Understanding U.S. Study Abroad in Ireland:

Economic impact and future possibilities

Discussion of Key Findings

Southern Cross Consulting, 2018

ASAPI Association of Study Abroad Providers in Ireland
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1 Contributing members include Boston College Ireland, Boston University, Champlain College Dublin, EUSA – The Academic Internship Experts, and Foundation for International Education (FIE). This study was jointly commissioned by the Association of Study Abroad Providers in Ireland (ASAPI) and Education in Ireland and was carried out by Southern Cross Consulting.

Education in Ireland is Ireland's national brand for the promotion of higher education internationally. Education in Ireland is managed by Enterprise Ireland, the government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. See www.educationinireland.com and www.enterprise-ireland.com.

ASAPI – The Association for Study Abroad Providers in Ireland is a national grouping of providers in Ireland and includes U.S. Colleges with a campus in Ireland, third party providers and internship providers. ASAPI was formed in 2015 to raise the profile of the sector, promote best practices, raise cultural understanding between the two countries, and to lobby for sectoral recognition with the Irish government https://asapireland.org/

Southern Cross Consulting is an Irish consultancy organisation whose associates specialise in international education with a particular focus on North America.

Acronyms

AH	Arts and Humanities (programmes/fields of study)
ASAPI	Association of Study Abroad Providers in Ireland
AY	Academic Year
CASSIE	The Consortium for Analysis of Student Success through International Education
CSO	Central Statistics Office (Ireland)
EI	Enterprise Ireland
EU	European Union
FLP	Faculty Led Programme
GSA	Generation Study Abroad (IIE)
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IIE	Institute for International Education
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IoTs	Institutes of Technology
JYA	Junior Year Abroad
m	Million (€)
NAFSA	Association of International Educators
SCC	Southern Cross Consulting
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

1. Introduction and rationale for the study

1. Introduction and rationale for the study

As an English-speaking country with strong historical and economic links to the U.S., and a compatible academic system, Ireland is well placed to attract U.S. study abroad students and has proved a popular destination for several decades, attracting close to 12,000 such students in academic year (AY) 2016/17.[i] Today Ireland ranks as the seventh most popular global destination for U.S. students, and first in the world for the number of study abroad students per capita. Numerically, the U.S. is by far the most important country of origin for international students in Ireland.

Ireland hosts a significant number of international students within both its Higher Education Institutions (33,000) and its English language schools (130,000 per year) and the economic impact of the presence of these students is well documented.[ii] Despite the prominence of U.S. study abroad within the international education landscape in Ireland, previous studies have tended to concentrate on degree-seeking students resulting in a lower national profile for the U.S. study abroad sector, and its significance sometimes being overlooked within the national discourse on international education in Ireland.[2]

'Today Ireland ranks as the seventh most popular global destination for U.S. students, and first in the world for the number of study abroad students per capita.'

A comprehensive exploration of the operations of this sector - which are known to be complex - and its impact on Ireland's economy and society is therefore overdue. This study represents a first step in addressing this deficit – an attempt to describe this important sector and its operations with clarity. For the first time in Ireland, this study has gathered detailed primary data from both study abroad providers and students, employing a number of methodologies to achieve a complete understanding of the U.S. study abroad sector. The approach generated solid economic data and uncovered the attitudes of both U.S. students and study abroad providers to Ireland as a study destination. Using first hand qualitative and quantitative data combined with secondary research, the study also comments on the equally important 'soft' or 'intangible' outcomes of U.S. study abroad and future opportunities and challenges for Ireland in this sphere.

2 For example, a report recently published by the HEA on the Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education (2018) made no mention of U.S. study abroad in its detailed report. *Clarke, M., et al (2018): The Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education Marie Clarke. Higher Education Authority 2018.*

Details of the methodological approach are summarised below and detailed in Appendix 1 of the main research document which additionally provides in-depth analysis and data around other areas of relevance to the study abroad sector.

It is hoped that this study will stimulate the key stakeholders in Ireland (government, the immigration service, higher education institutions, U.S. institutions, and study abroad providers) to come together to develop a focused and holistic plan around the future of the highly valuable study abroad sector.

Structure of the report

This summary provides a synopsis of a large study undertaken over a 12-month period between May 2017 and May 2018. The main findings are briefly presented here, and their implications for the future of study abroad in Ireland discussed. The main research report fully details the findings of the research and provides more complete data analysis under each heading. The Appendices to the main report provide a detailed description of the research methodology, an expanded discussion on the barriers to study abroad for U.S. students and the accommodation challenges in Ireland, and some additional statistical data.

Referencing

Numbers i, ii, iii... refer to document references/bibliography and are found at the end of the document; number 1, 2 ,3... refer to footnotes which are located at the end of the page where they appear.

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2. Understanding U.S. study abroad in Ireland

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Utilising the wealth of primary data gathered for this study as well as secondary research, the first part of this study (detailed in Chapter 1 of the main report) explores the characteristics of study abroad globally, and comparatively as it specifically manifests in Ireland. The analysis interrogates relevant key elements of the sector including the changing study abroad landscape and the particular features of study abroad in Ireland. This section also profiles the study abroad student, investigates why students and programmes choose Ireland, and discusses perceptions around study abroad in Ireland.

2.1 The U.S. study abroad student

Despite the availability of international study options for almost 100 years and the well-rehearsed benefits of such experience, U.S. student interest in pursuing overseas opportunities remains persistently low, with less than 2% of students choosing this option each year.[i]

The U.S. Institute of International Education's (IIE) 2017 figures show a 3.8% increase over last year, but longitudinal analysis suggests that the overall rate of growth has slowed over the last five years, compared to the previous decade. With higher debt burdens than most, U.S. students can be inhibited from studying abroad by real and perceived concerns around cost, an absence of prior international exposure, inadequate information, weak faculty engagement, complex funding models and concerns over security and health.

The constraints facing U.S. students have resulted in a largely homogenous study abroad population globally, characterised by their mid to high socio-economic status, being predominantly white (72%), female (67%), attending doctorate-granting or masters colleges or universities (85%) and with one third originating from just five States (California, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio).[i]

The most striking change in U.S. study abroad over recent years has been the swing towards shorter term programmes with particularly strong growth in programmes of eight weeks or less. In 1994/95 short-term programmes (eight weeks or less) accounted for 39% of study abroad - today these programmes account for 63% of students. For those seeking an international experience yet facing financial constraints or inhibited by the barriers described, a short-term programme offers a viable option.[3]

'The most striking change in U.S. study abroad over recent years has been the swing towards shorter term programmes with particularly strong growth in programmes of eight weeks or less.'

3 For example, 90% of community college students who studied abroad in 2015/16 chose a short programme.[i] See Chapter 1 and Appendix 2 of the main report for further details on the key constraints facing many U.S. students considering study abroad.

2.2 The U.S. study abroad landscape in Ireland

Official study abroad programmes commenced in Ireland around 1970 and have grown steadily - by an average of 8% - over the last five years. In academic year 2016/17 - the focus of this study - it is estimated that there were 11,912 such students in Ireland for a total of 95,035 weeks.

The study abroad landscape in Ireland is a complex tableau incorporating several modes of logistical and academic delivery. As a result of the cooperation of all sectors with this study, a clear picture of the sector in Ireland has emerged.[4]

1. Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) host around 34% of U.S. study abroad students in Ireland (n=4,044 including exchange students, but excluding summer school students), who are generally present for one semester and account for over 60% of all study abroad weeks. Almost 90% of these students are in the university sector, with 10% in private colleges and less than 1% in Institutes of Technology (IoTs). Study abroad students in Irish HEIs are received directly through partnerships with U.S. institutions (65%), arrangements with third party providers (27%) and direct application (8%) with the majority in situ for one semester.

2. Irish HEI Summer Schools: most universities and some other HEIs run annual summer schools which range from one to eight weeks. Students on these programmes account for 10% (n=1,142) of all study abroad weeks.

3. Third Party Providers are colleges or private organisations which channel students to both Irish HEIs, and to their own institutions (if they are also a college with a campus in Ireland). Most students coming to Ireland through third party providers remain for one semester and attend an Irish HEI, but a considerable range of durations and programme types was observed. Careful cross-referencing of the data from all sectors has established that around 40% of all U.S. study abroad students in Ireland are delivered through third party providers of whom there are an estimated 20 operating semester length programmes, and more operating short-term programmes in Ireland, eight of whom responded to the survey.

Box 1: Summary of research methodology, phase 1

The methodological approach for this research was designed in consultation with the Study Reference Group which included Education in Ireland and ASAPI (together representing all sectoral members, except FLPs).

Phase 1 of the study involved desk research, focus group discussions and interviews with HEI study abroad managers, administrators of U.S. programmes (both colleges and third-party providers) and faculty-led programmes to understand the study abroad landscape in Ireland and to confirm assumptions around categorisation and the size of the sector.

Baseline data for the sector was calculated using IIE Open Doors data over several years.[i] Primary source data was gathered directly through detailed surveys of the six study abroad sectors operating in Ireland, and through a further survey administered to U.S. study abroad students in Ireland. These surveys included a broad range of questions on student profiles, programme operations, expenditures and attitudes.

For consistency across the international education sector in Ireland this study employed a very similar economic model to that developed by the Department of Education and Skills for its most recent International Education Strategy. Data collected has also been analysed with close reference to both IIE and Central Statistics Office of Ireland data (CSO)[iii] as relevant. Full details can be found in Appendix 1 of the main report.

The research team were extremely fortunate to receive strong cooperation and assistance from all study abroad sectors in Ireland, ensuring a high level of confidence in the data collected.

Overall, through the surveys the location of **71% of an estimated 11,912 study abroad students in Ireland in 2016/17 was captured directly.**

4. U.S. Campuses in Ireland are owned and operated by an established U.S. university or college. These programmes may recruit exclusively from their home campus and/or attract students from other U.S. institutions. These colleges operate both one semester programmes and a variety of shorter programmes ranging from two to ten weeks in duration. An estimated 14% of students (n=1,660) are based in 17 known U.S. campuses in Ireland (13% of all study abroad weeks). As noted, some U.S. colleges based in Ireland are also third-party providers who may also offer internships. They may have students studying on their own campus and/or within one or more Irish HEIs.

4 See Chapter 1 for a full and detailed description of study abroad operators in Ireland.

5. Internship Providers are generally commercial organisations that offer 'for-credit' internships to study abroad students. These students account for 6% of the study abroad sector in Ireland (n=730) and 7% of study abroad weeks. Most other providers also offer internships.

6. U.S. Faculty-led Programmes (FLPs) are short study abroad programmes led by academic staff from a U.S. HEI. These programmes can be difficult to categorise as they display multiple modes of operation: from programmes fully managed by Irish HEIs or third party providers on behalf of U.S. institutions, to programmes entirely organised by the faculty-leader directly from the U.S. FLPs, who sometimes link in with other programmes in Ireland or other countries and are of varying duration, with two weeks being most popular. These students are estimated to account for 36% of the sector (n=4,336), and 16% of study weeks.

Table 1: Study abroad sectors in Ireland: numbers and duration (expanded from primary data)

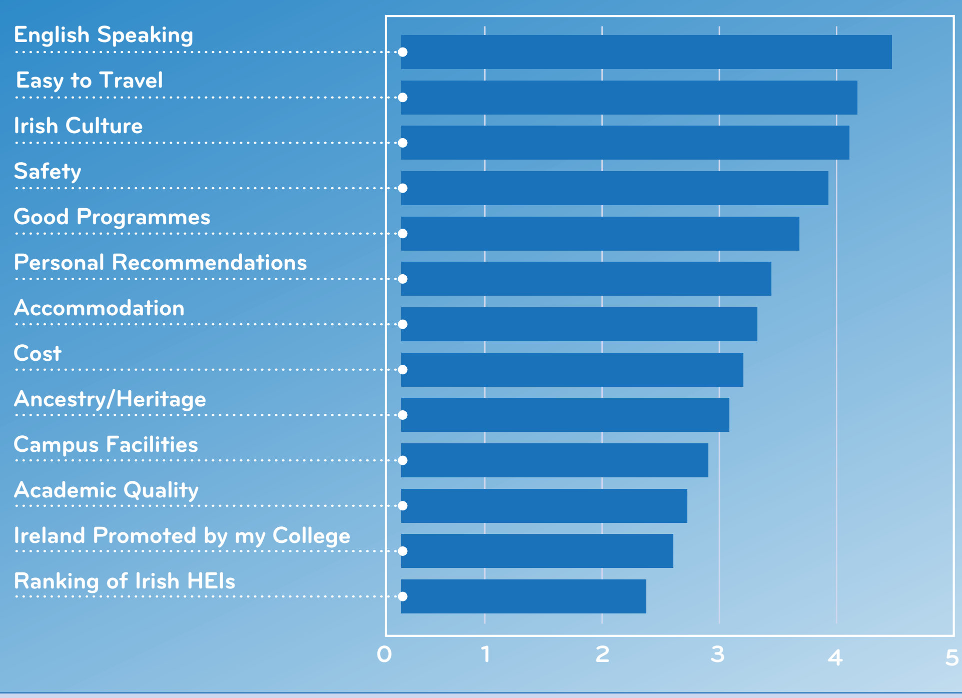
Duration	Irish HEIs AY	Irish HEIs summer school	U.S. College	Internship	FLP	Totals	%
1 week	10	257	173	-	542	982	8%
2 weeks	34	155	365	-	1,821	2,375	20%
3 weeks	19	341	50	-	796	1,206	10%
4 weeks	17	291	123	21	399	851	7%
5 weeks	0	97	-	128	209	434	4%
6 weeks	4	-	332	407	58	801	7%
7 weeks	-	-	-	23	23	46	<1%
8 weeks	42	-	17	26	-	85	1%
9 weeks	17	-	-	21	-	38	<0%
10 weeks	30	-	-	-	396	426	4%
1 semester	3,669	-	568	100	93	4,430	37%
1 year	144	-	-	-	-	144	1%
J-term/AY short	58		-	-	-	58	<1%
OTHER	-	-	32	4		36	0
Totals	4,044	1,142	1,660	730	4,336	11,912	100%

Source: IIE 2017, ASAPI/EI 2018

'...responses from students and providers suggest that Ireland is attractive chiefly because it is English speaking, offers excellent opportunities to travel to Europe, is safe and friendly, has an interesting (and fun) culture, a connected history, an understandable academic system and for the most part, well-aligned programmes.'

The study found that while study abroad in Ireland is complex and multi-layered in its operations, it presents a unique offering compared to many other European countries which accounts for its success, and provides scope for considerable future development. Overall survey responses from students and providers suggest that Ireland is attractive chiefly because it is English speaking, offers excellent opportunities to travel to Europe, is safe and friendly, has an interesting (and fun) culture, a connected history, an understandable academic system and for the most part, well-aligned programmes.[5] Figure 1 highlights student respondents reasons for choosing Ireland, showing weighted responses on a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 = not relevant and 5=highly relevant.

Figure I: U.S. students responses to question: "Why did you choose to study abroad in Ireland?" Responses are weighted on a Likert Scale of 1-5 (1 not relevant - 5 highly relevant)



Source: ASAPI/EI 2018

Each provider sub-sector emphasised the value of different elements, but all agreed that English language was of primary importance. Irish HEI respondents rated the 'ranking of Irish universities' as the second most important reason for choosing Ireland while students ranked this last out of 13 choices.

Other providers (third party providers, U.S. campuses and FLPs) ranked 'safety' as the next most important factor and 91% of students ranked this as relevant in influencing their choice (compared to only 30% in a similar study carried out in 2011[iii]).

Ireland is expensive for international students and this emerged as a particularly strong concern for U.S. campuses and third party provider respondents.[6] Irish HEIs exhibited less concern noting that high cost was a given in study abroad and Ireland was not out of line with other destinations. Student respondents appeared to share this sentiment as Figure 1 shows. In summary, costs were universally acknowledged as high, but were not considered an absolute deterrent given the current status quo of the sector, i.e. attracting traditional study abroad students from middle to high socio-economic backgrounds.

5 See Chapter 1 of the main report for a full and detailed description of study abroad operators in Ireland.

6 Highlighting the high costs of accommodation socialising, local transport and phone/data costs ValuePenguin,[8] for example, ranks Ireland as the 5th most expensive country to study in. See Appendix 3 of the main report for further details.

Ancestry is a significant factor in determining a study destination and of particular importance for Ireland, with an earlier study finding that almost 70% of U.S. students had some degree of Irish ancestry.[iii]

Students choosing Ireland tend to follow general global patterns, originating from East-coast states, North mid-West states, California and Texas. A special analysis undertaken for Ireland by IIE shows particularly strong growth over the last five years from the Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Atlanta metropolitan areas.

Academic choices: IIE data for all U.S. study abroad students illustrates the growth in importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects (from 16.4% in 2005/06 to 25.2% in 2015/16) and the corresponding comprehensive decline in humanities (declining from 14.2% to 3.7% over the last decade) thus reflecting the push towards more career-outcome oriented study abroad.[i] It is in this area that the profile of study abroad in Ireland deviates most significantly from the global norm. Findings from this and other studies show that 58% of student respondents (in Irish HEIs, but with similar findings across all sectors) were taking arts and humanities subjects. In addition, a further 18% were taking business, science or engineering combined with arts and humanities.

The global trend towards reduced duration of the study abroad experience is reflected throughout the sector, but most especially in the rise in popularity of FLPs, probably the fastest growing sector in Ireland. FLPs offer the student a tailored and contained international academic experience which is cost-effective.[7] U.S. colleges and third party providers in Ireland are increasingly offering short programmes to address demand. Aside from summer programmes, Irish HEIs have been slower to respond to this demand, but conversely given the unique combination of factors which make up the Irish offer, it is likely that Ireland will be one of the few countries which will see one-semester programmes continue to grow, as they plateau globally.

7 One FLP respondent stated that to their knowledge their University ran at least 40 FLP programmes each year globally.

‘The study found that while study abroad in Ireland is complex and multi-layered in its operations, it presents a unique offering compared to many other European countries which accounts for its success, and provides scope for considerable future development.’

3. The economic impact of U.S. study abroad in Ireland

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3.1 Introduction

Part two of this study explored the economic impact of U.S. study abroad in Ireland from May 1 2016 to May 1 2017,[9] using primary source data gathered for this survey from all sections of the sector and from students. The contribution of this sector to the Irish economy has been calculated by collating student tuition income, study abroad programme expenditure across all sectors and student and visitor spend.[10] As noted, the estimated number of U.S. study abroad students present in Ireland during AY 2016/17 was 11,912 who - across all sectors - spent a total of 95,035 weeks studying in Ireland. Tables 2 and 3 provide a summary of the direct, indirect and induced economic impact of these students.[11] To further develop context and offer a reference point, where possible student expenditure data was matched with the economic impact data published within Ireland's most recent international education strategy document.[ii]

In the opinion of the authors the overall figures are likely to reflect a conservative estimate of the economic impact of study abroad in Ireland. As detailed in the main report, third party providers, U.S. Colleges, FLPs and internship operators are mostly private institutions whose home base is outside Ireland and who therefore had no obligation to respond to this study, at all or in full. Although detailed levels of financial data were generously furnished by most respondents, there were some areas of non-response, particularly in relation to programme expenditure, which were considered commercially sensitive by some of the larger public HEIs and the private institutions both Irish and non-Irish. Also, in some cases, further programme/tuition fees or costs may have been paid to Irish HEIs but not fully captured by this study. Finally, although at least 30% of tuition income generated through study abroad does not accrue in Ireland - as students attending U.S. colleges pay tuition to the parent institution, and students on FLPs all pay their tuition fees to the home institution - it may be the case that some U.S. institutions based in Ireland are receiving a greater proportion of 'home fees' than uncovered by this study.

Additionally, the figures relating to both programme and student visitors are believed to be low. Focus group discussions revealed that too many questions here would have resulted in respondent fatigue and a low response rate and therefore detailed questions about expenditure beyond accommodation were not asked. Further research is required to unearth a clear understanding of both programme and student visitor spending in Ireland.

8 Please see Chapter 2 of the main report for a detailed discussion of all expenditure items.

9 Summer school data pertains to summer 2016 and student data pertains to the 2017 Autumn semester.

10 The methodological approach for this phase of the project is summarised below and further detailed in Appendix 1 of the main report.

11 'Indirect' impacts refer to the impact on suppliers to the businesses that have experienced an increase in demand due to the presence of the students. To calculate this, 'indirect' multipliers for different categories of expenditure were applied to the direct expenditure. These multipliers were previously calculated in the International Education Strategy using Central Statistical Office (CSO) data.

'Induced' impacts refer to shifts in spending on goods and services at the household level as a consequence of changes in income of the directly and indirectly affected businesses. This refers to the 'ripple effect' of suppliers having more money in their pocket, which they in turn use to fund their own expenditure and lifestyles. Here, the International Education Strategy/CSO multiplier for the 'Education' category was applied to the direct expenditure.

Table 2: Total direct economic impact of total U.S. study abroad to Ireland, 2016/17 (€)	
Profile	
Total students	11,912
Total study weeks in Ireland	95,035
HEIs/ALL Provider contribution:	
General expenditure (programme costs)	€9,405,290
Staff salaries	€6,620,656
Staff accommodation (FLP)	€352,624
Visitors to HEIs/providers (accommodation spend only)	€210,044
SUB-TOTAL	**€16,588,614**
Student Contribution	
Tuition fees (Irish HEIs only)	€26,764,371
Student accommodation spend	€22,156,750
Visitors to students (spend, including accommodation)	€11,983,826
Student general (living) expenditure	€11,905,186
Student large one-off expenses	€2,329,387
Student travel abroad - spend in Ireland	€4,139,289
Student travel within Ireland	€2,334,261
SUB-TOTAL	**€81,613,070**
Total	**€98,201,683**
Source: ASAPI/EI 2018	

Table 3: Total economic impact of U.S. study abroad to Ireland, 2016/17 (€)						
CSO sector	Total direct impacts	Indirect impacts (type 1 multiplier)		Induced impacts (type 2 multiplier)		Total
Accommodation, food & beverages	30,150,073	0.302	9,105,322	0.9853	29,706,867	68,962,262
Cultural & sporting activities	1,607,442	0.0999	160,583	0.4665	749,872	2,517,897
Education (inst. income & staff salaries)	33,590,152	0.228	7,658,555	1.167	39,199,708	80,448,415
Land transport services	2,096,775	0.4377	917,758	1.0984	2,303,097	5,317,630
Public administration	1,321,542	0.3886	513,551	1.0296	1,360,660	3,195,753
Recreation	2,209,286	0.0734	162,162	0.6579	1,453,490	3,824,938
Retail trade (weekly expenditure)	3,033,613	0.3035	920,701	0.8224	2,494,843	6,449,157
Retail trade (large one-off)	5,525,380	0.3035	1,676,953	0.8224	4,544,073	11,746,406
Travel and tourism services activities	18,667,420	0.0737	1,375,789	0.8681	16,205,187	36,248,396
Totals € *figures vary slightly due to rounding	98,201,683		22,491,375		98,017,796	218,710,854

Source: ASAPI/EI 2018

- The tables highlight the significant economic contribution of the entire U.S. study abroad sector to the Irish economy, at almost **€100m in direct impacts and almost €220m overall** during the period under review.

  This is equivalent to more than 25% of the impact of the entire international education sector in Ireland or the English language sector as calculated by DES[ii] and is particularly impressive as only two thirds of this cohort pay tuition fees in Ireland - normally the most significant single contributor to economic impact when assessing the international education sectors.
- **On average, each U.S. study abroad student directly contributes €8,244 to the Irish economy with each study week contributing €1,033. Taking indirect and induced impacts into consideration raises each student contribution to €18,360 - €2,301 per student week.** Looking across the CSO sectors (see Table 3), it is clear that the education sector benefits most from study abroad (37%). Institutional income, which includes tuition and fees paid to Irish HEIs by third party providers is the single most important financial category here.
- The next most important category is 'accommodation, food and beverages' which accounts for 32% of the total output.
- The tourism and travel sectors in Ireland also benefit significantly from U.S. study abroad (accounting for 17% of total output).
- The study abroad sector **directly supports 187 jobs in Ireland** which range from director/manager level to student officers and administrative staff across all providers. The knock-on effects (indirect and induced impacts) generate 261 further jobs, leading to **a total of 448 full-time jobs overall.**
- Overall one full-time job is created through the presence of 27 study abroad students in Ireland, and **every 15 one-semester students results in the creation of one full-time job.** Assuming an increase of 8% per year, it is reasonable to assume that **within five years, this sector will be supporting 667 jobs.**
- **Across the study abroad sector, providers are spending €6.62m on staff salaries.**

3.2 Programme expenditure

The fact that a considerable portion of study abroad tuition spend does not accrue to Ireland, means that the provider/ institutional contribution (programmes costs, salaries, visitors…) is less significant to the economy - at 16% of total spend - than might be expected.

- Excluding accommodation, all providers (including Irish HEIs) are spending almost **€9.5m per annum on programme expenditure.**[12]
- Study abroad programmes attract large numbers of visitors (academics, managers/advisors and administrators), who overall spent more than **3,000 nights in Ireland spending an average of €65.30 per day on accommodation**.

3.3 Student expenditure

The nature of the study abroad sector - where a large proportion of tuition spend does not accrue to the destination count y - means that the student contribution (tuition payments to Irish HEIs, living expenses, travels, visitors…) is more significant to the economy than the institutional contribution as noted above. This is clear from Table 2 which shows that 84% of direct expenditure comes from students. Unsurprisingly given the general profile of U.S. study abroad students (mid-to high socio-economic status, spending a relatively short time in country and high travel rates), these students were found to be higher spenders than the average international student in Ireland.

- The only study abroad sector which generates tuition income and fees is Irish HEIs. **Total direct expenditure on tuition fees is €27m which calculates as €384 per study week for the HEIs study abroad programmes, and averages at €5,800 for a semester programme.** Summer school programmes are more expensive, averaging at €907 per study week. Fees charged to summer students are generally inclusive of accommodation, trips and a number of social events.

Living expenses (calculations below do not include tuition payments)

Not including tuition costs, but including visitor expenditure, the direct financial contribution of this sector to Ireland is €577 per week.

Excluding travel costs and visitor expenditure, U.S. study abroad students are spending €383 per week, as compared to €198 as recorded by DES[ii] for the general international student population two years previously, further highlighting the value of this sector to Ireland.

For most categories of U.S. study abroad student in Ireland, accommodation is provided as part of the overall programme package. Across the entire sector U.S. short-term students are paying an average of €233/week. This figure is skewed upwards by the FLP sector whose weekly accommodation costs vary significantly depending on the choice of accommodation and duration of stay. The overall direct accommodation spend in 2016/17 was €22m.

Across the country, student respondents reported that they are spending an average of **€125 per week on living expenses** (with a median expenditure of €119). This category **excludes** accommodation costs, large once off expenses, and travel costs.

12 Reported programme expenditure in Irish HEIs is lower than anticipated at just under €0.6m compared to €1.25m by their summer schools - less than 20% of the average cost per student of the other sectors. This is due to a number of factors, including hesitation around divulging commercially sensitive information. Irish HEIs indicated that average programme expenditure per student is lower than for other providers, as they achieve significant economies of scale within this sphere: they often recruit very large numbers from one U.S. institution; have on-going exchange programmes which do not incur large promotional costs; are not necessarily required to include academic and other costs in their calculations (such as travel and rent/building costs) which come from central institutional budgets beyond the study abroad/international office. Where a U.S. institution sends several students to one Irish institution, there is also a level of burden sharing – these institutions frequently provide their own staff and support mechanisms to manage student (for example) welfare issues and practical aspects such as accommodation, programme trips, orientation etc. This can significantly reduce financial costs for the receiving institution.

As is the case internationally, food is the most significant weekly cost for students accounting for almost 30% of expenditure - a further 20% of the weekly spend goes on 'eating out' which includes takeaway meals and drinks. **Overall U.S. study abroad students spent €3.4m on food and alcohol, and €2.3m on eating out/takeaways in 2017.** Student's direct **spending on social and cultural events averaged €23 per week, accounting for 18% of student expenditure overall.** As most students live on campus, average transport costs were low at €11 per week.

Using general expenditure data from the surveys and grossing up for each sector by student numbers and weighted weekly figures provides a total living cost spend of €12m. The students based in Irish HEIs – by virtue of the longer duration of their stays – are responsible for almost 50% of this expenditure.

Student respondents were also asked to detail 'significant once off' expenditures in relation to their spending in Ireland. **By far the most significant once-off expenditure was the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) fee of €300. This requirement applies only to one-semester (or longer-term) students and incurs a fee of €300.** It is estimated that about 91% of one semester/one year students pay this fee – a total of €1.24m during the period under review and over 25% of all INIS fees generated by international students.[ii]

A particularly interesting finding was that students reported almost no variance in weekly expenditure across the four cities covered under this study (Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick).

'Overall study abroad students of one semester or more attract three visitors each to Ireland.'

3.3.1 Travel and visitors

Given the importance of 'ease of travel' as a reason to study in Ireland, it is unsurprising that 94% of respondents (93% of whom were one-semester and 7% were one-year students) had taken a trip away from their base in Ireland or a trip outside Ireland.

Students spent between one and 25 nights away from their study base in Ireland with an average of 4.8 nights and a median of three nights, spending an average of €79 per day away. **Over the period under review, one semester/one-year students took more trips than shorter-term students and spent a total of €2.3m.**

The study found that U.S. study abroad students on one-semester/one-year programmes spent more time traveling outside Ireland than within Ireland. However, they spent almost twice as much money in Ireland arranging travel to other countries than they did on their Irish trips (i.e. purchasing airfares, transport to airport, duty free etc.). The findings show that survey respondents took an average of five trips per person outside Ireland during their study abroad period. **Average student expenditure in Ireland for trips outside Ireland was €638, or €128 per trip – a total spend of €4.2m.**

Family and friends visiting students in Ireland is a significant revenue generator, especially for one semester/one-year students.[13] Eighty percent of student respondents reported that they have been visited by family and/or friends during their time in Ireland. Overall study abroad students based in Ireland for one semester or more attract three visitors each to the country. Spending by visitors at €73/day was lower than the CSO average for U.S. visitors of €103/day. Feedback from student focus groups, and call backs to respondents indicated that student visitors (often friends studying abroad in another European country) tended to spend very little during their trips to Ireland as they generally did not incur accommodation costs, ate cheaply and did not travel around the country. On the other hand, family members coming to visit tend to stay in hotels, hire cars and travel around Ireland for extended periods, spending up to €4,000 per trip (as reported by student respondents). **The direct annual expenditure of family and friends visiting U.S. study abroad in Ireland is €12m.**

13 Students on one-year programmes had an average of six visitors compared to three for one semester students.

The overall value to the Irish Economy of U.S. student travel and the spend of their associated visitors was at least €36m in 2016/17.

The foregoing discussion reveals that the economic impact of U.S. study abroad to Ireland is substantial. The DES analysis[ii] calculated the direct output of international education at €401m for AY 2014/15 (ibid, p56). The report focused almost entirely on full-time degree seeking students, not capturing all categories of short-term, study abroad/ summer students within Irish HEIs, students on U.S. campuses in Ireland, interns or FLP students. However, the figures generated by the current study - focusing on short-term categories - clearly point to the high value of this sector (and short-term study programmes in general), and the importance of including the entirety of this dynamic arm of international education within the national data in future.

The sector offers other advantages to Ireland such as the potential for a broad regional distribution of programmes and strong 'intangible' benefits.

In Ireland the most significant economic, social and cultural benefits of international education accrue to Dublin, and beyond that to the four major cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, with some smaller urban or rural areas benefitting from international students.[14] However, an important finding of this research is that U.S. study abroad, beyond the traditional one-semester model within Irish HEIs is characterised by its geographical spread, offeringeconomic and other benefits across the country, and with potential to do so much more, for example:

- A small number of Irish HEIs, U.S. organisations and other organisations offering programmes thrive in rural areas *(see Chapter 2, Box 8 of the main report for a discussion on the impact of one HEI offering study abroad within a rural community).*

- U.S. campuses in Ireland do not automatically locate in Dublin, with several quite large and established programmes located in Galway, Kerry, Mayo, Waterford and Wicklow.

- Irish HEIs Summer School Programmes almost always include one or more trips to other parts of the country, often with several overnight stays, thus contributing significantly to the local economy.

- The 39 FLPs who responded to this study are concentrated in Dublin, Galway and Cork, but operate across 22 counties, with several visiting many counties (North and South) during their short programmes. Many summer school programmes also operate across the island of Ireland, thus representing one of the few known elements of international education actively responding to the DES aspiration of "North-South cooperation promoting a 'whole of Ireland' approach to internationalisation." [ii (p40)].

As well as the economic benefits described here, U.S. students bring a range of advantages that are difficult to measure and define in monetary terms. The presence of the U.S. student in the Irish classroom helps to develop intercultural competency, critical thinking ability and communication skills amongst domestic students. U.S. (and other international) students also benefit Irish HEIs by ensuring that many programmes remain viable, which in turn offers domestic students greater choice. International students also increase the social and cultural diversity of our HEIs and their programmes, enriching the teaching and learning environment.

Critically, U.S. students are also likely to increase the country's 'soft power' becoming informal ambassadors for Ireland and our institutions, and ultimately strengthening cultural, trade, research and diplomatic links. This impact is bolstered by the dual facts that most have had a highly positive experience whilst in Ireland and have been directly responsible for at least three other people visiting the country (see Figure 2, page 28). As well as remaining life-long friends of Ireland and being likely to visit again during their lifetimes, some will return to Ireland for further studies, or possibly to employment, generally in high value positions.

14 International students are located in IoTs throughout the country including those in Athlone, Dundalk, Sligo, Tralee and Letterkenny. However, these institutions host negligible numbers of U.S. study abroad students.

4. The future of study abroad in Ireland

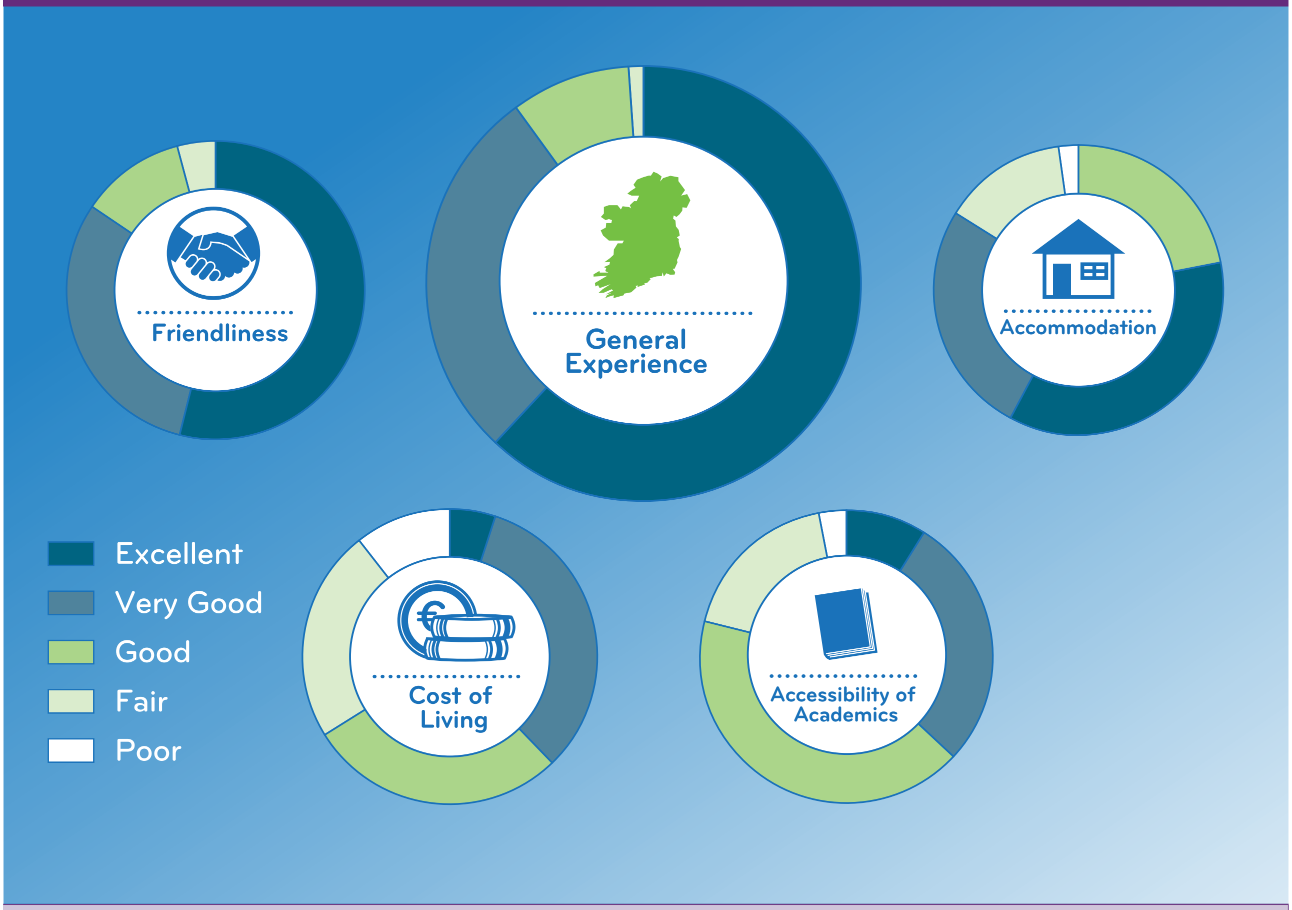
4 The future of study abroad in Ireland[15]

This study provides a thorough description of study abroad in Ireland, profiling it against the global norm and establishing the strong economic and social value of the sector to Ireland.

Ireland's study aboard sector offers an attractive package and is in a healthy state at present. It is particularly appealing to the fairly narrow demographic which defines the cohort today, yet possesses a number of important advantages which will continue to favour Ireland as the sector shifts to embrace greater diversity and the changes that will bring. These advantages include - but are not limited to - language, safety and ease of travel to other destinations. The study has shown that the benefits of U.S. study abroad accrue well beyond the education sector in Ireland. High visitor levels are reported as a direct a result of the presence of the programmes and the students, and the nature of the sector ensures a regional impact beyond the main urban areas.

In the context of global uncertainties, these advantages can be accentuated to ensure that Ireland can experience growth both in one-semester programmes and short-term programmes, which it is well positioned to do. In the current climate, areas of uncertainly refer specifically to fears around safety due to terrorist attacks in the U.K. and other parts of Europe, and to the impact of Brexit. At present Ireland scores particularly well with regard to safety – ranking as the 10th safest country in the world, well ahead of other top European competitors in the study abroad sphere.[iv]

Figure 2: Ratings of Irish Study Abroad Experience by U.S. Students (%)



Source: ASAPI/EI 2018

15 See Chapter 1, section 1.8 for a full and detailed description on attitudes to study abroad in Ireland.

Alongside with the positive findings, there are also some quite serious challenges for study abroad in Ireland. The current model is successful, but in essence has not changed since the early days of study abroad. New and more flexible and diverse modes of study abroad combined with the unknowable impact of Brexit and other geopolitical complexities bring new demands and uncertainty to the sector. These facts raise a number of interlinked questions for government, Irish HEIs, U.S. campuses, third party providers and the wider community who are invested in study abroad programme delivery in Ireland:

- Ireland already has the highest U.S. study abroad population per capita. Consideration needs to be given to what, if any limits should be set around expansion of this sector.

- Assuming expansion is feasible, can Ireland both grow as a destination and continue to maintain quality and a fresh appeal - what measures should be taken to ensure the sustainability of this sector?

- Is there capacity for significant increases across all sectors?

- Does growth offer an opportunity to broaden the reach of the sector to smaller urban and rural areas across Ireland and into the IoT or other sectors – how can this be facilitated?

- Brexit remains an unknown quantity: most provider respondents felt that Ireland would receive an increase in numbers because of Brexit, though several also commented that they did not know what impact it would have, and that students were not thinking about Brexit when they considered their destination. Study abroad advisors are thinking of these political issues however and noted that benefiting from Brexit would require more joined up thinking at government level and a concerted campaign emphasising the similarities and differences between Ireland and the U.K. for the study abroad student.

- Given that U.S. study abroad is the one known area of North-South cooperation within international education on the Island of Ireland, should deeper cooperation across the island be further supported by both governments (as recommended by the DES Strategy document[ii])? Does Brexit constitute an opportunity or a barrier here?

- What role should government play in supporting all elements of this important and dynamic sector beyond current Education in Ireland brand support to Irish HEIs? Is there room for expansion within the brand? Should government for example offer support to encourage more FLPs or U.S. institutions to set up operations in Ireland, or does this work against the interests of Irish HEIs? Can the immigration experience be enhanced to provide a more streamlined experience for this large cohort of students?

- The deep reliance on arts and humanities programmes within study abroad in Ireland throughout all sectors is a double-edged sword: on one hand, Ireland's rich offering across a broad spectrum of arts and humanities specialisms is clearly a unique selling point, allowing for distinctive semester programmes and particularly attractive short-term and faculty-led programmes. On the other hand, with the focus from the U.S. firmly on the career advantages of study abroad, and the corresponding decline in students choosing these fields over the last decade, Ireland risks being pigeon-holed as focusing solely on arts and humanities or viewed as an 'education tourism' destination rather than a serious academic destination.

'Assuming expansion is feasible, can Ireland both grow as a destination and continue to maintain quality and a fresh appeal?'

- Aligned to the discussion on academic aspects is the finding that while overall student satisfaction is very high, as Figure 2 shows, lower satisfaction was expressed with respect to academic programmes in Irish HEIs, campus facilities and the accessibility of academics. Responses to earlier questions in the survey suggested that students did not harbour high academic expectations for their study abroad experience. Further research is required here to understand if this is a global phenomenon or specifically relates to Ireland.

- Short-term programmes (eight weeks or considerably less) are becoming the norm in study abroad and to remain a leading destination, Ireland will need to increase its short-term offerings during term time and to develop these programmes across a wide range of subjects including STEM. In developing these programmes thought needs to be given to creative and innovative ways of incorporating internships and services learning elements into the offers.

- Internships for academic credit are becoming increasingly important and the evidence suggests that Ireland is benefitting strongly from this. Further thought could be given to nurturing creative industry relationships and developing a strong offering here for the more career focussed study abroad student.

- As the study abroad cohort diversifies, Ireland needs to find innovative ways to attract the non-traditional student.[16] Scholarships would be an important element here, as financial constraints are the most significant inhibitors for many non-traditional students.

- As noted above, the development of STEM and shorter programmes across several disciplines with an internship offering is necessary. In addition however Ireland could also focus on specific cohort led models and develop a high quality niche offering, for example, targeting athletes through intense sports-focused programmes, or heritage students through historical/genealogy programmes.

This study and the points raised above suggest that further research is required around a number of factors to fully understand the impact of this sector and the capacity for growth within the education system. Important initial steps however would be the inclusion of Irish HEI short-term programmes within the annual HEA data, and the incorporation of programme and visitor numbers within the DES international education economic model. These two actions would provide useful annual data and enhance our understanding of the value of both U.S. study abroad and the entire international education sector to Ireland.

Overall, the findings of this study are highly encouraging and further growth seems likely. The positive results at economic, social and cultural levels, and the goodwill and cooperation witnessed from providers and students alike suggests that Ireland has an opportunity to build on its success to develop a new and fresh study abroad model, which embraces a regional dimension and expands into other sectors, including tourism. Such a model would require government support and the various sectors to work together to focus on capacity issues and the other potentially limiting factors mentioned above to ensure quality standards are maintained across the board. One semester programmes are likely to remain the remit of the universities, U.S. colleges and third party providers, but the growing short-term requirements present both opportunities and challenges for all sectors and regions.

16 See Chapter 1 and Appendix 2 of the main report for a full discussion on the barriers and constraints to study abroad for U.S. students. In summary, a 'non-traditional' student (who does not study abroad in representative numbers) includes 1) minority and disabled students, 2) financially challenged students, 3) students whose U.S. curriculum may make it difficult for a semester away (e.g. IT and engineering), 4) and students with jobs, 5) students with campus commitments such as student government and 6) student athletes.

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