

# **Postgraduate Study Intentions: The Role of Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy and Career Decision Status in Decision-Making**

**by**

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## **Certification**

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of PhD in the department of Business and Economics, Macquarie University. This represents the original work and contribution of the author, except as acknowledged by general and specific references.

I hereby certify that this has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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## **Abstract**

Few studies have examined undergraduate students' decision-making about postgraduate study, yet a better understanding of how undergraduate students view postgraduate study may help university administrators provide improved student support and guidance and target potential postgraduate students more appropriately. The current study aimed to increase understanding of the decision to pursue postgraduate study through testing a hypothesised structural model. Two prominent career theories were applied to a testing sample 536 business students across five Australian metropolitan universities to determine the impact of student career decision-making self-efficacy, career certainty and career indecision on predicting undergraduate students' intentions to progress to postgraduate study. The path model included levels of awareness and knowledge of postgraduate studies as mediators to postgraduate intentions. Based on factor analyses, short forms of well-established scales were developed and used in structural equation analyses. The recently developed measures of awareness, knowledge and intentions to progress to postgraduate study demonstrated sound psychometric properties. A verification study on a sample of 558 undergraduate business students confirmed the relationships. Results indicate that career certainty leads to higher levels of awareness about postgraduate study than does career indecision. However, career certainty does not lead to higher postgraduate intentions when compared with career self-efficacy. Despite minor discrepancies between results in the testing and verification models, the study addresses a significant gap in the literature by applying the career decision-making self-efficacy and career decision theories to undergraduate business students' decision to progress to postgraduate study, a decision that is linked to career prospects and career intentions. The results provide insight into students' career status, decision-making and factors that influence the decision to pursue postgraduate study.