

ASSESSMENT OF POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN SELECTED AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES: INPUT FOR POLICY MAKING FOR INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author has aimed to assess the postgraduate programs offered for international students in selected Australian universities particularly the program, instructions and research. The study adopted the exploratory sequential mixed methods. It involves international postgraduate students studying for their master's through coursework, research and PhD. The following were findings of the study: This study evaluated the satisfaction levels of 173 international postgraduate students, predominantly enrolled in master's programs across three Australian universities: USyd, UTS, and UNSW. The author has shown that the findings underscore that Australian universities provide well-structured programs with strong academic support and career services. However, employment-related assistance for international students needs to be improved. The author has concluded with recommendations that include expanding work opportunities, offering more support for students balancing employment, and redefining program requirements for full-time employees. Overall, the study suggests that Australian universities effectively meet international postgraduate students' academic and professional needs, though room for improvement remains in career support.

KEYWORDS

Assessment, Postgraduate Programs, International Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Australia is a popular destination for international students, offering a high-quality education system with world-class universities and diverse cities. Further academics, the country's vigorous culture, remarkable landscapes, and welcoming ambience enhance the student experience. Australian universities provide comprehensive career support for international postgraduate students, including job listings, career development programs, advising, and workshops, aimed at improving employability and helping students secure rewarding careers. These institutions focus on practical learning, industry connections, and specialized postgraduate programs, which prepare graduates for the global job market. International postgraduate students face unique challenges in employment, including navigating job markets, cultural nuances, and visa restrictions, but universities and professional platforms provide crucial support to enhance their career prospects. Based on the related literature and studies, the researcher observed that there are insufficient studies when it comes to assessment of international postgraduate programs. It is very evident that previous studies were more focused in general student population (e.g., entire

population of the program and PhD students only). Also, the current survey questions of the selected Australian universities only focused on the course unit and not the program, instruction, and research. Lastly, the current student survey from The Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) only focuses undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students and those who are currently on their course's first or final year. With that, there is a research gap or lack of knowledge when it comes to assessment of postgraduate programs for international students who are studying master's by research and PhD in Australian universities, and that is what this study aims to explore.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

This study assessed the postgraduate programs offered to international students in selected Australian universities, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the programs and how well the program and how well they satisfied and met the needs of international postgraduate students.

Specifically, this study will seek to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following:
 - 1.1 Postgraduate program enrolled in
 - 1.2 Specialization
 - 1.3 Stage of Progress (year level)
 - 1.4 University enrolled in
2. What is the assessment of the respondents on the postgraduate programs for international students in selected Australian universities when it comes to perceived academic fulfillment in terms of the following:
 - 2.1 Program
 - 2.2 Instruction
 - 2.3 Graduate Research
3. Is there a significant difference in the evaluation of the respondents when the profile is taken as test factors?
4. What specific policy may be proposed based on the results of the study?

2. METHODOLOGY

The chapter presented the research design and techniques used in conducting the study. It included the respondents of the study, the research instrument used for data processing, and the statistical tools utilized for analysing and interpreting the data.

2.1. Research Design

The study employed the mixed method, specifically the explanatory sequential model. Using this model involves the following level: the **quantitative phase** – international students taking up master's degrees; international students doctorate degrees; and the **qualitative phase** – the deans of the Postgraduate School or program heads. The quantitative phase involved the international postgraduate students taking up master's degrees by coursework and research, and doctorate degrees in evaluating the postgraduate program offered by their respective universities. The qualitative phase involved the deans or program heads in an interview about the evaluation of the university postgraduate programs based on the distinct results of the quantitative phase.

2.2. Research Locale

This study was conducted in three selected Australian universities. The selected Australian universities—The University of Sydney, University of New South Wales and University of Technology Sydney—were chosen for their diverse international student populations and varying levels of technological integration.

2.3. Research Instruments

2.3.1. Quantitative Phase

The self-assessment tool was drawn from carefully selected literature on Postgraduate Program Evaluation. The researcher was guided by the Graduate Student Assessment Survey 2011 of the University at Albany's [1], the University of California Graduate Student Experience Survey 2021 [2], and the national standards of Australia. It was developed to meet the objectives of the study, meet the Australian standards and tailor fit the intended respondents with the guidance of the three international experts from selected Australian Universities (UNSW, U Syd, and UTS).

2.3.2. Qualitative Phase

The researcher created a semi-structured questionnaire about the assessment of postgraduate programs only after the distinct results of the quantitative phase were obtained. The questions were based on the distinct results only of the quantitative phase. This instrument was used for the interview with the deans or program heads.

2.4. Validation of Instrument

The self-assessment tool and the semi-structured questionnaire was validated by 3 experts: the Dean of the Postgraduate Studies, Program Heads, and Field Experts. The evaluation tool was pilot tested with the international students at Adamson University. The tool used a 5 – point Likert scale to ascertain the valid evaluation of the international student – respondents: 1 – not satisfactory; 2 – slightly satisfactory; 3 – satisfactory; 4 – very satisfactory; 5 – excellent.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

2.5.1. Quantitative Phase

A letter of request to the University Officer to conduct the study was processed after the defense proposal. The distribution of the questionnaire was done digitally by the researcher to postgraduate international students at selected Australian universities. The researcher sought help and support from the staff of the selected departments to ensure 100% retrieval. Retrieval was done 2 weeks after the distribution of the questionnaires.

2.5.2. Qualitative Phase

The researcher conducted an interview with the deans or program heads using a semi-structured questionnaire about the postgraduate programs offered to international students after the distinct results of the quantitative phase have been obtained. The interview questions were based on the distinct results only of the quantitative phase.

2.6. Data Analysis Procedure

2.6.1. Quantitative Phase

Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used in treating the gathered data in this study. Frequency counts and percentages was used to describe the profile of the respondents. The weighted mean was used to describe the assessment of postgraduate programs of the respondents as international students, and the following Likert Scale will be used:

Mean Range	Verbal Description
4.20 – 5.00	Excellent
3.40 – 4.19	Very Satisfactory
2.60 – 3.39	Satisfactory
1.80 – 2.59	Slightly Satisfactory
1.00 – 1.79	Not Satisfactory

2.6.2. Qualitative Phase

The researcher conducted the following steps by Creswell and Poth, 2018[3] in analyzing the data obtained from the interview: Manage and organize the qualitative data obtained from interview protocols. Read and memo emergent ideas from the interview protocols. Memos are short phrases, ideas, or concepts that occur to the researcher; and are synthesized into higher-level analytic meanings. Memoing captured emerging thematic ideas. Describe and analyse the codes into themes. Coding involves aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code, then assigning a label to the code. Themes or dimensions of information consist of several codes aggregated to form common ideas. Develop and assess the interpretations to establish the follow-up and explanation of the quantitative findings. Represent and visualize the qualitative data into a tabular format.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data gathered, the quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation of the findings. The sequence of the presentation is patterned after the statement of the problem through tabular presentations.

3.1. Quantitative Phase

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Program		
Masters	117	67.6%
Doctorate	56	32.4%
Specialization		
Business and Management	63	36.4%
Social Science	42	24.3%
Science, Health, Engineering, Computing	67	38.7%
Did not identify	1	0.6%
Progress		
Masters – coursework	109	63.0%
Masters- research	8	4.6%
Doctorate-research	56	32.4%
University		
University of Sydney	72	41.6%
University of Technology Sydney	52	30.1%
University of New South Wales	49	28.3%

A total of 173 international students were included in the study who are mostly from master's program (67.6%) while remaining 32.4% are Doctorate level. On specialization, 38.7% specializes Science, Health, Engineering, Computing, 36.4% Business and Management and other 24.3% social science. Moreover, majority are currently Masters-coursework (63%) while 32.4% are at Doctorate-research. Three universities were represented such as 41.6% from University of Sydney, 30.1% from University of Technology Sydney and 28.3% from University of New South Wales. Indeed, majority of the international students in Australia are taking up Master. According to MSA (2023) [4], Australia is a popular destination for international students seeking postgraduate education, with a significant number of pursuing master's degrees. According to one source, around 50% of international students in Australia are enrolled in higher degree programs, including Master's and PhDs. This high number reflects the appeal of Australian universities for their globally recognized qualifications, diverse course offerings, and opportunities for career advancement. The popularity of master's programs is further evidenced by the numerous universities offering these programs and the wide range of specializations available. The strong reputation of Australian universities, coupled with the availability of scholarships and post-study work visa options, makes pursuing a master's degree in Australia an attractive proposition for international students.

Table 2. Assessment of the respondents on the postgraduate programs for international students – Among Coursework

Table 2.1 Program

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Adequacy of facilities	4.26	0.66	Very Satisfactory	1
Quality of IT support	3.9	0.84	Very Satisfactory	4
Expectations to access library facilities or how easy to access library online	3.76	0.85	Very Satisfactory	10.5
My assessment of overall quality of library holdings in my program	3.88	0.75	Very Satisfactory	5
Required courses are offered regularly and as scheduled	4.25	0.65	Very Satisfactory	2
Elective courses are offered regularly and as scheduled	4.06	0.74	Very Satisfactory	3
Degree of faculty involvement in program activities and events	3.1	0.98	Satisfactory	16
My program's requirements are appropriate and well-defined	3.83	0.68	Very Satisfactory	7.5
My program's curriculum provides the knowledge and training for postgraduate competency in my area of specialization	3.72	0.73	Very Satisfactory	12
Conditions for understanding of the program's standards and expectations for student work	3.61	0.76	Very Satisfactory	14
Quality of the department/discipline/program advice and guidance	3.85	0.77	Very Satisfactory	6
The opportunity to interact intellectually across disciplines	3.45	0.79	Satisfactory	15
Assistance in finding employment from my department/program/instructors	1.98	1.05	Slightly Satisfactory	17
Literature advised by supervisor/s is/are relevant to program content	3.83	0.77	Very Satisfactory	7.5
Literature advised by supervisor/s includes the latest developments in the discipline	3.77	0.79	Very Satisfactory	9
Rate the variety of courses available in your postgraduate program	3.76	0.83	Very Satisfactory	10.5
My assessment of overall quality of my program.	3.63	0.66	Very Satisfactory	13
Overall	3.69	0.46	Very Satisfactory	

Overall resulting mean of 3.69 denotes a satisfactory rating on their assessment specific to program. Among the seventeen positive attributes, fourteen are rated as very satisfactory while two attributes are rated as satisfactory while remaining one is rated as slightly satisfactory. Highest mean is 4.26 which denotes a rating of very satisfactory about adequacy of facilities. According to Kumar (2023) [5], Australia boasts a number of top-tier graduate schools that are renowned for their exceptional facilities. These institutions invest heavily in providing students with the resources they need to thrive in their academic pursuits. For example, the University of Melbourne, ranked 33rd globally by QS World University Rankings, offers state-of-the-art research facilities, modern libraries, sports facilities, and various student services. Similarly, the

Australian National University (ANU), ranked 30th globally, provides modern classrooms, well-equipped laboratories, libraries, recreational spaces, and a range of student services. Meanwhile, this is followed by mean of 4.25, also a rating of very satisfactory about required courses are offered regularly and as scheduled. Additionally, rank 3rd is mean of 4.06, also a rating of very satisfactory about how elective courses are offered regularly and as scheduled. On the other hand, lowest mean is 1.98 which suggest that their rating is only slightly satisfactory about assistance in finding employment from their department/program/instructors. Thus, this table only suggests that universities in Australia offers international students an adequate facility as part of their coursework program. Many Australian universities provide extensive facilities for international students as part of their coursework programs. These often include well-equipped libraries with online resources, modern computer labs with high-speed internet access, and specialized labs for science and engineering programs. Students also typically have access to student support services such as academic advising, career counselling, and health and wellbeing services. Furthermore, many universities offer comfortable student accommodation options on or near campus, along with recreational facilities like gyms, sports fields, and social clubs to foster a supportive and enriching learning environment. The specific facilities available will vary depending on the university and the chosen course of study.

Table 2.2 Instruction

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Courses provide preparation for post-graduation careers	3.61	0.77	Very Satisfactory	6
Core courses provide a theoretical foundation in my field or discipline	3.7	0.75	Very Satisfactory	3
The course workload is manageable	4.04	0.71	Very Satisfactory	1
Instructor expectations for student work are reasonable	3.69	0.74	Very Satisfactory	4
Instructor expectations for student work are challenging enough	3.14	1.05	Satisfactory	7
Availability of my instructors/professors for consultation	3.98	0.85	Very Satisfactory	2
My assessment of overall quality of graduate level teaching in my area of discipline	3.65	0.7	Very Satisfactory	5
Overall	3.69	0.46	Satisfactory	

Overall resulting mean of 3.69 denotes a satisfactory rating on their assessment specific to instruction. Among the seven positive attributes, six are rated as very satisfactory while remaining one is rated as satisfactory. Highest mean is 4.04 which denotes a very satisfactory about the course workload is manageable. As per UBSS (2023) [6], the manageability of course workload is a crucial factor for postgraduate students, particularly those balancing studies with other commitments. Australian universities recognize this and often design programs with flexibility in mind. On the other hand, lowest mean is 3.14 implying a rating of satisfactory about how Instructor expectations for student work are challenging enough. Thus, this table only suggests that universities in Australia ensures that course workload for international students is manageable. Many Australian universities strive to ensure manageable course workloads for international students. According to Australian National University (2024) [7], they often provide comprehensive support services, including academic advising and English language support, to help students adjust to the academic environment. Course structures are designed with built-in

flexibility, allowing students to manage their time effectively. While the workload can still be demanding, universities actively work to provide resources and guidance to help international students succeed. Additionally, many universities offer orientation programs specifically designed to introduce international students to the academic expectations and support systems available.

Table 2.3 Overall Academic Fulfilment

Domains	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Program	3.69	0.46	Very Satisfactory	1.5
Instruction	3.69	0.46	Very Satisfactory	1.5
Overall	3.69	0.42	Very Satisfactory	

Overall rating on the postgraduate programs for international students is very satisfactory (3.69). This is also the same rating specific to program (3.69) and instruction (3.69). According to Hwa (2020) [8], academic fulfilment encompasses a sense of satisfaction and meaning derived from the learning process. It's not solely about achieving high grades but about experiencing intellectual growth, developing valuable skills, and feeling engaged with the subject matter. True academic fulfilment stems from the intrinsic rewards of mastering new concepts, tackling challenges, and feeling a genuine connection to the material being studied. It is a holistic experience that fosters both personal and intellectual development, leaving students with a lasting sense of accomplishment and a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Table 3. Assessment of the respondents on the postgraduate programs for international students – Among those in Research

Table 3.1 Program

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Adequacy of facilities	4.14	0.88	Very Satisfactory	1
Quality of IT support	3.85	0.77	Very Satisfactory	4
Expectations to access library facilities or how easy to access library online	3.76	0.8	Very Satisfactory	8
My assessment of overall quality of library holdings in my program	3.84	0.73	Very Satisfactory	5.5
Required courses are offered regularly and as scheduled	4.04	0.88	Very Satisfactory	2
Elective courses are offered regularly and as scheduled	3.93	0.89	Very Satisfactory	3
Degree of faculty involvement in program activities and events	3.19	0.89	Satisfactory	16
My program's requirements are appropriate and well-defined	3.67	0.93	Very Satisfactory	10

My program's curriculum provides the knowledge and training for postgraduate competency in my area of specialization	3.65	1.01	Very Satisfactory	12
Conditions for understanding of the program's standards and expectations for student work	3.57	0.85	Very Satisfactory	14
Quality of the department/discipline/program advice and guidance	3.78	0.87	Very Satisfactory	7
The opportunity to interact intellectually across disciplines	3.54	0.86	Very Satisfactory	15
Assistance in finding employment from my department/program/instructors	2.31	1.14	Slightly Satisfactory	17
Literature advised by supervisor/s is/are relevant to program content	3.84	1.01	Very Satisfactory	5.5
Literature advised by supervisor/s includes the latest developments in the discipline	3.74	1	Very Satisfactory	9
Rate the variety of courses available in your postgraduate program	3.65	0.98	Very Satisfactory	12
My assessment of overall quality of my program.	3.65	0.63	Very Satisfactory	12
Overall	3.66	0.63	Very Satisfactory	

Overall resulting mean of 3.66 denotes a satisfactory rating on their assessment specific to program. Among the seventeen positive attributes, fifteen are rated as very satisfactory while one attribute is rated as satisfactory while remaining one is rated as slightly satisfactory. Highest mean is 4.14 which denotes a rating of very satisfactory about adequacy of facilities. This is followed by mean of 4.04, also a rating of very satisfactory about required courses are offered regularly and as scheduled. Additionally, rank 3rd is mean of 3.93, also a rating of very satisfactory about how elective courses are offered regularly and as scheduled. On the other hand, lowest mean is 2.31 which suggest that their rating is only slightly satisfactory about assistance in finding employment from their department/program/instructors. Therefore, the table only demonstrates that when it comes to the assessment of the respondents on the postgraduate programs for international students among those in research, Australian universities have adequate facilities. As per Brisbane (2020), Australian universities generally provide adequate facilities to support the assessment of international postgraduate research students. While specific resources vary between institutions and programs, common features include well-equipped research libraries with access to extensive online databases, specialized laboratories for scientific research, and advanced computing facilities. Many universities also offer dedicated support services for research students, including statistical consulting, research methodology training, and assistance with thesis writing and publication. These resources aim to ensure that international students have the tools and support they need to successfully complete their postgraduate research programs. However, the adequacy of these facilities is subjective and depends on the specific needs of individual students and research projects.

Table 3.2 Instructions

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Courses provide preparation for post-graduation careers	3.58	0.81	Very Satisfactory	6
Core courses provide a theoretical foundation in my field or discipline	3.61	0.94	Very Satisfactory	4.5
The course workload is manageable	3.91	0.81	Very Satisfactory	1.5
Instructor expectations for student work are reasonable	3.81	0.73	Very Satisfactory	3
Instructor expectations for student work are challenging enough	2.98	1.06	Satisfactory	7
Availability of my instructors/professors for consultation	3.91	0.99	Very Satisfactory	1.5
My assessment of overall quality of graduate level teaching in my area of discipline	3.61	0.9	Very Satisfactory	4.5
Overall	3.63	0.52	Very Satisfactory	

Overall resulting mean of 3.63 denotes a satisfactory rating on their assessment specific to instruction. Among the seven positive attributes, six are rated as very satisfactory while remaining one is rated as satisfactory. Highest mean is 3.91 which denotes a very satisfactory about the course workload is manageable and availability of their instructors/professors for consultation. On the other hand, lowest mean is 2.98 implying a rating of satisfactory about how Instructor expectations for student work are challenging enough. Therefore, the table only demonstrates that when it comes to the assessment of the respondents on the postgraduate programs for international students among those in research in terms of instruction, Australian universities make the course workload is manageable and availability of their instructors/professors for consultation.

When evaluating postgraduate programs for international students, particularly in research-focused programs, Australian universities are often praised for their commitment to providing manageable course workloads and ensuring the availability of instructors and professors for consultations (Kanwal et al., 2023) [9]. This student-centred approach is instrumental in fostering a supportive learning environment where students can thrive and achieve their academic goals. By offering manageable workloads and easy access to knowledgeable instructors, Australian universities help create a strong foundation for international students to excel in their studies and contribute meaningfully to their respective fields of research. This dedication to academic support and mentorship is a key factor that sets Australian universities apart and makes them attractive options for students seeking high-quality postgraduate education in a research-intensive setting.

Table 4. Assessment on Graduate Research

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Diversity of school's discipline research interests	3.84	0.93	Very Satisfactory	3
My research supervisor helps me develop my ideas into a workable proposal or prospectus	3.95	0.84	Very Satisfactory	2
My research supervisor helps me design and implement my research plan	3.78	0.95	Very Satisfactory	4
My research supervisor reads my drafts and provides feedback promptly	3.73	0.96	Very Satisfactory	6
My research supervisor helps me with transitioning into a role as a professional or academic in my field	3.08	1.25	Satisfactory	19
My research supervisor encourages me to present my work at conferences	3.16	1.12	Satisfactory	17
My research supervisor collaborates with me on research for presentation or publication	3.19	1.22	Satisfactory	16
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to obtain faculty mentoring in developing research skills	3.45	1.14	Satisfactory	9
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to pursue my own research interests	3.77	0.97	Very Satisfactory	5
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to learn about other research conducted at my university	3.48	0.93	Satisfactory	8
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to conduct independent research	3.97	0.98	Very Satisfactory	1
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to learn about research conducted outside my university	2.77	1.26	Satisfactory	21
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to collaborate with peers	3.22	1.05	Satisfactory	13.5
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to collaborate with faculty or students from other departments	3.22	1.11	Satisfactory	13.5
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to work collaboratively with faculty on research	3.2	1.06	Satisfactory	15
My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to work with faculty whose research interests match my own	3.42	1.07	Satisfactory	10
Opportunities to establish research/academic mentorship relationships with faculty members in my program	3.39	1.21	Satisfactory	11.5

My pre-requisite courses prepared me to conduct research in my field or discipline	2.98	1.03	Satisfactory	20
The research program prepared me to publish in the discipline	3.39	1.03	Satisfactory	11.5
My university has provided me adequate training in research methods	3.13	1.15	Satisfactory	18
My overall rating of my research supervisor	3.72	0.86	Very Satisfactory	7
Overall	3.42	0.76	Satisfactory	

Overall resulting mean of 3.42 denotes a satisfactory rating on their assessment specific to postgraduate research. Among the twenty-one positive attributes, seven are rated as very satisfactory while remaining fourteen are rated as satisfactory. Highest mean is 3.97 which denotes a rating of very satisfactory about the attribute “My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to conduct independent research.” As per Profellow (2021) [10], many graduate programs require students to complete a research project as part of their coursework. This project can be a thesis, dissertation, or a smaller research paper, allowing students to explore a specific area of interest under the guidance of a faculty mentor. This is followed by mean of 3.95 which is also a rating of very satisfactory about the attribute “My research supervisor helps me develop my ideas into a workable proposal or prospectus.’ Rank 3rd is mean of 3.84 which also implies a very satisfactory rating about the attribute “Diversity of school’s discipline research interests.” On the other hand, lowest mean is 2.77 which also implies a rating of satisfactory about “My department/discipline/program has provided me with opportunities to learn about research conducted outside my university.”

This table only shows that in terms of the Assessment on Graduate Research, their department/discipline/program has provided international students with opportunities to conduct independent research. Australian universities have been highly successful in offering international students a wide range of opportunities to engage in independent research within various departments, disciplines, and programs. By fostering a research-driven academic culture, these institutions provide students with the resources, mentorship, and support needed to pursue independent research projects effectively. Through collaborations with faculty members, access to state-of-the-art facilities, and participation in cutting-edge research initiatives, international students can immerse themselves in impactful research experiences that contribute to their intellectual and professional growth. These opportunities not only enhance students' academic skills and knowledge but also enable them to make meaningful contributions to their respective fields of study. Overall, the commitment of Australian universities to promoting independent research among international students underscores their dedication to academic excellence and innovation, making them a preferred destination for those seeking to advance their research skills and make a positive impact in their chosen fields.

Table 5. Summary of Results among Research Group Only

Domains	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Program	3.66	0.63	Very Satisfactory	1
Instruction	3.63	0.52	Very Satisfactory	2
Research	3.42	0.76	Satisfactory	3
Overall	3.57	0.58	Very Satisfactory	

Overall mean is 3.57 which denotes a very satisfactory rating on their overall assessment on the postgraduate program among research group. Program is also rated as very satisfactory (3.66) as well as 3.63 rating for instruction. Based on Pillai (2015) [11], a well-designed program sets the stage for a fulfilling and meaningful postgraduate journey. It provides a framework for learning, encompassing relevant courses, research opportunities, and career development support. On the other hand, only a satisfactory rating for research (3.42). The results of the survey conducted among the research group clearly indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program and instruction aspects of the postgraduate programs for international students at Australian universities. This positive perception suggests that the respondents view the overall program structure as well as the quality of teaching and learning provided in a highly favourable light. The fact that these aspects received the highest level of satisfaction underscores the effectiveness and excellence of the educational experience offered to international students in terms of course design, workload management, instructor availability, and teaching quality. Such positive feedback not only reflects the commitment of Australian universities to delivering high-quality academic programs but also highlights their dedication to supporting the academic and research endeavours of international students. Overall, these findings serve as a testament to the strong reputation and quality of postgraduate programs offered by Australian universities, reaffirming their position as leading institutions for international students seeking top-notch research opportunities and academic excellence.

Table 6. Results of Test of Significance on their Program Assessment when Grouped according to Profile Variables

Profile	Mean	t	F	Sig	Interpretation
Program					
Masters	3.70	0.559		.446	Not Significant
Doctorate	3.65				
Specialization					
Business and Management	3.65	3.67	0.022	.978	Not Significant
Social Science	3.67				
Science, Health, Engineering, Computing	3.65				
Progress					
Masters – coursework	3.92	3.67	0.895	.445	Not Significant
Masters- research	3.67				
Doctorate-research	3.52				
University					
University of Sydney	3.69	3.52	2.988	.053	Not Significant
University of Technology Sydney	3.52				
University of New South Wales	3.78				

*Data is normally distributed with p value of 0.060 (Wilk Shapiro)

Resulting p value of 0.446 which exceeds level of significance of 0.05 implies that the mean program assessment is not significant between Masters and Doctorate. Similarly, p value of 0.978 suggest that the mean program assessment of the three different specialization is not significantly different. Furthermore, p value of 0.445 suggest also that there is no significant difference on the mean program assessment when grouped according to their progress. Furthermore, p value of 0.053 also denotes no significant difference on the mean program assessment when grouped according to their university. Based on Franklin University (2024) [12], a well-designed program

provides a structured framework for learning, encompassing relevant coursework, research opportunities, and career development support. This structure helps students navigate the complexities of graduate studies and ensures they develop the necessary skills and knowledge for their chosen field. A well-designed program establishes a structured learning framework. This framework integrates relevant coursework to build foundational knowledge, incorporates research opportunities to foster practical application of learning, and includes career development support to prepare students for future endeavours. This comprehensive approach ensures students acquire both theoretical understanding and practical skills, enhancing their overall learning experience and prospects.

Table 7. Results of Test of Significance on their Instruction Assessment when Grouped according to Profile Variables

Profile	Mean	T	F	Sig	Interpretation
Program					
Masters	3.67	.072		.943	Not Significant
Doctorate	3.67				
Specialization					
Business and Management	3.58		4.296	.015	Significant
Social Science	3.87				
Science, Health, Engineering, Computing	3.61				
Progress					
Masters – coursework	3.69		2.888	.058	Not Significant
Masters- research	3.21				
Doctorate-research	3.69				
University					
University of Sydney	3.66		1.996	.139	Not Significant
University of Technology Sydney	3.56				
University of New South Wales	3.78				

Resulting p value of 0.943 which exceeds level of significance of 0.05 implies that the mean instruction assessment is not significant between Masters and Doctorate. Furthermore, p value of 0.058 suggest also that there is no significant difference on the mean instruction assessment when grouped according to their progress. Moreover, p value of 0.139 also denotes no significant difference on the mean program assessment when grouped according to their university. On the other p value of 0.015 implies significant difference in at least one three specializations. According to Franklin University (2024) [12], while the overall emphasis on independent research and scholarly contribution increases significantly at the doctoral level, the role of instruction and assessment in both degrees remains crucial, albeit with distinct focuses. While independent research and scholarly contributions become the dominant focus at the doctoral level, instruction and assessment remain crucial for both master's and doctoral degrees. However, their roles differ significantly. In master's programs, instruction often provides a strong foundation in the field, with assessment focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Doctoral programs, conversely, emphasize the development of independent research capabilities, with assessment centred on the originality and quality of scholarly contributions.

Post Hoc Analysis – Comparison of Instruction Assessments

Profile	Sig	Interpretation
Specialization		
Business and Management –Social Science	.018	Significant
Social Science – Science, Health, Engineering, Computing	.040	Significant

Post hoc test results show that social science is significant as compared to Business and management, specifically rating of Social Science is significantly higher than Business and Management. Likewise, Social Science has significantly higher rating than those from Science, Health, Engineering, Computing. Ashour (2020) [13], emphasized that social sciences, encompassing disciplines like anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, and economics, provide a deep understanding of human behaviour, social interactions, and societal structures.

Table 8. Results of Test of Significance on their Research Assessment when Grouped according to Profile Variables

Profile	Mean	t	F	Sig	Interpretation
Program					
Masters	3.06	1.465		.148	Not Significant
Doctorate	3.47				
Specialization					
Business and Management	3.58		1.144	.325	Not Significant
Social Science	3.54				
Science, Health, Engineering, Computing	3.27				
University					
University of Sydney	3.55		2.317	.107	Not Significant
University of Technology Sydney	3.14				
University of New South Wales	3.58				

Resulting p value of 0.148 which exceeds level of significance of 0.05 implies that the mean research assessment is not significant between Masters and Doctorate. Similarly, p value of 0.325 suggest that the mean research assessment of the three different specialization is not significantly different. Furthermore, p value of 0.107 also denotes no significant difference on the mean research assessment when grouped according to their university. It's important to consider the context of the research assessment. The meaning of "no significant difference" might vary depending on the specific assessment criteria, the types of universities studied, and the research fields involved. As per Kevin (2022) [14], the research assessment methods used for both master's and doctoral students might be very similar, focusing on the same core criteria, such as research design, methodology, analysis, and contribution to the field. This similarity could mask any potential differences in research quality between the two levels.

3.2. Qualitative Phase

Based on the quantitative survey result from the international postgraduate coursework students, the lowest mean is 1.98 which suggest that their rating is only slightly satisfactory about assistance in finding employment from their department/program/instructors. While for research students, the lowest mean is 2.31 which suggest that their rating is only slightly satisfactory about assistance in finding employment from their department/program/instructors as well. The

researcher created a semi-structured questionnaire about the assessment of postgraduate programs which will be asked with the deans or program heads.

3.2.1. Qualitative Analysis

Question 1: Is there any existing assistance for international postgraduate students in finding employment?

Table 9. Existing Assistance for International Postgraduate Students in Finding Employment

Significant Statements, Phrases or Words	Code	Theme
<i>“Yes! there is an existing assistance for international postgraduate students in finding employment which they can access like professional development programs, career seminars and expos, the careers portal for job listings, and career advisors”</i>	Career Development Programs	Positive Support for international postgraduate students in finding employment.
Existing assistance for international postgraduate students through CareerHub, Career Development Workshops and Events, the Professional Mentoring Programs, Personalized Career Advice, Alumni Network.	Network	
<i>“Yes. There is a support. Their employability services provided a range of skills training and assistance for us as research students to find employment after we complete our degree. There is also an expectation that individual supervisors will help train us as candidates to prepare us for life beyond our PhD”</i>	Preparation	
<i>Yes. They have a centralized unit that helps all students (undergrad, postgrad coursework, and postgrad research).</i>	Appointed In-Charge in providing assistance	

Australia is a popular destination for international students, attracting a diverse and vibrant student population from across the globe. The country’s renowned education system, with its world-class universities and research institutions, offers a high-quality learning experience. Beyond academics, Australia’s welcoming culture, stunning natural beauty, and diverse cities provide a rich and enriching experience for international students. This union of academic prowess and a vigorous lifestyle makes Australia a highly sought-after destination for students seeking a global education. Australian universities offer a range of services to assist international postgraduate students in finding employment. These services include job listings, career/professional development programs, career advising, career seminars, and workshops. These resources are designed to support students in their job search efforts and help them develop the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue their desired career paths successfully. Australian universities recommend a wide range of postgraduate programs across various fields, attracting students from around the globe. These programs cater to various career aspirations and academic interests, providing students with specialized knowledge, advanced skills, and research opportunities. The country’s renowned education system, with its prominence on practical learning and industry ties, ensures that graduates are well-prepared to enter the global job market. The diverse and welcoming culture of Australia further enhances the postgraduate experience, providing international students with a rich and enriching environment for academic and personal growth. By taking advantage of these opportunities, international postgraduate students can enhance their employability and increase their chances of securing rewarding employment opportunities upon graduation.

Question 2: Given that international students are new to Australia and have no connections yet, do you believe international postgraduate students need assistance in finding employment? Why?

Table 10: The necessity for international postgraduate students' assistance in finding employment?

Significant Statements, Phrases or Words	Code	Theme
<i>"I agree and believe that international postgraduate students need assistance in finding employment. International students need additional support for a range of activities to ensure that they can settle into Australia effectively and get the most out of their international study experience which includes support in finding casual or part time work. The University provides support to all students to be able to find work, to write effective CVs and cover letters as well as internship opportunities with local employers"</i>	Settlement Assurance in the Foreign Land	The Necessity of Employment Assistance
<i>"I believe that international postgraduate students need assistance in finding employment. The service of UTS Careers, per above, are available to postgraduate students. Visa restrictions will apply, notably for HDR candidates, on the hours of paid employment possible alongside study. This is a national policy as much as an institutional issue"</i>	National Policy of Australia	
<i>"There should be an assistance for international postgraduate students finding employment. There are certainly cultural expectations on how to find jobs in Australia that international students will appreciate. Also, regardless of INTL or Domestic students, this need is common to most students everyone needs help understanding how their degree is helping to build skills and how to translate this into employment"</i>	Equal Benefits between International Postgraduate students and Australia	
<i>"Yes and No. if the international students have come to study, then that should be their focus. Part-time jobs to support a small income then those are easy enough to find and source without uni help. However, if the assistance is referring to help finding required study internships, then yes, it would be helpful. While, if the assistance was referring to work post uni, then the same help that all students receive is equally applicable"</i>	Focus	

International postgraduate students often face unique challenges when seeking employment after graduation. Navigating a new job market, understanding cultural nuances, and overcoming potential visa restrictions can be daunting. Many Australian universities provide career services specifically customized to international students, providing guidance on resume writing, interview skills, and networking opportunities. Additionally, professional organizations and online platforms dedicated to connecting international graduates with employers can be valuable resources. By leveraging these resources and actively engaging with potential employers, international postgraduate students can increase their chances of finding fulfilling career opportunities.

Question 3: Given that international student provided proof of funds when applying for student visa, do you believe international postgraduate students should be allowed to work full-time while studying for a master's or PhD? Why?

Table 11: The ability of the international postgraduate students to work fulltime while studying Master’s or PhD.

Significant Statements, Phrases or Words	Code	Theme
<i>I am hesitant in allowing postgraduate students to work full time while studying since it is difficult to study while working. Many international students have to work part time to supplement their living expenses. Working full time and studying full time is not possible for students, especially those studying research degrees as it will lead to poor outcomes and a poor experience for the students.</i>	Difficulties in working while studying simultaneously	Focus on Studying
<i>I didn't agree in allowing postgraduate students to work full time while studying for a master's or PhD. The achievement of a strong HDR outcome is the key to success, recognizing that baseline support/opportunity must be accessible to achieve this. Full-time work would fundamentally undermine the work of research, noting that full-time candidature is equivalent to a full-time job.</i>	Difficulties in working while studying simultaneously	
<i>Yes. It should be left to students to manage. They always advise their students that they need to keep their working arrangements in line with the expectations of the degree and the degree should come first. But the participant understands the financial pressures that students are up against, and the need to work.</i>	Freedom to choose	
<i>I did not agree, and the participant emphasized that doing a PhD is a full-time endeavour. There is not enough time in a day to hold another full-time position. An outside job is often a distraction and leads to poor progress in the PhD.</i>	Difficulties in working while studying simultaneously	

Balancing full-time work and study in Australia can be a challenging endeavour. The demands of a demanding job often leave little time or energy for academic pursuits. Juggling work schedules, deadlines, and study commitments can lead to feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion. Additionally, according to Taft (2024) [15], the high cost of living in Australia can add financial strain, making it difficult to prioritize both work and study. Balancing full-time work and study is a demanding endeavour that requires exceptional time management, discipline, and resilience. The persistent pressure to function well in both domains can lead to feelings of exhaustion, stress, and anxiety. Finding the time and energy to dedicate to both work and study commitments can be a significant challenge, often leading to sacrifices in personal life and leisure activities. Moreover, the mental and physical strain of juggling demanding schedules can impact academic performance and job productivity, creating a vicious cycle of pressure and fatigue. While it’s possible to succeed in this balancing act, it requires careful planning, effective prioritization, and a strong support system to navigate the inherent difficulties.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Most international students in Australia pursuing postgraduate programs are enrolled in master’s degrees. A recent assessment of these programs revealed a high level of satisfaction among international students, particularly regarding the adequacy of facilities and the manageability of course workload. In terms of program design, respondents consistently praise the availability of well-equipped facilities that support their academic pursuits. This includes access to modern libraries, research labs, technology resources, and other essential amenities. Furthermore, the structure and organization of the programs were deemed to be well-suited to the needs of international students, with a focus on providing clear guidance and support throughout their studies. Regarding instruction, students highlighted the positive impact of manageable course

workloads. This indicates that the programs are designed with flexibility in mind, allowing students to balance their academic responsibilities with other commitments. Lastly, Australian universities offer a wide range of support services and programs specifically designed for international students, including individual training. These programs aim to help international students adjust to the academic and cultural environment in Australia and succeed in their studies. The department/discipline/program has demonstrably prioritized fostering independent research skills among its graduate students, providing them with ample opportunities to delve into their chosen fields. This hands-on experience is invaluable for developing critical thinking, analytical prowess, and research methodologies. However, while research is a vital component of graduate education. It ensures a clear path for learning, encompassing relevant coursework, research opportunities, and career development support. This structure helps students navigate the complexities of graduate studies and ensures they develop the necessary skills and knowledge for their chosen field. While effective instruction and mentorship are crucial for translating program content into meaningful learning, a strong program sets the stage for a fulfilling and meaningful postgraduate experience. It's the program that provides the overarching structure and direction, allowing students to effectively engage with research, instruction, and other aspects of their graduate education.

Australian universities are renowned for their commitment to supporting postgraduate students in their career aspirations. They recognize that a postgraduate degree is often a steppingstone to a fulfilling and successful career, and they provide a range of resources and services to help students achieve their goals. From career counselling and job placement services to industry connections and networking opportunities, Australian universities go the extra mile to equip their graduates with the skills and connections they need to thrive in the competitive job market. While universities prioritize the career development of all students, postgraduate students often receive additional support tailored to their advanced level of study and career aspirations. However, balancing full-time work with postgraduate studies in Australia can be a significant challenge.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision for additional hours for the HDR students to work as instructors/tutors in the undergraduate program of their field for those who are struggling with their expenses.
Offering of part-time jobs for international students like administration, teaching, maintenance etc., who are struggling with their expenses and can't find jobs.

Redefine the requirements of the program during orientation for full-time employees.

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