

FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

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CULTURAL CONNECTION

SUMMER
2017

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Published by
European Association for International Education
PO Box 11189, 1001 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands
TEL +31-20-344 51 00
E-MAIL info@eaie.org, www.eaie.org

Editor Laura Rumbley
Publications Committee Laura Rumbley (*Chair*),
Jill Archer, Irina Ferencz, Jos Beelen, Han Aarts, Sara
Lopez, Elise Kuurstra, Mariah Tauer

Head of Marketing & Communications Elise Kuurstra
Editorial Coordinator Mariah Tauer
Graphic Designers Nhu Nguyen, Kelly Sue Cram

E-MAIL publications@eaie.org

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Printed by Drukkerij Raddraaier, Amsterdam

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ISSN 1389-0808

Cover photo: shutterstock

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EDITORIAL

Working with and on behalf of international students is a core activity and daily reality for many of us who serve as international education professionals. We manage mobility programmes that facilitate the intake of international students into our countries and higher education institutions. We help to develop and deliver curricula designed to meet international student needs and interests. We advocate for and oversee student service and support systems that are calibrated to respond to the demands of a growing and diversifying international student population. Equally, for a good many of us, we also relate on a very personal level to the international student experience. Who among us was not at one time an international student in some capacity? We ‘get’ what it means to be an international student – or do we? How much do we really know about ‘the international student’ in our midst today – their identities, needs, expectations and experiences?

Our current issue of *Forum* takes up this fundamental question and reminds us to think broadly and deeply about the students from around the world who study in our midst today – both as individuals and in relation to larger trends and issues that frame their experiences. At a very essential level, Frank Haber’s piece reminds us of the importance of helping international students to effectively address crucial (and universal) matters of stress management and mental health support. Student wellbeing is the



core building block for whatever else we might aspire to for the international student experience and must be carefully attended to. Meanwhile, in the realm of broader trends and concerns, Aisling M. Tiernan’s examination of how ‘changing political environments’ can have an impact on international students is timely and relevant. Our interview with Safi Sabuni, President of the Erasmus Students Network, also speaks to the profound importance of the intersection between individual experience and major trends in the world at large.

More at the level of institutional experience, we are treated to a range of highly current examples that help us think more creatively about good practice in the field, touching on such topics as

better integrating international students into the host institution and local context where they study and live; enhanced planning and execution of strategies for retaining international students; and more effective delivery of career guidance to international students.

The international student discussion among our colleagues is grounded in great sensitivity to the unique needs and interests of this population. But, by contributor Elspeth Jones, we are also requested to consider turning that question upside down and ask ourselves, “Are international students so different?” We wonder what conclusions you will come to as you explore this issue of *Forum*.

— LAURA RUMBLEY, EDITOR
PUBLICATIONS@EAIE.ORG

CONTRIBUTORS

Daniela Crăciun

Yehuda Elkana PhD candidate, Central European University, Hungary

Currently studying in Hungary, Daniela has also studied in England, Germany, India, Poland, Brazil and the USA! She is a PhD candidate who loves to hit the slopes on her snowboard!

Adriana Perez-Encinas

Lecturer and Researcher, PhD candidate, Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain

With a passion for languages (she speaks five!) and meeting new people from different cultures, Adriana makes a point to stay in close contact with her international friends from all over the globe.

Judith Hoogmoed

Project Coordinator International Career Services, Erasmus University Rotterdam; Alumni and Development Officer, University College Utrecht, the Netherlands

Judith has over a ten years' experience in international education, and has been learning to play the trumpet for fifteen!

Dorianne van Schaijk

Career Adviser, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands

Dorianne is an enthusiastic career adviser who has helped to establish career centres at three Croatian universities. She is also training for her first half marathon.

Livia Castellanos

Associate Vice President and Chief International Officer, University of Regina, Canada

Livia left her home country of Mexico to become an international student and has been working to create purposeful international education strategies ever since.

Haroon Chaudhry

Associate Director, International Student Services and Global Learning Centre, University of Regina, Canada

Having studied in Pakistan, The United States and Canada, Haroon is fully aware of the dynamic challenges international students face. Haroon is trilingual, speaking English, Urdu and Punjabi!

Elsbeth Jones

Emerita Professor of Internationalisation of Higher Education, Leeds Beckett University, UK; Honorary Visiting Fellow, Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI), Catholic University of Sacred Heart, Italy

Elsbeth, a fan of gardening, Star Trek and progressive rock music cruises, has been involved in the field of international education for more than 35 years!

Frank Haber

Psychological Counsellor and Intercultural Education Officer, Jacobs University Bremen, Germany

An expert in international student mental health, cross-cultural training and multicultural campus community development, Frank likes to spend his free time Thai boxing.

Aisling M. Tiernan

PhD candidate, King's College London; Regional Manager, Middle East & North Africa, University College Dublin

Aisling spends most of her time doing PhD research on the student visa system in the UK, but she also adores the ballet. She was lucky enough to fulfil a lifelong dream when she attended the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Bryce Loo

Research Associate, World Education Services, USA

Bryce served in the US Peace Corps as an English Teacher Trainer in a rural college near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. He also happens to be a classically trained singer.

Zhengrong Lu

Former Research Associate, World Education Services, USA

When he's not comparing and contrasting the teaching philosophies between the Eastern and Western education systems, Zhengrong enjoys working on jigsaw puzzles.

Megha Roy

Senior Research Associate, World Education Services, USA

Megha enjoys using her background in market research to study international mobility and the way today's students seek to make the world a better place.

Cheryl Rounsaville

Global Student Experience Manager, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Cheryl loves a good conversation about genealogy and could talk about it all day with the friends she has made while working in international education.

Suzanne Buckley

Support Officer for International Students, University College Cork, Ireland

Suzanne, who has an insatiable curiosity for people, their culture and their ways of doing things, finds great satisfaction in her work in higher education and also in a good game of tennis.

Armida de la Garza

Director of International Strategy and Chair of the China Regional Working Group, University College Cork, Ireland

Armida's professional expertise is in off-shore education and transnational campuses, but she enjoys embroidering for e-textiles in her downtime.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE

RETHINKING THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LIFECYCLE

Universities around the world consider internationalisation to be ‘the central motor of change’ in higher education. International student mobility, probably the most prominent aspect of internationalisation, is generally considered to be outside of the purview of strategies focusing on internationalisation at home. This is a lost opportunity. By rethinking the international student lifecycle, universities can promote and enhance internationalisation at home through outbound student mobility.

The international student lifecycle refers to the different stages through which international students pass and the different services they need in the process. Three main stages and respective types of services have been identified in the literature: (1) services needed before arriving at the host institution; (2) services needed upon arrival at the host institution; and (3) services needed throughout the mobility period. An additional stage and afferent services can be added to this lifecycle: (4) re-entry or reintegration services. This new stage closes the lifecycle circle and helps to highlight that reintegrating outbound international students can promote higher education internationalisation not only abroad, but also at home, as students can act as ambassadors and bring new experiences and insights to the home institution.

Reintegrating outbound international students can promote higher education internationalisation not only abroad, but also at home

WHAT IS INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME?

Until recently, internationalisation at home was thought of as being “any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility”.¹ This definition reflects the origins of the concept: an attempt to make the benefits of internationalisation accessible to *all* students, whether they are mobile or not. However, because it focuses on explaining what the process isn’t rather than what it is, this conceptualisation is not very useful in practice. Jos Beelen and Elspeth Jones provided us with a better understanding of internationalisation at

home, defining it as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments”.² Thus, it becomes apparent that by reconceptualising the international student life cycle to include the *reintegration concept*, outbound mobility can represent a previously untapped source of promoting internationalisation at home. Specifically, short-term mobility programmes are a great avenue for building synergies between mobile students and domestic students and, therefore, the enactment of internationalisation at home processes.

DON'T ASK WHAT ERASMUS CAN DO FOR YOU, BUT WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR ERASMUS

Erasmus, the flagship mobility scheme of Europe, reaches its 30th birthday this year. It is a time to take stock of what the programme has achieved so far, but also a time to think about its relevance and future. Since its inception, the Erasmus programme has enabled more than four million students to move freely in the ‘common European space’ by mediating cooperation partnerships between universities, promoting ‘a common sense of value’ through the ECTS, and providing students with financial support for the duration of their stay abroad. All in all, it is regarded as one of the most important drivers for synchronising the continent’s disparate higher education systems at the same heartbeat. As such, student mobility is seen as highly desirable and, even though it has been supported policy-wise, it still only reaches a minority of students.

The programme is also the prime example of a time when European policy and practice understood internationalisation mainly as in-bound and out-bound mobility. Critics of Erasmus have pointed out that there is little return on the public money invested in the programme beyond the personal benefits for the individuals taking part. It is out of

this context that the idea of ‘internationalisation at home’ arose as a way to call attention to the need of spreading the benefits of internationalisation to the vast majority of students who are not internationally mobile. Arguably, this call has been heard and policies have moved

reintegration services are geared towards international students sharing experiences with other (future) international students. However, this scope is limited. Innovative institutions could find ways to assimilate the international and intercultural experiences and knowledge of mobile students

It is time to bring internationalisation at home and abroad together and see how they can interconnect and benefit from each other

away from equating internationalisation with student mobility. It is a mistake to continue positioning internationalisation at home against mobility. It is a time when we have to bring internationalisation at home and abroad together and see how they can interconnect and benefit from each other. Innovative reintegration services could represent a learning laboratory in which to connect these different facets of internationalisation.

LIMITED REINTEGRATION SERVICES

The latest ESN survey, which gathered data from 12,365 international exchange students, reveals that 70% of the respondents would welcome reintegration services.³ However, there is a very limited availability of corresponding support services in universities. In fact, 15% of the respondents hadn’t received any reintegration services. Even when these were offered, they were mainly focused on three areas: (1) helping outbound Erasmus students; (2) helping inbound Erasmus students; and (3) joining a student association for international students. It seems that

and integrate them into the formal and informal curriculum. In turn, both domestic and returning students could profit from international student mobility.

The most widely known reintegration activities are mainly related to career services such as employment opportunities through alumni networks. However, it would be advisable for higher education institutions to keep in contact with returning students and to connect them to

volunteer opportunities are good links to promote the interaction of both student groups through peer-to-peer contact. Returning students have gone through a cultural learning process abroad and they have knowledge to share but also experiences to assimilate. Home universities can take action in order to help returning students assimilate what they have learned and share it with others.

Higher education institutions should close the circle of the international student lifecycle by enhancing reintegration activities and services provided by the home institution. In return, by integrating internationalisation at home and abroad, internationalisation is bound to become more inclusive and less elitist.

— DANIELA CRĂCIUN & ADRIANA PEREZ-ENCINAS

15% of international exchange students do not receive reintegration services upon returning to the home institution

domestic students. Ultimately, returning students can act as ambassadors for a study programme or country where they have enjoyed a mobility period abroad. Participating in social gatherings and

1. Crowther, P., Joris, M., Otten, M., Nilsson, B., Teekens, H., & Wächter, B. (2001). *Internationalisation at home: A position paper*. Amsterdam: EAIE.

2. Beelen, J. & Jones, E. (2015). *Redefining internationalisation at Home*. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *European Higher Education Area: between Critical Reflection and Future Policies* (pp. 59–72). London: Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from: <http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0>.

3. Erasmus Student Network (2017). *The International-Friendliness of Universities: Research Report of the ESNsurvey 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://esn.org/ESNsuryey>.

CAREER PREP

FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Is your university struggling to meet the expectations international students have regarding employability and the university's career services? International students tend to be enormously enthusiastic and ambitious. Most of them also have very high expectations of the university's career support, and rightfully so. ►



After what has probably been a long period of preparation, international students decided to travel to *your* country, *your* city, and it is *your* university they chose for pursuing their education. While a broad spectrum of factors is likely to have influenced their decision, they enrolled in their study programme because they believe it matches their talents and passions, and they chose your university because they are convinced completing the programme at your institution will prepare them best for realising their ambitions.

However, somewhere along the way, they might discover the support offered by your university to prepare them for their professional lives is different from what they had expected. The realisation that landing their dream job entails much more than successfully passing their courses and obtaining a diploma may come only too late. These potentially negative experiences, if not recognised and countered in time, may pose a serious threat to your future graduates' satisfaction with the education and support received at your institution.

DIFFERENT CAREER PATHS

An often heard question is: *"Do international students really differ that much from domestic students?"* In many ways their career support needs appear to be very similar; every student needs to learn how to write a CV, how to network and how to prepare for a job interview. That's true enough, but we should not forget that the most important characteristic that sets international students apart from local students is that they are, well, not from

your country. While some internationals aspire to a career in their host country and intend to stay after graduation, others choose to return home or even find a job in an altogether different location. Much more than their local peers, international students are facing the challenges of a truly global career.

As a consequence, effective career support requires less focus on preparing students for one specific labour market, and more on helping them to feel ready for their futures, regardless of where they wind up after graduation.

GLOBAL TRENDS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

What do international students need to feel career ready? An important development students have to take into account is the increased mobility of work and people around the globe. This is due to some major trends and developments in the labour market that we have already seen happening for a while: globalisation, flexibilisation and digitalisation. The world of work is rapidly changing, and current first year students will be filling jobs in the future that do not yet exist.

hands, taking full responsibility for their careers.

So what can your university do to prepare international students for keeping up with the challenges they have to face in the future? The answer lies in a strong focus on the development of transferable skills. For example, adaptability and (cross-)cultural communication skills are essential in all international work environments. Creativity, problem solving and analytical skills are required competencies for practically every higher level position. These abilities, along with a clear sense of self-direction and self-awareness, will help students to constantly adapt to new circumstances throughout their careers.

HELP STUDENTS DISCOVER TALENTS

International students are often unaware of the fact that they already possess most of the skills employers, trying to stay abreast of the developments in an increasingly globalised world, need. First, the simple fact that they chose to study and live abroad indicates their international mindset and their ability to adapt to a

International students are often unaware of the fact that they already possess many of the skills employers need

Another transition to distinguish is a shift from lifetime employment to lifetime employability. Young professionals are far more likely to change jobs more often, and in order to be successful they will need to take matters into their own

new country and culture. It also shows their problem-solving skills and creativity, having overcome situations and problems domestic students may never encounter, such as settling into a city they do not know, and having to build a new social

network from scratch. International students should, secondly, embrace their own culture. Being aware of their culture's values and characteristics can help them become more grounded individuals, and their unique cultural identity can be a valuable asset for employers. Last but not least, international students should look for their own niche in the labour market. What makes them who they are, what are they good at, how can they stand out? Specific knowledge and (language) skills derived from their cultural background can be a part of that niche.

To sum it up, your international students are sitting on a treasure trove without realising it! By providing them with the opportunity to work on their employability during their studies, you can help them to reveal and strengthen their hidden talents.

INTEGRATED APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL

In order to prepare international students for the labour market in a sustainable way, skill development deserves a more prominent place in both the university's educational policies and the student support organisation. Activities aimed

experience and hone their career skills by doing internships or becoming active in an association or committee.

You may think *"these services are already offered by our career centre, so what's new?"* However, the career readiness of international students cannot, and should

Activities aimed at developing students' transferable skills should be implemented from the moment they enter the university

at developing students' transferable skills should be implemented from the moment they enter the university, and training these competencies should be a continuous process until graduation. Furthermore, international students should be encouraged to gain work

not, be the responsibility of your university's career centre alone. The process of preparing students for their careers should take place both in the classroom and in the form of extra-curricular (or co-curricular) activities. This entails that all parties involved work closely together. Academics, international officers, career advisers, internship coordinators and alumni officers should join forces and show they take student employability seriously.

An integrated and skills-based approach to career services, in addition to a solid academic training, will result in career-ready international students who feel confident and sufficiently equipped to enter the labour market, no matter where their lives will take them.

— DORIANNE VAN SCHAIJK & JUDITH
HOOGMOED



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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

DEVELOPING RETENTION STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Recruitment and retention of international students are integral components of higher education institutions' international strategies worldwide. Your institution likely has its recruitment strategies carefully aligned, but what does it do to ensure those international students stick around? Is it time now to turn your focus on retention?

The success of an internationalisation strategy begins with our international offices, which can serve as a catalyst to transform the institution's culture. International offices must recognise that their role is not only to provide services to students, but also to be change agents as they implement best practices for the inclusivity and transformation of their campus community.

In today's competitive environment, where higher education institutions in many countries are striving to attract the best talent from around the world, creativity is required to identify international students' expectations, needs and challenges. Strengthening student retention and creating a student support service programme entails three components: connection, engagement and a roadmap to success to guide academic institutions as they develop their framework.

CONNECTION

International students leave their home countries, bringing with them a range of expectations and perceptions about their host countries. A successful retention strategy includes advance planning. Student



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service units should start building their connection with the students before their arrival. An ongoing, meaningful communication procedure will keep the institution in contact with the students after they arrive. This early connection with their academic institution benefits students during their transition, which goes on to contribute to their success.

For example, once students are accepted, the international office can dedicate resources to connect with those students and help in their initial transition to the university. International professionals can build a meaningful connection with the students, giving them guidance and support in areas such as housing, local transportation, health

services and banking. This assures the students that there is an entity within the university that will support them in settling into their new home and that they can use as an ongoing resource while they pursue their studies away from home.

ENGAGEMENT

International students' overall success greatly depends on the institutional environment and on opportunities for academic and non-academic engagement.

Because all international students expect to succeed in their academic career, retention strategies should be based on integration and intervention for academic programming. Factors that affect the students' academic transition include their academic background at the secondary level, language proficiency, cultural background, country of origin and suitability of their choice of programme of study.

These factors will guide the creation of programming that can assist all international students at varying academic levels. Institutions must develop mechanisms that connect international students with

kind of academic engagement is pivotal for success, closing pedagogical and learning gaps that the transition between academic systems may have left.

The international office, faculties and academic units should work together to provide cohesive academic support. Students must be monitored, as should the supports that are offered – not only to learn about the progress of each student, but also to assess those support programmes.

Many challenges – transitional, cultural and social – isolate international students, and these can be addressed through non-academic engagement. International offices can connect students with international groups or associations on campus, which can reduce the risk of student isolation. Involving student groups, local communities and cultural groups in the transition process through social engagement can boost student success.

Student associations can engage by mentoring university staff as they provide guidance and support by arranging cultural events. When students are actively

International students' success greatly depends on the institutional environment and on opportunities for engagement

professors, academic advisers and other academic support opportunities on campus: tutoring, language training, writing/reading skills, mathematical/science support, academic workshops, *etc.* These offerings can boost students' skills and enhance their academic experience. This

engaged on campus, they feel more supported and connected – and are therefore more likely to succeed. The institution is also responsible for creating intercultural strategies to enhance campus inclusion. These strategies should be included in tailored programming that empowers

international and domestic students and gives them a platform and environment where they can enhance their intercultural competencies. An example is a peer-advising programme, a mentorship in which senior students support new students, guiding them through the process of embracing the university's culture. These types of programmes succeed because they empower students to teach others from their own experience.

ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

For international students to succeed, the retention strategy requires clear communication between academic and non-academic advisers. Higher education institutions must run reports of their students' grades to monitor their academic situation. These reports will flag at-risk students, and advisers will then be able to monitor the students' progress through check-in sessions. Advisers can also direct international students to support programmes where they can learn skills to overcome their academic challenges.

If higher education institutions track international students' academic progress starting in their first year, such



Photo: Shutterstock

students' performance. Faculty members can report on the students' behaviour, with the international office following up accordingly. For example, if a student has been missing classes, the international office can contact them to see how they are doing: Are they depressed, or having

Strategies in small universities and centres can focus on personalised services. Big universities might use other approaches to suit their volume of students. Every university that wants to retain its international students must provide a combination of programmes that engage students academically and non-academically – and meet international students' expectations.

— LIVIA CASTELLANOS & HAROON CHAUDHRY

When students are actively engaged on campus, they feel more supported and connected and are therefore more likely to succeed

early intervention can direct students to recovery programmes and resources that will remediate academic setbacks. This is better than waiting until later years, when the students might end up dropping out due to poor academic performance.

Institutions can also ask their faculty members for feedback about international

problems? Advisers can support international students with non-academic programming such as life skills workshops. Each university can design a student-retention strategy that fits its needs, according to its location, size, type of students enrolled, and student background by country and cohort.



ARE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SO DIFFERENT?

A meme was recently doing the rounds on social media, where someone says, “My college is full of international students,” to which the reply is, “Oh, what do they look like?” This serves as a reminder, as if we needed one, that we can’t tell a person’s background simply by looking at them. Are international students really so different, or do we need to deconstruct our thinking about services for students? ►

Studying in another country has repeatedly been shown to offer a range of benefits, from enhanced intercultural understanding to employability and other transferable skills. But much has also been written about more problematic issues faced by international students. They may be studying in another language and be unfamiliar with the academic cultures and traditions of the host environment, be missing home and family or they might have difficulty adjusting to the new country and making friends.

and nor are domestic students – that the traditional way of categorising them is out of step with the reality of today's global and highly mobile student body. Many universities, certainly in western Europe, will see people from all over the world on their campuses, and they will also see local students who come from many different cultural backgrounds. This is one of the great strengths of our institutions, and one which provides opportunities for students and staff alike to experience international and intercultural perspectives 'at home'.

on the academic side, including language support and academic writing, taking part in seminars, using the library, expectations by academic staff of contributions in class, and assessment, learning and teaching practice at the institution. But, equally, it could be about the kind of orientation to local life which many universities provide exclusively for international arrivals – how to open a bank account, catch a bus, find food from their country in local shops and restaurants, join clubs and societies or make use of the student union. Why don't we offer these services to any student who might benefit from them rather than simply assuming that *all* international students but *no* 'home' students will have these needs?

This isn't simply a question of national, ethnic or religious cultural backgrounds. As higher education systems grow from elite to mass participation, diversity naturally increases to include 'mature' students, first-in-family to go to university, those with an indigenous heritage and so on. Studies have shown that domestic students from black and ethnic

International students aren't all the same nor are domestic students – the traditional way of categorising them is out of step with the reality of today

HOW WE CATEGORISE STUDENTS

What we haven't recognised so often, perhaps, is that some who are classed as 'home', 'domestic' or 'local' students may in fact have similar needs to some of those identified as international by their passport or visa status. Those officially labelled as home students may include refugees or recent migrants, they may speak another language in their family or be unfamiliar with academic traditions or the education system of the host country. In parallel to this, so-called international students may simply be continuing from high school level to university, and be more used to life in the host country than some of the domestic students are.

What this should tell us is that international students aren't all the same

SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS' NEEDS

So is the 'international student experience' so unique and worthy of our attention, with special services provided for those who fall into this category? Wouldn't it

Domestic students from ethnic minority or working class backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities, can face similar issues to international students

be more appropriate to consider diversity across the whole range of our students and recognise that some home students need greater support of the type we provide for international students? This could be

minority or working class backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities, can face similar issues to international students on entering higher education, and even students from rural locations moving



to study in a large city may face major 'cultural' issues. Rather than focusing on nationality, recognising diversity and providing relevant, targeted and integrated support is key to addressing student needs, in particular when they first arrive at university.

students, those for international students or for minority ethnic students, mature students and so on. In such cases, attempting to integrate service delivery for any student who needs it may not be a realistic solution. But taking the first step and recognising these issues is a

'Not all and not only' is a good way to frame these efforts. *Not all* international students need the services we provide and *not only* international students need the services we provide, because some home students need them as well. Thinking laterally rather than vertically could result in a more comprehensive approach to internationalisation, diversity, and social and cultural inclusion, which will better and more effectively serve the student population as a whole, regardless of the country of origin.

— ELSPETH JONES

Rather than focusing on nationality, recognising diversity and providing relevant, targeted support is key to addressing student needs

REFRAMING THE APPROACH

At a practical level, beginning to take a different approach towards international and domestic students may be limited by traditional vertical structures in the university. Institutions often separate the services provided for disabled

good starting point, which may eventually encourage staff to work across structural boundaries. Using cross-university working groups to gather ideas, opinions and perspectives from people who normally work in those different areas is one way forward.

This article is adapted from Jones, E. (2017, forthcoming) Problematising and Reimagining the Notion of 'International Student Experience'. *Studies in Higher Education* DOI 10.1080/03075079.2017.1293880



DE-STRESS,
LET GO, RELAX!

Professionals in international higher education tend to hear many stories about international students in distress. Especially front-line staff seem to have more and more difficult conversations with international students overwhelmed by their experience – cultural adjustment demands, high workload, challenging social life, difficulty finding student jobs and affordable accommodation. How do we help these students relax?

Sometimes, international students just need an empathic listener. Sometimes, however, they need someone who can help them look at their situation a bit more systematically: a trusted person who is willing to add perspective and able to propose a strategy to tackle a problem step by step. Ideally, an overtaxed and emotionally challenged student should be referred to a psychological counsellor. However, not every student who is displaying signs of distress must or wants to be seen by a mental health expert. Fortunately, higher education professionals can support distressed students already by having a structured and goal-oriented conversation with them. A simple yet effective method that does not require in-depth psychological training is referred to as the ‘psycho-educational approach to stress management’. Being knowledgeable about and practicing this method can help professionals to become better stress managers themselves.

DEFINING STRESS AND COPING

In academia, international students are trained to think about problems in conceptual terms. What is the cause, what is the effect? Are there mediating and moderating variables that influence process and outcome? When talking about stress, references to scientific models of explanation offer a safe ground for exploring the student’s stress-related concerns. Models provide orientation by defining the ‘what is what’ of otherwise confusing and conflicting subjective experiences.

Basic assumptions are:

- Stress is a combination of physical, physiological and behavioral responses to events that challenge or threaten us.
- Stress management is the ability to analyse one’s own stress experience, to develop possible coping alternatives and to use them for achieving a personal goal without experiencing distress.
- This competency is developed and refined throughout one’s lifetime.

THE TRANSACTIONAL STRESS MODEL

The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping was originally developed by Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman. It explains how humans respond to stress by emphasising the influence of cognitive appraisal patterns. The model depicts a process that starts with a stress-eliciting event, a so-called stressor such as a demanding course, a language barrier, a conflict with others, an illness that affects the ability to learn and study, *etc.* The stressor triggers a stress response. If not coping well with a stressful exam, for instance, we may respond *physiologically* with too much muscle tension and a racing pulse. *Cognitively*, we may focus too much on the potential threat to our grade while experiencing difficulty retrieving test-relevant data from our memory. *Emotionally*, we may feel anxious or upset. *Behaviorally*, we may try to avoid the situation (procrastinating, not showing up) or we work too hard on it while neglecting other important needs (cramming, binging, *etc.*). According to

the model, however, there are important mediating and moderating variables located between the stressor and the stress response. They explain why separate individuals may respond to one and the same stressor very differently; it's about our personalities, our attitudes, our mindsets. If we appraise a situation as a challenge through which we can learn and grow, as opposed to viewing it as a threat or loss, for instance, we are likely to experience fewer symptoms of psychological distress.

REMOVING OR MINIMISING STRESSORS

Psycho-educational stress management teaches a methodology to influence the stress experience at all the aforementioned variables of the process; on the level of the stressor, we need to look closely at specific stressful situations. Since it is usually several coinciding stressors, it's helpful to note them down on a whiteboard or flipchart. Once they



coping'. What can you do to decrease workload? How can you solve a conflict? Where can you find information that will help you to make a decision? All these and other questions can be discussed with your international student on a very practical and solution-focused level.

If we appraise a situation as a challenge through which we can learn and grow, we are likely to experience fewer symptoms of psychological distress

are named, they already lose a bit of their overwhelming nature. In a second step, they can be ranked according to their perceived impact. Finally, one can explore various options on how to influence them in order to make them less stressful. This rationale comprises all activities aiming to minimise or remove a stressor and is referred to as 'problem-focused

CHANGING MINDSETS

Sometimes, while exploring means to reduce or remove a stressor, it can become apparent that a certain coping style or personal bias prevents your client from tackling a problem rationally. Here 'emotion-focused coping' comes in. The leading question is: How do you tend to put yourself under stress? Oftentimes,

students are actually surprisingly aware of their stress-producing tendencies. International students were asked this question during a short stress management workshop. Statements such as *"I am just too much of a perfectionist"* or *"Perhaps I care too much about what others think about me"* can offer valuable starting points for committing to changing unhelpful attitudes and behaviors. In terms of psycho-education, it might also be worthwhile to present some of the most typical irrational beliefs that Albert Ellis, founder of the influential Rational-Emotive-Therapy, identified in his clients. Here are two big ones:

- The irrational idea that it is easier to avoid than to face life's difficulties.
- The irrational idea that your worth as a person depends on how much you achieve and that you have to be competent in everything you do instead of acknowledging that all humans have limitations and shortcomings.

MAIN SOURCES OF STRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (IN THEIR OWN WORDS)

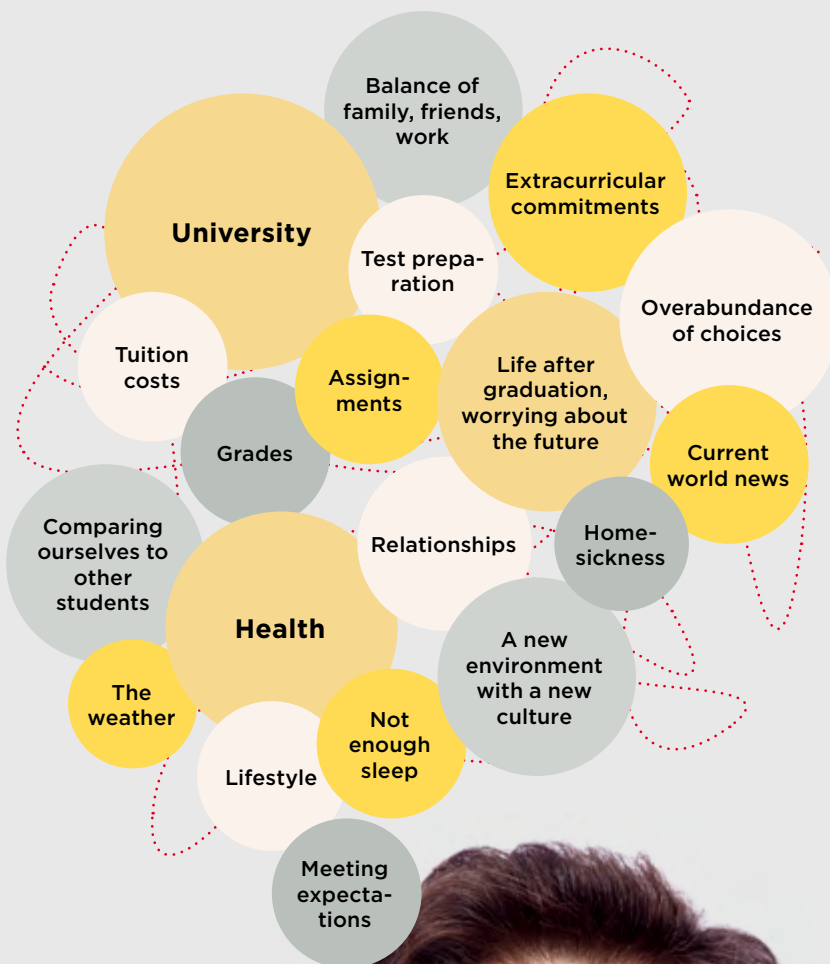


Illustration: N. Nguyen

RELAX!

Finally, looking at the response level of the stress experience, you can explore how your international student tends to react physically to the mentioned stressors. Oftentimes, distressed individuals experience very high levels of physiological arousal. This can lead to all sorts of negative acute and chronic effects such as hyperventilation, excessive sweating, palpitations, tension headaches, *etc.* Consequently, relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation as well as physical exercises such as yoga or long-distance running are methods of choice when it comes to minimising potentially harmful effects of stress. Depending on the setting and how experienced you are at applying them, you may want to consider introducing your favorite relaxation methods towards the end of the counselling or

Oftentimes, international students are actually surprisingly aware of their stress-producing tendencies

guidance session. The very last thing before saying "goodbye" should always be asking the student what he or she takes away from the conversation. While they will usually only mention one or two insights, you can rest assured they are taking those thoughts to heart.

— FRANK HABER

IN CONVERSATION WITH

SAFI SABUNI

MARIAH TAUER
EAIE

Safi Sabuni is President of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), Europe's largest network of student organisations, where she oversees representation and advocacy-related activities as well as EU-funded projects. Born and raised in Sweden to Congolese refugees, Safi has experience as an international student herself. She discusses the importance of supporting the international student and how the ESN intends to continue providing them with a platform well into the future.

This issue of *Forum* magazine is all about the international student. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing the international student today?

ss: One of the major issues is finances. Going abroad is still very costly and the grants that students receive are still too small to truly cover the needs of students. From our ESN survey to international students, the top issues are funding and accommodation. Finding student accommodation that is affordable and in an attractive place remains a challenge.

Can you elaborate more on your own experience as an international student? What was your motivation to go abroad?

ss: I studied on an Erasmus exchange in Brussels, but I also went on other exchange programmes to India and Uganda. My first experience abroad was actually after I'd joined the ESN. I had already been a volunteer for three years and helped international students come to Sweden. I've always personally been very interested in more of a global dimension of the world. In being able to take care of international students that came to Sweden, I also saw a bit of how easy it was to go abroad myself – it was something that even I could accomplish.

The motivation in the end came from learning more about different cultures but in a way also about myself, because that's what you do when you go on exchange. It's not only about the different study

programmes but also about experiencing living abroad. That's where I kind of developed in my professional career as well. My first professional job was working for an international association where a lot of the tasks were related to understanding intercultural learning and intercultural differences. I was still in Sweden but it required a lot of contacts with many different parts of the world. Still today I work in Brussels, so I managed to find another way of having this international connection in my daily work.

The motivation in the end came from learning more about different cultures but also about myself, because that's what you do when you go on exchange

How is the ESN network reacting to the current political climate?

ss: We are doing several different things. Some of our main activities focus on creating more of an intercultural atmosphere. We have a project called SocialErasmus that focuses on integrating international students into local societies and fostering a dialogue with local communities about differences, related to culture and so on. I think that's one of

our main projects – to try to create more understanding in today's society.

We also do all that we can to react to ongoing discussions. Brexit, for example, has been one of the big topics this past year, and we've been able to, together with our colleagues in the UK, try to map out and try to support Erasmus students through this process. What it means for

international students and sometimes even refugee students joining our activities.

We had been pushing internally for the European Commission to, for example, open up the online linguistic support (OLS) for refugees, which happened not too long ago. We are also looking at helping universities assess their prior experience and advocating for the fact that this

support of their family to go abroad, was able to cover expenses and so on. We miss out on the students that come from socio-economically diverse backgrounds or difficult backgrounds. And we miss out on students who might want to go out on mobility but have a stable job right now at home that provides more funding and where taking half a year or a year off just isn't an alternative. So I can imagine us seeing more of a blended type of mobility where you, for example, do part-time studies and part-time traineeship, or part-time studies and part-time volunteering.

I think we're moving away from mobility just being partying, which used to be one of the very known slogans of Erasmus, to being more of a professional experience that you do for yourself, for your own development. I think young people in the coming years will like to have something beyond just the academic side of mobility.

Erasmus is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Where do you see the ESN in the next 30 years?

ss: I think our next challenge in the coming 30 years will be how we expand. Because the Erasmus programme is going international – there are credit mobility programmes outside of the EU and

I think young people in the coming years will like to have something beyond just the academic side of mobility

students that are currently living in the country, but also for students who might be interested in going abroad. We are trying to support students by providing information about different potential situations and how Brexit might affect student mobility and education.

You've spoken openly before about your own family's experience as refugees. What does the ESN do to support refugee international students?

ss: We've been collaborating with UNICA, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe and also with the European University Foundation (EUF), in supporting universities but also in understanding how universities are trying to tackle the refugee situation. We are also in close collaboration with the European Commission, trying to give input on how we can have a targeted approach and collaborate with universities in their support structures. Generally, because we take care of international students and have a very nice international environment that we create on campus, we also have

support for refugee students is something that needs to be carried out. We might not always have the perfect solutions but we are going to continue advocating for these kinds of services.

Looking ahead to 2030, 2040 even, what do you see as far as changes in international mobility?

ss: Wow, 2030, 2040, that is some time from now! I think we will see more of a blended approach to mobility. Right now it is still very clustered in terms of, you go for study mobility, or you do a traineeship, or you do volunteering. I could imagine in

The field of student mobility or international learning is something that is tackled by many parts at the same time

the future that there will be more combinations of mobility to cater to more young people. If you look, for example, at the typical mobile student, it is someone from the middle class, that has perhaps the

Europe – I think that will be one of our major challenges in the future. Expanding and creating a network of support with organisations outside of Europe to cater to European and international students.

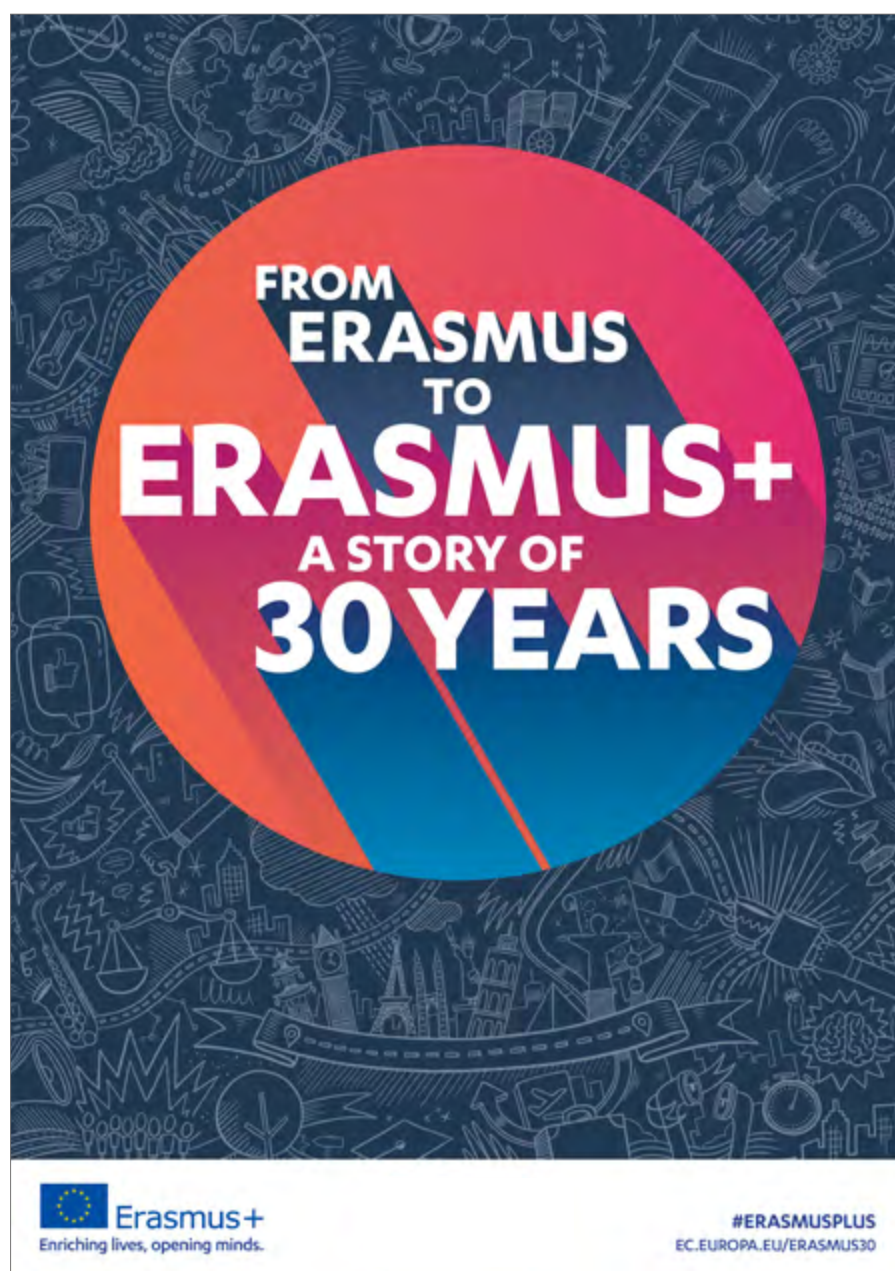
The approach that we use – we've gone from focusing mainly on the student to becoming an organisation that has strategic collaborations with universities, governments, local municipalities, tourist agencies and accommodation providers. We've really managed to capture this approach, and we'd really like to see more of in the coming years. We want to ensure that the field of student mobility or international learning is something that is tackled by many parts at the same time.

We also are looking at the digital world that is expanding and digital learning becoming more of an area that students are seeking. Seeing what our role would be – if we can facilitate or provide any kind of services in that field is a big priority right now.

Sounds like you've got your work cut out for you for the next several years! What is the ESN working on to help the international student today and into the future?

ss: We have a lot of work going on for the next Erasmus programme – what will happen after 2020. We are, right now, carrying out a structured dialogue with Erasmus students. Our European organisations are asking Erasmus students, and local students who haven't been abroad, about the Erasmus programme: Is it attractive, does it fit their needs, what else could fit in there, what should Erasmus really be about? We're trying to have them engage a bit more and think about the future of the programme.

We have a question in there which is, 'if you had the decision makers of Erasmus in front of you, what would be your one wish?' We are aiming at collecting all of these outcomes, then we will



have a conference in October where we will invite about 60 former and current Erasmus students to actually carry out this dialogue with the decision makers in Brussels. From that we will put together some kind of Erasmus manifesto that

we will use for the coming advocacy in the next three years. It is one of our very hot topics of the moment. Discussion of the next programme but also funding for Erasmus after 2020 and for youth in general. It's going to be a hectic year for us!

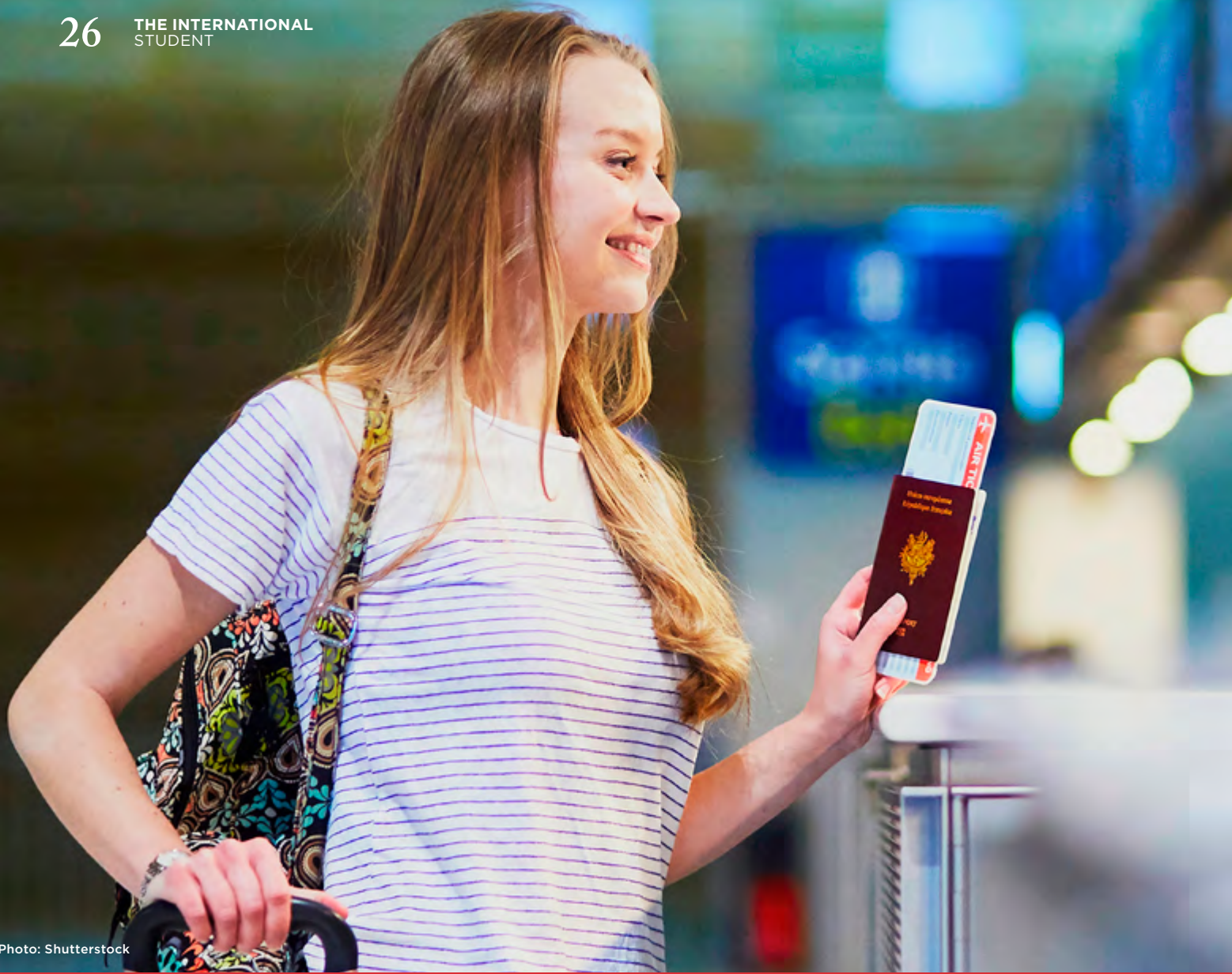


Photo: Shutterstock

The UK has experienced a time of considerable political change over the past three years. While these political changes are a big concern for students and institutions alike, this article focuses on how exactly the political climate is impacting current and potential international students in the UK.

The rise in popularity of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in 2014, the positive vote for Brexit in June 2016, and the political uncertainty following the recent general election illustrate three key developments during this time of change. Each of these events has focused with varying degrees on a normative immigration debate, with many political leaders like David Cameron and Theresa May repeatedly committing to reduce net migration figures into the UK. The inclusion of international student numbers in these net migration figures has remained a heated point of contention within higher education throughout these debates.

UK universities distinguish between home students, European students, and international students, with these distinctions being specifically reflected in fee and visa requirements. The term 'international student', particularly in the UK context, is used to describe non-European students, a categorisation signified by the requirement to apply for a Tier 4 visa and to pay significantly higher fees than their UK and European counterparts.

CHANGING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT VISAS

Research on international student visa issues has been primarily explored in the US context following the tragic events of 9/11.¹ The dominant observation in this

The Tier 4 student visa has become increasingly difficult for international students to navigate

literature is the increased difficulty of visa procedures experienced by international students in the aftermath of the event.²

Immigration-related hurdles include finger printing, profiling procedures, longer security checks at airports, questionings and detainments without reason, insults, accusations and even physical violence.³ The difficulties surrounding immigration to the United States may have resulted in international students choosing not to study there and many are concerned that recent decisions made by the Trump administration will further encourage international students to look for alternatives outside the USA.⁴

Countries endeavouring to attract more international students are conscious of the role played by more attractive student visa systems. Attractive student visas can include easier application processes

as offered by Malaysia, Singapore, China and Hong Kong, or routes to citizenship as have been available in Australia and Canada. Attractive student visas may also include flexible work allowances or post-study work options as offered by Ireland's recent expansion of the post-study work visa to two years.

CHANGING VISA CONDITIONS

In addition to, or perhaps as a consequence of, the political ambition to reduce net migration into the UK, the Tier 4 student visa has become increasingly difficult for international students to navigate. Part of this difficulty is a result of the frequent changes that have been made to the Tier 4 visa since 2010. These changes include the

introduction of Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) statements (2010), the introduction of Highly Trusted Status (HTS) for universities (2012), the removal of the post-study work visa (2012) and the introduction of credibility interviews for students from certain countries (2014).

but more research is needed to support and inform an understanding of how international students are affected by the UK student visa system.⁶ Student visa changes in the UK since 2011 have made it easier for students from 'low risk' or wealthy nations than 'high risk' nations

Nobody knows how the political environment will unfold and Brexit arguably poses less of a threat to international students than to those currently registered as EU students. In fact, the weakened strength of the pound currently reduces the cost of UK higher education to international students, so not all consequences of political change are negative.

Nevertheless, the UK needs to change how discussions on international students are framed. Political debates about international students are too often loaded with negative labels such as 'overstayers' and 'bogus colleges'. Now is the time for lobbying and debate. As conversations ensue about how EU students will be treated in a Brexit-driven future, this is the time to demand equal rights and treatment for all international students.

— AISLING M. TIERNAN

The temporality of international students' situation overhangs their entire experience

Evidence of maintenance funds and the visa application fee have both increased, adding to the financial burden of the Tier 4 visa. In addition, two large organisations, London Metropolitan University and London School of Business and Finance, have had their HTS revoked, leaving significant numbers of international students in a vulnerable position.

THE THREAT OF TEMPORALITY

The threat that any UK university could be suddenly deemed non-compliant by the home office, resulting in its students having 60 days to find alternative study paths, is an understandable concern for many students, especially because of the investment that they, their families and their governments have made to secure their study path with their current university. This temporality of international students' situation overhangs their entire experience, and this temporary status of student visas is attributed to the 'othering' of international students.⁵

There is some evidence that one of the main reasons that international students decide not to study in the UK is because of the lack of post-study work options,

to travel to the UK to study, illustrating some extent of the impact of the Tier 4 visa system. This impact needs to be understood further.⁷

FEELING UNWELCOME

Concerns about the Tier 4 visa, and potential further restrictions that may be placed on future international students, place a burden of concern on international

Many international students no longer feel welcome in the UK and it is this message that they are sending home to prospective future international students

students studying in the UK. Many international students no longer feel welcome in the UK and it is this message that they are sending home to their families, their friends and to prospective future international students considering the UK.

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WHAT EUROPE CAN LEARN FROM AFRICAN STUDENTS IN THE USA

Europe and the United States have long been favourite destinations of sub-Saharan African students. However, these regions face increasing competition from other destinations, both traditional (such as Canada) and emerging (such as Saudi Arabia and China), as well as each other. Read on to discover just what attracts Sub-Saharan African students to American institutions, then decide how your HEI wants to compete. ►

In this increasingly challenging environment, institutions must pay even more attention to the experiences of international students on their campuses and in their countries. Positive experiences can potentially mean that more students from these countries will continue coming, while negative experiences could signal declines.

In 2016, World Education Services (WES) conducted an extensive study of international student satisfaction and experience in the United States, with

European institutions can glean insights from one of the most demographically and economically vibrant places worldwide

particular focus on major regions and countries of origin.¹ The results related to sub-Saharan African students were very positive, with 59% of respondents indicating that they were 'very satisfied' with their education in the USA, the highest of any region of origin.² Additionally, 93% of the students from this region were 'likely' or 'very likely' to recommend their institutions in their home country, indicating that students from this region can become strong brand ambassadors for future recruitment efforts.

While the report focuses on the experiences of African students in the United States, European institutions can also glean insights into recruiting

and retaining students from one of the most demographically and economically vibrant places worldwide.

ACADEMICS ARE KEY

Academics are overwhelmingly the draw for African students going to institutions in the USA. Seventy percent of African respondents indicated that better quality education outside of their home country was a top factor for going abroad, compared with 57% of respondents overall. By far the top factor that led these students into USA-based institutions specifically was the availability of desired programmes, indicated by 63% of all respondents. Research opportunities was another big draw, with 38% of sub-Saharan African students citing this reason for coming to the USA, compared with 29% of all respondents.

The research shows that sub-Saharan African students often do well academically in American higher education. For one, they are among the most satisfied with the academic aspects of their experience. More than 90% of respondents from this region, more than any other source region, indicated satisfaction for factors ranging from availability of courses to faculty expertise to research opportunities. Furthermore, WES research has consistently shown that sub-Saharan African students are often well-prepared academically.³

For institutions wanting to draw in top-quality African students, highlighting the academic strengths of the institution is paramount. Markers of quality and a variety of academic programmes are most likely to catch the eye of many students from the region. Research opportunities

related to a wide array of academic disciplines are a particular draw for this group. Also, programmes delivered in English or French will likely draw in larger numbers of African students predominantly from Anglophone or Francophone Africa particularly. These students will already be fluent and well-educated in the respective language. Only 11% of sub-Saharan African students cited English as a major challenge, compared with 24% of international students overall.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREER PROSPECTS

Research also indicates that many sub-Saharan African students go abroad to improve their career prospects back home (45%) and gain international work experience (45%), both at a higher rate than for the average international student. This demonstrates the importance of gaining marketable job skills and experience in the country of study to these students.

Students from this region can become strong brand ambassadors for future recruitment efforts

In terms of career preparation services, students from this region had a higher-than-average satisfaction rate relative to international students overall. The one exception was 'knowledge of work authorisation regulations among staff,' for which there were slightly lower satisfaction levels (68%) than international students overall

(70%), with students from Cameroon (59%) and Kenya (54%) demonstrating even lower levels of satisfaction. This may indicate that many African students believe that they are not receiving enough assistance in dealing with the work authorisation regulations.

European nations where higher education is free or inexpensive for international students may have an advantage

The ability to gain work experience in their host country is important to many African students. Yet, students from this region may become discouraged as work authorisation regulations tighten in some countries, like the USA and the UK. Institutions in these countries likely can do little to affect national policy, but they can make sure that relevant staff are knowledgeable and stay up-to-date on the regulations, as well as conveying accurate information to students before and during their stay in the country.

By contrast, some countries offer generous work opportunities during and after coursework, with some (such as Canada) offering pathways to citizenship for some graduated international students. Institutions from these countries may want to take advantage of these conditions in recruiting African students, while support staff may want to make sure that students know about and take advantage of these opportunities.

COST AND FINANCING

The cost of financing an education abroad is a major challenge for many sub-Saharan African students. The availability of financial aid or scholarships tied with institutional reputation as the second most important factor in selecting a US institution, at 39% each, higher than for the international student population overall.

The cost of education, both in terms of tuition and living expenses, is by far the most cited challenge with their education in the USA (71%), higher than the overall rate for international students (64%). In this regard, European nations where higher education is free or inexpensive for international students may have an advantage. Even then, some students may struggle with living costs, so institutions may want to consider providing assistance in the form of on- or off-campus jobs (depending on work authorisation regulations) and scholarships.

Institutions in countries where higher education is known to be more expensive – like in the USA – may need to address the issue of cost more directly. The reputation of the higher education system, good choice of academic programmes and the ability to access relevant work opportunities (both for supplemental income and for experience) may encourage many African students to find ways to fund such an education. However, institutions may want to target assistance to these students and help them locate external funding, or, when possible, offer at least targeted small-scale funding that can help offset expenses.

In all, a combination of strong academic factors, the ability to gain work experience

and mitigation of costs may open doors for European and American institutions to recruit more talented African students. Additionally, as long as these students experience success, they may further open the door to more students from across the continent.

— BRYCE LOO, MEGHA ROY &
ZHENG RONG LU

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Photos courtesy NTU

NOTTINGHAM TRENT

FACILITATING CULTURAL CONNECTION

Nottingham Trent University (NTU), a British University with an enrolment of nearly 30,000 students, 10% of which are international, received the top rating of five stars for internationalisation from QS. Read on to learn about the university's award-winning Global Lounges, which may very well have contributed to that five-star rating!

NTU's Connecting Globally strategy states a commitment to internationalising the student experience. The University aims to nurture global citizens by providing a chance for all students to internationalise their learning through a range of off-campus and on-campus international opportunities. Many of the on-campus opportunities take place in or are organised by our Global Lounges. The basic idea and objectives of the lounges can be replicated at other institutions in either the same or a similar format.



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

NTU's Global Lounges, managed by the Global Student Experience team, were established in 2013 as focal points for our diverse range of international activities and opportunities and are multi-functional hubs that offer all NTU students and staff the opportunity to engage in internationalisation initiatives. The primary goals of the Global Lounges are to create an inclusive and welcoming international community at NTU where all students and staff feel valued, and to offer opportunities for all students to internationalise their learning, broaden their cultural perspectives, develop their cross-cultural skills, and become true global citizens.

To achieve these goals, the Lounges offer many on-campus opportunities to all students and staff that promote internationalisation, cultural sharing and the development of an international community, including our annual (university-wide) Global Week celebration. All events are free and open to all students and staff. The remit of the Lounges not

only includes the development of extra-curricular international opportunities, it is also responsible for supporting our International Mobility team to promote off-campus international opportunities such as study abroad, exchange, work placements abroad, international volunteering projects, *etc.* Each Lounge has a resource corner for students who want to participate in these off-campus opportunities that provide more information on our international partnerships, various overseas programmes, and funding available to students, as well as a range of travel guides for students to read about their potential country of study. The Global Lounges are open all year but most events and activities take place during term time.

The Lounges provide international students with personal and social support and opportunities for integration. They are unique event spaces that host a variety of cultural events, workshops and social gatherings to provide numerous opportunities for our international students to share their cultures and meet other

students from around the world. Once a week, for example, the City Global Lounge holds an International Community Lunch, a social event where students have an opportunity to socialise with other students from around the world. The attendance at this lunch is anywhere from 150-200 students per week. The Lounges also provide a safe and comfortable space for international students to relax between and after classes.

A PLACE TO SHARE YOUR CULTURE

Throughout the year we work with our international students to develop cultural events where these students have the opportunity to showcase their cultures to other students. Our cultural events have included Chinese New Year, Diwali, Eid, Kurdish New Year, Nigerian Independence Day, and American Thanksgiving. We provide funding and logistical support, while the students determine how to run the event and what activities to hold. In addition, every year the Lounges organise Global Week, a celebration of the diversity at NTU through art, music, dancing, sport and food. We celebrate a different world region from which our students come (including the UK and Europe) each day of Global Week. Students are encouraged, supported and funded by the Global Lounges to develop cultural stalls to showcase their cultures to other students and staff. This event takes place across our three main campuses. This year we were delighted that students from 53 countries (including the UK) engaged with Global Week mainly through these cultural stalls.



Our international students tell us these opportunities to share their cultures with the support of the Global Lounges makes them feel welcomed and valued.

EMPLOYING STUDENT AMBASSADORS

The Lounges have had a very positive impact on international students who feel they have a place at the university where they can find personal and social support, or just go to hang out and relax. One student said:

"The Global Lounge is an enrichment to the experience of Uni, bringing with it a global integration of people, communities, countries and the world! That's fairly reflected in what Global Lounge offers in its services, provision and staff representation."

The Lounges also employ students from different regions of the world to act as Global Lounge Assistants (GLAs), which are similar to student ambassadors. The GLAs provide a friendly face for students using the Lounges and are responsible for introducing students during events to promote an international community. We also employ a student placement (this is a year-long placement opportunity), usually an international post-graduate student, whose focus is increasing student engagement. The GLAs and student placement posts also give international students an opportunity to obtain some work experience.

Information sessions are also held in the Lounges with various support departments from within the university (*ie* Student Services, Students' Union, Careers

& Employability) to inform international students about the resources available to them. On a daily basis the Lounges do a lot of signposting for students to various university services.

FILLING A MUCH-NEEDED GAP

Before the Global Lounges, we had no central space to highlight international opportunities or create an international community. Since they opened in 2013, interest in all things international has increased and after nearly four years we now have a thriving space that welcomes over 10,000 students each year to our events and activities.

This year we introduced weekly Language Cafes where students and staff can come along to practice speaking other languages. The Cafes have been well received by students interested in other languages and the English table has been particularly popular with international students wanting to improve their English language skills.

In 2016, our Global Lounges won two NUS/UKCISA awards for Innovation in Internationalising the Student Experience and Excellence in International Student Support. The basic idea and implementation of these Global Lounges is not 'rocket science', rather it is about paying close attention to the student voice. Other universities can develop something similar to NTU's Global Lounges. The benefits far outweigh the costs and time involved and our students are worth the investment!

— CHERYL ROUNSAVILLE

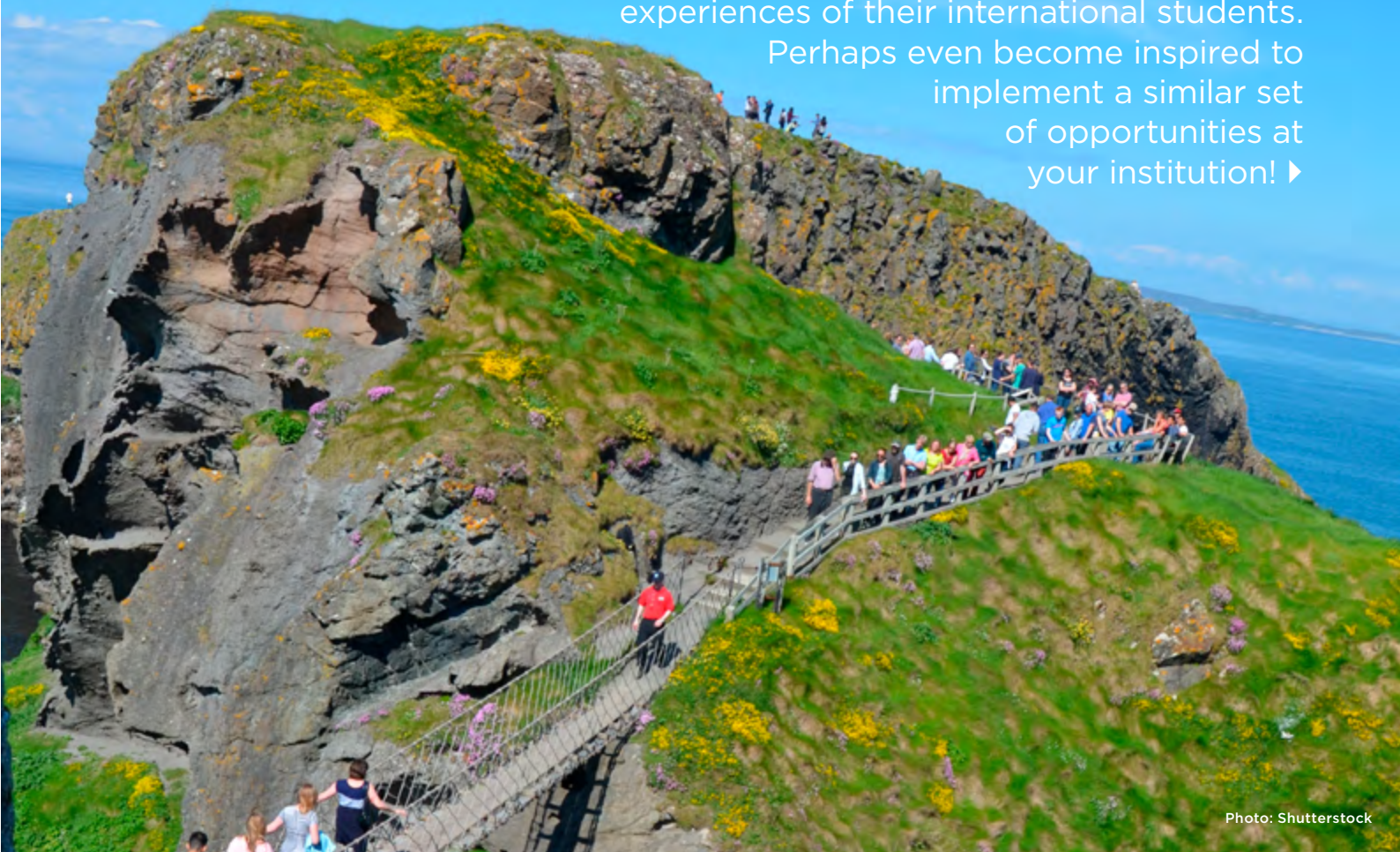
THE LESSONS WE HAVE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS THAT CAN BE APPLIED ACROSS THE SECTOR ARE:

- Student engagement is key to the success of these kinds of initiatives and is something that needs to be worked on year round not just immediately before an event – this refers to both getting students to lead events and activities but also to having student ambassadors/ student placements who focus on engaging other students;
- Make on-campus international events free for all so that you don't limit access for students – international students are particularly price conscious and may not engage if they have to pay to participate – but this means you need a healthy budget to work with;
- Prioritise student-led and student-focused events and activities;
- Relationship building with colleagues across the University is critical to achieving the goals of these kinds of initiatives.

LIVE & LEARN IN IRELAND

In the previous article, you read about how one university in the UK is making a difference in the lives of its international students by providing student lounges. Read on to learn more about how several universities in neighbouring Ireland have collaborated to improve the experiences of their international students.

Perhaps even become inspired to implement a similar set of opportunities at your institution! ►



Periods of transition are crucial in life, and the transition international students make can be challenging and stressful. Digital technology is widely used by students to gather information before and after arrival as they seek to adapt to their new living and learning contexts and cultures. But, as is often the case these days, the problem is now one of abundance. There are far too many resources and the need for filtering and curating the really useful information for the international student's experience is pressing.

With these considerations in mind, a group of Irish institutions of higher education, the Southern Cluster, applied to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning for funding to create a website that would provide exactly this support. The project, entitled 'Live and Learn in Ireland' comprises three student units: academic, practical and social, as well as two staff units.¹

MULTI-DISCIPLINED COLLABORATION

The project team represents a collaborative effort that brought together staff from five different HEIs in Ireland: the Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow); the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT); the Institute of Technology, Tralee (IT Tralee) Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and University College Cork (UCC). As well as coming from different locations, the team was multi-skilled and multi-disciplined, in that it included social science and science lecturers, international officers, project managers, instructional designers, educational developers and researchers.

While the logistics of bringing such a team together was challenging, the result was enhanced by the variety of expertise and perspectives that the project was able to draw on. It provided an opportunity for participants to become Third Space Professionals.²

DOING OUR RESEARCH

To make the website truly relevant to international students, an evidence-based approach was followed to develop the series. While building the website, the team learned a great deal about the student populations that motivate us and drive our profession forward. The first step was a literature review that sought to look at

While building the website, the team learned a great deal about the student populations that motivate us and drive our profession forward

the various issues faced by international students when coming to a new country, focusing on English-speaking countries. The issues highlighted during this stage were used to inform the design of the next two stages, namely semi-structured interviews and an online survey. The primary data collection phase commenced in March 2015 and was completed by the end of May 2015. Digital technology was crucial to the project, not only in the

form of an online platform for interaction and dissemination of the work, but also it played a role in the gathering of materials for the website. As stated on the website:

"The project team were very keen that the student's voice should be heard loud and clear in the development of these units and therefore the online survey of existing international students provided such an opportunity. The five partner colleges emailed a link to the survey to the international students in their respective colleges. We received a total of 573 responses which represents a significant response rate and certainly added to the validity of the findings. However, the other side of the learning coin is the college staff that teach and support incoming international schools. Therefore, the third element of the research involved doing semi-structured interviews with international officers and lecturing staff who have extensive experience of teaching incoming international students with the view to gaining insight from their know-how and understanding."

GOING LIVE

The website was launched at a high-profile event at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, where each member institution explained the role they played in the research and the building of the website, and also provided brief demonstrations of the content and uses. However, the most compelling demonstration of the

Live and Learn in Ireland digital tool's effectiveness was provided by the two users who had first tried it and have continued to use it since. These were two students of nursing from China, currently enrolled at IT Tralee. They explained the difference the site had made to them when one of them fell ill and they were unsure of how to approach the medical system. Through the tool, they gained better understanding of it and were able to utilise it more easily the second time they had to visit a doctor.

Live and Learn in Ireland is being disseminated through three streams: digital learning, internationalisation and academic research. It has been well received nationally and internationally. It has been the subject of peer reviewed papers and conference presentations, including at the Annual EAIE Conference in 2016.

The Live and Learn in Ireland website is an open-access resource, available for use throughout the Irish higher education sector. Anyone seeking to help international students come to Ireland are most welcome to make use of the



Photo: Shutterstock; modified by N. Nguyen

module on internationalisation that will be offered at UCC in autumn 2017. This module, available to undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff and indeed to anyone with an interest on internationalisation in the Cork

backgrounds. It is envisaged that the Live and Learn in Ireland website will prove an invaluable resource enabling our international students to make the most of their time with us, and indeed, to transition from being an 'international student' in Ireland to a fully engaged member of our thriving community of intercultural teachers and learners.

— ARMIDA DE LA GARZA & SUZANNE BUCKLEY

The Live and Learn in Ireland website is an open-access resource, available for use throughout the Irish higher education sector

series and promote it on any platform. The project team is running a series of workshops in Irish HEIs to assist those seeking to take advantage of the objectives and raise awareness of all the project's outcomes. An important initiative in this regard is the university-wide

community, consists of three workshops. Participants learn about different cultures and religions, the adjustment of teaching methods to suit a more international classroom and how to improve working relationships or service provision to people from different ethnic and cultural

1. www.liveandlearninireland.net

2. Whitchurch, Celia (2008) *Shifting Identities and Blurring Boundaries: the Emergence of Third Space Professionals in UK Higher Education*. Higher Education Quarterly, 62 (4). pp. 377–396.



ANDALUSIAN UNIVERSITIES A DYNAMIC AND COHESIVE SYSTEM

The Annual EAIE Conference is heading south to Seville for 2017. Seville is the capital of Andalusia, where international education is a top priority – so much so that it is one of the most sought-after destinations in the Erasmus programme! Now that you have had a glimpse into the trials and triumphs of today's international student, take a peek at this 500-year-old university system and learn why it is so enticing to international students the world over.

For decades, Andalusia has built a public university system based on one clear premise: knowledge only has real value if everyone can access it. Fairness and equality of opportunities have allowed this region in the south of Spain to have the second largest student community in the country. Over 200,000 people study undergraduate, Master's and doctoral degrees here every year.

The origin of this system dates back around 500 years. At that time, two universities were founded in the cities of Seville and Granada, and since then they have grown into two of the most prestigious institutions in the world.

Photos courtesy of author



To spread higher education throughout the whole of society, more recently universities have been founded in the region's eight provinces, along with Andalusia's own International University (UNIA), which seeks to forge links with Europe, North Africa, Latin America and the rest of the world.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE STUDENTS

In total, Andalusia has ten public universities. Although they are all independent and follow their own strategies, they work in close collaboration to offer students and society as a whole the best possible service. Major decisions are reached by

working together, and these institutions are constantly launching shared projects where all are involved.

One such project is the single access system, which allows students wishing to study in the region to submit just one application, stating their preferences in terms of subjects and universities. Places are then allocated (over 70,000 new places annually) based on the candidates' academic merit.

Another example of this cohesion between universities are the Campuses of International Excellence, a project that involves public entities and leading companies in Andalusia. These projects pool

teaching and research resources along with infrastructures in order to promote specialisation in areas such as biotechnology, ICTs, biodiversity, agro-industry, marine resources and historical heritage.

These initiatives offer students joint qualifications delivered across several universities, providing flexible training according to preference and the best teachers regardless of their affiliated institution.

AN ATTRACTIVE OPPORTUNITY

These values, accompanied by the culture, geography and the warm and sunny climate enjoyed year round, have made Andalusia a leading destination within

international student mobility programmes. Every year, thousands of Erasmus students choose this region to expand their knowledge and improve their language skills, seizing the opportunity to enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is thanks to all of them, acting as the best ambassadors upon returning home, that Andalusia is one of the most sought-after destinations in this programme.

Universities in Andalusia are also active in attracting students from other parts of the world, such as Latin America, the USA and Canada, and increasingly from Asia. Andalusian campuses are home to a diverse and multicultural community, hugely enriching university life and the surrounding cities.

FORGING AHEAD

Maintaining and increasing the quality of university teaching undoubtedly requires a firm commitment to the generation of new knowledge. Following Spain's transition to a democratic system, Andalusia was the first region to launch its own science strategy. Back then, just as it is now, research and development and innovation were seen as necessary tools to foster social and economic progress.

The development of this scientific policy has allowed Andalusia to triple its investment in research and innovation, making it one of Spain's top three regions in terms of the allocation of material and human resources to this task. Last year, for the first time, it topped the leader board in terms of patent applications in Spain, pulling ahead of Madrid and Catalonia, both of which boast greater industrial development. The great work carried out in universities has undoubtedly contributed to this achievement,



and Andalusian universities hold a strong place on the international intellectual property register.

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION

Andalusia's firm belief in an open and accessible system of higher education, present throughout the length and breadth of this region, has become the most valuable tool for transformation. There is an increasingly close bond between university researchers and enterprises, geared towards fostering knowledge creation in certain areas and finding solutions to the problems that hamper improved growth in the productive sector.

INTERNATIONAL ACCESS FOR ALL

Higher education that is within everyone's reach has marked a turning point in terms of business creation. In contrast to just a few years ago, today the majority of entrepreneurs have a university education. These are people who develop strong value-added projects with

international knowledge, experience and vision. Their work is bringing a fresh new approach to traditional areas such as tourism and agriculture and is opening up new fields in biotechnology, computing and renewable energies.

Andalusia believes in universities as valuable institutions, capable of offering people the opportunity to harness all their talent. That is why it has committed itself to a university system that is prevalent throughout the region, with autonomy but a strong level of cohesion, so that students can enjoy conditions of quality and equality. It is Andalusia's abiding belief that the future of the region is only possible if everyone gives their very best.

— DOLORES FERRE-CANO, GENERAL DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITIES, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF ANDALUSIA





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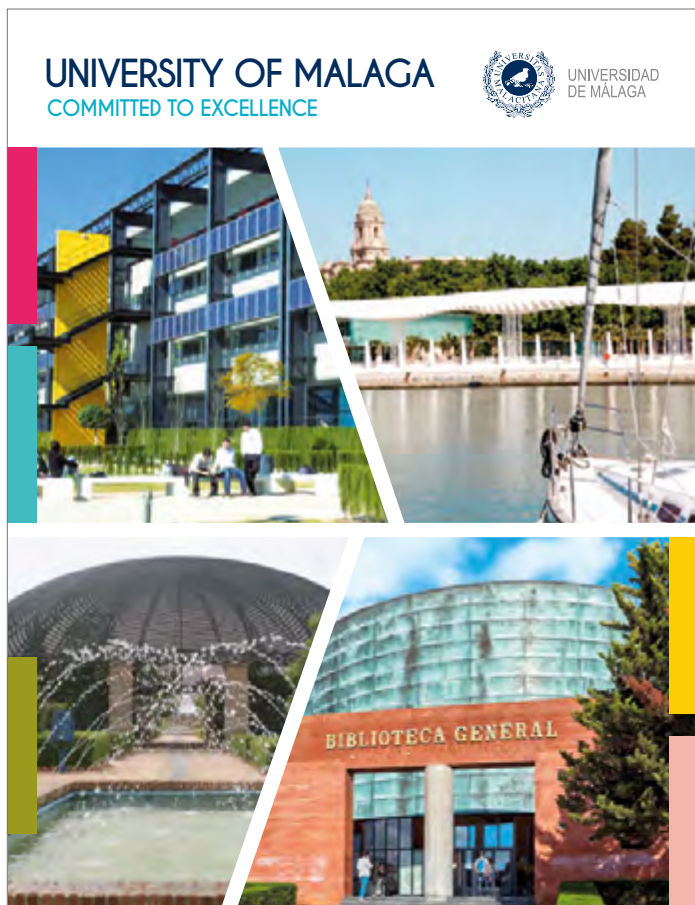
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MAR

HASHTAG HEROES: USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMBAT INTOLERANCE

Several higher education institutions have recently launched social media campaigns aimed at spreading messages of inclusion and welcoming international students.

<http://ow.ly/G1qB3Od0tBn>



12
APR

MAPPING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FEES IN EUROPE

Fee policies and structures are constantly evolving in Europe. As an international officer, having a good overview of which institutions charge international students what is essential.

<http://ow.ly/r38a30d0tDZ>



10
MAY

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORS – MANAGING UP, DOWN AND ACROSS

A key challenge for international directors is pursuing internationalisation strategies within wider, and often competing, institutional priorities.

<http://ow.ly/BSIT3Od0tJk>



31
MAY

JOINT PROGRAMMES: SURVEYING THE IMPACTS ON GRADUATES

An assessment of dual and joint programmes within higher education institutions from the graduates' point of view.

<http://ow.ly/7JRh30dj61Y>



7
JUN

CHOOSING THE RIGHT IMAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING COLLATERAL

Photos for marketing collateral are one of the most critical components of your international recruitment strategy. Make sure you choose wisely!

<http://ow.ly/DHqD30d0tLd>



20
JUN

REFUGEES IN FOCUS: A REFUGEE VOICE

Hasina Shirzad, an Afghan refugee living in Norway, shares her experience as well as tells us what institutions can do to make a refugee's transition easier.

<http://ow.ly/XNi830d0tXf>

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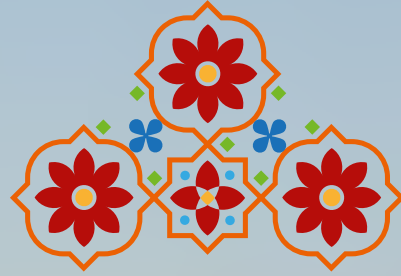
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