



Global Horizons for UK Universities

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Executive summary

1. The purpose of this report is to provide decision makers in universities with ideas on how they might further internationalise their institutions. We take a comprehensive, wide ranging definition of what internationalisation actually means and distinguish between those activities on a UK campus and those undertaken overseas. The main focus is on the former since the CIHE is particularly interested in what can be done to make UK graduates more globally aware and attuned to different countries and cultures and hence also more attractive to major employers. We want the experience of UK higher education to be of such a quality and so globally based that we become the preferred location for internationally mobile students. We are also interested in raising the knowledge base and the UK's access to world class R&D.
2. The key questions we try to address are: What are the key issues in achieving an internationalised university? How are they being addressed and what good practice is there that we can learn from?
3. In some other countries internationalisation has been a key issue for much longer than it has in the UK. In the USA central agencies have developed many tools for helping universities progress on the long path of internationalisation - self analyses, checklists, advice on expected student outcomes etc. Likewise the universities in Australia have given considerable emphasis to international issues; 35 of the 38 universities have a PVC or DVC International. In Singapore, as one might expect, there is a strong national strategy aimed at building the city state into a regional hub of quality higher education through international partnerships. In mainland Europe higher education systems are offering many programmes in English and institutions are becoming much more attractive to foreign students. A SWOT analysis of our relative internationalisation shows that we can learn from some of our competitors and must not be complacent.
4. There is a vital difference between an international strategy and an internationalisation strategy. The former used to concentrate on recruiting international students, while the focus of internationalisation strategies is now much wider and covers all the activities within an institution. Almost all universities have either completed or are working on such strategies. Although their contents are very similar, there is a key distinction; some focus on the future reputation and capacity of the institution and are university-centred, while others are student-centred and concentrate on the qualities that students will be expected to gain from their experience on campus. A significant number of institutions are setting out to ensure that everything they do is internationalised.
5. There are many difficulties in increasing the number of students who travel overseas, but some excellent good practice has emerged in the way that universities are helping to remove the blockages to overseas travel. There is a clear finding (from a survey of employers that we commissioned) that study abroad helps to increase students' employability. This message does not seem to be getting through to students. Employers should thus make their views on this more strongly known.

6. The realisation that we are in a much tougher competitive environment for recruiting international students has led to much greater interest and investment in their support and facilities (and we provide examples of good practice here). While the potential for achieving a multi-cultural campus will differ from one institution to another, there is evidence that more can be done to increase mutual understanding and social interaction between UK and international students. Evidence from international students suggests that they consider their UK hosts to be less friendly than those in other nations. This perception has to be addressed. We need to distinguish between the experience of undergraduates and post-graduates. Focusing on the latter, we are becoming dependent in some disciplines on international students to fill our postgraduate programmes and underpin the provision of certain STEM subjects. We must also improve our competitive edge by offering more international students enhanced employability through training in the relevant skills, integrating work experience in their programmes and through better links with international recruiters.
7. Institutions see it as an advantage to increase the proportions of international academic and professional staff from the current average figure of 19%. This is now happening across the board, helped to some extent by economic factors overseas. The other aspect is to help existing UK staff become more internationalised. This is proving difficult in some non-research environments. Staff development and travel incentives are being adopted.
8. An essential aid to internationalising the curriculum is for the university to have a clear understanding of the attributes that it expects internationalisation to give graduates and we provide two examples. Not all academic staff realise what internationalising the curriculum actually means and why they should do it. The task of adapting the curriculum will need some support to be provided such as: guidelines, checklists and examples of what internationalisation means for the university. Academic cooperation will need to be earned through careful promotion of the need for change.
9. Building links with any multi-cultural communities outside the campus is a means of helping to promote awareness among UK students. Although such community work and related volunteering have often been under the auspices of the Students Union, they should be integrated with the university's own internationalisation programmes. We show how international volunteering, which often starts with purely charitable motives, can become part of a wide-ranging academic and humanitarian partnership programme.
10. "Strategic Partnerships" are the key words in most internationalisation strategies; this is taken to mean a focus on a few well-supported institutional partnerships that seek to involve relevant faculties across the university in teaching and research collaborations with their international partner. Their beginnings can be "bottom-up" or "top down", but they always need to be rooted in trust and respect between a core of academic staff on both sides. The bottom-up v top-down drivers may differ depending on the cultures involved. Once such partnerships have been selected (and this should be a careful process), these partnerships have to be delicately, but regularly, managed and kept going with central funds. Membership of international networks such as WUN or Universitas 21 provides an invaluable framework within which communities of interest can emerge.
11. It is becoming recognised that the process of internationalising a university needs management and direction. The governing body has a role in approving the overall strategy and in exercising the necessary overview of risk to the university's reputation. Beyond this some direct management support is needed and a growing number of top tier posts with "Internationalisation" in the title are emerging. Below this senior person there is great variety in how the support functions are structured and organised, but one evident trend is towards the widening of the role of the International Office to bring together many of the functions related to internationalisation. In general, approaches to central management of the overall internationalisation process are hesitant, although some examples exist of formal targets and key performance indicators being developed for the various categories of international activity.

12. In the final chapter of the report we make some recommendations for the sector and for individual institutions. The national recommendations concern better information on numbers studying abroad, financial support to make this more possible and improved information and advice on internationalising the curriculum and the activities of international competitors. We also need consistent and positive policies on visas and work permits across the UK.

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Companion Reports

This report is complemented by two others that develop specific themes in more detail:

Internationalising Higher Education: A Financial or Moral Imperative?
Global Horizons for UK Students: A Guide for Universities.

The former addresses the value issues that institutions will want to have regard to as they internationalise. The latter suggests how institutions might encourage more students to study overseas as part of their UK higher education.



Richard Brown
Chief Executive of CIHE

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