SEC13D04 (Document D)

International Student Experience workshop record

The Internationalisation Executive requested a short review of activity in light of some concerning results regarding international student experience in the i-graduate Student Barometer survey.

Two workshops were held in March/April 13 and included input from : Jane Amos and colleagues from DOS, INTO, Planning, the Student Union, Partnerships, ARM, LTS, SSF and HUM.

The following summary includes :

- A brief set of comments related to the barometer results – further data analysis is being completed on the differences between H/EU and International results

- Ideas for what could be done around campus to improve the international students' experience specifically – these ideas are very diverse and classified in terms of impact but not in terms of return on investment

- Some opportunities for further reading on this particular issue

Hopefully this acts as stimulation for further review and on-going discussion of this key issue.

Mark Hitchcock, SSF, May 2013

i-graduate Student Barometer (includes Autumn 2012)

The Business Intelligence Unit provided an overview of the i-graduate Student Barometer Survey. Becky Price can provide further details on this very detailed source of information on student perception of UEA and benchmarks against national and international competitors. The sample is around a quarter of a million students from 190 institutions in fourteen countries.

Cross-referencing this survey with SES and NSS provides a useful range of observations on the experience of international students.

Key messages included :

- UEA is slightly higher in terms of student recommendations than the 1994 group

- UG are more likely to recommend than PGT with PGR in third place (89-87-83% respectively)

- Bursaries are a key differentiator for international students

- Agent influence is the key driver with website , friends and ranking as other leading factors

- International students share many expectations and response levels with Home e.g. expectation of good honours classifications are as high as Home expectations (for more on this review the SES results)

- There is interesting data available with regard to expectation and actual degree class. The shortfall between these levels is a key driver of satisfaction and the gap varies considerably across Faculties i.e. some Faculties are achieving student degree expectation much more successfully than others.

- However some key differences between Home and International are clear e.g. Internationals are much more interested in identifying and contacting a specific member of staff for advice and support

- No specific services were clearly of poor quality although some UEA provision ranked poorly against UK and 1994 competition (the following areas all came outside the top 30 of 53 UK institutions in Summer 2012) :

    o Campus buildings and learning spaces were ranked very low against both UK and 1994 competitors
    o Language support, technology and online library were also low-ranked academically-related criteria
    o Opportunity to meet students of the same nationality ('Home'), worship facilities and Accommodation Office support were low-ranked pastoral criteria

- The Autumn 2012 survey (the most recent survey) offers some additional information and reiteration of the Summer 2012 data :

- A matrix of 'learning' criteria charted by satisfaction and importance suggests Language Support, Employability, Learning Spaces and Careers Advice are all areas that are underperforming (although it is unclear whether this is true of all students or only some sub-groups)
- A matrix of 'living' criteria charted by satisfaction and importance suggests Campus Buildings, Social Facilities, Host Culture and Earning Money are all areas that are underperforming. Overall Campus Buildings are poorly ranked against UK, 1994 and specific competitors.
- A matrix of 'support' criteria charted by satisfaction and importance suggests ITCS, Finance, Catering and Accommodation are the services most in need of review. Catering, ITCS and Accommodation are perhaps more important as at least half the students surveyed use these services (up to 86% of use of Catering).

- Transport link satisfaction do not score highly for Internationals but was seen as a strength in the staff SWOT (see below) – suggesting the importance of relying on student feedback in place of staff perception of student satisfaction.

- Recent analysis of the SES shows : The greatest difference between home and international students' propensity to recommend us was based on socialization opportunities, which the international students rated less favourably.

- We ignore EU at our peril – generally it is an older, female, research-focused and experienced cohort and therefore may be more demanding than either Home or International students (for more on this review the SES results)

Ideas for improving the international students' experience

The workshop used the Impact Matrix to group ideas that would hopefully improve international student experience. Drivers for the ideas were :

1. Improve international (non-UK) student satisfaction
2. Integrate all students
3. Retain international students
4. Improve international student performance
5. Maximise resource usage

The ideas generated are listed below in groups ordered by priority :

- Immediate,
- Plan,
- Consider

	Concept	Why	Cost
IMMEDIATE	1. Better info on what's on - an international community hub – based on the international advisory team's website	This brings higher profile and would channel students into existing activity and support. Creation of a simple social media plan would increase traffic to the site. All campus and city activity should be logged here to address shortfalls in information that have been noted in student feedback.	This may be a Springboard internship to set up at the start of each year - £350, although ideally £700 for two internships a year. Negligible if managed as a simple webpage. Online database would be preferable and would incur DMT buyout (£500?)
	2. International link on front page of portal	Brings focus and coordination to activities across campus and city	Negligible
	3. Grouping students by personal preference in accommodation	Admissions process to help draw personal preferences during application stage that informs accommodation planning – encourages integration and cohesion. Accommodation Office feel this might be possible – for example offering Alcohol Free flats as trials in the same way as Green Flats have been trialled this year. Pre-arrival grouping through social media (primarily Facebook) may bring advantages (as has been seen in some INTO and other university activity).	Negligible
	4. Improve accommodation allocation and service		
	5. Encourage language/cultural courses for UK/Home students delivered by International students	Further integration and building on existing international resources – increase student interaction. Twelve sessions per year.	£600
	6. More events in the Go Global calendar / Go Global food events could lead to a student cookbook	More activity has been requested and would further integrate the international community, provides more non-alcoholic events and could	Could be included in the Springboard internship above.

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		connect with the new Accommodation online cookery book	
7.	Ask students what they want	Plan social activities based on customer demand – as per INTO – and research the student demands in more detail	Could be run by the Springboard internship via online questionnaires
8.	Access to more social space with catering facilities required for social activities. Little space is currently available and very little is available for free or with simple catering facilities.	Use of LTS hubs for international student events as social space. Other space around campus should be identified with the Space Manager and support given by the Internationalisation Executive to ISAT and student society access to this space.	Negligible – it should be noted that events, such as Conversation Club, that require this space are run very economically. Catering is not ordered – materials are purchased and used by the group as UEA Catering is seen as too expensive. It may be useful to consider whether the University would like to support full catering for these events.
9.	More socialisation around food (no alcohol) all students.		
10.	Improve funding for and work with international student societies / support increased activity for these groups	These groups cannot finance themselves so a small fund to increase cross-cultural activity would enhance the level of activity here. Could be apportioned by DOS/SU Diversity Officer.	£1000
11.	Each school to have a member of staff with the international student experience as part of their remit	Possibly via the advisor system so that ISAT can channel information toward those with advising responsibilities for international students and making it easier for advisors to support them. This would also harness School activity through Go Global website and share best practice. Finally, by creating this network of international student support we gain greater integration without spending on expansion of central services staff.	Staff time – perhaps 80 hrs per year for an academic in schools with significant international cohorts
12.	Academic International officers in schools – do these exist in all? Link up with Jane in DOS		
13.	DOS to train schools > schools to arrange specific enhancement activities > schools to report to INTO, DOS (less work for DOS and school specific stuff) > DOS report to internationalisation exec > other relevant teams		
14.	Sharing best practice across schools (by appointing international officers)		
15.	The current International Orientation could be further improved with additional resource	The critical arrival and welcome session was attended by 800 in 2012 however some sessions had to turn students away as demand could not easily be catered for. If this was split along UG and PGT lines, there will be additional demand on space and funding will be needed to run enough reception events that can cater for current demand. Additional budget for student ambassadors on this event would also allow the group to be split UG/PGT and more easily managed.	£3000 for SCVA for an additional reception £200 for student ambassadors Staff time from schools is necessary

		Greater involvement of School academics in the event would enhance the content, assist ISAT in staffing the sessions and improve the welcome given overall. The priority of these events should be supported by Internationalisation Executive given the importance of setting the impression of the University and communicating critical information within the first three days of arrival.	
	16.	Promote sports that would attract international students and help them to integrate i.e. China – basketball…India – badminton	Seed-funding of a few key sports groups on campus would allow these activities to be a significant part of the marketing of the experience. This in turn would help recruitment in specific regions and draw students to UEA for this reason. Consequently they would be integrated into the sporting group as well as academic life of the university.	Variable
	17.	INTO and DOS working group on INTO students transition to UEA	A critical handover point which is within our control but has not been analysed or resourced sufficiently in the past. Jane Amos and Roxie Hickie are among those working on this at the moment.	Project team to continue to scope this with the support of Internationalisation Executive
	18.	Record lectures to give international students more time to understand lectures	Where possible – may be a major capital investment in terms of hardware requirements. Supported by universal use of Blackboard as host to lecture notes.	-
	19.	Teaching seminar series	Expand on provision of training to academic staff in teaching international students – currently three sessions available per year	Variable
	20.	Include CSED training on teaching international students in all lecturers' induction programme (and/or increase the number of sessions)	It would raise the profile of these sub-skills and promote greater inclusion and awareness of needs	May require a short session to run quarterly
	21.	Better links with the community and offer bus drivers training so they are more patient	Transport links are not well-ranked. One aspect appears to be the standard of service by staff and this should be raised with transport contacts. A key focus on being 'friendlier' as reported to the Student Affairs Group.	Staff time – unclear on who would be responsible for this.

22.	Stop referring to a distinct group of students as 'international'	Using the term means the group will always be separated from Home and EU. Consider which planning activities and what services could integrate H/E with International and reap the benefits of this.
23.	Better mix of int/home on courses	Consider diversity ratios as internal planning guidelines

		as some may feel dominated	
	24.	Recruit students who want to integrate / Educating home to think of themselves as an international student	Review the presentation of the UEA product – are we actively recruiting students with a global perspective, or are we generally recruiting students who want a 'fun' student experience? Altering our message may improve the 'integration intentions' of Home students
	25.	Create a study abroad programme in China for Home/EU students	A specific suggestion to increase international view of Home/EU students.
	26.	Build a purpose built faith centre and convert the chaplaincy into a non-alcoholic social centre	May not be linked activities or delivered this way but would deliver faith facilities and a social space that is open to all.
	27.	Continue to invest in campus buildings internal and external to improve social and teaching space	A noted issue in several satisfaction surveys and in discussions during the workshop.
	28.	A bigger ISAT team	Calls were made to increase the ISAT team resource given the apparent lack of time spent on non-visa-related support. If 70% of the current team works on visa support there is a need for more resource to achieve the support to students that is outlined in the corporate plan. Primarily this might be a Clerical Assistant to support an increase in event planning and activity, as well as internship supervision.
	29.	Set up potential work experience abroad	It would demonstrate truly global reach and ambition and this would translate to our students – even if it were only run at a low level
	30.	Record lectures to give international students more time to understand lectures	Where possible – may be a major capital investment in terms of hardware requirements. Supported by universal use of Blackboard as host to lecture notes.
	31.	Review visa process	Given the resource being used to support the visa process, this facility should be reviewed with the possibility of increasing efficiency of use, perhaps through use of technology for example.

CONSIDER	41	Improve organisation of in sessional English programme	Currently underway – but should be reviewed again ahead of Easter 2014.	Free
	42	Continuity of working group	The two workshops were seen as very useful as a forum for innovation and linking key contacts across the campus. A request was made that the activity was run regularly – if this occurs it should also incorporate study abroad, accommodation and international office colleagues.	Staff time
	43	Have a video/film making competition that displays the UEA student experience i.e. these are me and my friends and this is what we've done this year	Promotion of UEA from the perspective of a non-UK national may help sell the benefits to a wider market and help increase diversity.

Could be on the basis of a student competition with films being made for free and the best winning prizes. Would stimulate social media and be more authentic. | Variable |
| | 44 | Help with teaching and learning regulations: add general overview to international student welcome induction | LTS volunteered to support this – could be tied in with the positive approach to information and advice. | Staff time |
| | 45 | Expand and publicise host families programme | It is unclear what the existing demand is in this area but there is a belief that more students would take this option, particularly in holiday periods. | Significant management costs here |

Useful introductions to the topic

- A very effective YouTube video in which Sheffield Student Union helps present all University of Sheffield students (and staff) as international : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsX_yg6ovoI

- Warwick Student Union have an excellent e-book for Go Global activity : www.warwicksu.com/goglobal/

- i-graduate produced a useful handbook in 2010 entitled 'A Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience' http://heglobal.international.gbtesting.net/media/531381/webversion_final-1.pdf

- The UK Council for International Student Affairs continues to act as the primary point of discussion and lobbying for the interests of international students in the UK : http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

- The University of Falmouth's handbook for international students is seen as an example of best practice : http://ish.falmouth.ac.uk/

- More about enhancing international students' integration with UK students and the Prime Minister's Initiative : www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/international/PMIproject

- A PhD thesis written in 2012 at Newcastle Business School is of particular use in its analysis of how 'international' Northumbria university really is and also provides a good range of references for further reading: http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/11365/1/thomas.kevin_prof.doct.pdf

- A useful article introducing the academic and social barriers facing international students : Qing Gu , Michele Schweisfurth & Christopher Day (2010): Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: intercultural experiences of international students, Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 40:1, 7-23

- A recent and challenging article on how social integration does not always correlate with academic performance : Rienties et al (2012) : Understanding academic performance of international students ; the role of ethnicity, academic and social integration, Journal of Higher Education, 63:6, 685-700