The international student experience: The Teaching International Students Project

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Outline

- Teaching international students: Issues and implications

- Teaching International Students (TIS) Project

- Changes to core-periphery model

- Persisting issues

Changes in UK student population

- **16%** and rising (22.9%↑ 2010: *UUK*; 32%↑ last 5 years, *HESA*)

- **12%** of first degree students

- **66%** of full-time taught postgraduates; **50%** of full-time research degree students; **43%** of all research postgraduates (**37%↑** in PG numbers last 5 years)

- Increasing competition in international education market
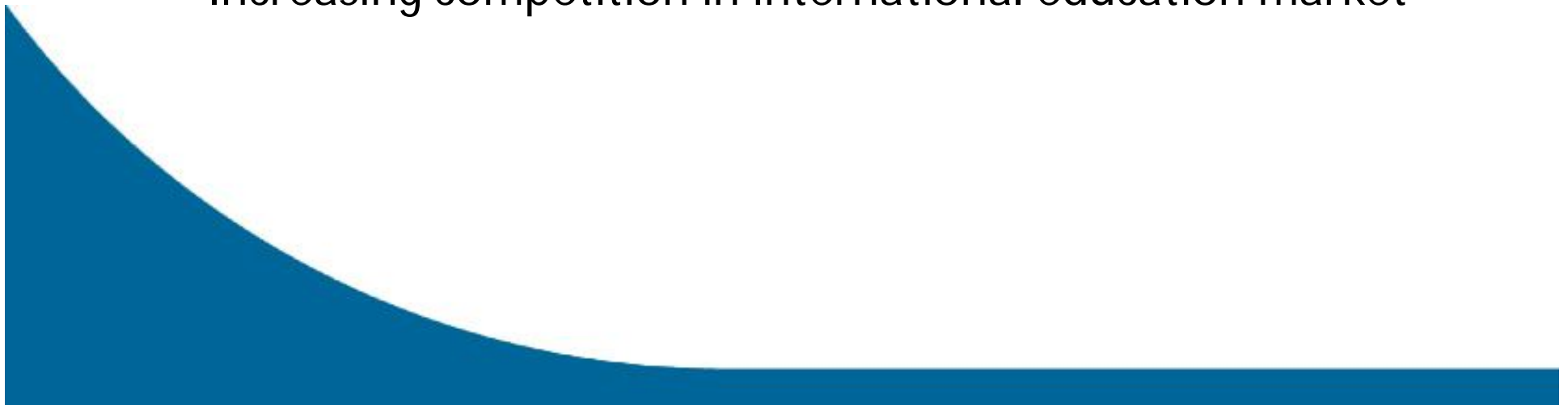
Box C3.1. Long-term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship

Growth in internationalisation of tertiary education (1975-2009, in millions)

1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
0.8 m	1.1 m	1.1 m	1.3 m	1.7 m	2.1 m	3.0 m	3.7 m
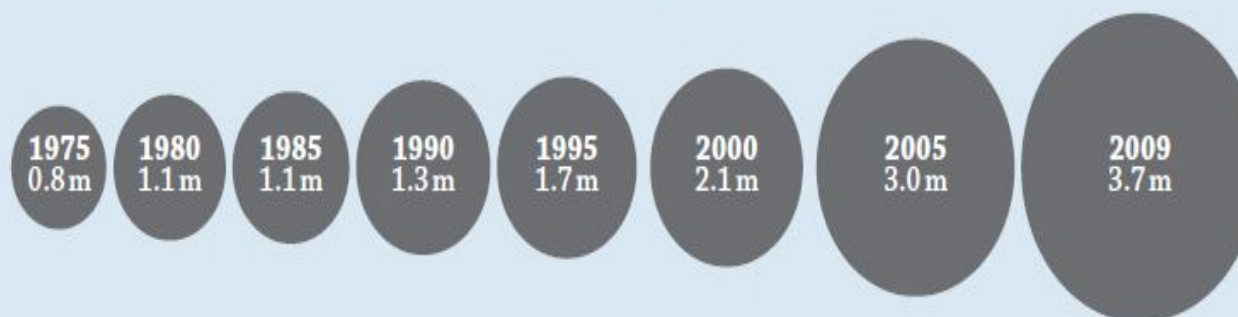
Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Data on foreign enrolment worldwide comes from both the OECD and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). UIS provided the data on all countries for 1975-95 and most of the non-OECD countries for 2000, 2005 and 2009. The OECD provided the data on OECD countries and the other non-OECD economies in 2000 and 2009. Both sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series.
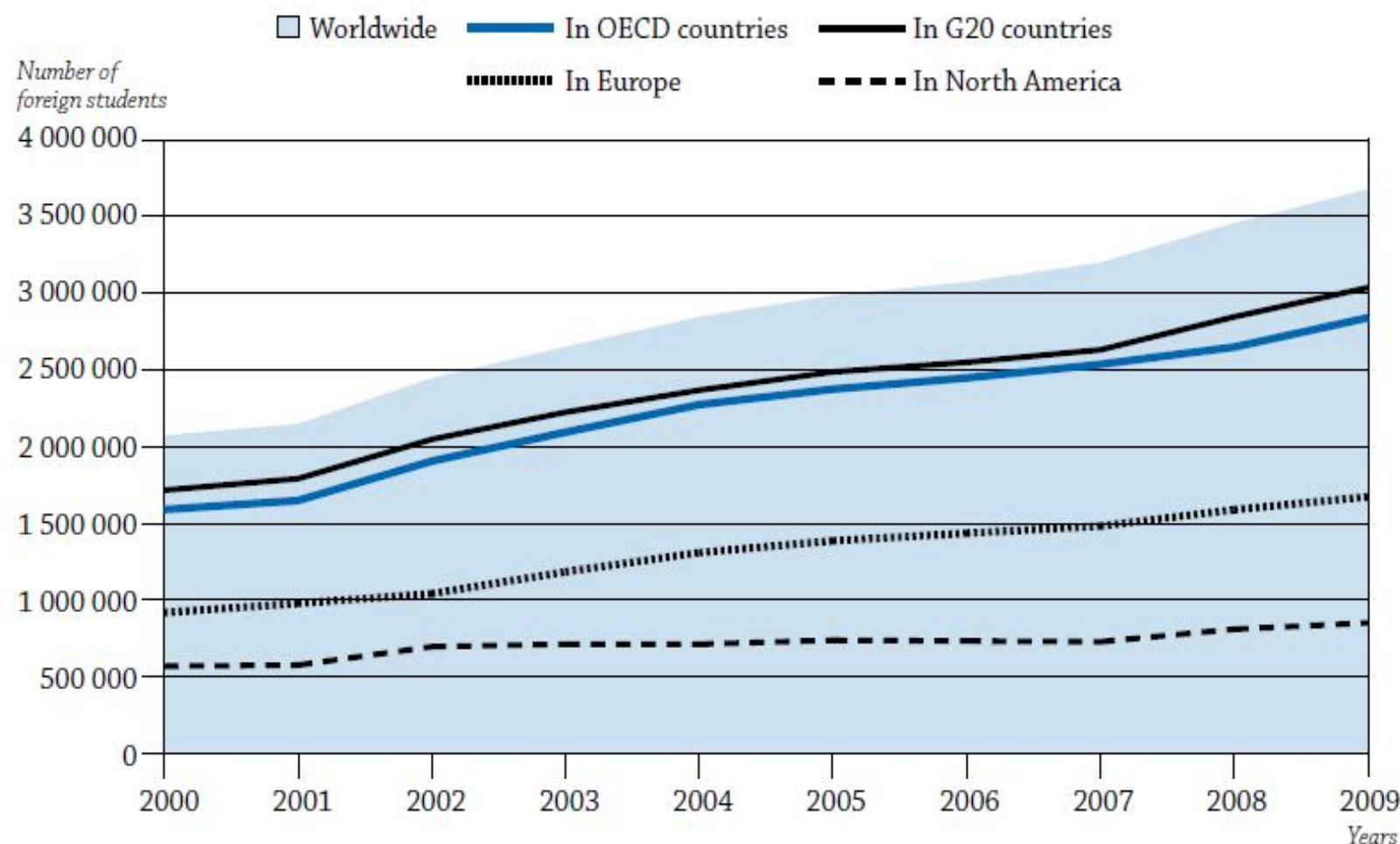
StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932461617

Chart C3.1. Evolution by region of destination in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship (2000 to 2009)

□ Worldwide ▬▬ In OECD countries ▬▬ In G20 countries
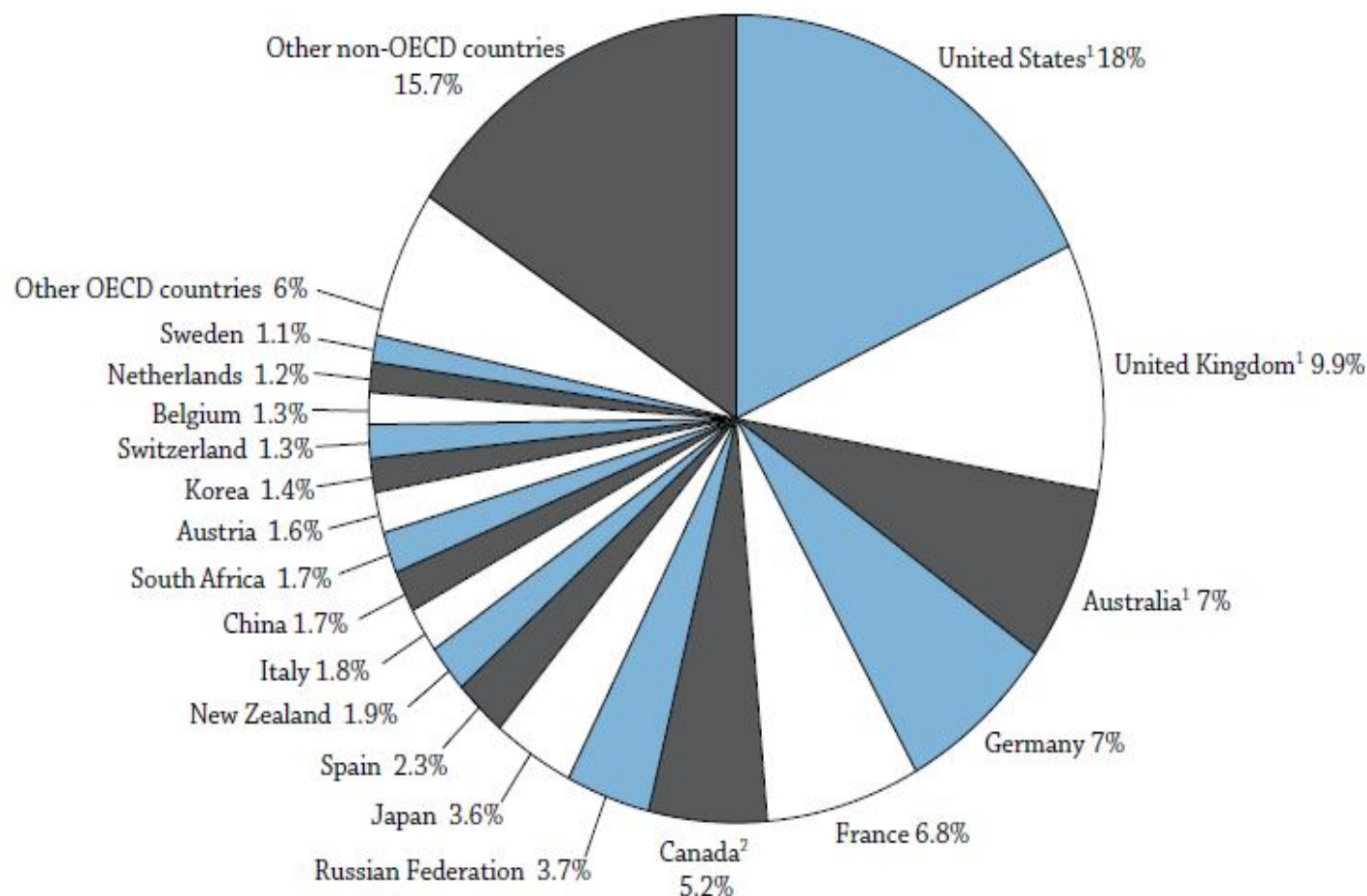▪▪▪▪▪▪▪ In Europe ▬ ▬ ▬ In North America

Number of
foreign students

Chart C3.2. Distribution of foreign students in tertiary education, by country of destination (2009)

Percentage of foreign tertiary students reported to the OECD who are enrolled in each country of destination
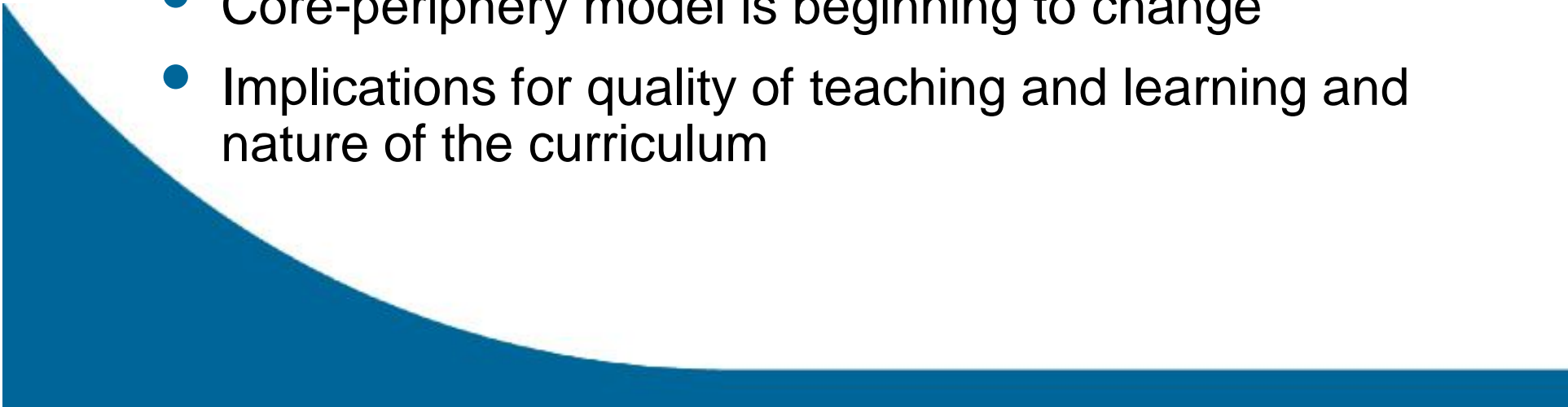

1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence.
2. Year of reference 2008.
Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics for most data on non-OECD destinations. Table C3.6, available on line. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2011).

StatLink ⚞⚟ http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932461560

'One-way' traffic

- 83% of IS enrolled in G20 countries (mainly Anglophone)
- 3:1 IS enrolled in OECD countries c/f from OECD countries - in UK: 11:1
- China, India and Korea - 52% of IS worldwide
- Increased competition from non-Anglophone countries
- China now receives more IS than it sends overseas
- Core-periphery model is beginning to change
- Implications for quality of teaching and learning and nature of the curriculum

HIGHER EDUCATION ♠ SPECIAL REPORT
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
ACROSS THE GLOBE

VIEW ◑ BOTH   ● DESTINATION   ● SOURCE

🦘 SHOW AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION IN DETAIL

< BACK TO GLOBAL VIEW

GREATEST
DESTINATION

GREATEST
SOURCE

UNITED KINGDO[M]
TOP 5

Top student destinations

1. US

2. France

3. Ireland

4. Australia

5. Germany

Top student sources

1. China   4

2. India   3
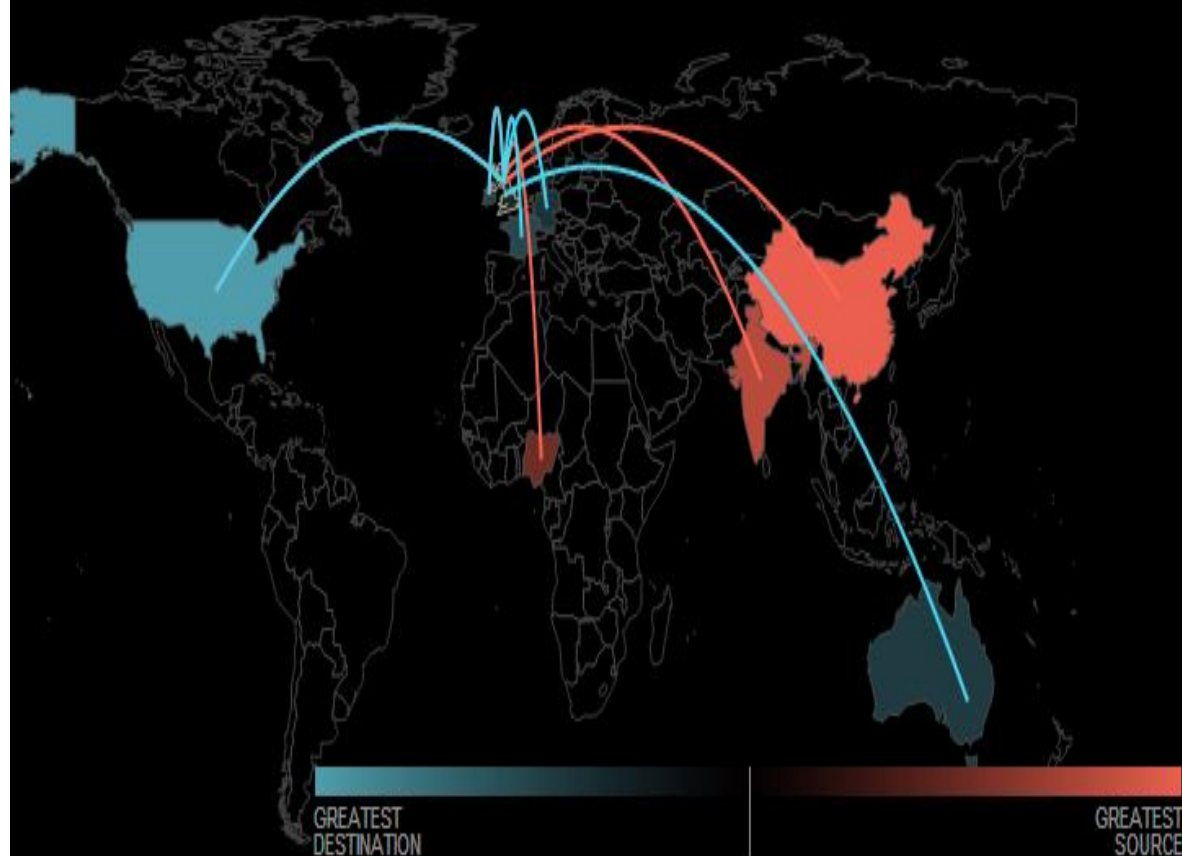
UK features

- Mainly postgraduates – shorter, more intense

- Different marking system

- Less support from lecturers – 'academic shock'

- Less continuous assessment, more summative – fewer opportunities for feedback, support needs to be built in

- Harder to make local friends – UK counterparts less mobile

- Complacency – 'they come here for a British education'
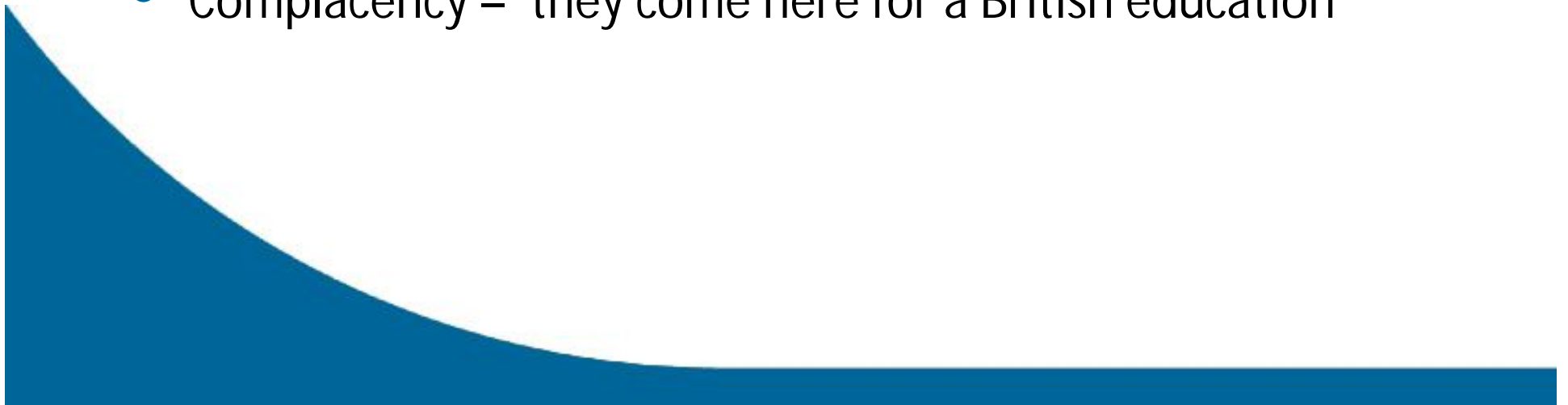
Implications

- Increased support services for IS but little change in teaching and learning approaches – 'silo' mentality

- Good induction programmes but then less well supported

- Reliance on 'add on' approach rather than embedded within discipline and normative approaches

- Need a more sustainable and holistic approach

- Need to share expertise and experiences
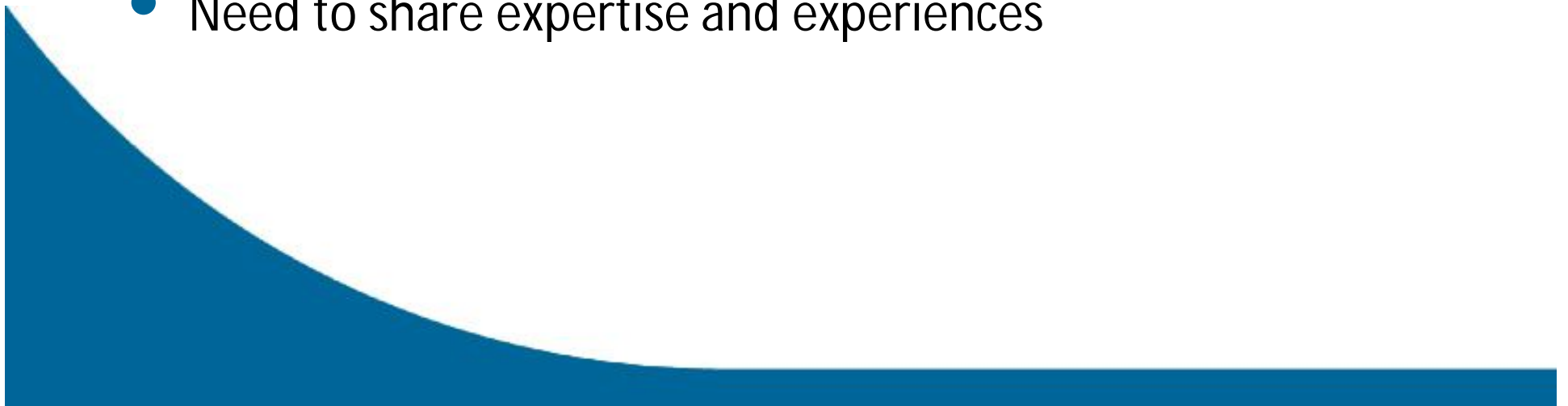
Academic staff issues

- Feel **untrained**, may have majority of IS or work in TNE

- Little reward or recognition

- **Misconceptions** about IS learning needs - rote learners, lack critical thinking skills, prone to plagiarism

- Don't consider **teaching, learning and assessment factors** and role of previous experiences and expectations

- May **conflate** lack of language proficiency with lack of ability

- Don't understand the **complexities** of language learning
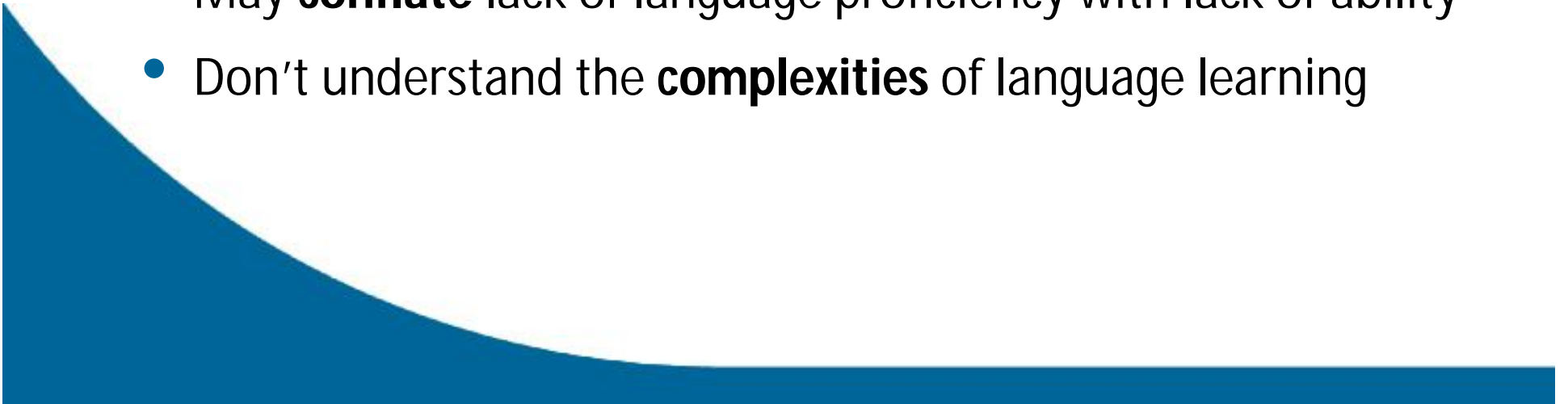
International student issues

- **Unclear expectations**: don't know the 'rules'
- Lack required **background knowledge**
- **Language** and **assessment** issues
- Difficulties participating and making **friends**
- Know they are viewed as a **'problem'**
- **Achievement gap** in some areas
- Do achieve well overall but **need support**
- **Less satisfied** than UK students overall
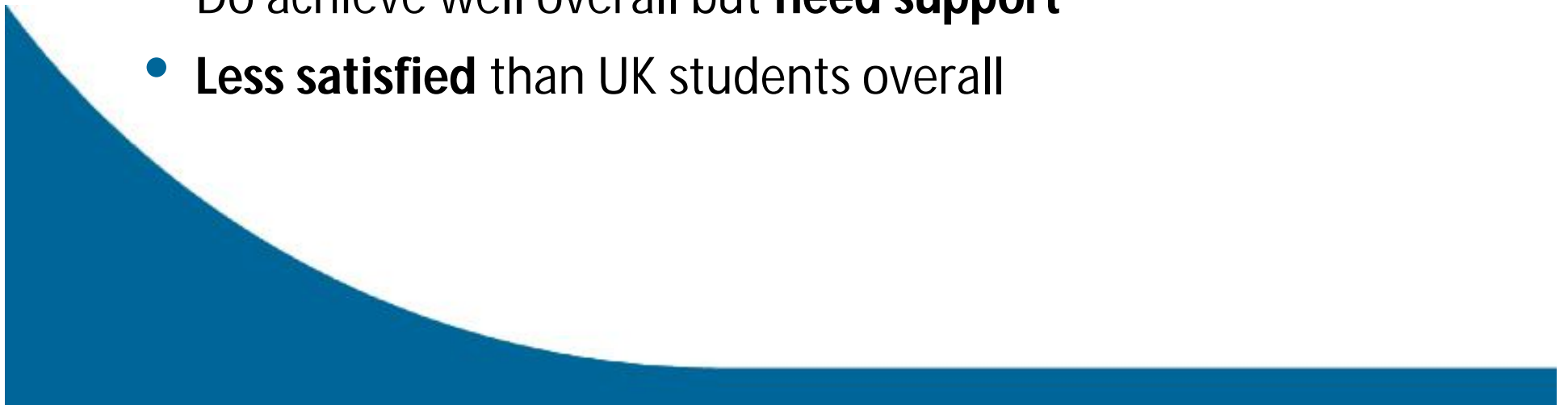
UK National Student Survey
Q22 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course
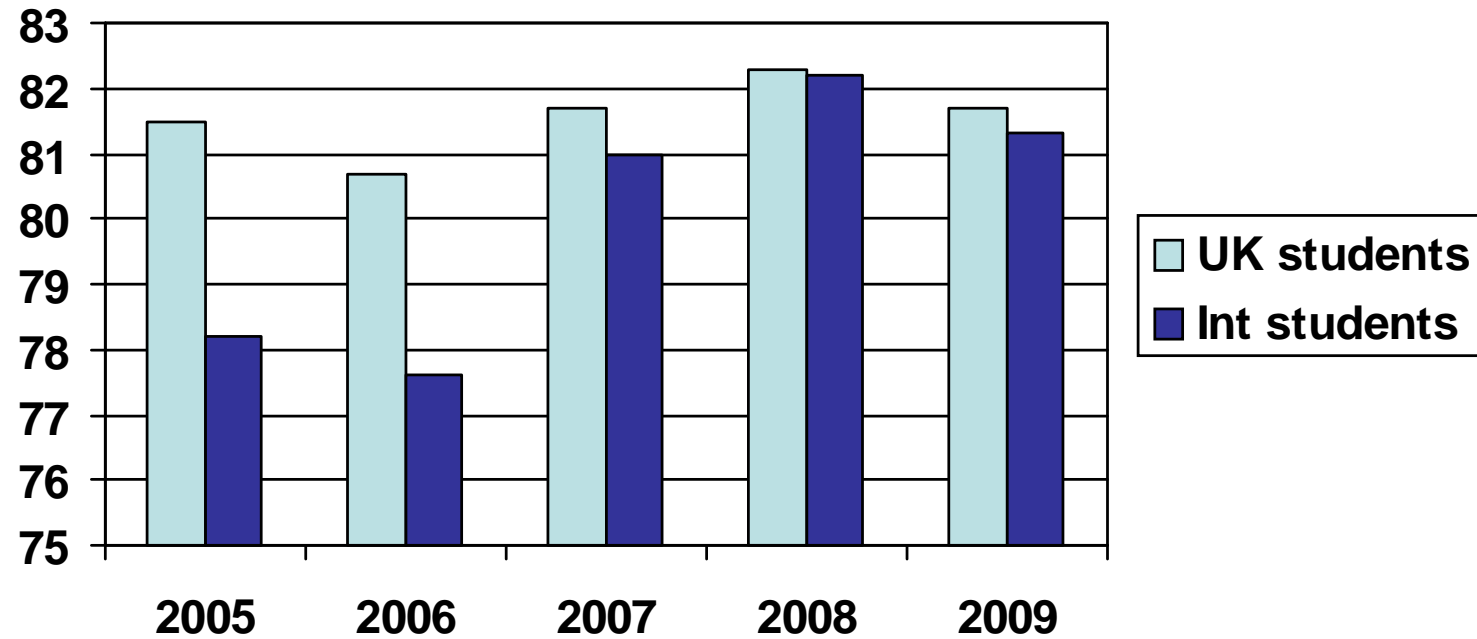
NSS 2005-2009 results

		Q22 **Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course**					
		Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Total
UK		25016	57364	78561	425091	290215	876483
		2.9%	6.5%	9.0%	48.5%	33.1%	100.0%
International		1834	4768	9460	42058	23813	81966
		2.2%	5.8%	11.5%	51.3%	29.1%	100.0%
Total		26850	62132	88021	467149	314028	958449
		2.8%	6.5%	9.2%	48.7%	32.8%	100.0%

Teaching International Students project

- Move beyond 'problem identification'
- Encourage understanding and 'meta-sensitivity'
- Sharing of ideas, resources and expertise
- See students holistically
- Facilitate collaborative approaches
- 'One stop shop' – database of research and teaching resources

Hosted by the Higher Education Academy
Funded through the Academy, UKCISA & PMI2
2 year project

TIS Team:

Janette Ryan, Jude Carroll, Fiona Hyland (ESCalate), Inna Pomorina (Economics), Melodee Beals (History, Classics & Archeology) , Simon Steiner (Engineering) , Malcolm Todd (C-SAP), Ali Dickens (LLAS), Andrea Frank (CEBE), Caprice Lantz (Psychology), Richard Atfield (BMAF), Adam Child & Katherine Gent, HEA

Teaching International Students

The Teaching International Students Project is a joint initiative of the Higher Education Academy and the **United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs** (UKCISA) with funding from the **Prime Minister's Initiative 2** (PMI2). It is a two year project, hosted and co-funded by the Higher Education Academy.

Increasing student mobility and successful national policies to recruit international students have led to more culturally diverse higher education landscapes around the world. The UK is the most popular destination for international students due to the quality of its provision, and it is important that this quality is maintained.

The project therefore focuses on the ways that lecturers and other teaching staff can maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning for international students thorough providing guidance and information about how to meet the diverse learning needs of international students, and, importantly, in ways that will benefit all students.

TIS activities

The TIS project activities include:

- the 'International Student Lifecycle' Resources Bank

Contact Information

Teaching International Students Project team
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International Student Lifecycle

Resources Bank

The International Student 'Lifecycle'

Higher education students: undergraduates, postgraduates, exchange, transnational, distance learning students

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Pre-arrival and pre-sessional support

Induction

Teaching & Learning in the 'classroom'

Life outside the 'classroom'

Employability & next steps

→ Transition →

Teaching Context

- Lectures
- Seminars and tutorials
- Professional placements
- Supervision
- Online teaching
- Transnational and multimodal teaching

Teaching Approaches

- Pedagogic theory
- Group work
- Assessment & feedback
- Language

Learning

- Critical thinking
- Academic writing
- Avoiding plagiarism
- Independent learning
- Language
- Reading and note-making

Curriculum

- Internationalising the curriculum
- Disciplinary approaches

Intercultural Competencies

- Mixing, learning and working together
- Intercultural competencies

The International Student Lifecycle

Welcome to the Teaching International Students Resources Bank.

A diagram of the 'Student Lifecycle' is available to **download as a PDF document (PDF - 37KB).**

This collection of resources is aimed at teachers in Higher Education. It targets issues which are especially (but not exclusively) relevant to teaching students who have travelled to the UK to study from other countries. You can read more about the TIS project and about the underpinning rationale for creating this resources bank here

If you teach international students, you can look to the TIS resources bank for:

- An overview of common teaching topics

- Selected resources for teachers

- Links to specialist sites and research databases

- Lists for further reading.

- Case stories written by teachers and by international students to make the topics 'come alive'.

You can use this site to check how others deal with teaching issues. For example, a check on how others handle group work could affirm your own approach and suggest further action.

You can use the Teaching International Students site to plan ahead.

Contact Information

Contact the team
01904 717 500
Email us

Language

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Language is one of the most difficult areas for both teaching staff and international students. Even with high IELTS scores (see http://ielts-preparation.110mb.com/bands.htm for an explanation of the IELTS bands) and good language skills overall, non-English speaking background students are likely to struggle at first with language in lectures and tutorials, complex reading and writing tasks, and new academic and disciplinary concepts.

The main issues: getting started

International students may have a range of difficulties with language especially at the beginning of their studies. They may have trouble with fast-paced lectures, non-standard English, accents, local references and discipline-specific language, and in the beginning may only understand between 10 and 50 percent of lectures. They may be unable to participate verbally in tutorials in any meaningful way or without encouragement. In assessments, they may not be able to demonstrate their true abilities.

There are many ways that teachers can assist their international students to cope with the challenges of learning in a foreign language or where terms and concepts are unfamiliar, and many of which may also be of benefit to local students. The following section describes:

- The complexity of language learning
- Steps teachers can take to increase their own understandability and the understandability of texts
- Ways to help students participate successfully and use language
- Steps teachers can take to improve students' own language skills

Steps teachers can take to improve students' own language skills

- In the early days of a programme, help students self-assess their language skills. The Open University Scotland produces an online workbook called 'Am I ready to study in English?' which sets tasks and guides a student to self-assess their skills. See http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3638

- Organise group tasks of students speaking to each other (see the suggestions in Group Work to ensure these encounters are positive / helpful)

- Encourage peer support and review where students help each other (this needs sensitive organising)

- Where appropriate, explicitly point to opportunities to use English from the simple (listening to local media) to the more challenging (such as part time work or volunteering). This recognises that the university is not the only place for rich language interactions and requires the student, too, to take the initiative and move outside of their 'comfort zone'.

See also the sections on **Lectures** and **Seminars** for further ideas about the use of language and structures to assist students' comprehension and learning. The section on Assessment also gives ideas on assessing language in assignments.

Top resource

Carroll, J. (2005). 'Lightening the load': Teaching in English, learning in English. In J. Carroll & J. Ryan. (Eds.), *Teaching international students: Improving learning for all* (35-42). London: Routledge.

What is the evidence?

Further reading:

Ryan, J. & Viete, R. (2009) Respectful interactions: Learning with international students in the English-speaking academy. *Teaching in Higher Education* 14(3), 303-314.

Assessment and Feedback

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the **Teaching International Students** project.

Many teachers find international students less problematic to assess than UK students and more than a few say they are 'a joy to teach'. On the other hand, many have concerns linked to students' varied language skills, background knowledge, and familiarity with UK assessment methods. This section concentrates on how teachers can assess students' work, using practices that are fair, reliable and efficient. It also considers feedback, which is an aspect of assessment crucial to all students but especially so for international students who may be unfamiliar with assessment requirements and with marking criteria. Feedback helps students to check if they are on track for success and to reorient their efforts if they are not.

Whilst the focus of this section is on teachers' actions, external factors also influence assessment. Assessment decisions might reflect disciplinary priorities, students' future employment possibilities, recruitment and reputation. Sometimes, teachers report they even think about financial matters such as the departmental budget if teachers' actions mean that many students fail. This complex context can make addressing assessment issues problematic.

In other sections, you will find additional guidance on issues associated with assessment such as group work, plagiarism and critical thinking.

The main issues: getting started

Teachers' concerns when assessing international students often include:

Time. In a diverse student group, it can take longer to teach necessary skills, to provide practice opportunities,

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Critical Thinking

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Much has been written on the supposed lack of critical thinking skills amongst international students. There are even (false) claims that there is no equivalent for the term in some cultures or languages such as in Chinese.

International students need to be explicitly taught the forms of expression of critical thinking and inquiry which are expected within their particular context and discipline. Equally, lecturers interested in internationalising their pedagogy and curriculum need to learn about other possible forms of expression of reasoning and writing in other cultures so that they can recognise and reward these.

Related documents/links

Bennett Moore, Z., Faltin, L. & Wright, M. (2010)- Critical Thinking and International Postgraduate Students in Discourse vol 3 pp63-94

Video of international students discussing critical thinking

Critical thinking: developing students' independence - Rebecca Moor et al. University of Nottingham

More from the Teaching International Students Resources bank

The main issues: Getting started

For teachers, a place to start is by examining what you and others with whom you work mean by 'criticality'

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Supervision

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Most international students in the UK are undertaking postgraduate studies. They account for 33.4% of all postgraduate students; 43% of all research postgraduates and 50% of full-time research degree students (HESA, view the HESA statistics online).

The main issues: getting started

For students doing a thesis, their relationship with their supervisor is paramount. They rely on their supervisor for not only their academic success but also their future career prospects. Many students, especially those from China, may be expecting a 'parent-like' relationship with their supervisor (in China, your supervisor is referred to as your 'boss') or a continuing collegial relationship (African students often expect that they will

Related documents/links

Video of international student views on supervision

More from the International Student Lifecycle Resource Bank

Transnational and multimodal teaching

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Multi-modal programmes require students to move between countries and between institutions, and importantly, students must change their enrolment status when they travel. (See Online Teaching for additional examples of multi-modal teaching).

In professional qualifications such as Engineering or Law, a multi-modal student could complete two years at home then the student would become a UK resident, enrol in a UK university, and complete two more years' study. Many three-year degrees have a 2+1 pattern of study. Multi-modal programmes can make particular demands on the (receiving) UK teachers beyond those suggested in this resource for international students and all students.

Another way in which programmes are designed is for students to stay in their home country and to seek accreditation from a geographically distant (UK) university. This is often called transnational education and an example would be a student who remains in Malaysia for degree-level study and graduates with a UK-accredited award. Such students are usually taught by a combination of local and in-coming faculty. Visiting 'transnational' staff from the UK accrediting institution (be they teachers, quality assurance professionals, support staff etc) stay for as little as a week or remain for a longer period before returning to the accrediting institution. A few transnational staff transfer residency to the new country (but their employment remains with the UK accrediting institution). It is common for UK-based teachers to be called 'flying faculty' and for many to travel out and back regularly, often over several years.

Transnational teachers describe particular issues and problems with this kind of work as well as citing many opportunities to develop new skills, to broaden their perspective and develop productive networks with international colleagues. Some of the lessons learned and general guidance for teachers are explored and brought together in resources described below.

Internationalising the curriculum

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Curriculum content and the pedagogical approaches used by teachers are key vehicles for improving teaching and learning for all students.

Internationalising the curriculum involves providing students with global perspectives of their discipline and giving them a broader knowledge base for their future careers. You can also help to provide them with a set of values and skills to operate in diverse cultural environments; skills often labelled 'intercultural competencies' or 'cross-cultural capabilities'. These values, skills and knowledge are discussed in the literature in relation to graduate attributes and global citizenship with an acknowledgement that graduates today will need the resilience and competencies to communicate and compete in a rapidly changing, complex global workforce and world.

The main issues: getting started

A key question is what internationalisation might mean at the disciplinary level, for example, what should an engineering, psychology or arts curriculum look like if it is to meet the needs of the 21st century student? We are shortly going to include some links to work in this area, however, when it comes to looking at each of the disciplines there is often not as much guidance at the level of curriculum content as might be expected although clearly much work is currently being done in this area. This type of work provides an exciting opportunity as by engaging with your communities of practice, such as professional bodies and Subject Centres, you can listen to, debate and contribute to the process of curriculum internationalisation within your subject area.

Some disciplines are already 'internationalised' (such as International Studies, Comparative Religions etc) or lend themselves to internationalisation more easily. Internationalisation could mean providing a broader

Intercultural competencies

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Intercultural competencies are those knowledge, skills and attitudes that comprise a person's ability to get along with, work and learn with people from diverse cultures.

Higher education can provide an excellent opportunity for students and staff to explore and practice the development of intercultural competencies. However, there is both anecdotal and research evidence to suggest that this does not always happen nor does it happen by chance. Staff within higher education are well positioned to acquire and develop these skills and to encourage the development of these skills in students first by modelling these skills themselves and also by using specific strategies within their classes. Clearly these are competencies for all students, not just international ones.

The main issues: getting started

Developing your own intercultural competencies

- Find time to learn a little about the cultural backgrounds of your colleagues and students

- You can't learn about the cultures of all of your students but you can develop a 'meta-awareness' (Louie, 2005; Ryan & Louie, 2007) about the different kinds of experiences and expectations they may have.

- Reflect on your own culture and its approaches to education. See your colleagues and students as a learning resource - they may be able to provide insights into how the whole system and

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Mixing, learning and working together

Related documents/links

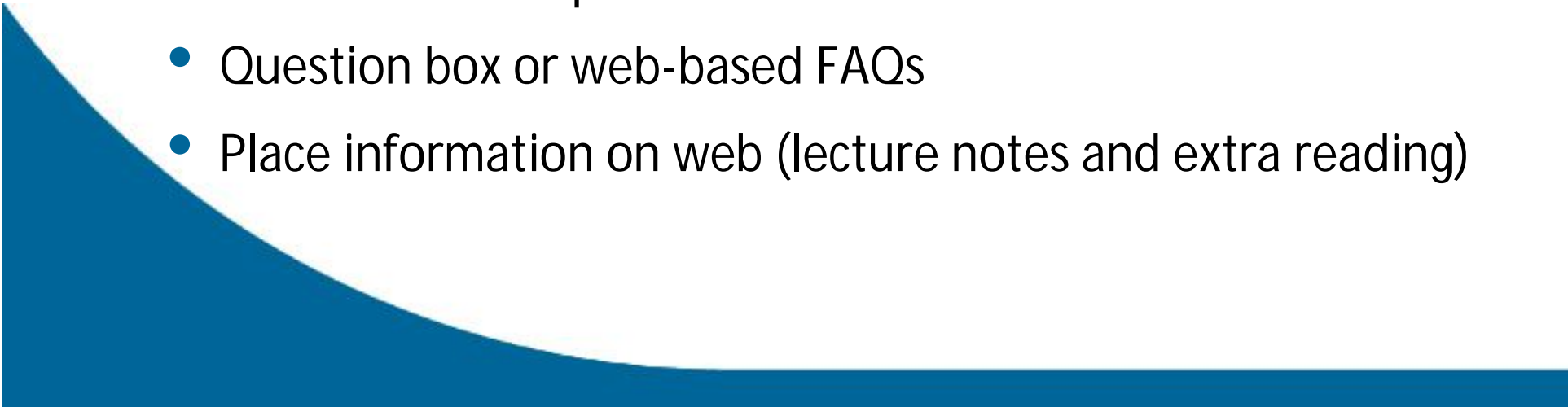The Global University: The role of the curriculum (PDF 2.98MB)

A teacher's account of how grouping local and international students addressed learning needs better

Effective Programming for International Students - Doctoral thesis

Chang, S. (2008). Facilitating local-international student interaction and integration through curriculum development. Paper presented at the 19th ISANA International Education Association Conference Auckland, New Zealand.

More from the International Student Lifecycle resource bank

The information on this page has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project.

Most students do not take advantage of the opportunities presented by diverse campuses and classrooms though, of course, some do. A minority will take it upon themselves to develop friendships, broaden their perspectives and learn skills suitable for a diverse and globalised world. This behaviour is probably easier in cohorts where no one group predominates or where the overall level of diversity is high.

Introduction

A majority of students, when left to their own devices, are likely to work and learn alongside but not with students they perceive as culturally different from themselves. The result for some, especially for international students, is disappointment that they have not had more opportunities to mix with and make friends with local students. International students do appreciate the rich mix of other nationalities they can meet by travelling to the UK, helping them feel that they have had some of the benefits of international

Lectures

- 'Lighten the cognitive load'
- Provide a framework – review and link lectures
- 'Signposting'
- Explain unfamiliar words, acronyms, expressions
- Take care with stories, anecdotes, jokes, metaphors
- Use Plain English (finish words and use fewer words)
- Audio or videotape lectures
- Question box or web-based FAQs
- Place information on web (lecture notes and extra reading)

Case stories from students and staff...

It takes us extra time

I am an international student currently studying MSc Economics. This is the first year and first time I came to UK. Actually, there are a reasonable number of difficulties while I am taking these modules. The biggest problem I have found is the listening skills. As an international student, one has to catch up with what the lecturers have stated in class. You know, the teachers often speak at a normal native speaker's pace. Sometimes it is hard to follow the instructors in detail, which can be a barrier to grasp the key elements in handouts. Often, some international students are ashamed to ask questions in class and even after class and let it be. Day after day, problems stick together and I do not know which to tackle first.

The next problem is the translation issue. For international students, if we want to totally understand the context from lectures, we have to translate English into our mother tongue. In some circumstances, we can not find the right interpretation for the terminology. The lecturers in foreign countries can only explain them in other words; maybe they are still a struggle for us to understand.

The third problem is our relatively lower reading speed. We international students read the core books and supplementary books recommended by the lecturers much more slowly compared with native students. Therefore, we need much more time consuming and grasping the idea of the book. This kind of problem is hard to solve. We have to practice more.

The final problem is the different way of thinking between English people and people from some other parts of the world. We international students often find it very
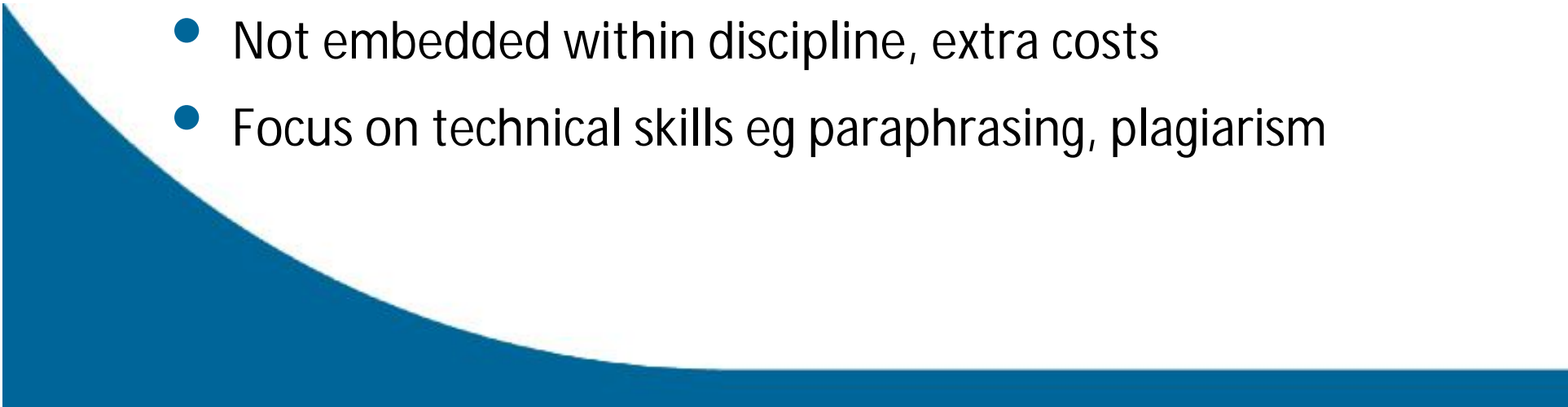
The problem with making assumptions

In the Qualitative Research Methodologies module I teach, there were now two groups of students. I realised that there were more Chinese students than before and that all of the Chinese students in both groups were regularly sitting together. Previously there had been only a few Chinese students and, I must admit, I hadn't really noticed where they had sat. The Chinese students and the other international students seemed to have similar questions and problems and seemed disconnected from the local students. **The local students seemed completely uninterested in mixing with the international students and tended to dominate the discussion in class, try as I might to get everyone to talk**.
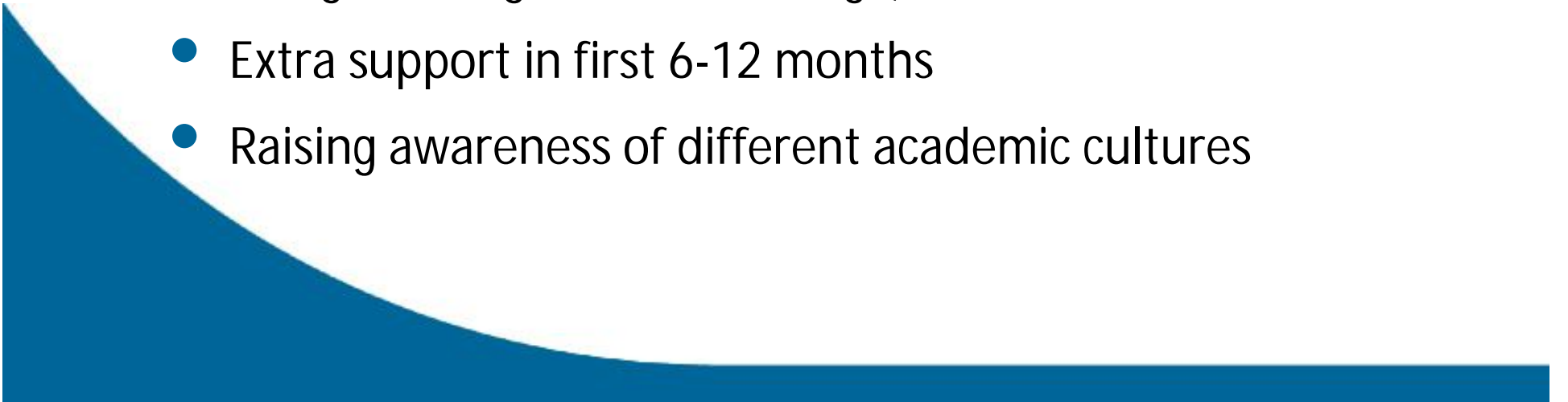
Were (the international students) starting at a lower level and should I adjust my teaching? Should I just separate the international and the home students? ...Instead, I asked the students to self-select into a 'beginners' and a 'more experienced' group. ... **to my surprise, the following week when they turned up for the new self-selected groups, both international and local students almost equally chose each group**...

Extract from: TIS Resource Bank, Intercultural Competencies,

Mixing, learning & working together, A teacher's account...

Persisting issues

- 3 phases of 'shock' – culture shock, language shock, **academic shock**

- Lack of understanding of limitations of IELTS

- Current 'frontloading' or 'add on' leads to 'deficit' approach

- Takes responsibility away from academics - 'someone else's problem'

- Lack of connection with foundation EAP/programmes

- Not embedded within discipline, extra costs

- Focus on technical skills eg paraphrasing, plagiarism

Possible solutions

- More explicit teaching of critical thinking and writing skills

- Joint sessions between academics and EAP practitioners

- Study groups (not just for IS); mentoring/buddies

- Understanding the developmental nature of language learning and academic writing

- Recognition of extra time required (language issues and filling in background knowledge)

- Extra support in first 6-12 months

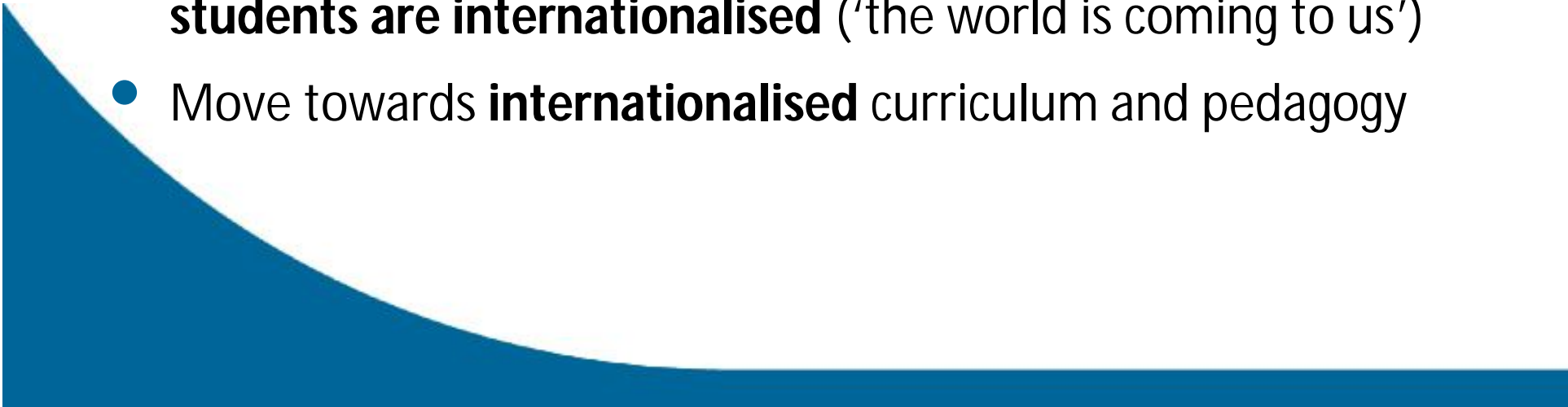- Raising awareness of different academic cultures

China as a case study…

China	UK
• Level of knowledge	• Type of (critical) thinking
• Learn from the teacher	• Independent learning
• Respect teachers and texts	• Question teachers and texts
• Harmony of the group	• Student-centred learning
• Consensus /avoiding conflict	• Argumentation /assertiveness
• 'Reflective' learners	• 'Deep' learners seeking meaning
• Critique of the 'self'	• Critique of the 'other'

Challenges and opportunities

- Focus is usually on **students** to change and adapt

- IS seen as 'bearers of problems' rather than '**bearers of culture**'

- Ignoring one of the best sources of **intercultural knowledge and skills** – international students

- UK students **less mobile** than their EU or international peers but British HEIs have very **internationalised classrooms**

- International students can be a resource for learning so that **all students are internationalised** ('the world is coming to us')

- Move towards **internationalised** curriculum and pedagogy

Persisting issues

- 3 phases of 'shock' – culture shock, language shock, **academic shock**

- Lack of understanding of limitations of **IELTS**

- Current 'frontloading' or 'add on' leads to **'deficit' approach**

- Takes responsibility away from **academics** - 'someone else's problem'

- **Lack of connection** with foundation EAP/programmes

- Not embedded within discipline, extra costs

- Focus on technical skills eg paraphrasing, plagiarism