

# Going Global

Are graduates prepared for a global workforce?



Written by:

The  
Economist

Intelligence  
Unit

# Going global

Are graduates prepared for a global workforce?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive summary.....	5
About the research.....	6
1. Introduction.....	8
2. Views and experiences of international exposure.....	10
3. Recognising the impact of international experience and skills....	14
4. Beyond the classroom.....	16
5. Broadening the international experience at home.....	18
6. The impact on employment.....	22
7. Learning on the job.....	24
8. Conclusion.....	26

# Foreword

Higher education institutions play multiple roles, providing an educational foundation that enables students to gain exposure to new ideas and approaches, become good citizens, and perhaps most importantly, prepare for the competitive world of employment. In an increasingly global workplace, post-secondary institutions are facing more pressure than ever to produce graduates who are not just educated, but capable of forging multi-cultural relationships and working effectively across borders.

Free trade and technology have opened access to a global talent pool, and the workforce is becoming more skilled and more specialized. Universities are taking on a greater role as the chief conduit for international learning, yet the findings of this report, prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), show that university students are often disconnected from how critical international experience has become. Many come to appreciate the importance of international learning opportunities only after graduating. In addition, while many post-secondary institutions offer cultural and language exposure, there remains an unmet need for work opportunities that prepare students for a global career.

At Kaplan, we are actively engaged in partnerships with universities, governments, businesses and individuals to expand the trans-national flow of students. We help students attain the necessary skills to succeed, first in the classroom and eventually in the global workplace. Language study, cultural awareness, test preparation and professional education are all parts of the toolkit.

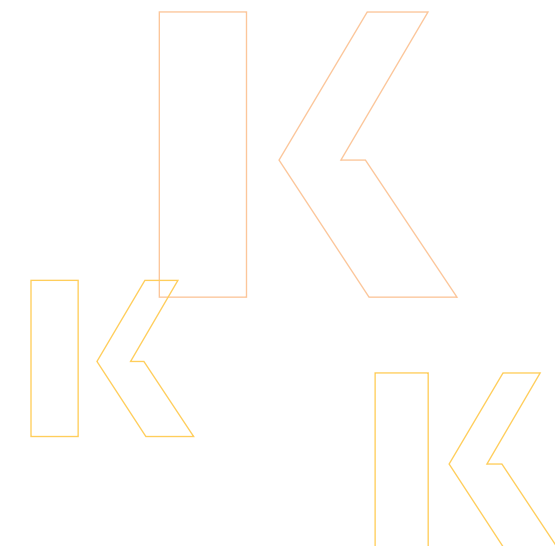
Kaplan is proud of its 75-plus year history in expanding educational access and improving student outcomes. We hope this report will help shed additional light on how educators, employers, governments and students can pursue opportunities to foster greater international understanding and workplace readiness.

Some of the findings are not surprising; others uncover new sets of questions for further investigation. There are some significant differences across countries in terms of how students prepare for today's global environment. One conclusion is inescapable: Students who do pursue international learning opportunities find they pay off.

Andrew S. Rosen  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Kaplan, Inc.



Andrew S. Rosen







## Executive summary

If university graduates and employers can agree on one thing, it's that international experience can improve a person's chances of finding a job and succeeding in the global workforce. However, few students recognise its value before graduation, and many turn down opportunities to gain a more global perspective offered by their educators.

Graduates with international experience find employment faster than those without it, and they find that their languages, intercultural awareness and overseas contacts are valued by their employers. Yet many report feeling unprepared on their first day at work, despite the majority thinking they were well prepared to join an increasingly global workforce. Why is this—and what can universities, employers and students themselves do to close this gap?

That is the central issue explored in a global research effort conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which included a survey designed to examine the experiences of recent university graduates around the world and relate the results to what experts in academia and business see as important requisites for career success.

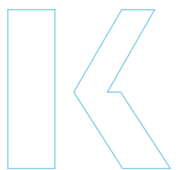
The key findings of the survey, commissioned by Kaplan and conducted among recent graduates from Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, Singapore, the UK and the US, are as follows:

**Graduates believe that institutions of higher education have a responsibility to prepare them for today's global economy and workforce.** Three out of four respondents agree that it is part of the role of universities and colleges to prepare them by offering access to international experience. And almost as many (70%) feel that their higher education has challenged their beliefs and exposed them to different cultures and ways of thinking beyond their home country.

**Most students have access to international experiences during their studies, but only a minority take advantage of them.** Opportunities to gain international experience during their studies were available to 75% of respondents. Most (69%) were offered the chance to study overseas, while 62% had access to foreign language courses and 55% to international cultural exchanges. But only 34% of those with access to international experience actually pursued it.

**Many students do not realise the importance of international exposure until after graduation, when its full value becomes clearer.** Half of respondents feel that they failed to recognise the value of international experience during their studies, suggesting that higher education institutions may need to help students recognise the benefits of participation.

**International experience in higher education is seen as improving the chances of finding a job.** Respondents who had gained international experience during their studies were twice as likely to be employed within six months of graduation than those who did not have the same opportunities.



# About the research

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) conducted a survey as part of a global research effort into international experiences available in higher education institutions and their impact on employment. Of the 1,072 recent graduates who participated in the survey, 10% were drawn from Australia, 8% from Brazil, 10% from China, 10% from France, 10% from Germany, 11% from Italy, 10% from Singapore, 11% from the UK and 21% from the US. They were born between 1985 and

1993 and graduated between 2011 and 2016 with either a bachelor's or undergraduate degree (65%); a master's degree or equivalent (29%); a PhD or equivalent (4%); or another professional degree (2%). Of those surveyed, 29% had studied Humanities or Liberal Arts, 35% STEM (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) subjects, 28% were pre-professional, and 20% took vocational or career-focused studies. The online survey were conducted in March 2016.

The EIU also conducted in-depth interviews with experts and global employers in this area to provide a further dimension to the broad research findings. We are grateful to the following for their time and insights (listed alphabetically):

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan,  
president, National University of Singapore

David Fairhurst,  
chief people officer, McDonald's

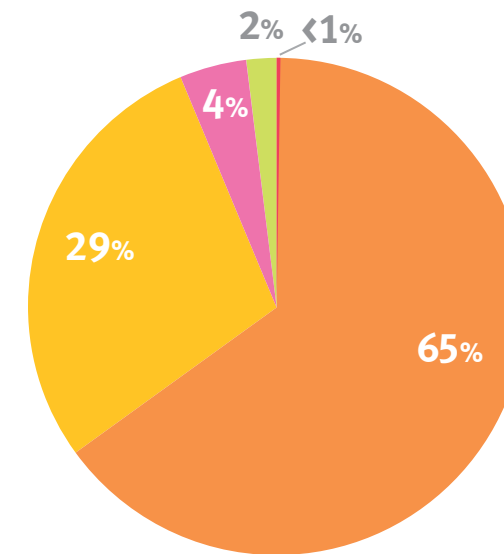
Lynda Gratton,  
professor of management practice,  
London Business School

Nick Hillman, director,  
Higher Education Policy Institute, Oxford

Andre Martin,  
vice president for talent development  
and chief learning officer, Nike, and  
formerly chief learning officer, Mars

Professor Enrico Sangiorgi,  
vice rector for education, University of Bologna

Juichi Yamagiwa,  
president of Kyoto University



## Level of qualification

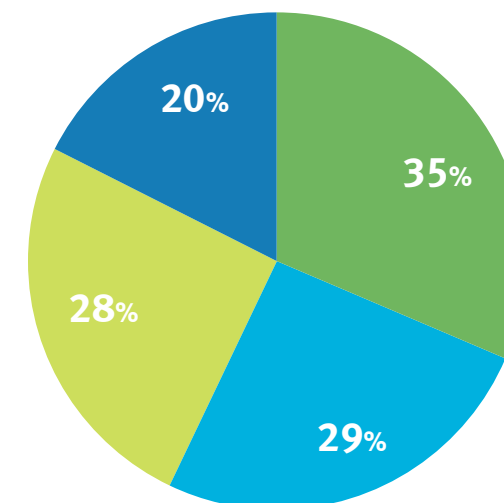
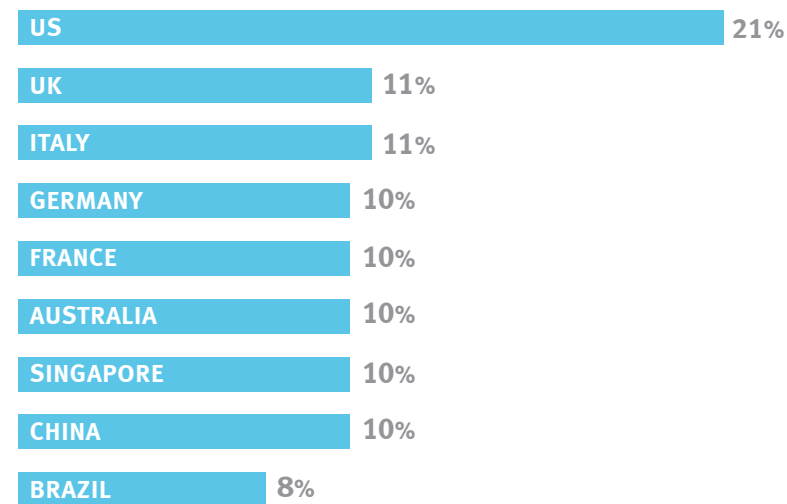
(% of respondents)

- Bachelor's degree/undergraduate degree, or equivalent
- Master's degree, or equivalent
- Ph.D., or equivalent
- MBA, or equivalent
- Other professional degree, or equivalent

N=1,072

## Country of origin

(% of respondents)



## Subject studied

(% of respondents)

- STEM
- Humanities / Liberal Arts
- Pre-Professional, eg, law, medical, business
- Vocational / Career-focused

N=1,072



# 1 Introduction

The rise of globalisation—including global businesses—has led to considerable discussion among employers and academics alike about how best to prepare tomorrow’s employees for the future world of work. A global research effort that included a survey of recent university graduates and in-depth interviews conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) on behalf of Kaplan found that the majority of the graduates surveyed feel well prepared to join an increasingly global workforce. But surprisingly, an almost equal number of survey respondents do not equate this general feeling of being prepared with full confidence to meet the specific demands of their job on their first day at work.

What experiences and skills do graduates need to ease their transition into the reality of today’s global workplace—and whose responsibility is it to provide them?

One of the realities of the world of work is that it is becoming increasingly international. In a 2013 report by the British Council, *Culture at Work: the value of intercultural skills in the workplace*, more than two-thirds of international employers reported

that their employees frequently interacted with colleagues outside their country, while over half said their employees frequently engaged with partners and clients overseas.

When your suppliers are in Asia, your competitors are in Europe and your target markets range from South America to Africa, readiness for the job may require more than knowledge of your industry. It may entail being equipped to understand the dynamics of consumers in different markets, respecting local sensitivities and priorities, as well as collaborating with colleagues in different time zones and contexts with unfamiliar perspectives and workplace practices.

Multinational employers recognise the challenge, and many provide in-house training to prepare new staff for precisely these scenarios.

As David Fairhurst, chief people officer at McDonald’s, explains: “We provide skills development programmes that help our international leaders to lead their global teams. This includes running virtual meetings and spending more time launching the teams in order to set them up for success. These sessions encourage a range of heightened awareness of time zones, country holidays and norms around conflict and discussion.”

However, the graduates in our survey feel that education providers also have a role to play in providing exposure to the interconnected world of work. Our study explores the impact of international experience gained while in higher education, as well as the views of educators, employers and graduates on the skills demanded in a globalised work environment and how they are best acquired.

**Beyond the educators: 44% of respondents say that career services at their college or university were crucial in helping them to explore different career paths and opportunities.**



# 2

## Views and experiences of international exposure

Universities and colleges recognise that the world is changing—people, organisations and markets are becoming more connected and must deal with a wider group of customers and relationships. More sectors and industries than ever before, from fashion retailers to coffee companies, banks to web developers, are more likely to demand an international outlook from their employees, and the majority of higher education providers appear to offer opportunities for their students to develop just that. Of the 1,072 graduates surveyed, 75% say that opportunities to gain international experience had been available to them while studying. Most (69%) were offered the chance to study overseas, while 62% had access to foreign language courses and 55% to international cultural exchanges (see figure 1).

However, as the large discrepancies between countries suggest, the availability of these opportunities

depends on the place of study (see figure 3). While 87% of German and 81% of American graduates say they had opportunities to study abroad, just 48% of Chinese respondents say that similar options were open to them. Work experience with an international employer, offered to 40% of respondents from Singapore, was available to just 25% of those from China and Italy. Students from the US are the most likely to have been taught by a multicultural group of educators (58%), compared with just 24% of Italians.

Providing access to opportunities and persuading students to take advantage of them are two different things (see figures 3 and 4). While the vast majority—78% of respondents—consider that institutions of higher education have a responsibility to provide international experience, far fewer were active participants. Just 34% of respondents who had the opportunity to obtain international

experience while in higher education actually did so—and fewer still pursued this experience outside university. Just 18% of those whose college or university did not provide international experience made their own arrangements.

**“ I fear that some students do not seize these [international] opportunities because they don’t understand the value employers place on the additional non-technical skills they provide.”**

– DAVID FAIRHURST, CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER, MCDONALD’S

Figure 1

International experience opportunities offered by higher education institutions (% of respondents)

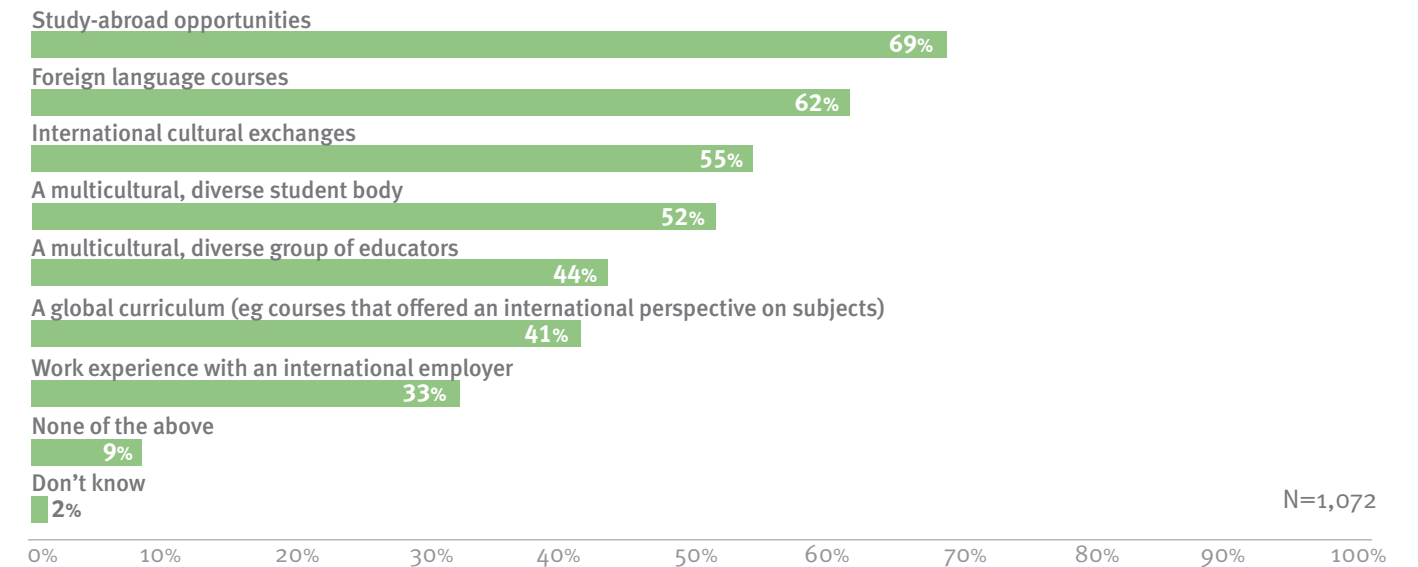
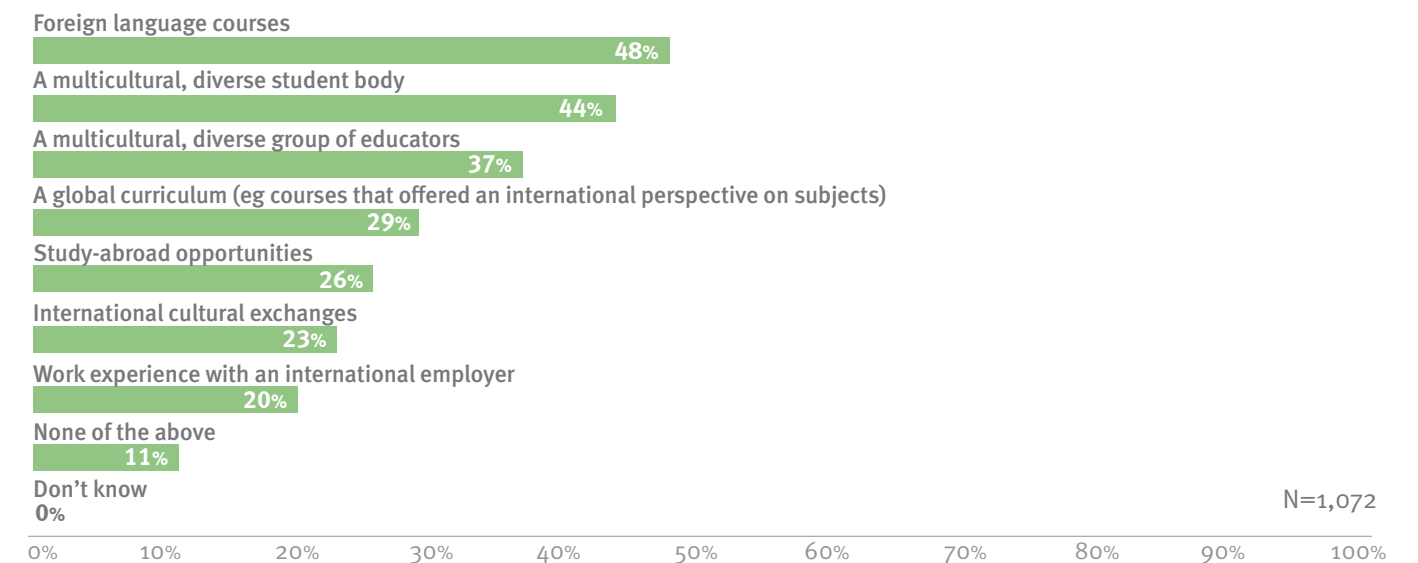


Figure 2

International experience opportunities taken up by students (% of respondents)





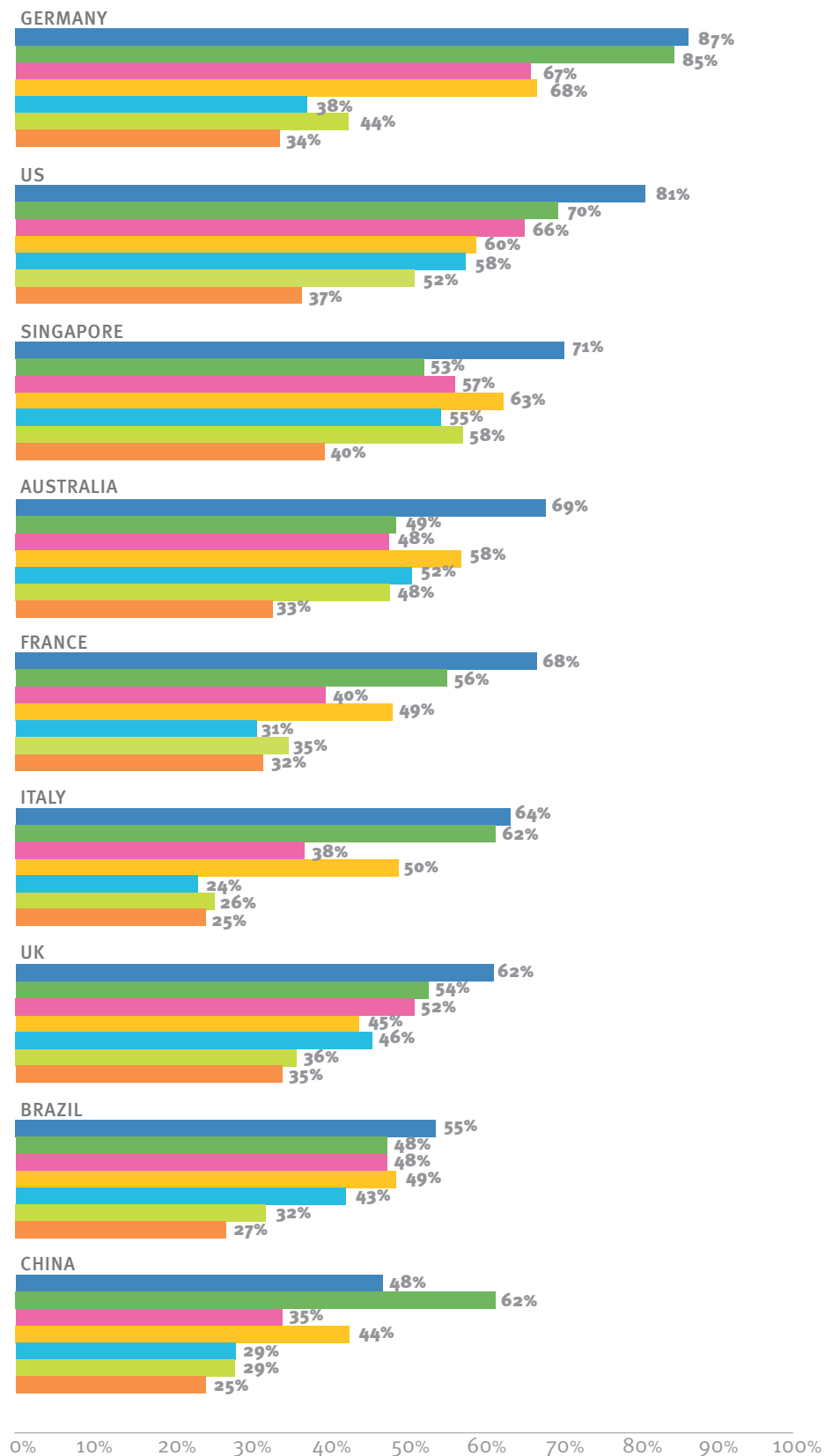
Mr Fairhurst believes that employers should be part of the solution. “I feel that employers need to do more to highlight to students the long-term career benefits the international opportunities their universities and colleges are creating. I fear that some students do not seize these opportunities because they don’t understand the value employers place on the non-technical skills they provide.”

Part of the challenge is that studying overseas—one of the ways to gain international experience—may not be a viable option for all, despite its seemingly widespread availability. Considerations of cost and personal circumstances, which may prevent many from taking this opportunity, are issues that some countries do more to address than others.

In Germany, where 34% of respondents had participated in study-abroad programmes (the second-highest percentage after Singapore), the government has set specific targets to send 50% of the

**Figure 3**  
International experience opportunities offered by higher education institutions  
(% of respondents, by country of origin)

- Study-abroad opportunities
- A multicultural, diverse student body
- A multicultural, diverse group of educators
- Work experience with an international employer
- Foreign language courses
- International cultural exchanges
- A global curriculum



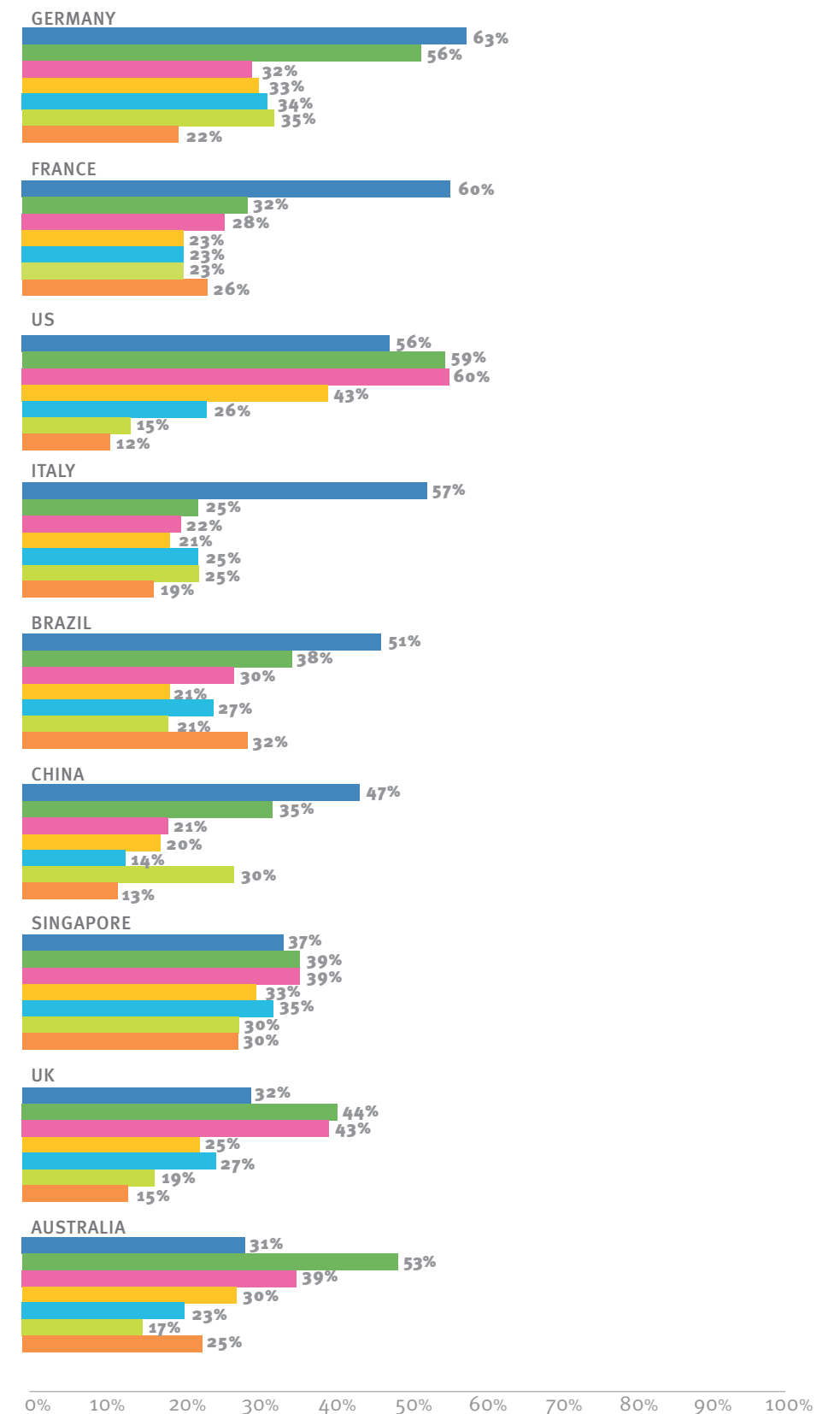
country’s students overseas for part of their higher education by 2020. Government funding has been set aside for 118,000 students per year, topped up for students on a low income. State-funded universities have been given additional funds to award as scholarships to send an additional 10,000 high-achieving students abroad.

Although the US has no mandated target regarding the number of overseas students, Federal Student Aid, a part of the US Department of Education, can provide financial support to enable students to take up educational opportunities abroad.

Some countries do more to ensure that students seize study abroad opportunities.

**Figure 4**  
International experience opportunities taken up by students  
(% of respondents, by country of origin)

- Study-abroad opportunities
- A multicultural, diverse student body
- A multicultural, diverse group of educators
- Work experience with an international employer
- Foreign language courses
- International cultural exchanges
- A global curriculum



# 3

## Recognising the impact of international experience and skills

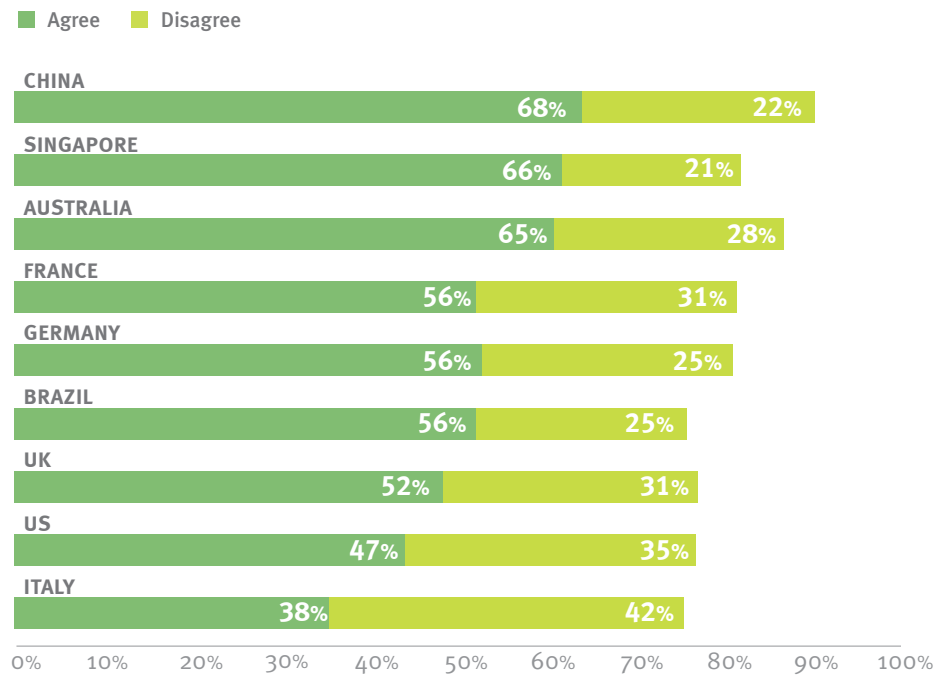
While German students receive an explicit message through such funding policies about the connection between international experience and employment options, they seem to be in a minority. For many students elsewhere, international experience is seen as a luxury, or a means of delaying entry into the “real world” rather than the key to a more secure future within it. For these students, the realisation that international experience has a value in the labour market often comes too late. Almost half of respondents agree that they had not recognised the importance of international experience until they joined the workforce. Once there, however, its impact becomes clear—75% of those whose experience of higher education included international elements believe that they were more culturally aware at work as a result.

Furthermore, over half of all respondents (55%) feel that the international experience they acquired while in higher education has proven beneficial to them in seeking employment, although this varies considerably by country (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

To what extent do graduates agree that international experience while studying has been beneficial in securing a job?

(% of respondents, by country of origin)



International work experience and internships were ranked as the least available opportunities provided by institutions, but had some of the highest uptake.

The survey shows that the key form of international experience sought by graduates is foreign languages, with almost half (48%) of respondents studying a foreign language alongside their primary discipline. While participation in Australia and the UK is relatively low at 31% and 32% respectively, the US, surprisingly, bucks the monoglot trend among anglophone nations, with 52% of American respondents studying a foreign language.

But it is the non-anglophone respondents who place the greatest importance on learning a foreign language. Asked to rate their importance, 50% of French graduates regard language courses as extremely helpful or indispensable (ranking them in 9th or 10th place on a sliding scale), while just 13% of British graduates view them in the same way. But when asked to look at languages from an employment perspective, 79% of all graduates feel that the ability to speak additional languages

“It’s not enough for a doctor to learn to cure patients, an engineer to build bridges, or for a lawyer to appear in court... [The educator’s] role is not just to educate students in a certain discipline, but to prepare them for the global workplace.”

– PROFESSOR ENRICO SANGIORGI, VICE RECTOR FOR EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

is important to securing appealing job opportunities. In Brazil, this even rises to 90% of respondents.

While students may be taking time to recognise the impact that international exposure can have on their employability, both the survey and supporting interviews suggest that universities increasingly view it as part of the “soft” skill set which students need to obtain in order to hold their own in the 21st-century job market.

“Compared with half a century ago, it’s not enough for a doctor to learn to cure patients, an engineer to build bridges, a lawyer to appear in

court,” says Enrico Sangiorgi, vice rector for education at the University of Bologna in Italy. “There are a set of skills which are common to all disciplines, from the ability to present yourself at an interview to a sense of intercultural awareness, and if a student graduates without them, he can’t leverage himself in the labour market. Our role is not just to educate students in a certain discipline, but to prepare them for the global workplace.”



## 4 Beyond the classroom

The 2013 British Council report *Culture at Work: the value of intercultural skills in the workplace* drew on surveys of HR managers at 367 large companies in nine countries. It found that almost all the employers surveyed regarded intercultural skills as very or fairly important, ranging from 100% of those surveyed in Indonesia to 70% in China.

Mr Fairhurst views the skills required for a globalised career as forming two distinct strands. One is the demands of international leadership, including the ability to understand and influence a diverse range of people, be mindful of the fact that team members may be geographically dispersed and working in different time zones with little overlap of working hours, and be able to resolve the complexity of the differing pace of market change in different countries. The other is the ability to manage the complexities of working in a non-native country, including loneliness, work-life balance, relationship issues, cultural differences and language.

“Overall, the skills and attributes I’ve seen demanded by an international career could be categorised as people and personal skills, such as empathy, cultural awareness, communication, leadership, resilience and self-awareness, rather than technical skills.”

“**The mission of universities, and even more so public universities, is to prepare students for employability, and today that means the global job market.**”

– PROFESSOR ENRICO SANGIORGI,  
VICE RECTOR FOR EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

If employers increasingly demand greater international awareness, is it part of the role of higher education institutions to provide opportunities to develop it? According to the survey respondents, the answer is yes, with 78% agreeing that higher education has a responsibility to prepare students for the global workforce by offering international experience. Professor Sangiorgi concurs: “The mission of universities, and even more so public universities, is to prepare students for employability, and today that means the global market. Our students must be prepared for a global workplace.”

At Japan’s Kyoto University the focus is on both increasing the diversity of the student population and encouraging home-grown students to venture further afield. “We have increased the number of lectures in English and in other languages,” explains Juichi Yamagiwa, the university’s president.

“We are also working to increase the number of foreign students and to develop our international exchange programmes to send students abroad. We have established three bases overseas, in London, Heidelberg and Bangkok. Our aim is to foster elite scholars and researchers to benefit the global community.”

“**Our aim is to foster elite scholars and researchers to benefit the global community. We are looking for outstanding students to come to Kyoto University and to return to their countries and take important roles in many fields, such as in politics, economy, research work or technologies in industry fields. To achieve this goal, we need to have more students and researchers to exchange with foreign universities.**”

– JUICHI YAMAGIWA,  
PRESIDENT OF KYOTO UNIVERSITY





## 5

## Broadening the international experience at home

“ In my more optimistic moods I think British universities are so much more diverse than elsewhere that maybe it doesn’t matter that we don’t send as many students overseas as other countries do. Except, then, how do you ensure that people mingle?”

– NICK HILLMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY INSTITUTE

Overseas experience can lead to long-term friendships and contacts. While 48% of respondents say that friends from study-abroad programmes and cultural exchanges are now a key part of their international professional network, 56% actively use social media to build that network. However, local contacts offer more concrete support—59% believe that connections from their home city or country had served them most in their career so far.

While the demographic make-up of the student or staff population may sound incidental, it is clear from the responses of recent graduates that it can have a significant impact on the international exposure students consider themselves to have gained.

Over half of graduates surveyed (52%) had been part of a multicultural student body, while 44% had been taught by a diverse group of educators (see figure 1), and up to 70% consider these experiences to have been very helpful or indispensable. Simply living alongside people from elsewhere, understanding their perspectives and “normalising” what may at first feel alien can have a far-reaching impact, even if students remain in their own hometown.

Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) in Oxford, says that his own research is consistent with these findings. He believes that the benefits of being part of a multicultural student body may be great enough to compensate for a lack of more proactive engagement with other countries.

“We [HEPI] did a poll last year asking students whether they felt that they benefitted from an international student body, and they very strongly felt that they did, as they’re going into a globalised labour market. In my more optimistic moods I think British universities are so much more diverse than elsewhere that maybe it doesn’t matter that we don’t send as many students overseas as other countries do. Except, then, how do you ensure that people mingle?”





**“It’s very important for our students to develop an international outlook and cross-cultural sensibilities. You can co-locate people, but how do you ensure they actually interact?”**

– PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN,  
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
OF SINGAPORE

Turning a diverse student body from a series of discrete social groupings into a cohesive whole is not something that happens by accident. Increasingly, institutions which take the importance of encouraging intercultural understanding seriously are taking steps to break down the barriers between different groups on campus. The president of the National University of Singapore (NUS), Tan Chorh Chuan, sees this microcosm of the global community as one of the key benefits the university can bestow on its students (as explored in further detail in the case study on the National University of Singapore).

“It’s very important for our students to develop an international outlook and cross-cultural sensibilities,” Professor Chuan explains. “We have tried to create a diverse environment so that students are used to working with people from lots of different nationalities and backgrounds. You can co-locate people, but how do you ensure they actually interact?”

The degree of multicultural exposure differs significantly by country. While 66% of American survey respondents feel that the word “multicultural” correctly describes the student body at their university, just 35% of those from China say the same. When it comes to teaching staff or faculty, the US again appears to be the most diverse, with 58% of Americans stating that they had been taught by a multicultural group of educators, compared with just 24% of Italians.

Professor Sangiorgi points out that if the language of instruction is not widely spoken internationally, a university will find it harder to attract students from abroad. “Around 10% of our intake at Bologna is made up of foreign students, some from South America, some from Eastern Europe, and we do have a multicultural atmosphere, but lack of English limits the influx.”

## CASE STUDY | The National University of Singapore

At the National University of Singapore (NUS) the past 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in focus on producing global citizens. As the expectations from graduates in the workplace have changed, the NUS has made a concerted effort to keep pace, seeing globalisation as an increasingly essential component of a good education.

“We take our responsibility to prepare students for the realities of the globalised workforce extremely seriously,” says Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, the university’s president.

“Singapore is a very small island, trade is three times our GDP, and we have many multinational companies based here. But although that has long been the case, 15 years ago only about 10% of students would have gone overseas as part of their studies. In recent years we have seen globalisation as a vital area in which to prepare students. Today 80% of NUS students take part in study-abroad programmes.”

The NUS has formed partnerships with 300 universities around the world, encouraging its students to spend anything from a few weeks to a year studying overseas while continuing to accrue credits for their degree.

“We’ve spent a lot of time arranging the credit transfer system so that it’s relatively hassle-free,” Professor Tan explains. “You don’t

have to worry about whether your work will count. We also provide financial aid for needy students who want to go overseas but may be daunted by the expenses.”

Time spent overseas is viewed as beneficial for the intercultural understanding of the university as a whole, not simply the individual concerned. “We want students to be able to come back and share diverse experiences and perspectives.”

For some students, the aim is more explicitly commercial than for others. In 2002 the NUS formed what Professor Tan believes to be a unique programme focusing on entrepreneurship—the NUS Overseas Colleges. Participants spend up to a year as interns with a technology start-up in Silicon Valley, New York City, Beijing, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, Stockholm, Lausanne and Munich, while taking courses in entrepreneurship at partner universities in those cities. On their return to Singapore they live on campus in a specially designated block, sharing ideas with students who have undergone the same experience elsewhere, in close contact with venture capitalists prepared to fund any promising ideas. The intention is to form an entrepreneurial hub fuelled by international exposure.

But even for the minority of NUS students who do not travel abroad, an international perspective is seen

as one of the benefits of the NUS experience. While the university has long boasted a diverse student body, it has recently taken a far more proactive approach to ensuring that students interact across cultural boundaries. A new residential site called University Town has recently been created, made up of four colleges. Each houses 600 students, at least 30% of whom are from 30 to 40 different countries outside Singapore. Places are allocated at random to ensure that all students live in a culturally diverse setting and fraternise with their contemporaries from all over the world. Discussion groups are multidisciplinary and as culturally diverse as possible to allow for a range of perspectives to be heard. “This kind of exposure has been very valuable in terms of developing cross-cultural understanding,” says Professor Tan.

But for all the emphasis on entrepreneurship and employability, the less tangible benefits of international experience also play a part. “Going overseas is very important in terms of learning about other cultures, but also to give students a sense of their own strengths and weaknesses. It’s about their own personal development, learning how to cope with unfamiliar situations.”



## 6 The impact on employment

The survey shows that international experience makes students more employable after they graduate. Almost two-thirds of respondents believe that their international experience has given them an edge in finding a good job in their chosen career. The survey also shows that respondents with international experience are more likely to be employed within six months of graduation than those without, and are much more likely to have international elements to their work.

Over half (57%) of respondents credit their overseas experience for the pool of jobs and opportunities that they were interested in, while 66% say that their international exposure and the experiences they accrued while studying made them more culturally aware in the workplace.

Andre Martin, vice president for talent development and chief

learning officer at Nike and formerly chief learning officer at Mars, notes that in his experience global skills are not recruited for in isolation but are more likely to be found in those applicants with what he terms a “growth mindset”.

“Global multinational companies are looking for diverse skills and experiences in three areas—technical skills, life experiences and educational background. What we’re seeing employers looking for more and more are people with inter-disciplinary skills—the designer with the background in business, or the English major with the MBA.”

While Mr Martin stops short of describing overseas travel as a prerequisite, he says that “the growth mindset is not built by staying in one place. Multinationals also need people to be mobile, not tied to one place, and open to the idea of travel.”

“The growth mindset is not built by staying in one place. Multinationals also need people to be mobile, not tied to one place, and open to the idea of travel.”

— ANDRE MARTIN, NIKE





So is higher education the last chance to develop sufficient international experience to benefit graduates in the labour market or can a global outlook be developed on the job? Clearly, education does not end, but rather really begins, on the day of “commencement” exercises. Lynda Gratton, professor of management practice at the London Business School, feels that developing an international outlook is an ongoing process involving many inputs over

“Universities could be working with businesses to allow them to shape the curriculum to prevent skills gaps, while we should also be thinking more effectively about how universities could curate gap years, summers and semesters overseas.”

– ANDRE MARTIN, NIKE

time. “The stakeholders in any person’s learning are themselves, the corporation they work for and their educators,” she explains. “The best corporations play a role in developing intercultural understanding. Almost every multinational organisation has some kind of globalisation programme. But individuals also have to take responsibility themselves—through reading, travel and becoming global citizens.”

Nike’s Mr Martin also considers the responsibility to be a shared one, and one which needs to be shouldered more effectively by both educators and employers. “The partnership on both sides could be much more effective than it is now,” he says. “Universities could be working with businesses to allow them to shape the curriculum to prevent skills gaps, while we should also be thinking more effectively about how universities could curate gap years, summers and semesters overseas.”

McDonald’s is one example of this kind of partnership in action. It

“The best corporations play a role in developing intercultural understanding. But individuals also have to take responsibility themselves.”

– PROFESSOR LYNDA GRATTON,  
LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

partners globally with hundreds of universities and colleges, recruiting from them, providing internships and working with them to the benefit of its own corporate university, which has campuses in Chicago, Sydney, Munich, London, Tokyo, Sao Paulo and Shanghai.

Mr Fairhurst feels that the role of employers is crucial. “Many of the people and personal skills I highlighted can only be effectively developed in a workplace setting. It’s therefore unreasonable to suggest that universities and colleges are failing if graduates do not have these skills—employers need to step up.”

## CASE STUDY | Sony University

Many multinational corporations provide in-house training to staff embarking on global careers. Sony has gone one step further and created its own university for the purpose.

With the aim of cultivating global business leaders, Sony University in Tokyo offers programmes looking at networking, management decision-making and business vision, all from a global perspective. It brings Sony staff members viewed as prospective leaders to Tokyo to share ideas and learn from each other, as well as to learn how to work effectively together.

Not all the learning takes place in Japan. The company’s Global Challenge Programme sends employees overseas to work for several months in other Sony offices, specifically to allow them to experience a different culture and understand the dynamics of another country’s workplace. For example, each year four employees based at the Japanese headquarters are sent on a three-month programme to the UK. Sony also employs global talent directors whose role is to identify participants for worldwide job rotations, allowing future business leaders to receive an overarching experience of the company’s global

reach, irrespective of their country of origin or business specialism. Exchange programmes and rotation initiatives within and between Sony’s subsidiaries in Latin America, Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific enable staff to learn about new technologies and trends alongside a familiarisation with different working styles, values and workplace cultures.

English-language training and an increasing number of training programmes in other languages are also provided in-house, while under the Global Job Postings programme staff can apply to be transferred to an overseas site for the purposes of career development. Sony also encourages staff to take up opportunities such as overseas study programmes, for example for engineers or IT specialists who wish to update their understanding of cutting-edge technologies. Training programmes with the company’s own global sites or practical work experience with its overseas business partners also form part of a varied package of possibilities available to staff eager to prepare themselves for a career on the global stage.

For an ever-growing number of industries, competition comes not from around the corner but from across the globe. Employees who feel at home in an international environment and are able to engage professionally with clients, colleagues and competitors wherever they may come from are a valuable asset, and international experience gained while studying offers increasingly tangible benefits in gaining a toehold on a career. The majority of those surveyed feel that in their chosen sector international experience makes graduates more likely to find a good job.

International experience is increasingly part of the package that higher education institutions are expected to provide—over three-quarters of graduates feel that they have a responsibility to do so. But with two in five respondents turning down the chance to gain international

experience while studying, students themselves need to take a proactive approach to seeking out the opportunities available to them.

The role of employers is also likely to increase, as the skills needed in a globalised career often are largely acquired on the job. From in-house training to corporate universities, employers can fill much of the gap in employees' international skills. And partnerships between educators and employers would enable knowledge-sharing about the types of skills and experiences that are most required—and how they can be provided while still studying. When it comes to preparing graduates to collaborate in a global workplace with diverse stakeholders, educators and employers can lead by example by working together.





## About Kaplan

Kaplan, Inc. serves over 1.2 million students globally each year through its array of higher education, test preparation, professional education, English-language training and university preparation for individuals, institutions and businesses. Throughout its 75-plus year history – first as the founder of the test-prep industry, then as an online education pioneer and now as a global education leader – Kaplan has expanded educational access, while leveraging technology innovations and learning science to improve outcomes. Kaplan is the largest division of Graham Holdings Company (NYSE: GHC).

For more information, please visit [www.kaplan.com](http://www.kaplan.com)

Copyright© 2016 Kaplan, Inc.  
All rights reserved.

