desk research clearly demonstrates that shorter study periods abroad are more likely to attract a more diverse student base to apply.
- 11.18 This option would not need to restrict the funds by any particular type of destination – as the country or institute of destination does not have bearing upon the outcomes attained by mobile students according to the research. However, a specific scheme for particular destinations of strategic importance to Welsh Government could be an adaptation to this approach.
- 11.19 Students from Wales currently studying abroad were also surprisingly positive about this type of option. Whilst they believed that full time study abroad was of interest to only a small cohort of students, they were of the view that there would be huge interest in studying overseas for a shorter period of time.
- 11.20 This type of option could be achieved in a number of ways. It could simply be a fund to support existing exchange programmes which students, or institutions could apply for directly, or it could be a programme with a more specific remit (similar to the Study USA scheme delivered by the British Council in Northern Ireland for example), to develop leadership and business skills for the future by accessing specific courses, or by limiting the scheme to a specific country or area where Wales wishes to develop specific links (such as via the Global Wales scheme or a version of the Generation UK-China approach).

11.21 Students studying at FE or HE level could equally be eligible for a short-term mobility option such as this one, and some stakeholders welcomed this.

Option 3: Strategic Partnerships Model

Brief Outline:	Provide a scholarship to enable Welsh domiciled students to study part of their course at an overseas University in a strategic partnership with a Welsh HEI.
Rationale:	To build on the existing strategic partnerships that already exist between Welsh HEIs and key overseas Universities.
Target Audience:	Any (Welsh domiciled) student studying at a Welsh HEI who wishes to study some modules abroad.
Duration:	At least one semester of study. Could include one year placement/sandwich year options.
Location:	(e.g.) Swansea University and Texas based Universities, USA or Xiamen University, China and Cardiff University
Administration:	Funding provided directly to Welsh HEIs involved in the pilot. No major governance and QA issues as 'home' HEI should ensure alignment with their existing requirements/procedures.

11.22 There is merit in building upon the arrangements that Welsh universities already have in place with international HEIs, and as a result this option was widely supported by stakeholders. In several instances, the strategic partnerships already in place are in areas of economic and trade interest to Wales. Universities explained how joint research and staff exchanges already occur with these strategic alliances but often there is less of a focus on student exchanges. Beyond Europe, overseas mobility is largely dependent on students accessing university funding, which currently creates a slightly uneven playing field across Welsh HEIs, with larger, wealthier universities with a more international perspective more likely to promote and support overseas mobility than other Universities in Wales.

11.23 Stakeholders felt that enabling these alliances between Welsh HEIs and strategically placed, high quality Universities abroad would be a positive development to higher education in Wales. Several examples were provided of relationships that could be expanded. Cardiff University has two 'signature partnerships'. One is with Xiamen University in China, and this partnership

(borne out of the Cardiff City twinning originally) now includes collaborative scientific and business research, the co-supervision of doctoral students and elements of promoting trade links between China and Wales. Similarly, there is a partnership between Cardiff University and the Leuven University in Belgium which also involves formal research collaboration. Swansea University has similar arrangements with a number of Texas-based Universities in the USA. One stakeholder conceded that 'we sometimes struggle to join the dots between [international research collaboration] and mobility' and felt that more could be done to build on this.

- 11.24 Welsh HEIs also have a number of exchange agreements, some of which tie into the strategic partnerships and others that do not. Aberystwyth University, for example, has exchange links with more than 100 institutions across Europe and a further 100 or so across the world. The main focus of Aberystwyth's overseas mobility activity (beyond Europe) is in the USA, with institutions with a strong Welsh connection, such as Bryn Mawr in Philadelphia and Rio Grande University (home to the Madog Centre for Welsh studies) in Ohio of particular interest.
- 11.25 Interestingly Welsh HEI stakeholders took the view that Welsh domiciled students were 'not especially courageous' when considering overseas study, and did not tend to opt for countries that were very culturally different, such as China. The Welsh HEI representatives interviewed as part of this research all saw merit in a pilot programme that worked with Welsh HEIs to encourage international mobility beyond Europe and would be happy to work with the Welsh Government to develop such ideas further. Funding for shorter term study, work experience or volunteering opportunities was deemed most useful 'because there isn't any funding at the moment' and due to shorter mobility periods being more accessible to students from lower socio-economic groups who are less likely to undertake international mobility experiences in the first place. However, this comment was made on the presumption of Erasmus+ continuing to be available to cater for longer placements.

- 11.26 One concern raised by a stakeholder was that a pilot limited to Welsh domiciled students studying at Welsh HEIs would be inherently unfair on other students from other parts of the UK studying in Wales, and it was also argued that it would be equally unfair to exclude Welsh domiciled students studying at English universities from qualifying for similar schemes running in England. However, another stakeholder commented that when overseas study schemes were offered by their University, their existing international students were considerably more likely to capitalise on the opportunities than their UK domiciled counterparts. One stakeholder noted that any pilot of this type should be pan-Wales and not be focused on institutions funding overseas mobility, in order to make international mobility more accessible to a wider range of students, across all Welsh HEIs.
- 11.27 There was a general feeling that a pilot scheme such as this option (or option 2) had the prospect of enabling Welsh Government to convey 'a really positive message' about international mobility to students and to institutions, and would serve to reinforce the message that 'we need young people and graduates who are outward looking' in order to build the Welsh economy.
- 11.28 Another benefit to this option that made it an attractive and viable option to stakeholders was that quality assurance and governance issues should already be covered to a certain extent due to the relationships already being in place.

Option 4: Trade Connections Model

Brief Outline:	Provide a scholarship to enable Welsh domiciled students to study abroad for one year at a HEI in an area of economic trade importance to Wales
Rationale:	To capitalise on emerging economies; or to strengthen relationships between key areas of strategic importance for the Welsh economy.
Target Audience:	Any Welsh domiciled student studying at undergraduate level at a UK HEI Relatively high cost per head so fund up to 15 students per year at most?
Duration:	Sandwich or 'gap year' scheme (one year)
Location:	3-4 HEI institutions at locations of strategic international trade and investment importance to Wales in Europe (e.g. Germany); specific regions overseas (e.g. Chicago, USA) or specific countries overseas e.g. Canada, China
Administration:	Dependent on strategic priority but could link to Global Wales scheme (administered by British Council) or Fulbright Commission (if focused on America). Could be a reciprocal partnership with the identified HEIs abroad.

11.29 A consistent message from our fieldwork was that there was merit and a clear rationale on focussing a pilot to support students to study, and act as ambassadors of Wales, at countries which are well aligned to the economic and strategic priorities of the Welsh Government.

11.30 One stakeholder highlighted how the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All economic action plan had shifted the focus away from a sectoral focus in terms of economic development, and that this needed to be reflected in its outcomes in relation to higher education too. Important global regions such as North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia were all noted as priority areas, and several stakeholders mentioned Germany and France as key markets in Europe, whilst America (and the Chicago region in particular), Canada, Qatar, China and Vietnam were also raised as countries where work is currently being undertaken to build and enhance relationships.

- 11.31 Several stakeholders also mentioned how any option for a pilot should link to areas where Wales had existing, or was intent on opening new international offices, which are based on an assessment that they are areas of economic opportunity for Welsh businesses. The Prosperity for All economic action plan notes that new offices are to be opened in Canada, Germany, France and Qatar in 2018, whilst 'existing and new markets'¹¹⁷ will be allocated resources where good opportunities are possible. In this respect, this option would link overseas mobility with Wales' economic ties in terms of foreign investment.
- 11.32 At least three stakeholders suggested linking a pilot with the work of the current Global Wales partnership between British Council Wales, Universities Wales, Welsh Government and HEFCW. Other stakeholders suggested that a pilot could be aligned with schemes such as Generation UK-China, run by the British Council.
- 11.33 One or two stakeholders felt that this option could work as a competitive model if the number of students interested exceeded the resources allocated. If this was the case, a similar approach to the Study USA scheme in Northern Ireland could be utilised, where the average results of first year undergraduate study could be taken into account to provide a 'cut off' for funding support.
- 11.34 Several stakeholders also saw merit in exploring a hybrid model between Option 3 and Option 4 which could focus on the economic priority countries of importance to Wales, but adopt a delivery approach as outlined in option 3.

Option 5: Full degree portability model

Brief Outline:	Provide portability of funding (maintenance grant/loan) to study a full degree abroad
Rationale:	Responds more directly to Diamond Review recommendation (especially if institutions are outside EU)
Target Audience:	Welsh domiciled students who wish to study full degree abroad
Duration:	3-4 years (depending on length of undergraduate study at overseas country)
Location:	Focus the pilot on 3-4 publicly funded Universities (to be identified) in specific regions/countries of strategic importance to Wales. Choose locations with low/no tuition fees.
Administration:	Student Loan Company? Fulbright Commission (if US focused)? QA via direct contact with participating institution due to low numbers

11.35 The final option is based on a similar set-up to that undertaken by the Scottish Government for its portability pilot. As it would be a pilot scheme, the locations/institutions would be limited, but full portability of funding would be offered as per the maintenance grant for studying in the UK.

11.36 Whilst this option responds most closely to the Diamond Review recommendation, it was also the one that was questioned in terms of its practicalities, limitations and cost. Several stakeholders queried the need to fund full degree options for students abroad, and felt that this option would be driven by benefit to the individual student rather than providing benefit to Wales and its economy. Others questioned its administration and observed that the Student Loan Company, as the obvious administrator of such a scheme, would need a long lead-in time to set the appropriate processes and procedures in place.

11.37 The scheme would have to be operated as a grant or bursary award given the restrictions on making student loans available for overseas students. Tuition fees cannot be covered either, due to UK Treasury regulations, so this would necessitate narrowing the options in terms of locations (as per the Scotland model) to countries where there were little or no tuition fees.

Several European countries would fit into such a model at the moment, but again, the uncertainty of Brexit, and its potential impact during a three-year pilot period also caused concern.

- 11.38 To counteract concerns about losing Welsh talent to other countries, one stakeholder suggested that the pilot should adopt some criteria around 'encouraging students to return to Wales to work afterwards', even looking at garnering support from some key employers with links to any given location that could offer a role back in Wales on completion of an overseas degree.
- 11.39 Generally, stakeholders felt that HE institutions involved in such a pilot scheme would need to be prestigious and high-ranking, and if a scheme was to look at the top 20 or top 50 in any recent international university ranking guide, then this would guide this option to consider the USA above any other area. The Times World University Rankings for 2015/16 for example determines that 14 of the top 20 universities in the world are US based (most of the others in the top 20 incidentally are in the UK). This approach could also be attractive from a promotional perspective, with Welsh Government supporting a small number of Welsh domiciled students to study at the very top global universities.
- 11.40 If such a pilot was to be considered under Option 5, with a US focus, then one stakeholder suggested that a scheme which could provide additional funding could serve to enhance (and leverage) the funding generally available for US-based study, and would not necessarily need to cover the whole costs. It would be sensible for the fund to be made available for those Welsh domiciled applicants applying to 'needs based' US institutions: as one stakeholder commented 'if a student can say 'I can bring £10k to the table' when applying then they are increasing their chances of securing a place at a US university'. There is merit therefore in offering a sizeable amount of funding per student which would be adequate enough to make a difference in terms of their application success rate but which would also ensure that a decent cohort of students (circa 8-10) could be supported in any one year.

12. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 12.1 The evidence considered to support the development of an Overseas Study pilot has taken us on a somewhat unexpected trajectory and as a result the focus of some of the options provided reflect that journey.
- 12.2 By looking at the current patterns of Welsh domiciled students studying overseas, we can conclude that the numbers are generally low. The evidence suggests that Welsh domiciled students are less likely than their UK counterparts, and certainly less likely than European or international students generally, to undertake overseas study. The evidence suggests that even when Welsh domiciled students study abroad it is for a shorter period of time, and to countries that are either relatively close to home (in Europe) or in countries further afield with a similar culture (USA and Australia). Accessing provision through the medium of English also plays a part in establishing overseas destinations, understandably.
- 12.3 When taking into account that the research into the characteristics of students who choose to study overseas demonstrates that independent school-educated individuals and those from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to study overseas, it is no surprise that Wales is under-represented and that actual and latent demand here, although impossible to accurately quantify, is certainly very low.
- 12.4 Perhaps the more surprising message that has become increasingly apparent during this scoping study is that the rationale for considering overseas study as an element of a student's experience during an undergraduate degree – be it short term or for the duration – from a government perspective, is different to that of the individual.
- 12.5 Whilst the benefits for the individual are to boost future employability and to obtain new experiences, this does not necessarily translate into any direct benefits for the Welsh economy. Indeed, there is some argument that such mobile students (especially those who study for the longer term overseas) are more likely to have a positive impact on the economy and innovation of the host country, and are more likely to continue with their global outlook for future graduate employment opportunities. It was also argued that Welsh Government should do more to boost the future employability and maximise

the aspirations of individuals irrespective of whether they were living and working inside or outside of Wales.

- 12.6 It is therefore not unexpected that the rationale behind almost all government-funded scholarship programmes for overseas study that were studied as part of this study, was for supporting short-term (one year or less) study for outward mobility and that they were often linked to clear economic priorities – either to build human capacity in undergraduate talent, to capitalise on emerging economies or to strengthen cultural collaboration or strategic economic partnerships.
- 12.7 In terms of barriers, two specific issues stand out. Firstly, it is one of funding an overseas mobility experience. And secondly it is one of receiving timely, accurate and inspiring information to generate interest and enable the individual to make the step into the unknown.
- 12.8 The research has demonstrated that there are several conflicting views on what an overseas study pilot should and could set out to achieve, but there is relative agreement that any approach needs to be wider than the initial Diamond Review recommendation that generated the study in the first instance.
- 12.9 As a result of the findings of this scoping study, we therefore make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

When developing an overseas study pilot the Welsh Government should look to ensure that the model opens up opportunities for all current Welsh domiciled students. As a result, funding opportunities for shorter-term study should be the main focus of any intervention.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government should look to develop an overarching strategy for its overseas mobility activities aimed at linking 'Wales and the World'. This strategy should clearly articulate the rationale for such activity and link with the relevant educational and economic development priorities of the Welsh Government. The strategy should also set specific targets regarding the

proportion of Welsh domiciled students experiencing overseas study, in line with both the UK and EU approach. This will be crucial in ensuring that any future overseas study options, funded by the Welsh Government can be evaluated against clear strategic aims and objectives and expected outcomes.

Recommendation 3

Whilst it is important that any pilot schemes are closely aligned with Welsh Government economic priorities, some caution is required as Welsh Government strategic areas of interest overseas can change over time. The pilot should therefore focus on areas that are likely to remain of high importance over the coming decade so that funding interventions remain highly relevant.

Recommendation 4

A small working group to include British Council, HEFCW, Welsh HEIs and Welsh Government officials (from HE and economic development departments) should be set up to scope out the strategy and its underpinning financial interventions for overseas study.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government should seek to support a suite of 'Wales and the World' pilot initiatives, based on some, all or a hybrid of the five options outlined in this report. This would enable the pilot to address a number of existing gaps in provision, but ensure that each model or option clearly links with the Welsh Government policy objective that it intends to achieve and ensure that collectively any new and existing activity (e.g. by individual Welsh HEIs) all work towards the same strategic aim.

Recommendation 6

In addition to supporting financial intervention for an overseas pilot, the Welsh Government should also develop a Wales-wide campaign within schools, sixth forms and the FE sector to raise awareness of the benefits of overseas study and promote existing (as well as new) funding sources prior to attending University.

Recommendation 7

It is an important principle that any options for a pilot study to be considered should not replace or fund any provision which is currently available. Whilst new activity, funded by Welsh Government, should have a strong strategic economic development focus, that should not replace important funding and activity in relation to individual development or educational attainment via overseas study that is already in place, particularly within HEIs.

Recommendation 8

The focus of any investment via a pilot scheme, whilst not means-tested, should ensure that Welsh domiciled students from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity to take advantage. This points to more investment in shorter study periods abroad rather than investment in full-degree portability options. The Welsh Government should also explore how funding could be aligned to the level of maintenance grant provided to students, so that more support for living costs when studying overseas can be provided to those who most require it.

Recommendation 9

Due to the uncertainty over the future of overseas mobility schemes such as Erasmus+ post Brexit, we recommend that any interventions are not fully implemented until there is more clarity. This will help ensure that the focus and funding available will be utilised in the most effective way. We therefore recommend that the awareness raising aspects for existing scholarship opportunities and the pilot options that are not dependent on Brexit decisions (e.g. for short term study) should be rolled out from 2018/19 but that longer-term funded pilot options should be delayed by one full year, with the promotion of opportunities during 2019/20 and the first cohorts of students undertaking overseas mobility in 2020/21.

References

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- ¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- ² See <https://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/seren/?lang=en>
- ³ The Sorbonne Declaration's aim was a joint declaration on the harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system, signed by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy and the UK on May 25th 1998.
- ⁴ In 1999, the Ministers of Education of 29 countries agreed on a common vision of a EHEA.
- ⁵ EHEA website <http://www.ehea.info/pid34248/history.html> [accessed 27 April 2018].
- ⁶ ECTS is a more transparent credit system. It was developed under Erasmus, when a large number of students began to move to other countries for part of their study and needed assurance that their study abroad would be recognised at their home institution. ECTS takes a standardised approach to study assessments and credits, therefore making it easier to transfer learning experiences between different educational institutions. However, implementation of ECTS within the EHEA remains patchy.
- ⁷ Universities UK (2017), Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility: A picture of participation, p.1
- ⁸ Universities UK (2017), UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-2020, p.7
- ⁹ Ibid., p.2
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p.3
- ¹¹ Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
- ¹² Association of UK Higher Education European Officers
- ¹³ Universities UK (2017), UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-2020, p.4
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.5
- ¹⁵ Welsh Government (2013), Policy statement on higher education
- ¹⁶ Ibid. p.14
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- ¹⁹ Ibid.p.15
- ²⁰ www.studyinwales.ac.uk [accessed 22 January 2018]
- ²¹ The Independent Review of Student Support and Higher Education Funding In Wales, chaired by Professor Sir Ian Diamond
- ²² This recommendation was made prior to the outcome of the Brexit referendum vote
- ²³ Review of Student Support and Higher Education Funding In Wales (2016), <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160927-he-review-final-report-en.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2018]
- ²⁴ Welsh Government (2016), Response to Recommendations from the Review of Student Support and Higher Education Funding in Wales, p.10
- ²⁵ Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Higher-Education/Students/Welsh-Domicile-Enrolments-at-UK-HEIs/enrolmentsat1decemberatukheisby-level-modeofstudy> [accessed 13 June 2018]
- ²⁶ Down from 106,645 enrolments in 2013/14 to 96,080 in 2016/17
- ²⁷ Stats Wales <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Higher-Education/Students/Welsh-Domicile-Enrolments-at-UK-HEIs> [accessed 18 May2018]
- ²⁸ Stats Wales, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Higher-Education/Students/Welsh-Domicile-Enrolments-at-UK-HEIs/eenrolmentsatukheis-by-level-mode-gender-disability>, [accessed 18 May 2018]
- ²⁹ It is a compulsory requirement for HEIs to provide HESA with data on students undertaking a mobility experience with a combined duration of 4 weeks or more. It is optional for short durations which sum up to less than 4 weeks. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16051/e/mobility> [accessed 18 May 2018]

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- ³⁰ HESA mobility data for all UK domiciled students 2015-16, <http://go.international.ac.uk/content/how-many-students-are-going-abroad-uk> [accessed 18 May 2018]
- ³¹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2015 figures
- ³² OECD (2017), Education at a Glance, p.288
- ³³ Universities UK (2017), Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility: A picture of participation, p.4
- ³⁴ OECD (2017), Education at a Glance, p.289
- ³⁵ Ibid., p.289
- ³⁶ Ibid.p288
- ³⁷ Ibid. p.288
- ³⁸ Ibid.p.302
- ³⁹ Ibid.p.302
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.p.302
- ⁴¹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010), Motivations and experiences of UK students studying abroad
- ⁴² Ibid., p.41
- ⁴³ It should be noted that this percentage would include both undergraduate and postgraduate study.
- ⁴⁴ A variety of sources were investigated, during an 18 month study in order to prepare the 'best estimates'. These included UK official sources (International Passenger Survey, HESA survey of destinations of leavers, UNESCO, OECD and EUROSTAT datasets and national statistical sources for Australia, France, Germany, Ireland and the USA.
- ⁴⁵ Education at a Glance (2017), p.303
- ⁴⁶ The EU-22 average refers to the 22 European Union members of the OECD
- ⁴⁷ Percentage of national tertiary students enrolled abroad, OECD (2017), Education at a Glance, p.303
- ⁴⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010), Motivations and experiences of UK students studying abroad
- ⁴⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁵⁰ Wales Factsheet, <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/results-and-statistics> [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁵¹ <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/higher-education-funding> [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁵² In 2017/18, students who commenced their course at an HEI in Wales, England or Scotland on or after 1 September 2012 are not eligible for the tuition fee waiver. Instead, they pay a maximum of 15% of their institution's tuition fees for that year (capped at £1,385). The tuition fee waiver continues to apply in Northern Ireland.
- ⁵³ Figure is taken from a Welsh HEI stakeholder interview and is unsubstantiated.
- ⁵⁴ <https://www.studyinholland.nl/scholarships/find-a-scholarship> [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁵⁵ <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/en/21148-scholarship-database/> [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁵⁶ The IIE Funding for US Study Online portal provides a database which includes details of all grants, awards and scholarships available for study in the USA – www.fundingusstudy.org
- ⁵⁷ www.collegeboard.org provides a search engine for HE institutions which offer funding for international students.
- ⁵⁸ The www.InternationalScholarships.com and www.ScholarshipPortal.eu websites include databases of scholarships for various overseas HEIs.
- ⁵⁹ Education USA is a US Department of State network of over 425 international student advising centres in more than 175 countries.
- ⁶⁰ More information is available at: <http://www.fulbright.org.uk/going-to-the-usa/undergraduate/educationusa-advice/funding/external-funding-bodies> and includes links to external organisations such as EducationUSA, BigFuture Scholarship Search, the IIE and IEFA.org

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- ⁶² More information is available at: www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/scholarships [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁶³ Four Universities in Wales are Santander Universities: Bangor University, Cardiff University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Swansea University.
- ⁶⁴ <https://www.iie.org/>
- ⁶⁵ <https://www.suttontrust.com/about-us/us/fast-facts-programmes/>
- ⁶⁶ Number of courses and institutions include private universities.
- ⁶⁷ Fees are per year of undergraduate tuition. Some courses will last for more than three years. Indicative fees are for public universities only.
- ⁶⁸ A Star Future (www.astarfuture.co.uk) is a limited company which provides information about international higher education opportunities to British students, parents and advisors. It is a free advisory service designed to signpost individuals to information about universities abroad. https://www.astarfuture.co.uk/financial_info.html [accessed 01 May 2018]
- ⁶⁹ See Altbach and Engberg (2014), *Global Student Mobility: the Changing Landscape*, International Higher Education 77 p.13 for a review of schemes
- ⁷⁰ UK International (2017), *UK Strategy for Outward Mobility*
- ⁷¹ For example, the Finnish National Board of Education provide funding for about 7% of outwardly mobile students, but we do not know how this is targeted:
http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/21273_Faktaa_1b_2011_web.pdf
- ⁷² UNESCO, for example, has a different definition of 'study abroad' from that used by the IIE
- ⁷³ Hillman, N. (2015), *Keeping up with the Germans? A comparison of student funding, internationalisation and research in UK and German Universities*. HEPI Report 77, Higher Education Policy Institute
- ⁷⁴ <http://monitor.icef.com/2015/06/german-student-mobility-continues-to-increase/>
- ⁷⁵ Huberts, D, (2016) *Outgoing student mobility in Dutch higher education 2015-2016*. EP/Nuffic
- ⁷⁶ Gvetadze, S. (2014) *Financing the Mobility of Students in European Higher Education*. Working Paper 2014/21, EIF Research and Market Analysis.
- ⁷⁷ Saarikallio-Torp M, Wiers-Jenssen J, (2010) *Nordic students abroad. Student mobility patterns, student support systems and labour market outcomes*. Helsinki: The Social Insurance Institution, Finland, Studies in Social Security and Health
- ⁷⁸ <http://monitor.icef.com/2015/04/international-student-mobility-picking-up-in-norway-while-major-reforms-take-shape/>
- ⁷⁹ The pilot scheme has purposefully avoided choosing universities providing medical degrees in the pilot due to concerns about the comparability of qualifications.
- ⁸⁰ <http://www.nordpluonline.org/>
- ⁸¹ Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2010), *Motivations and Experiences of UK Students studying Abroad*, p. 42
- ⁸² Ibid., p.42
- ⁸³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010), p.42
- ⁸⁴ HEFCE (2010), *International student mobility literature review*, p.26
- ⁸⁵ Ibid..p26
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p.27
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p.27
- ⁸⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010), p.42
- ⁸⁹ Credit mobility refers to students who undertake some credit bearing study abroad
- ⁹⁰ British Council (2015), *Broadening Horizons: the value of the overseas experience*, p.9
- ⁹¹ Ibid., p.10
- ⁹² Ibid., p.11
- ⁹³ Ibid., p.11

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- ⁹⁴ Analysis of the Student Record and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys in 2012/13 looking at 233,185 UK domiciled first degree completers.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., p.13
- ⁹⁶ Ibid, p.15
- ⁹⁷ Analysis of DHLE, p. 15
- ⁹⁸ The Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016), Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education.
- ⁹⁹ Go International/UUKI (2017), Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility: A picture of participation, p.1
- ¹⁰⁰ British Council/DAAD (2014), The rationale for sponsoring students to undertake international study, p.4
- ¹⁰¹ OECD (2017), Education at a Glance, p. 289
- ¹⁰² Department of BIS, p.43
- ¹⁰³ British Council (2015), Broadening Horizons: Addressing the needs of a new generation p.15
- ¹⁰⁴ UUKI (2017), Gone International, mobility works, p.3
- ¹⁰⁵ Go International (2013), Gone International: mobile students and their outcomes, p.18
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.4
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p.4
- ¹⁰⁸ British Council (2015), Broadening Horizons, p.16
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.21
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.22
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., p.17
- ¹¹² Next Generation UK research by the British Council and YouGov in 2011 came to this conclusion.
- ¹¹³ British Council (2015), Broadening Horizons, p.18
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.19
- ¹¹⁵ <https://us.suttontrust.com/about/>
- ¹¹⁶ <https://globalscholars.yale.edu/>
- ¹¹⁷ Welsh Government (2017), Prosperity for All: economic action plan, p.42