**UK Council
for International
Student Affairs**

PMI Student Experience
Achievements 2006-2011

UKCISA

Contents

Introduction

In the autumn of 2005 UKCISA recommended to government that within the second phase of the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2), there should be a new focus on strengthening the overall quality of the international student experience.

UK universities and colleges traditionally had strengths in providing support to international students but expectations were rising as was the competition from a rapidly expanding number of countries. UKCISA's 2004 report 'Broadening our Horizons' had also shown that whilst services were extensive in many institutions, there were aspects of the experience and areas of satisfaction which could be enhanced.

As a result, the quality of the international student experience became one of the four key themes of PMI2 when it was launched in April 2006, funds were allocated to support it and a Student Experience Advisory Group established to agree strategic themes for investment.

The Group, which I chaired, over the years established that priority should be given to a small range of key themes:

financial advice – helping students and their parents or sponsors better understand and budget for the full cost of studying (and living) in the UK

transition – helping students to prepare for the vital adjustments needed when moving from one learning style to another

teaching and learning – providing a centre of expertise, a forum for the exchange of ideas and a bank of resources and advice for all those engaged with the teaching and learning of international students

student services – helping institutions to develop and expand their dedicated international support services

students' unions – helping them to internationalise their activities, reach out to international students and assist and enable better integration

employability – an aspect which was rapidly gaining in importance and where students were expecting enhanced advice on jobs both in the UK and in their home countries

professional development – creating a range of new learning resources and opportunities for all those working with international students and

good practice guides – documenting and sharing good practice across the sector

Many of these areas are interrelated with themes such as **integration** key features in all.

This summary provides merely a brief overview of some of the key projects in each area. In parallel, universities and colleges themselves have also invested further in these and other aspects of the international student experience.
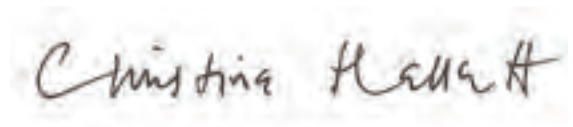
The overall result, I am delighted to say, and which is documented in the i-Graduate findings at the end of this report, is that over this period international student satisfaction ratings have increased across 20 out of 21 of the key indicators identified. This is a very significant achievement - and the DTZ evaluation of the overall PMI programme has also provided evidence of very extensive impact.

We have, of course, **new challenges** now to face. The PMI programme and its financial support formally finished at the end of March. Domestic funding across the sector is being radically re-engineered. The global economic recession is affecting us all. We can also expect yet more, and possibly quite substantial changes to student visa regulations – an aspect which has a powerful impact not just on demand but on overall perceptions of the UK as a welcoming destination.

Against this background, we must ensure that lessons are learned, projects continue, investment is maintained and that the overall quality of all aspects of the UK international student experience remains one of the UK's key assets, continuing to attract hundreds of thousands of students from all parts of the world.

I would like to place on record my thanks to everyone who has contributed to the achievements of the last few years – to those on the Advisory Group, those who led on particular projects, colleagues in universities and colleges who have themselves introduced new or expanded initiatives, to sector bodies, representative organisations and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

I hope this report will both inform and inspire and we look forward to continuing to work with you on these and related themes in the future.

Professor Christine Hallett

formerly Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Stirling

Chair, PMI Student Experience Advisory Group and Chair, UK Council for International Student Affairs Board of Trustees

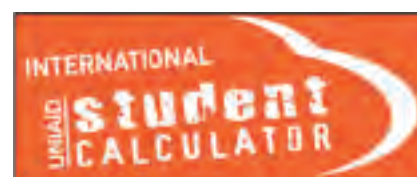1 April 2011

The International Student Calculator

'Broadening our Horizons', UKCISA's 2004 survey of international students found that of those students who reported themselves in hardship, 72% said that the main reason for this was that the cost of living was higher than they had budgeted for.

The report recommended that, "institutions ... think about how they can help students to plan their finances more realistically." UKCISA's 2007 HE Benchmarking report revealed that only 35% of institutions provide both overall figures for the cost of living and a breakdown of sample items from a typical student budget, while 27% of institutions surveyed did not "report the practice in their institution".

UNIAID (now Brightside UNIAID), a charity who provide online tools for 14-25 year-olds as well as a range of teaching resources, were commissioned by UKCISA to develop the International Student Calculator (**www.studentcalculator. org.uk/international**), an interactive website which helps prepare international students for the cost of living in the UK.

The International Student Calculator includes:
- the ability to save and edit your budget
- flexible money and time 'sliders' which alter depending on type of course, and can therefore be used by students on HE, FE or more short-term courses
- top tips on student discounts, banking, employment and more
- a jargon buster
- student profiles – real-life stories of international

students, their budgets and their advice
- study timetables – a variety of course types, showing how this might affect availability for part-time work
- useful information on insurance, utility bills, transport costs and much more

Since its launch in May 2008, the International Student Calculator has been accessed in 210 countries and received over 200,000 visits – the site averages just over 6,000 visits a month.

UNIAID have also developed a range of resources for student advisers to use in money management induction sessions, such as downloadable presentations, posters and workshop activities. Publicity postcards are also available to order. To date over 400 advisers have downloaded the resources, which can be found at **www. studentcalculator.org.uk/ advisers**.

In November 2009, a student life wiki (**www.studentcalculator. org.uk/wiki**) was launched to encourage international students and institutions to add their own localised content to further support students in this area. The wiki has had over 22,500 visits from 171 countries since its launch, with much content being added by UK staff and students already in the country.

Almost two thirds of institutions surveyed in UKCISA's 2011 benchmarking survey now link to the International Student Calculator and the provision of advice and availability of workshops to students on money matters is much more prevalent across UK higher and further education institutions.

Top ten countries using the International Student Calculator since launch:

1. **United Kingdom**
2. **India**
3. **USA**
4. **Pakistan**
5. **Germany**
6. **Canada**
7. **Malaysia**
8. **China**
9. **Singapore**
10. **France**

Transition

Prepare for Success

One of the key challenges for international students is to adapt swiftly to the conventions and learning style of a UK education. To be successful, a recognition of this and some preparation prior to arrival in the UK can be essential.

Following an extensive selection exercise, the University of Southampton was selected to develop an online pre-arrival study skills website, **www. prepareforsuccess.org.uk**

Prepare for Success offers 23 'learning objects' – self-contained online interactive study sections containing a range of information, learning activities and quizzes, as well as audio and video extracts, focusing on a range of topics such as:
- critical thinking
- studying independently
- understanding course assignments
- taking part in seminars
- using study time effectively

It includes a dedicated section for FE students, as well as resources for those studying science-based courses.
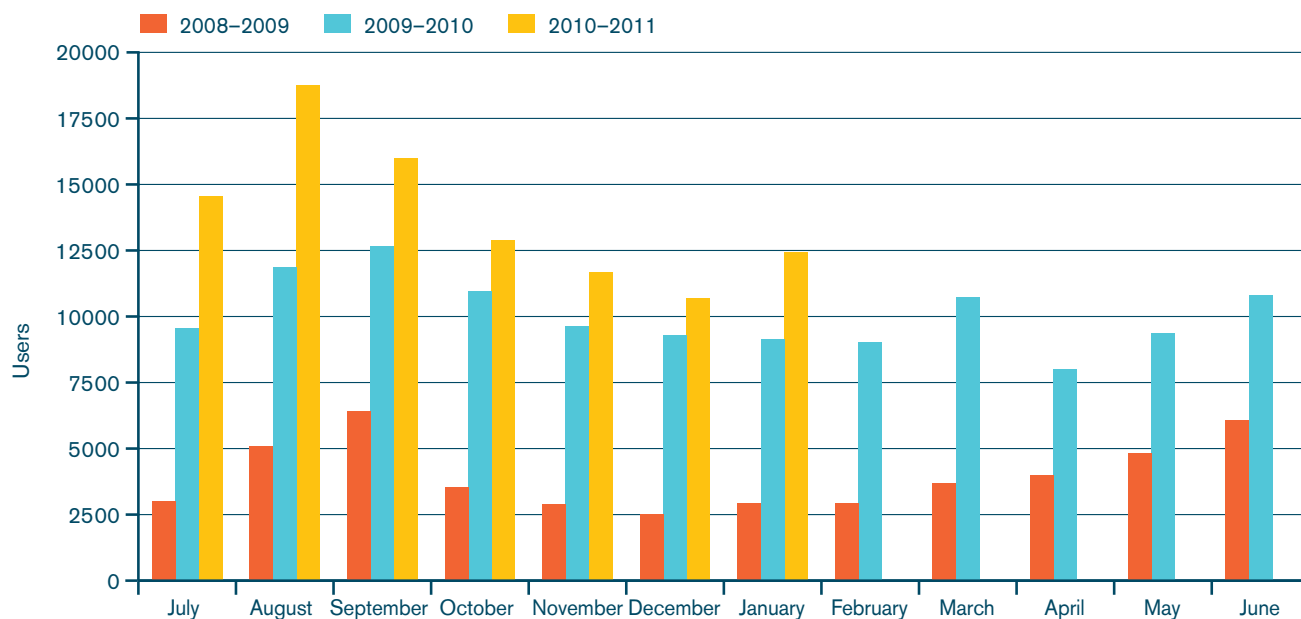
The site has proved extraordinarily successful. Since its launch in 2008 it has been accessed in 208 countries, with between 500-800 visits in any 24-hour period. It received 19,000 users in August 2010 alone and usage has continued to climb each year. The number of visitors to the website is still rising. Over three years, each month sees between a quarter to a third increase on the same month the previous year. It is thought to be the first of its kind anywhere in the world and is an entirely free resource for international students planning to study in the UK.

The flexible construction of the site allows institutions to use individual sections in their own virtual learning environments (VLEs) and provide the content directly to their own students if they wish, before and/or after they arrive in the UK.

Comparison of monthly visits between 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-2011

Legend: 2008–2009 | 2009–2010 | 2010–2011

Chart: Users (y-axis, 0 to 20000) by month (July through June)

"*We've been staggered by the amount of very positive feedback we've had from students and teachers alike. It seems to be unique as a website - at least students tell us they haven't found this kind of information anywhere else.*"

Julie Watson, project developer, University of Southampton

What institutions say:

"*We use it for pre-arrival through information given by our agents worldwide (some of this is in translation). It is also mentioned in our confirmation letters to all students (direct entry as well as through agents).*"

What students say:

"*This homepage is fantastic. It should be featured on all universities homepages and maybe even on the governmental ones. I'll be telling my friends, if they want to come to the UK to study, they should check here first.*"

"*Thank you from the bottom of my heart I found information and resources that I've been longing to find. I looked in forums and University web sites but couldn't find the international student point of view.*"

"*Really useful and informative. Really appreciate it. Everyone that will be going to study in the UK must go through it at least once.*"

"*It has been extremely useful in getting prepared for studies in UK. It has highlighted on topics that are usually not thought about and ignored.*"

Top ten countries accessing Prepare for Success

1. UK
2. China
3. Germany
4. USA
5. India
6. Russia
7. Pakistan
8. Spain
9. Mexico
10. Netherlands

Teaching and learning

Teaching International Students

This two-year project, Teaching International Students (TIS), co-funded by the PMI and the Higher Education Academy (HEA), has been directed by Dr Janette Ryan, with Jude Carroll, Fiona Hyland and members of the Academy's Subject Centres also having key roles:

TIS has:
- established a repository of national and international research on teaching and learning of international students at **www.heacademy. ac.uk/internationalstudents**
- identified and disseminated information and guidance about teaching and learning of international students, based around the student lifecycle (see screenshot)
- provided guidance on staff development strategies relating to teaching and learning of international students via events, guidance materials and its website. A range of resources have been produced, including written resources, videos and case studies from staff and students
- raised the profile of the importance of learning and teaching of international students

Following the launch in February 2010, the TIS homepage was the seventh most visited page on the whole HEA website. It was the second top entry for new visitors to the HEA website.

Since the launch:
- the site has received almost 10,000 visitors
- the 'International Student Lifecycle' resource has had over 4,700 visitors
- a regular newsletter on the project has over 600 subscribers
- those involved have presented at over 45 events (see map) and delivered 11 workshops
- the first Teaching International Students conference, in collaboration with the Centre for Academic Practice and Research in Internationalisation (CAPRI) and the Centre for Internationalised Curriculum and Networking (CICIN), to be held in June 2011, has received a phenomenal initial response with over 120 abstracts submitted

The red markers on the map indicate the locations where TIS has been presented or events held. Some of the locations involve multiple events.
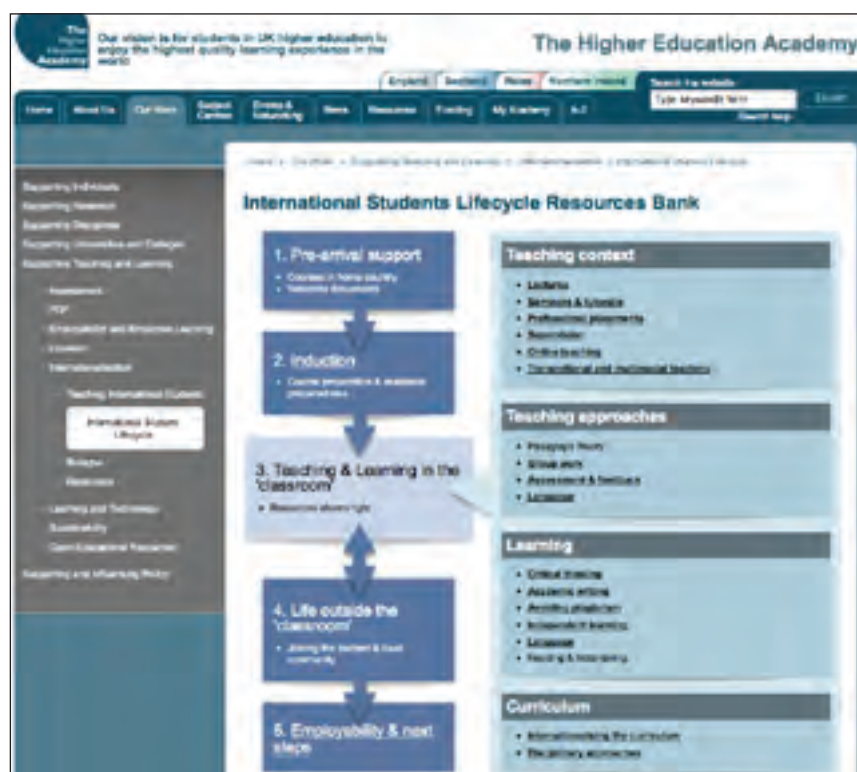
"Why is the project so popular? Its concerns are increasingly becoming the concerns of higher education as a whole. As perception of quality among international students is key to their decision about where to study, teaching for this group is an important issue for universities. In the current climate, the UK needs to stay competitive compared to other countries in attracting students from abroad."
Teaching International Students Project newsletter, December 2010

Feedback from TIS workshops includes:

"Today's event really was amazingly well attended. It was also particularly active, I think the reason being because it was so practical, people being treated with respect for the difficulties they face, with clear, comprehensible ideas for how they might be able to address their concerns."
Joint Degree Programme Coordinator and Reader in Mathematics, 1994 Group University

Pilot Project Awards Scheme

6 1 projects funded over five years

The projects included:

- **orientation** – new methods and ways of delivering orientation and induction sessions
- **student support** – range of initiatives including support for dependants and PhD students
- **integration** – mentoring and buddying schemes, volunteering and community projects
- **learning and teaching** – working with English language support staff and academics
- **employability** – work experience and internship initiatives, skills training
- **using new technologies** – using social networking, podcasts and other technology to more effectively connect with students

The aim of this scheme was to encourage innovation and develop and publicise examples of best practice in international student support. Institutions were awarded funding of up to £5,000 in most cases for projects which they piloted and disseminated in order to benefit the UK sector as a whole.

It provided an opportunity for universities, colleges and students' unions to expand or adapt services which support international students and, at the same time, contribute to national and sector policy and good practice.

An evaluation of three years of the pilot project scheme was published in 2010. Projects may have stopped, changed or developed in various ways since the evaluation was carried out, but the report showed that the main benefits were:

Extension to a larger group of students or other stakeholders

- Huddersfield University's project providing research skills training to international PhD students had, from October 2009, been extended to home students as well. The project had now been mainstreamed and since its success on a small scale was clear to see, it was not difficult to persuade the institution to extend its reach.
- The University of Plymouth had continued their link-up with City College Plymouth, (each of whom received
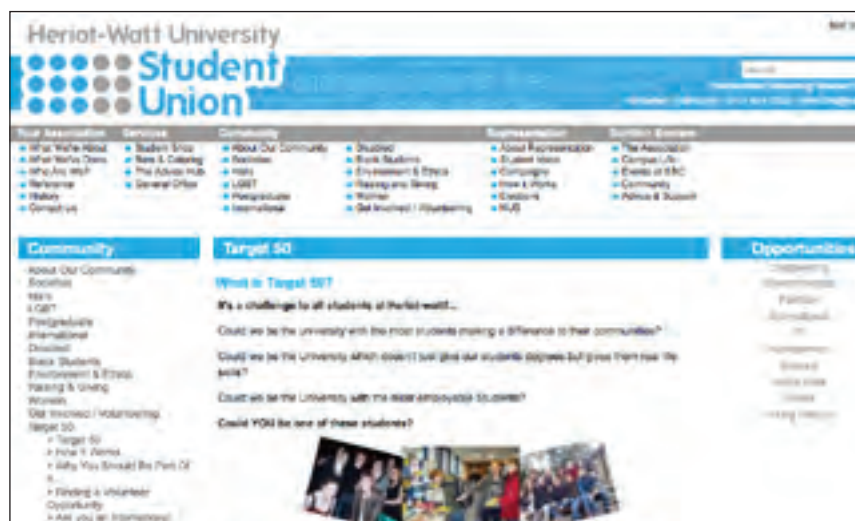
pilot project funding to ease the transition both for international direct entry students and for those transferring from FE to HE). Peer mentor support was offered to both groups of students, and the collaboration then reached around 150 students (compared to around 40 when the project started).

A changed cultural mindset within an institution and local community

- Heriot-Watt's *Target 50* volunteering project had led to increased collaboration with the Students' Association, who, at the time the project started, had been cutting back on what they were involved with. The Students' Association and Careers Service now widely promote the initiative and are engaged in linking these opportunities to subject-based student societies. A much greater awareness of the benefits and value of volunteering has been reported and more volunteering on campus is also being encouraged.
- Sheffield Hallam University's *M-Learning* project, a series of podcasts for international students, had given staff involved the skills and confidence to develop further *M-Learning* materials. The University had also launched an invitation to all staff and students to make podcasts on '100 things every student should know'.

Benefits achieved beyond the original stated aims

- De Montfort's *One Voice* project had improved its links with local schools and this had enhanced the university's local reputation, as the parents had been extremely positive about the project and as more

schools showed an interest in becoming involved.
- As a result of Bournemouth University's *integration & development curriculum enhancement project*, cultural awareness training was being provided to student groups working with local (and often culturally diverse) community organisations.

Consideration given to formalising projects

- There were plans to make Kingston University's *Introduction to British life and culture* lecture and field trip series a course module so that students could get credit for it.
- Following a project looking into *factors causing non-European students to under-utilise free English language classes* at the University of Abertay, Dundee, English classes there were in the process of being turned into credit-bearing courses.

Further funding and staff time provided by the institution (and other bodies)

- The International Student Job Club at Sheffield Hallam University had been rebranded to become *International Student Career Coaching* (ISCC) and was an embedded and integral part of the Careers and Employment Service.

- Brunel University's *InterVisual* website had been given further funding for additional programming costs by the Placement and Careers Centre, and other departments keen to use the system had promised additional sums. Work was ongoing to identify a possible partner for further development and rollout.

Indication of interest in the project beyond the institution itself

- QAA Scotland had used Heriot-Watt's *Target 50* volunteering project as a case study for one of their publications.
- Bournemouth University's *Keep cycling, keep safe: a cycle safety DVD for adults in the UK* had been sent to all UKCISA primary contacts and the PMI funding allowed for this resource to be widely distributed across the UK.

The PMI pilot projects

Orientation

- Easing the transition FE/HE *(City College Plymouth and University of Plymouth)*

- Easing the transition: peer mentor support to international direct entry students *(University of Plymouth)*

- Piloting a short course: 'An introduction to British life and culture' *(Kingston University)*

- International student teachers acclimatisation: an evaluation of the effects of different stakeholders in enhancing adaptation *(University of Huddersfield)*

- Help me – I'm an international student: reaching out to international students *(University College Falmouth)*

- Preparing international students for the British higher education experience: the role of regional alumni hubs *(London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)*

- Improving induction for postgraduate international students *(University of Stirling)*

- Pre-departure support from students' union societies *(University College London Union)*

Student support

- Preparing for 'life after Brookes': support for postgraduates in their final year *(Oxford Brookes University)*

- Residential training event for international student officers *(University of London Union)*

- Safe City guide and map for international students *(Heriot-Watt University)*

- Cycling safety – a road safety DVD for international students in the UK *(Bournemouth University)*

- What is the disabled international student perspective? *(Brunel University)*

- International student mental health promotion materials *(Lancaster University)*

- Home student CV proof-reading service for international students *(Oxford Brookes University)*

- 'Home away from home': a student-centred support group model and project for isolated newly-arrived international students *(School of Oriental and African Studies)*

- International student house-hunting *(Leeds University Union)*

- The international student Christmas vacation project *(University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University)*

Integration

- International e-buddies resource *(Anniesland College)*

- BLISS: blogging and buddying to give information to international students *(Edinburgh's Telford College)*

- Discussing difference – a toolkit for improving cross-cultural exchange *(University of the West of England)*

- Intercultural mentoring pre-arrival, on arrival and post-arrival *(Staffordshire University)*

- International student peer mentoring scheme *(Heriot-Watt University)*

- One Voice: outreach projects with the local community *(De Montfort University)*

- International student volunteering – Target 50 *(Heriot-Watt University)*

- Culture Vulture: a new approach to hosting aimed at integration between UK and international students *(University of Nottingham)*

- Adopt an international student *(Queen Margaret University)*

- Making connections: enhancing international students' integration with their UK peers *(University of East Anglia)*

- Art for integration *(University of Central Lancashire)*

Learning and teaching

- An integration and curriculum development enhancement programme *(Bournemouth University)*

- Learning and internationalisation *(Sheffield Hallam University)*

- Understanding the factors which cause non-European students to under-utilise free English language classes *(University of Abertay, Dundee)*

- Exploration of non-attendance at induction by specific groups of non-UK students *(University of Birmingham)*

- Teaching and learning: the international perspective and cultural awareness *(University of Brighton)*

- A framework for research skills training, support and e-supervision for international PhD students *(University of Huddersfield)*

- Exchange students as language tutors *(Newman University College)*

- The international student experience – more than just academic learning *(University of Leicester)*

- Development of a sustainable student trainer course and resources to support the participation and learning of international students *(University of Bath Students' Union)*

- An investigation into international students' expectations, the reality of their programme and how these predict academic performance and satisfaction *(Glasgow Caledonian University)*

Employability

- Effective remote interviewing *(Kensington & Chelsea College)*

- Developing employment skills and enhancing international experience *(Greenwich Community College)*

- Job-hunting package for HE students whose first language is not English *(University of Glasgow)*

- 'Moving on': enhancement of employment prospects for international students in the UK *(Brunel University)*

- 'Moving into': internships, placements and high quality work experience for international students *(Brunel University)*

- Work experience and graduate employment programme and database for international students *(Heriot-Watt University)*

- International student job club *(Sheffield Hallam University)*

- Work experience scheme for international students *(University of Leicester)*

- International work placements: vocational teacher training *(City of Sunderland College)*

- HOTELL: hospitality training for employability and lifelong learning *(Edinburgh's Telford College)*

- Forum theatre and international students: an interactive approach to developing employability and social networking skills *(Glasgow Caledonian University)*

- Online employability enhancement tool *(Heriot-Watt University)*

- Developing an international employability zone for international students *(University of Manchester)*

- How to engage international alumni in supporting international students in their career development *(University of Warwick)*

Using new technologies

- InterVisual – an online, interactive recruitment and careers education tool for international students *(Brunel University)*

- C-Shock: a virtual environment for combating culture shock *(Portsmouth University)*

- M-learning: delivering international student support via mobile technologies *(Sheffield Hallam University)*

- International student video-casts and case studies for career development *(Newcastle University)*

- International student experience in social networking *(Castle College, Nottingham)*

- Colleges in partnership utilising technology to enhance the international student experience *(Ayr College and Cardonald College, Glasgow)*

- UK culture through international students' eyes: a web-based video resource *(Loughborough University Students' Union and Southampton University Students' Union)*

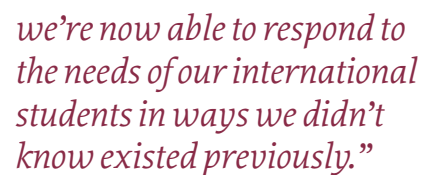- Cross-cultural training with online visa compliance module *(University of East London)*

The evaluation of the pilot project scheme is available at: www.ukcisa.org.uk/files/pdf/pmi/review_pilot_project_ march2010.pdf

UKCISA has also created a bank of case studies, with reports from all pilot projects, grouped by theme, at: www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

Internationalising students' unions

In 2006, very few students' unions across the country had an elected sabbatical international students officer. Some did have part-time non-sabbatical posts, but more typically an elected sabbatical Welfare or Education Officer had responsibility for international students. Few unions actively engaged with their international students and international students were often put off becoming involved in their students' union, often because they felt it did not represent them, or because they were put off by the perceived focus of UK students on alcohol and parties.

The three-year Internationalising Students' Unions project, run by the National Union of Students (NUS), began to deal with these issues by developing a self-assessment audit tool for unions to establish their existing level of engagement with international students.

Following a pilot involving three students' unions in 2008/09 which developed a draft strategic framework, 40 further students' unions were recruited to complete the self-assessment and received support to institute a programme of

development which supported their international students and internationalised their students' union in the process.

A number of workshops and training events have taken place over the last two years, a resource pack and toolkit for unions has just been launched and a new National Advisory Group has recently met for the first time.

The 40 students' unions involved have done a huge amount of work on establishing a more inclusive union, which actively represents international students and encourages their involvement in union activities.

What students say:

"The Internationalising Students' Union project has helped to create a greater level of synergy across departments within our organisation, ultimately leading to a richer, more valuable experience for our international students."

"Working on the internationalising students' unions project has meant

we're now able to respond to the needs of our international students in ways we didn't know existed previously."

"Having the opportunity to have a framework on best practice in internationalisation has had an incredibly positive effect on our union. It has helped us bridge the gap between home and international students through raising awareness on issues affecting both. There is still a long way to go, but we're making headway, finally."

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Joanna Purkis, Project Officer, Internationalising Students' Unions, says:

"I have been so impressed by the enthusiasm of students' union staff and officers for the project. There have been some fantastic new initiatives put in place which have really made a difference for students."

Annual training for International Student Officers

UKCISA has also worked with the NUS to provide an annual training event for International Student Officers in students' unions. These events provide newly elected officers with information on the key topics they are likely to have to deal with, along with giving examples of good practice and allowing much sharing of opinion.

The most recent event attracted over 70 delegates with comments such as, *"Highly useful. Perfect balance between information and operational action"* and *"definitely the best NUS event to date"*.

Participating unions

2009-2010

Anglia Ruskin Students' Union
De Montfort University Students' Union
Durham Students' Union
Exeter Students' Guild
Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association
Goldsmiths Students' Union
Kent Union
King's College London Students' Union
Lancaster University Students' Union
Leeds University Union
Leeds Metropolitan University Students' Union
Loughborough Students' Union
Newcastle University Union Society
Northumbria Students' Union
Reading University Students' Union
St Mary's University College Students' Union
Strathclyde Students' Association
Surrey Students' Union
University College London (UCL) Students' Union
University of Central Lancashire Students' Union

2010-2011

University of Bath Students' Union
Birmingham University Guild of Students
Coventry University Students' Union
University of Derby Students' Union
Edinburgh University Students' Association
University of Essex Students' Union
Glamorgan University Students' Union
Hull University Union
University of Liverpool Guild of Students
Liverpool John Moore Students' Union
University of Manchester Students' Union
University of Nottingham Students' Union
University of Plymouth Students' Union
University of Portsmouth Students' Union
Queens' Students' Union
SOAS Students' Union
University of Sussex Students' Union
Swansea University Students' Union
Wolverhampton Students' Union
York University Students' Union

Employability

Employability and PMI2

The employability strand of PMI2 started within the main student experience strand but was soon given a separate budget line and advisory group in recognition of its importance and the need for it to be led by the relevant professional associations. It was managed by the National Association for Student Employment Services (NASES) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS).

Introduction
Employability is important as an element of the student experience, and also as one of the outcomes of higher education to those international students who choose to study in the UK. According to the recent i-graduate report *Measuring the effect of the Prime Minister's Initiative on the International Student Experience in the UK* (see Appendix 1) satisfaction with employability has increased from 71% in 2008 to 78% in 2010. It is essential that international students are given the opportunity to develop the skills which employers in their home country will value when they return home.

Projects in the employability area have enabled professionals in careers and employment services to develop their skills so that they are better able to advise international students and graduates. Projects have also been developed to provide additional support for international students and graduates such as websites with specific advice, virtual fairs and vacancies, induction and mentoring packages and country guides for graduates returning home.

Study visits to China and India
PMI funding enabled teams of careers and student employment professionals representing AGCAS and NASES to undertake study visits to China in March 2009 and to India in February 2010.
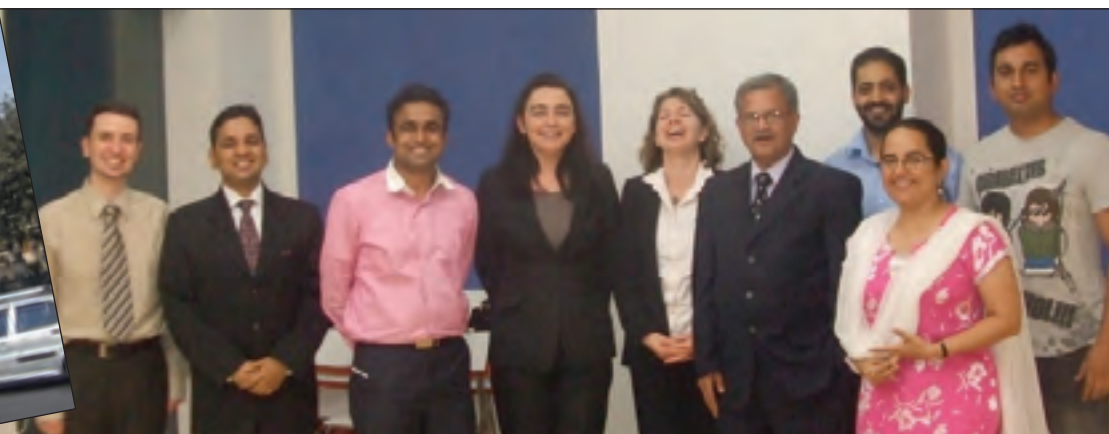
The key objectives of the visits were to:
- improve the understanding

China report: www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/133-China-Visit-A-Report-on-the-AGCAS-and-NASES-PMI2-Visit-to-China

of the labour market in the country in order to help UK educated graduates to enter the job market more successfully on their return home

- develop relationships with employers, alumni, recruitment specialists and careers professionals
- expand and develop contacts and information resources to be distributed nationally to support careers and employment advisers working with international students

The visit to China comprised an intense one-week visit to Beijing and Shanghai by seven UK HE careers and employment professionals, and was an extremely valuable opportunity to gain an overview of the graduate labour market in China's major cities from the perspectives of the key players. Through meetings with a wide range of Chinese UK graduates, employers, recruitment agencies and other relevant organisations, participants were able to gain real insights into the perceptions of and challenges facing those involved in graduate employment from both the recruitment and the employee perspective. The visit also resulted in connections being made leading to visits to the UK from representatives of

the Chinese Government to see AGCAS and NASES.

In India a team of nine careers and employment professionals visited three major cities – Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. In each city, a team of three visited some umbrella organisations, such as the Confederation of Indian Industries and the British Council or British High Commission, in order to improve their understanding of the Indian economy.

Participants met with graduate recruiters to find out what skills, attributes and experience they seek, how these are developed by the education systems in India compared with the UK, how they

perceive UK-educated Indian graduates, and how they recruit. Through alumni network events and focus group interviews they heard about UK graduates' job hunting and career experiences in India, and the sources of information, influence and support they consider important. Over the week participants developed a rounded picture by also interviewing key people in higher education institutions, Education UK agents and careers and recruitment specialists.

The reports have been promoted widely and have received a substantial number of visits, (China 1,013 and India 1,127), which confirms the anecdotal evidence that the resources in

the reports are being used by institutions for internal events with international students.

International Virtual Fairs

The International Virtual Careers Fair project created a shared online meeting space for employers, institutions and international students from all over the UK. They provided a virtual 'one stop shop' for international employers looking for UK educated talent to meet their skills needs. Three virtual fairs were scheduled for 2010-11 covering a range of types of institutions and areas of the country. The first fair specialised in Greater China and South East Asia, 25-29 October 2010 and was managed by the University of Glasgow; the second event was from 31 January - 11 February 2011 specialising in the Asia-Pacific region and managed by the University of Exeter, and the third from 14-25 February 2011 specialising in India was managed by a consortium of West Midland Careers Services.

The Glasgow fair had 1,679 registrants from 84 institutions across the country from Aberdeen to Exeter, Belfast and Teesside, and 94 companies covering a wide range of sectors and from six countries – China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam. The overall feedback was positive. Students found the access to job markets in other countries very useful. Employers also found the fair useful in terms of access to potential candidates.

"We support AGCAS Scotland's Virtual Career Fair as we believe it is an effective platform to draw a closer distance between us and the overseas Chinese students. We would like to continue supporting it."

Lily Siu, HR Marketing, Senior Manager, Human Resources, KPMG Hong Kong.

The Exeter fair featured a wide range of employers offering a variety of global career and employment opportunities, principally in the Asia Pacific region. The fair had 2,005 visitors from 18 different locations across the UK, plus two from overseas – Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Thirty-six companies from 16 countries attended the fair including 10 companies from the PMI2 priority countries, and although the majority were from the Asia Pacific region there were also exhibitors from the USA, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

International Graduate Jobs Website

This website was been developed through two PMI-funded projects. The first project, which created a database of international vacancies and employers was managed by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU), who collaborated with the original developers, the Careers Group, at the University of London. It includes employers within the UK and overseas offering vacancies, as well as organisations offering other forms of education and training such as work experience, internships or voluntary work. The online system is available through the University of London Careers Group website, branded International Job Online, and also went live in May
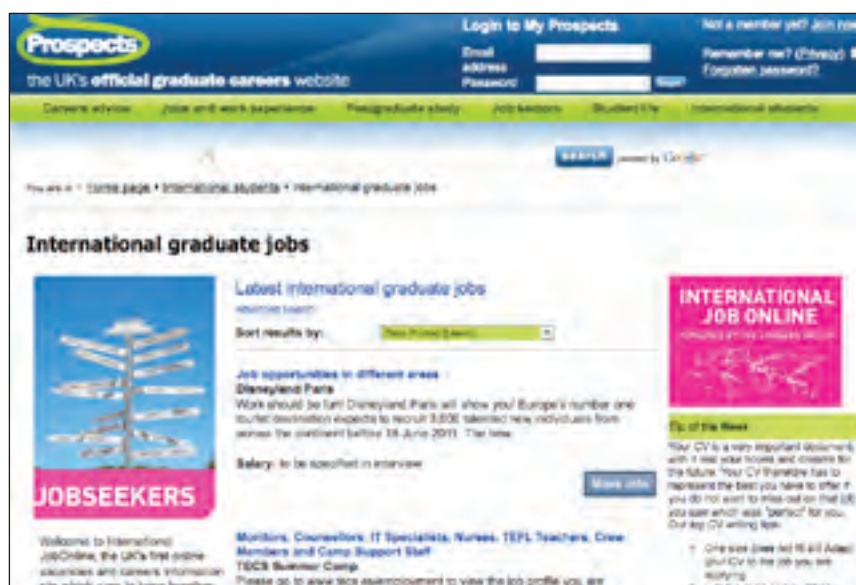
2009 as part of Prospects.ac.uk, where it is branded International Graduate Jobs (www.prospects. ac.uk/international_graduate_ jobs.htm). It is the most comprehensive portal for international graduate job vacancies in the UK, enabling students to search for graduate vacancies as well as find information on working in the UK alongside country-specific careers.

Between May 2009 and May 2010 there were approximately 35,000 visits and just under 25,000 unique users to International Job Online on the University of London careers website. The number of visitors via Prospects. ac.uk was initially low with only 908 between October 2009 and May 2010. However following a restructure in June 2010, which gave International Graduate Jobs a much higher profile on the site, there has been a huge increase in visitors with a total of 19,905 between June 2010 and January 2011. The number of employers posting to the International Job Online database up to January 2011 was 3,419 and the number of vacancies posted was 7,779.

Further developments and improvements have taken place as part of a second PMI project. The enhanced International Graduate Jobs was launched in March 2010 and has been promoted to international students and graduates, employers, careers services and student employment services.

International Student Employee of the Year

The International Student Employee of the Year Award, sponsored by PMI, was launched in 2008 and joins an already impressive list of National Student Employment Awards organised on an annual basis by

study commitments. Each university arranges for their local nominations to be judged, winners are put forward for regional judging and those winners progress to the national judging stage. The national winner is announced and the award presented at an awards ceremony at the NASES Annual Conference held in July.

The award has gone from strength to strength, entries have grown year on year, increasing from 25 in 2008 to 57 in 2010, with a total of 115 nominations since the award began from universities and colleges throughout the UK.

NASES, the National Association of Student Employment Services. The Student Employee of the Year (SEOTY) is celebrated to give recognition for student employees, student employee/ employee relationships, student friendly employers and campus based Student Employment Services and the role they play in student development. It also

acknowledges that part-time employment enhances future employability prospects.

The International Award aims to recognise and promote the outstanding contributions and achievements of international students overcoming additional barriers to effectively combine part-time work with their

These projects are just a selection of those managed by NASES and AGCAS under PMI2. For the full list of projects and further details, go to: www.nases.org.uk/pmi2

Case study
Saskia Wischnewski, 2010 winner

International Student Employee of the Year 2010, Saskia Wischnewski, worked part-time as a hotel receptionist at a Premier Inn while studying.

"I started (at the Premier Inn) at the end of October and I am still working here. I cannot describe how important this job is for me and how much I grew during this year. It became so much more than just a possibility to earn money. The Premier Inn is my home

in Aberdeen and I am so thankful to the whole management. I wanted to give them something back in return and this award seemed to be a perfect opportunity. On the other hand it is a very important acknowledgement for myself.

"Even though everyone told me that I can not successfully combine studies and work, I managed to do so. It was a lot of work to still get involved in

University, manage to keep up my grades and work all the time it is left, but I proved them wrong and this is my message to all the future students being confused by even those sceptics. It is definitely not always the easy way to follow your dreams, but if it is really what you want to do and you are willing to give 100% for it, you can achieve everything and nothing is impossible."

Professional development

New to International

Following initial scoping reports by Sue Carrette and Christine Humfrey, a need was identified for a generic training programme for staff new to international work.

'New to International' is a web-based self-study package to help staff in their first six to twelve months in post to learn about key aspects of international work in the education sector. It aims to get new staff up and running quickly and increase their effectiveness. It is relevant to all staff with an international component in their role, including recruitment, advice, outward mobility, partnerships, transnational education and staff mobility, as well as more generalist support roles. The modules can also be used as induction activities for staff.

Four modules were launched in November 2010 (see box right). In the first three months since its launch, 653 people have registered with *New to International*.

What was most useful?

"All of it! Have recommended to our Staff Development Department that they link to the programme on their web pages."

New to International modules

Four modules were launched in November 2010

Getting started will help you:
- think about how you fit into international activity in your organisation
- identify internal and external resources available
- provide an ethical framework for your work

Internationalisation will help you:
- understand what internationalisation and globalisation mean for education
- consider how institutions manage their international activity

Cultural awareness will help you:
- understand dimensions of cultural difference and how these affect your work
- consider the nature and impact of culture shock

New to International

Communicating across cultures will help you:
- identify the different forms of communication you use regularly
- consider how cultural differences can affect communication
- learn to communicate effectively with people from other cultures

A further set of modules are due to be launched this spring, covering the following topics:

- **health, safety, risks and crises** in international work
- **the student journey**: inward and outward mobility
- **staff mobility**
- **differences in education systems:** issues from credential evaluation to learning styles

- **managing international partnerships**
- identifying **next steps for your continuing professional development**

A further module on **immigration essentials** will follow later.

Other professional development programmes

With initial PMI encouragement and support, including the award of bursaries to three students in the first cohort of each programme, two universities have developed postgraduate qualifications for staff working with international students:

Postgraduate Certificate in Enhancing the International Student Experience
(University of Northampton)
www.northampton.ac.uk/ courses/461/postgraduate- certificate-in-enhancing- the-international-student- experience-pgcert/

Postgraduate Certificate/ Diploma/MA in Management of International Higher Education
(Edge Hill University)
www.edgehill.ac.uk/study/ courses/management- of-international-higher- education#summary_2009

Staff at all levels have benefited from a range of PMI-funded training events and workshops run by UKCISA, the Association for International Student Advisers (AISA), English UK, the NUS, and the Association of Colleges.

"The FE International Network, run jointly by UKCISA and the AoC, has proved to be an ideal forum to discuss the key issues surrounding the international college student experience. It has contributed to creating an FE international community which has helped promote the sharing of good practice and a collective approach to challenges that the sector faces."

John Mountford, International Director, Association of Colleges

Overseas Study Visits

The aim of the Overseas Study Visits scheme was to provide administrative and support staff with grants of up to £2,000 to enable them to travel abroad to identify relevant aspects of policy and best practice in institutions in key competitor countries.

Over the last four years, 19 such awards have been made:

Reports from each of these visits are available to download at **www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/study_visits.php**

Halina Harvey	University of Huddersfield	Academic skills/learner development within the business subject areas	USA
Ivan Hutchins	City University	An examination of post-offer/pre-arrival services for incoming international students – what happens between accepting the offer and registration/enrolment onshore?	Australia and Hong Kong
Susan Isherwood	Leeds Metropolitan University	On-course support for study abroad students, welcome programmes, credit transfer and service learning schemes supporting student mobility	USA
Julia Weedon	Edinburgh's Telford College	Internationalisation strategy, employability & internships and the international learner experience	Australia
Adriana Crear	University of Surrey	Best practice in monitoring and reducing the numbers of withdrawals and the role of international officers in preventing them	USA
Rachael Elliott	Brunel University	How US universities responded to the compliance environment launched in 2003	USA
Polly Penter	King's College London	Study abroad provision and support	Singapore and Hong Kong
Heather Robson	University of Warwick	Types, modes and timeframes of immigration advice to international students	USA
Sally Saca	Oxford Brookes University	How can mentoring and buddying schemes aid integration into the host society?	Norway
Fiona Nouri	Royal Veterinary College	Veterinary medicine students' experience of student support services and an investigation into the health and wellbeing aspects of the university structure	USA and Canada

Wendy Knowles	York St. John University	Good practice within services for disabled international students in American institutions – what can we learn from the American experience?	USA
Katrina Abatis	University of Leicester	Internationalisation of Japanese universities and the integration of students within the wider local community	Japan
Sharon Bolton	Imperial College London	The interpretation of Australian immigration rules by institutions and procedures adopted to ensure student compliance	Australia
Erica Arthur	Keele University	The basis for successful exchanges, focusing on student expectations and staff training	Canada and South Korea
Rosemary Gibson	University of Nottingham	Looking at on-going programmes offered to develop intercultural awareness and communication, to help students get the most out of their time at university	USA and Australia
Jennifer Raper	Lancaster University	A comparative study of the processes of social integration	Australia and New Zealand
Claire Massey	University of Plymouth Students' Union	The involvement and development of international students within volunteer programmes	USA
Alana Holland	University of Surrey	The integration of international students with Dutch students and the local community	The Netherlands
Christina Leong	Keele University	How Monash prepare and manage international education initiatives and projects	Australia

Good practice guides

The following resources were produced and disseminated extensively across the sector in hard copy, as well as being available to download from the UKCISA website.

Planning and running orientation programmes for international students

provides an overview of all the key areas that staff in student services should aim to cover when organising such programmes, and gives a wide range of workshop ideas and icebreaker sessions which they can use in their work.

Volunteering and international students: a practical guide

gives an overview of the issues that institutions should consider before setting up such a scheme using international students as volunteers. It addresses the ways in which volunteering is perceived by people from different cultures, as well as practical matters such as risk management, legal issues and recruiting volunteers.

Mentoring schemes for international students: a practical guide

provides practical support to staff who are considering setting up such schemes specifically for international students and provides a range of sample documents which can aid their efforts.

Discussing difference, discovering similarities

is a toolkit is designed to aid academic staff and those working with students in a support role to improve interaction and cross-cultural learning between students from different cultural backgrounds. It includes a range of training materials, including suggestions for ice-breakers, induction sessions and discussion topics which could be easily used by non-specialist trainers.

Managing accommodation for international students: a handbook for practitioners

compiled by Unipol, is aimed at staff who deal with international students in residential accommodation in HE and FE institutions as well as policy-makers, students' unions, voluntary organisations providing accommodation services and commercial providers. The guide sets out good practice on the provision of accommodation and associated services and maps out the issues for consideration either where practice is too context-specific for meaningful generalisation or where it has not yet been established in the sector.
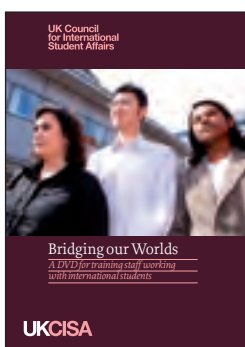
International students under 18: guidance and good practice

draws together descriptions of regulatory requirements affecting different sectors and nations within the UK and examples of good practice, provides sector and country-specific guidance where applicable, and brings together general points of relevance where sectors can learn from one another.

Bridging Our Worlds DVD

In this DVD, funded partly by the PMI, students from across the globe talk frankly about the things that have surprised, puzzled and challenged them about living and studying in the UK. British students and staff also reflect on the issues facing international students, how they can help with the adjustment process, and what they themselves have learned from the varied perspectives and experiences international students bring with them. The DVD is aimed at trainers wishing to increase awareness of international students' experiences and concerns among staff and students within universities and colleges and is accompanied by a Trainers' Manual.

Related reports and allied initiatives

HOSTing international students

HOST are a voluntary organisation who organise a network of UK residents to welcome international students into their homes for short weekend and holiday visits. Universities and colleges can subscribe to offer the service to their international students. PMI funding was used to support HOST's work in this area, by providing them with the opportunity to reach a greater number of subscribers and to advertise their services to a greater number of hosts, as well as providing training for regional organisers. Students have reported great benefits in terms of how they see British people and observe their way of life from staying with them for even a short period and a number continue to keep in touch with their hosts following their visits.

Linking outward and inward mobility: how raising the international horizons of UK students enhances the international student experience

Integrating international and home students is not simply a case of encouraging international students to mix with home students, but it is vitally important that existing home students are persuaded of the benefits of integration themselves. Providing opportunities for interaction on campus and beyond can make a big difference. This report, by staff at the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research at Sheffield Hallam University, explored how and to what extent promoting UK student outward mobility was linked with improving the international student experience on UK campuses. The report took a case study approach, highlighting four universities where outward student mobility had been strongly promoted.

Transnational education and the student experience

Transnational education (TNE) is a growth area for UK education, and in 2008, with PMI funding, UKCISA commissioned Christine Humfrey to write a report which looked at the type and range of provision in this area. The report concluded that "provision of quality TNE appears, in many ways,

to stem from the same general principles of good management as exist for all other undertakings."

The report also included a case study on student support for students studying UK courses in Malaysia. It investigated whether the range and type of student support differed in any meaningful way from the support on offer to students studying in the UK. Of the three institutions focused on, the study found that the standard of international student support for these students was as high, if not higher, than for those studying in the UK. An understanding and acceptance of cultural differences meant that some student services were organised or advertised differently but in general, students were well supported and had a wide range of services available to them.

Benchmarking student services

UKCISA undertook two benchmarking surveys to establish the range of international student service provision in UK higher (2007) and further (2008) education institutions. Until this point, there had been no generally agreed benchmark of what international students would typically need or expect. The survey revealed that institutions provided a generally consistent range of services, although to differing degrees. The self-assessment tool enabled institutions to benchmark themselves against their competitors and could be used as a useful bargaining tool in order to argue for more resources.

UKCISA has repeated the benchmarking exercise in 2011 with both FE and HE and a separate report is available which shows the state of current provision and highlights where improvements have been made.

Measuring the effect of the Prime Minister's Initiative on the international student experience in the UK

I-Graduate PMI 2010 Report summary
William Archer, Jess Davison, Jacqueline Cheng

In the fifth year of providing the official measure of the international student experience for the UK university sector we can confirm that overall international student satisfaction remains high at 81%. This represents a marginal increase year on year from 2009 to 2010, as measured by the PMI ISB (International Student Barometer) Index.

Across the past five years, international student satisfaction at UK universities has increased on average by 8 percentage points.

Satisfaction with support services and the learning experience remain strongest at 88% and 85% respectively.

Across the lifetime of PMI2 (from 2006 to 2010) we have seen measurable improvements in the international student experience across 20 of 21 measures applied.

The strongest increases are:
- Worship facilities (increased 9 percentage points (pp) from 76% to 85% satisfaction)
- Language support (8pp from 77% to 85%)
- Employability (7pp from 71% to 78%)
- Good teachers (6pp from 80% to 86%)
- Multicultural (7pp from 82% to 89%)
- Living cost (7pp from 61% to 68%)
- Visa advice (7pp from 74% to 81%)

The only element that has experienced a decline in satisfaction from 2006 to 2010 is opportunities to earn money (-4 percentage points from 60% to 56%).

Commentary

There is no evidence that international students are less critical today than they were five years ago. The increases in student satisfaction recorded by the International Student Barometer are not in any sense inevitable. We know this from applying the same methodology across 22 countries. So something has been going very right in UK higher education in its delivery against the expectations of international students.

In fact, international student expectations have never been higher. And in times of economic uncertainty, delivering on the promise has never been harder. The typical profile of an international student is a young person, filled with hope and expectation, travelling to a country he or she has never seen before, several time zones from home. The students who have provided feedback for this report came from more than 100 countries to the UK. The extent of the challenge - for UK universities to meet the myriad expectations of multiple cultures - cannot be overstated.

The reputation of British higher education, around the world, is defined and re-defined each year by those students who have made the journey and stayed the course; reporting home to family, friends, schools, agents and governments. Like it or not, UK HE now has as many brand managers as it has students. Reputation is no longer defined by dreaming spires, cool culture or historical brilliance, nor research that has changed the world. The UK's reputation for international education is defined by what students experience - and what they say to others - this year, each year, in real time.

UK universities have been quick to recognise the now bonded link between experience, reputation and recruitment. Many have responded comprehensively to the challenge this presents.

Some of the increases in satisfaction, in some universities, can be explained by direct investment in student facilities and services. There is no doubt that sustained investment in this area is more important than ever: UK universities must maintain the ability to attract great students - and the fees they pay. But the biggest change has been attitudinal; recognising that the only way to differentiate convincingly from rivals around the world is to deliver a better student experience.

The UK's universities are now committed to listening and learning from their students. Most have responded by enhancing the student experience across all dimensions of study and encouraging a culture of continuous improvement among staff. Where things are hard to change or where expectations are evidently unrealistic, universities are working to manage those expectations.
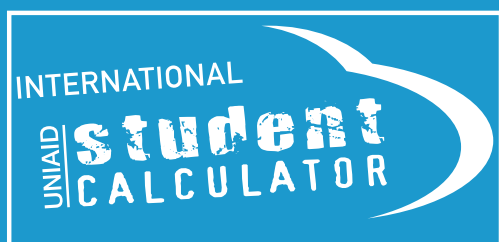
As the PMI2 initiative draws to a close, the challenge is to sustain that engagement and the responsiveness of institutions and of staff, to ensure each year that the UK's international students are, in increasing numbers, its advocates and ambassadors.

William Archer
Director, i-graduate

With thanks to the current members of the Student Experience Advisory Group:

INTERNATIONAL
UNIAID student
CALCULATOR

The International Student Calculator helps international students plan and manage their money for studies in the UK

It enables students to:

- build a lifestyle budget and see how it balances by week, month or over a year
- understand how they will spend their time as well as their money in the UK
- learn from case studies and top tips from other students
- save their budget so they can use it before arriving or during their study

www.studentcalculator.org.uk/ international

prepare for
success

Learning activities to prepare international students for study in the UK

Prepare for Success is an interactive pre-arrival learning tool for international students who are getting ready to come to the UK to study. The learning resources about different aspects of academic life in the UK help students to find out what British academic life is like and what kind of academic skills will be needed for effective study. The activities also provide scope for improvement in English language skills.

www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk

UKCISA is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

It does so through research, print and web-based publications, a national training programme, dedicated advice lines for students and advisors, and liaison and advocacy with institutions, agencies and government.

Its members include all UK universities, those further and higher education colleges which are active internationally, and a range of specialist and representative bodies.

BIS

**Department for Business
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