

THE PRIME
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FOR INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION

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

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Case Study Report:
University of Leeds

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SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

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A. Introduction - Background information

The University of Leeds is situated at the heart of a vibrant, multicultural city in West Yorkshire. During the current academic year there are over 30,000 students attached to over 700 undergraduate and 400 postgraduate degree programmes. With 8,000 staff members, they are the largest local employer.

Over 700 students take part in the institution's outward mobility programme every year, with over a third of these not being on a language degree. Successful students are awarded a 'European' or 'International' version of their degree.

The university has over 40 worldwide partners including 17 in the world's top 50 universities and exchange links with over 200 institutions. Nearly all of the institution's programmes provide students with the opportunity to study abroad.

Up to 5,000 international students study at the University of Leeds every year from over 130 different countries. Roughly 650 of these students take part in a study abroad programme, with 300 of those coming for only one semester. Consequently they are one of the UK's principal recruiters of international students. However the universities international ambition is much bigger than purely increasing international recruitment figures. Increasing the quantity and quality of their international strategic collaborations is a high priority for the university (University of Leeds 2008¹).

The institution offers a foundation year for international students who wish to complete their full undergraduate programme in the UK, but don't have the necessary qualifications to do so. Students from over 70 different countries have successfully completed this course.

The university is made up of nine faculties. Each faculty is made up of a number of individual schools, research centres and institutes.

B. Promoting outward and inward mobility at university level

Institutional strategic plan of promoting outward and inward mobility

There are four key themes within the university's strategic plan:

*'Achieve an influential world-leading research profile
Inspire our students to develop their full potential
Enhance enterprise and knowledge transfer
Enhance our international performance and standing'* (University of Leeds 2006:12²).

¹ University of Leeds (2008) *University of Leeds Annual Report and Accounts 2007/08*. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/finance/publications/zARA08_FINAL.pdf (Accessed March 2009).

² University of Leeds (2006) *Strategic Plan 2006*. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/about/strategy/plan.pdf> (Accessed March 2009).

The university ties the first and last of these in with their internationalisation strategy. These are also related to promoting outward and inward mobility. While it may be noted that the middle two points may also be relevant in this context, the strategic plan does not make this link.

Under the first point '*Achieve an influential world-leading research profile*' the strategy states that '*excellence in research and scholarship*' within an international context will be translated into '*learning opportunities for students*' (University of Leeds 2006:12). While this does not explicitly mention outward and inward student mobility, there is an underlying student mobility tone in this statement. However, none of the key performance targets for this theme relate to promoting outward or inward mobility.

In contrast the fourth theme, to '*Enhance our international performance and standing*' is explicitly linked to outward and inward student mobility in the strategic plan. On the topic of internationalisation in general it states that:

'Internationalisation is an essential element of our strategy, synonymous with our world-class vision. Enhancing our international performance and standing will be an outcome of the way in which we are able to translate and apply the core activities of the University' (University of Leeds 2006:20).

To achieve this, the university has developed three core objectives that shape, as they put it, '*our international aspirations*' (University of Leeds 2006:20). These are:

1. *to create sustainable recruitment of high quality international students*
2. *to increase the impact of our international activities*
3. *creation of new research and innovation led international strategic collaborations* (University of Leeds 2006:20).

The first objective '*to create sustainable recruitment of high quality international students*' is concerned with, but not restricted to, improving inward student and staff mobility in both quality of experience and quantity of participants. Achieving this objective extends far beyond increasing the number of international students on campus, though this is also a key target for the immediate future. Part of this wider outlook in sustainability of recruitment is establishing international partnerships and collaborative teaching programmes (University of Leeds 2008). An intrinsic part of this is increasing the number of student exchange programmes on offer and promoting both inward and outward student mobility (University of Leeds 2006).

The second objective also relates to increasing the institution's international profile and reputation through international activity and partnerships. Part of this involves creating opportunities for staff outward and inward mobility and increasing opportunities for home students to study at quality institutions around the world.

The third objective is likewise related to international collaborations both within and outside of the higher education sector. The focus of this objective is on the quality of the relationship between partners and the activities facilitated through these relationships. In the near future, the university plans to create three new international strategic partnerships to fulfil this objective. While the plan makes no direct reference to outward or inward student mobility in relation to this objective, the benefits are evident in line with previous statements.

Institutional support services for outward mobility students

The university's Study Abroad Office offers support for all outward mobility students. In addition to this, departments to a varying degree also offer course specific support. Our staff interviews and focus groups all revealed that this departmental support varies across the institution as a whole in regard to pre-departure, whilst abroad and post trip support:

'There are some schools ... and I bet this is the same pretty much in every university where coordinators change quite regularly, some of them have experience, some of them don't, some of them have interests, some of them don't.'

This inconsistency across schools results in some students receiving a more integrated support service than others. The Study Abroad Office recognises that this is at times problematic. In the Study Abroad Office's internal audit on support services, students highlighted the need for more academic preparation in their pre-departure activities.

This issue was also raised by students in this study's outward mobility focus group (see Section D). Due to the variance across departments, the Study Abroad Office, in response to the internal student feedback, has decided in future to offer country specific academic support:

'So it's quite variable how much support they get from their individual school but there is some generic preparation I think you can do which is what we are trying to do this year... Really generic stuff like in America you have mid terms, you have attendance requirements.'

A course co-ordinator who organises departmental support highlighted the importance of the support offered by the Study Abroad Office in addition to the department's services:

'I had a little bit of feedback on the sort of workshop preparation day that they had last April... that was quite positive... The more input they have the better really, even if it's the same messages repeated.'

As well as the importance of preparation activities, both respondents stressed the importance of support for students whilst they are abroad, as being as importantk, if

not more so than pre-departure support, to ensure that students have a positive mobility experience.

Outward mobility programme models

The Study Abroad Office highlighted the benefits of the extra year pass/fail model in an English university context for the following reasons:

'In England with the three year degrees it's very hard to recruit to, and support students I think in that short period of time. I mean in Scotland with the four year degree you've got at least a year to let them settle in before you say 'hey why don't you study abroad'. So I think that yes although some people criticise the extra year pass/fail model as being a bit 'study abroad light' as it were, I actually think it gives students reassurance that they are not going to jeopardise their degree and that they have got time to kind of think about it, apply for it, to get prepared for it.'

This university predominately uses this extra year pass/fail model. The study abroad representative we spoke to believes that predominately using this *'slightly non risk'* model is the reason for the high numbers of students that take part in outward mobility at this university.

Another programme model that the institution employs is to recruit directly onto a four year degree programme with a year abroad included. This is offered in addition to the traditional three year degree and is only offered in some departments and for some courses:

'They apparently report they've been very successful in increasing the requirements for that programme by offering a year abroad. So those students must do that year abroad as part of that programme. They opt into it I think at the application stage rather than when they are here.'

Again this is a pass/fail model. While there are many benefits to the pass/fail model, a programme co-ordinator who employs such a model also noted some disadvantages. These comments apply equally to the three and four year programme:

'The marks for those students, even though they were good students were much lower than ours. When the students thought they just had to pass that's what they did. So on that score I'm not too happy with it because I think the students should be putting their full effort into it.'

The same co-ordinator believes that effort in a foreign language should also be rewarded by a grading system:

'Well I think there's an argument of fairness. But still I can see there's a student who went and got a first class in her year abroad in France and also learned really good

French. She put a lot of effort into the course and perhaps if she'd just been on a pass or fail year she would have put less effort into the course.'

However the same tutor notes the difficulties involved in fairly and accurately converting marks when a graded system is used.

As well as offering these two types of pass/fail mobility models, some departments also offer alternative models including substituting the second year of study in the UK with a year abroad and converting grades whilst at the partner institution.

In addition to offering different programme models, the university employs two distinct models of organisation within departments - academic run programmes and administrative run programmes. The Study Abroad Office emphasises the benefits of the second model:

'Some of our schools... have administrators whose job it is, amongst other things, to look after study abroad. So a lot more happens then if they organise something and ask the coordinators to join in. That's going to be much more successful than me saying to a research professor in chemistry; would you mind organising an afternoon tea for these students? Invite them and do all this work. Is that realistic even with his enthusiasm?... Unless there is administrative support it's not going to happen.'

An administrative study abroad co-ordinator that we talked with supports this assertion:

'I think sometimes support staff in this university are able to give more time. I mean I have an open door policy as far as students are concerned and I don't kick them out after half an hour. I will give them the time that they need, which academics aren't always able to do. I don't particularly see the fact that I'm not a [subject specialist] as a handicap. I mean actually the academic issues which are to do with a content of a particular module overseas, those kind of queries are very few in comparison to general administrative or other issues. If there is a particular query to do with module selection I would ask one of the academics just by e-mail... But generally I can answer 99% of the queries myself.'

The same co-ordinator not only sees this model as being beneficial for students and the programme, but also views it as meeting one of the institution's strategic objectives i.e. releasing academics time for research:

'This university, and I think others as well, one of our agendas, one of our strategic objectives is to release academic staff time for research, and I think [study abroad] is one area that doesn't have to be done by an academic. Therefore it is a good thing to take off the academics if it can be done by a competent admin member of staff.'

Both the study abroad representative and administrative placement co-ordinator see this model as being the way forward, requiring universities to change their thinking to allow administrators to take on this role, and take a lead in organising study abroad

programmes at a departmental level, that has previously been thought of as an academic task.

Outward mobility student profiles

The overall feeling at the university is that the majority of students who take part in outward mobility schemes are white, female students from a high socio economic group.

One programme leader highlighted the lack of ethnic minorities taking up study abroad opportunities as being problematic, though the Study Abroad Office does not see this as being different from the experiences of other institutions.

Promotional activities

The Study Abroad Office organises a yearly study abroad fair which attracts a large body of students. However the office highlighted the importance of smaller more subject specific activities in promoting the programme, such as coffee afternoons and talks after lectures that are organised within a departmental context rather than across the whole university:

'We organise a big study abroad fair that we get a lot of students through... but that's a one off and although its really well attended there is always going to be some students who didn't go to it obviously... I think it's imbedded in the department, or school in terms of whether they put the posters up, whether they talk to students in lectures, whether they have a sort of coffee afternoon that has [someone] talking about what the opportunities are.'

The same respondent highlighted the importance of involving enthused staff members in promotional activities rather than just putting on lots of events. The Study Abroad Office also employs previous study abroad students in the role of 'Peer Advisor' to promote programmes and offer support to the new study abroad cohort:

'I do think that the peer advisors are one of the best investments that you've got to promote things. And then we have a much wider network of return students who do volunteer, who come to the fair, who come to networking events. We don't pay them obviously but ... when we email to ... say we're having a fair... there is a fairly core group of the ones that would love to come and talk about what they did last year in Australia to potential students. And those ones who couldn't care less and never show up for anything.'

The Study Abroad Office, where possible, incorporates international students in outward mobility promotional activities as can be seen in this example:

'We organise sort of networking sessions in February/ March time where we invite say all students that come from Canada or students who are going to Canada and all students who have been to Canada to ... answer questions about Canada... They

get into groups and then try and answer [the questions] and that I think went down quite well.'

However, organising activities like this is not always possible for all countries that outward mobility students go to.

The types of activities that departments organise that involve international students again varies dependant on the programme co-ordinator:

'A department very engaged with their home exchange programme will probably more likely be the ones that will invite the incoming students from those universities to a session with the potential out goers, and also bring in the returned students. So that's obviously ideal in a way of kind of getting people talking. So some departments do it, a lot of departments don't... Again it comes back to us.'

The International Student Office also highlighted the value of involving international students in outward mobility promotional activities:

'It's perhaps easier in the study abroad situation to more closely match everybody who has... [come from] one country with everybody who is going there, that's slightly easier to do than in a situation where we've got loads of people coming in and we're not always sure exactly where they come from and you can't easily match them... but I think that does work very well, because then people can really ask those tiny little questions that they want to ask. Or it's the fact that those people can bring it to life with an example or an anecdote. So that is very good and also if that can be followed up on when people are first arriving as well.'

As can be seen from this extract, utilising international students in outward mobility promotional activities can also be used as part of a wider support network for incoming mobility students.

Linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

The Study Abroad Office and International Student Office work closely together to link outward and inward mobility to the mutual benefit of both groups of students. Each office has a different aim in doing this with the Study Abroad Office looking to support outward mobility students and the International Student Office seeking to support incoming students.

Where possible the Study Abroad Office uses international students in pre-departure activities for outgoing mobility students:

'We used international students who were here. We also used the students who had returned from being abroad to kind of just chip in about their general experience... It was done on a voluntary basis. We did about ten different country or regional sessions so it was quite a lot. So to some extent we just took who we could get who would volunteer to come along.'

As already noted in the previous section, some departments also use this model. The International Student Office also sees the value of linking outward and inward mobility students to support outward mobility students in this way, as well as to help inward mobility students integrate into campus life in the UK.

Both offices reported that many returning students are pro-active in getting involved in welcoming incoming students to the university on their return to the UK:

'We get a lot more applications say for the job of peer advisor than obviously the number of peer advisors that we've got. We get a lot of unsolicited emails from return students saying I had a great experience but particularly the international student office at my host university were fantastic and I want to do the same in return here. So they volunteer in the international student office and particularly at arrivals time and orientation... It doesn't always mean that just cause you've been to Australia you're going to be more open minded... But I do think it definitely does broaden their horizons.'

The International Student Office makes use of this enthusiasm through linking outward and inward mobility students with the express purpose of supporting the incoming students, as is expressed through the words of the Study Abroad Office:

'They are quite active in getting students who have been abroad to interact with international students who are here, because there is a feeling I think that after recruitment that international students feel a bit isolated or end up just kind of socialising in their own peer groups. So we do use the return students especially for orientation.'

The International Student Office has created a job role of 'Welcome Assistant' to assist international students in adjusting to life in the UK. These posts are popular amongst study abroad students. As well as providing initial orientation advice, this team organises a weekly global café. This is an informal opportunity for both home and international students to meet together:

'[Its] a good way of keeping contact between them and... literally is just tea, coffee and biscuits. It's very popular with the students because it's something that they can drop into and it's a social event without loud music. You know it's a very relaxed situation. They can drop in then they can go off and do something else afterwards. So I think that would be a good model to use.'

The International Students Club also has a number of home student volunteers and organises different activities that are popular with international students. As well as this, many societies involve international students in their activities and are active in making them accessible to people from different cultures and faiths. This is encouraged by the way the student union is structured with a number of different development co-ordinators.

The role of the Faith and Culture Development Co-ordinator involves encouraging all societies to be more open to people from different backgrounds. All societies are therefore encouraged to have an international or a post graduate representative. A student union representative stated that in her experience some cultures and faiths find it easier to integrate than others. This is reflected in how easy or difficult the union finds it to make links between certain cultural and faith groups. She stated that *'the way we PR societies is important'* to break down friction and stereotypes. To do this she thinks that we first need to review the language and terminology we use in this context. She asked whether the term 'international student' was helpful or a hindrance? She sees two main problems with this term. Firstly that European students feel overlooked as they feel that they don't fit into the home student or the international student category. And secondly that most international students who integrate well don't view being 'international' as part of their identity:

'Students who integrate well don't feel like international students but just like students.'

The respondent suggests using the following model to promote links between students from different backgrounds:

'We shouldn't try to integrate a whole nation but focus on an individual level... You need to start off by saying you're all students and you're all here. Now what are your needs...? Try to spark relationships. Not through having a manual but having contact with another faith or culture... We need to do this in a natural environment not a created one.'

She strongly believes that personal contact breaks down stereotypes and that this needs to be facilitated on an individual not a group level. To do this she asserts that:

'We need to look at individuals and not two sides. We shouldn't identify students as 'international' but should look at their individual interests and hobbies and make societies accessible to them in that way... We need to find natural ways of doing unnatural things.'

She suggests some key strategies for achieving this:

1. Making societies open to people from different backgrounds through changing the culture of the society, partly through the appointment of an international representative.
2. Focussing on individual student's hobbies and interests irrespective of their backgrounds.
3. Having a combined Freshers' Week for 'international' and 'home' students.
4. Making use of the International Student Office as a back up for 'international' students, not a first point of call.

C. Promoting mobility at programme level

This section explores two different mobility programmes in place at the University for students. The programme leaders were interviewed about their programme, looking specifically at promotion, student support, and the student experience.

Programme A

Overview of mobility programme

Programme A is an outward mobility programme within the institution's faculty of Environment that is co-ordinated by an academic member of staff. The programme is run on a direct recruitment four year degree programme model:

'So the students when they enter on this programme they know they're going to get a year abroad. They don't know where they're going to go because it operates within the overall university exchange scheme so the numbers that can go to a particular institution depends on the numbers that are coming in the other direction.'

Students therefore do not know which country or institution they will go to, however there are a limited number of possibilities. The department has partner institutions in USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and have an agreed programme of study with each individual institution. The course's entry requirements are higher than for the three year equivalent programme. To meet the ongoing conditions for the study abroad year, students need to retain at least an average of a 2:1. Students who originally apply for the three year programme and who get consistently high marks can also transfer onto the four year programme.

This mobility programme has a strong research element with the fieldwork component being seen as *'one of the strongest selling points for spending a year abroad'*. Consequently this element of the mobility experience has encouraged a number of students in the past to continue studying as doctoral students.

Support services and support activities

Making use of the fourth year students on the programme is seen as being an important way of preparing the new cohort for their year abroad:

'I think having students who have been there makes a big difference. One of the things we do in the second year is we get the fourth year students who have been abroad to come and they do an evening in a local pub. So they do a session where they show photos and things like this and talk about the logistics and all that sort of thing and that's really quite important. Two years ago I got some people to go and they've come back and now it's not been a problem to get others to go out there because they have said yes it is really good.'

This year in addition to this informal session, the programme is planning to involve returning students in class tutorials to help outgoing students prepare for the academic side of their time abroad and in particular the fieldwork element of their academic time at a partner institution:

'We have some tutorial support. So this semester, and this has been a bit spotty over the years. But this semester what we're going to do is with the fourth year students who are coming back we'll get them to talk and do some assignments on research and things like this abroad... I think this is one of the strongest selling points for spending a year abroad i.e. that many of our students have gone on and done PHD's and have ultimately gone back to the country they went to.'

Linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

Though the institution partnerships mentioned above are university wide and not departmentally focussed, the department welcomes incoming study abroad students from their partner institutions, as well as incoming students from elsewhere. However, the programme notes that there are challenges in promoting their department to incoming students.

The co-ordinator finds it useful to involve these incoming students in pre-departure activities for outgoing students, but hasn't noticed that being on the mobility programme has changed home students' relationships with international students. Consequently, most mobility students do return from their year abroad with more confidence and a broader global perspective.

Programme B

Overview of mobility programme

Programme B is an outward mobility programme within the university's faculty of Environment that is co-ordinated by an administrative member of staff:

'I'm an admin member of staff and not an academic member of staff, I think at this university most study abroad co-ordinators tend to be academics, but there are models who have admin staff in charge. I co-ordinate the whole effort in the school ... with regards to study abroad.'

Unlike some departments this department has two different mobility programmes:

'There's no direct entry into international programmes in [name of department], it's all by transfer once they're here... We have two models for study abroad. One is the international version of the programme - to study abroad as an extra year, so to change a three year programme to a four year programme. The other programme, which is less common I think across the campus, is to actually substitute their second year with a study abroad year, so we have a smaller number of students who will do their first year in Leeds and then will go abroad and do their second year

overseas instead of their level two in Leeds and come back straight into their final year.'

The department offers four undergraduate courses and students on each of these courses are eligible to apply for a study abroad year. The department also has some students doing joint honours who are eligible to apply if there are any spare places.

The department has a number of partner institutions in different countries worldwide, such as Australia, Singapore, USA, Canada, France, Spain and Holland. They are also looking to establish partnerships with institutions in Hong Kong and Ireland.

Support services and support activities

The department organises a yearly formal pre-departure meeting for all out going students. While this is not mandatory all students are strongly encouraged to attend:

'We really only have one formal meeting... which all the out goers are expected to attend. I take a register and I do contact anybody who hasn't been to the session but we wouldn't take any action if they didn't come. We wouldn't stop them going abroad just because they haven't attended that session, but it is important. So we cover a number of academic issues and then somebody from study abroad talks a little bit more about practical issues, in addition to the compulsory workshop day that study abroad organises.'

As well as organising this formal session, the co-ordinator has an open door policy and encourages students to approach her with any queries and questions they have both before they go and whilst they are away:

'Particularly with the students who are abroad, I will always address their queries immediately. Same day if at all possible because you know that they can feel extremely isolated and if it's a big issue it's important for them to have an answer straight away... I mean they can get things quite out of proportion whilst they're overseas, which is another reason for being as supportive as possible remotely.'

Linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

A high proportion of the department's incoming students are from partner institutions, however due to the nature of the partnerships being with the whole of the institution this is not always the case:

'I would say probably 80% of the incomers are from destinations where we have a partnership... but occasionally we have students from elsewhere.'

While the co-ordinator noted that some links are made between both mobility groups, she did also state that this is a resource that the department currently does not use to its full potential:

'Occasionally yes there is an overlap. I've got one or two very good examples where a really solid friendship has formed between incomers and out-goers. I do possibly slightly under exploit the resource that we have in our incomers in terms of preparing the out goers, but you know there's not always a match, it may be that one year we're not sending anybody to Singapore but we've got a Singaporean student here.'

Consequently links between outgoing and incoming students aren't formally facilitated but are informally encouraged. The co-ordinator views the study abroad year as being a life changing experience even when *'it hasn't all been plain sailing'*. However apart from the occasional example she hasn't observed a change in the relationship between international students and returning study abroad students.

D. Outward mobility - Home student voice

Context: Introduction to focus group participants

Nine white female students attended our outward mobility focus group. They had visited a number of different countries whilst on their year abroad - Australia, Canada, France, Czech Republic and Spain. They are also studying a variety of courses in a number of different departments which are representative of four out of the institution's nine faculties. These are as follows:

- Faculty of Arts - 4 focus group participants
- Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law - 2 focus group participants
- Faculty of Medicine and Health - 1 focus group participant
- Faculty of Performance, Visual Arts and Communication - 2 focus group participants

To protect participants' identity, information on their specific courses has not been given as some students are from departments that have a low outward mobility participation rate. However it should be noted that all participants were on different courses or, in the case of the joint honours students (two participants), different combinations of courses. All participants took part in the extra year pass/fail model of outward mobility.

A number of different motivations and aspirations were given for participating in an outward mobility programme. For many participants the opportunity to be able to afford to live in, rather than just travel to another country was a big incentive to taking part in the programme as was having a break from Leeds. Experiencing another education system and brushing up on language skills were common aspirations for taking part in the mobility programme. While all of the participants were from a high socio economic group, many stated that they would not have been able to have taken this opportunity without the financial support they received in the form of a loan or grant.

Experience of pre-departure and international promotion activities

Participants were mostly positive about the pre-departure activities and information provided by the Study Abroad Office. Participants who had had the opportunity to meet students who had previously been on a year abroad programme cited this as being especially helpful:

'You're definitely not spoon-fed but everything is in place. I think that the most useful thing for me was speaking to students who were already there.'

'I felt really prepared. I went to a networking event and met [name of country] students. Then I went to two lectures organised by the study abroad and then I went to a third lecture by students who had come back from their year abroad.'

'The Study Abroad Office is so good - so supportive and helpful. You send an email and instantly you get a reply... Even now when you send an email they always respond. And if they can't do something they'll say we can't do it but we are on the case.'

'They definitely have it in place if you want to take the opportunity... if you put a bit of effort in.'

However many noted that due to the amount of placements on offer this information can only be very generic:

'They know about the general process but obviously they can't know everything about a place.'

'I don't think they offer much place specific support.'

Participants were divided on whether or not it was a good thing for students to have to research their own trip. Some seemed to have been more active in this than others.

Some students said also that they would like there to be more communication between the International Student Office and the Study Abroad Office regarding mobility students' pre-departure preparation, so that outgoing students could get in touch with international students before their trip:

'There are people from [name of city] in Leeds but they didn't tell us. So I went, not knowing anything about it.'

Support throughout all aspects of the study abroad programme varied greatly between departments. This impacted directly on students' experiences and was particularly true for joint honours students who found there to be a lack of communication between departments and therefore conflicting pre-departure advice and support.

Experience abroad - positives and challenges

Overall participants were enthusiastic about their experiences despite the challenges they encountered. Some experienced more difficult challenges, but all could see the benefits of their time abroad. During the initial period abroad participants received different types of induction events. Some found these more helpful and relevant than others and consequently found it easier to settle in to their new environment and mix with other international and home students.

'We had a really good experience of meeting international students.'

Some participants however came across hostility from the local population due to their foreign language skills:

'I sort of ended up accidentally in [name of country]... It wasn't a very informed decision. I don't speak any [name of language] but thought I'd pick it up easily. But didn't really... I didn't like to go to the supermarket 'cause they'd just shout at me cause my [language skills] were really awful and someone told me to 'Go home!' once on the Metro.'

This was true for participants with varying levels of language skills. In contrast other students had the opposite experience:

'When I spoke [name of language] they really appreciated that I was trying.'

'They were shocked when I could speak [name of language] 'cause English people rightly have a bad reputation in speaking other languages.'

Participants experienced different levels of culture shock:

'I didn't expect to experience culture shock going to another Western country.'

'I was so shocked when I arrived. I thought Europe - it's so close but...'

Similar to the language barriers that some participants faced some students found that cultural barriers made it difficult to integrate:

'In [name of country] people have actually requested not to live with international students. The [local people] are not that welcoming at all... I was in quite an unusual faculty. The young people are quite welcoming but the old people aren't. ... They were really cold. It was really difficult at first and I don't have that many [local] friends... It was a really difficult hurdle to get over.'

Participants doing joint honours experienced problems in co-ordinating the academic side of their programme whilst abroad. As mentioned above some departments were noted as being more supportive than others in all aspects of the programme.

Outcomes: Benefits of experience

For many participants the main benefit of taking part in the programme is increased employability:

'I think I have become more employable as a result of being on my year abroad.'

'In interviews I've already had people who are interested. All you have to say is 'on my year abroad I...' and people are interested.'

*'I think I won my interview the other day with 'Because I was in [name of city] I...'
You've got something more to say.'*

'The year abroad had definitely added to my CV - beefed it up a little bit.'

The experience of living in another country and having to cope on your own in a new place was seen as being a personal character building experience:

'The experience thing - meeting new people and living in a different place.'

'You've got independence too. You've gone somewhere on your own.'

Improving the outward mobility experience

As previously stated, some students said also that they would like there to be more communication between the International Student Office and the Study Abroad Office during pre-departure preparation, so that outgoing students could get in touch with international students before their trip. Some participants felt that this could be an extension of support networks that are already in place to support incoming mobility students.

Students from a number of different departments stated that they would have liked there to have been better communication between their department(s) and the Study Abroad Office and for joint honours students between their two departments. This was mentioned in respect to all aspects of the programme - pre-departure, whilst abroad and on return. The main issue that was mentioned was receiving more support for module choices whilst abroad, better preparation for the academic aspects and reintegration into the final year of study in the UK. This was not true of all departments with a minority of participants stating that they felt very well supported in these areas.

Linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

All participants stated that any activity to link outward and inward mobility on the UK campus would have to be done outside of the classroom, as it is very uncommon for any student to make friends with their classmates at this university. Because of this participants mentioned that it is crucial where and how the university provides accommodation for international students. They see mixed accommodation as being a really practical way to facilitate links between home and international students.

A proportion of participants are actively involved in the International Student Office and Study Abroad Office's activities - such as the International Orientation Week and buddying schemes. Students stated that the extra curricular activities organised by these two offices are a good way of linking home and international students as well

as offering a support network for returning students. The experience of being an international student, as part of the study abroad programme, has meant that participants are more likely to get involved in such activities:

'It's much better to get involved once you've been away.'

'Now I've been away I want to get more involved. I can sympathise as I've been away myself and know what it's like. How nice it is to speak to someone who's been to where you know.'

'I've definitely met more students in my final year and been more friendly towards them.'

However pressures of being a final year student were cited as limiting the amount of involvement people are able to have. The impact that the study abroad programme has had on motivating outward mobility students to interact with international students on the UK campus is epitomised in the following extract stated by a home student who had helped an international student on her arrival:

'Even though it took ages - it took two hours but then I managed to get her somewhere to stay for the night. I know for a fact though that two years ago... I'd have felt sorry for her but I probably wouldn't have gone out of my way to help her. But now I stayed with her for the two hours.'

E. Inward mobility - International student voice

Context: Introduction to focus group participants

Nine students attended our inward mobility focus group - five female students and four male students. They were from a number of different countries - Thailand, India, Saudi Arabia, Malawi, Zambia and Norway. All students who took part were post graduate students and in the UK for the full duration of their course. They were studying a variety of courses in a number of different departments which are representative of six out of the institution's nine faculties. These are as follows:

- Faculty of Arts - 1 focus group participant
- Faculty of Medicine and Health - 1 focus group participant
- Faculty of Performance, Visual Arts and Communication - 2 focus group participants
- Faculty of Mathematics and Physical Science - 1 focus group participant
- Faculty of Business - 3 focus group participants
- Faculty of Biological Sciences - 1 focus group participant

To protect participants' identity, information on their specific courses has not been given as some students are from departments that have a low inward mobility participation rate. However it should be noted that all participants were on different courses.

The world-wide reputation of a Western education was the main motivator for most students to come to the West to study. The UK's close proximity to Europe was a deciding factor for some to come to the UK rather than another Western country due to the ease of travelling home for a holiday. For others financial considerations were key, and in particular the relative ease of being able to obtain work in the UK in comparison to other Western countries. This, alongside the UK's '*relatively low tuition fees*' was an important factor for self-funding students.

Experience of pre-departure and international promotional activities

Students' experience of pre-departure activities was largely based on their country of origin. In general, students who came from a country where the university has an office or a strong relationship with an agency, felt well supported. However, participants who were from countries where the university had fewer networks did not feel as well supported. This was particularly true for those who do not receive a scholarship that is connected to the British Council. Lack of support organisations in Europe was not seen as being as problematic as it was for students who are from countries outside of Europe:

Pre-departure support from departments also varied, with some students feeling very well supported;

'For me I also had a lot of support from the programme itself. Even when I asked a question not related to the programme but to staying here they were able to give me the contact were I could get this information. And it wasn't as if I was bothering them or anything.'

'I did also get a lot of support from my research institute... so I found that the university was very approachable.'

Some students however mentioned not feeling as well supported as this.

HE experience and integration on UK campus

When asked to sum up their experience of being in the UK in one or two words respondents used the following descriptors: *eye-opening; cultural shock; culturally integrating; great; cosmopolitan; young; involving; accessible support; facilities; automated; weather; accommodation*. As can be seen from this, different aspects of life in the UK are important for different people.

For some participants the academic side of university life is important whether that is in the benefits or the challenges of being in the UK. For others the recreational

activities that are available were important as well as the social aspect of life on campus more generally.

In general participants felt welcomed at the university and involved in a variety of activities. A number of students highlighted the work that the students union, individual societies and the International Student Office do to involve international students in extra-curricular activities:

'You have the students union which from day one has been organising activities... You can get involved in any kind of activity you are interested in. And then the International Student Office organises lots of events.'

They stated that these opportunities alongside the multi-national nature of the university had made their experience very *'culturally integrating'*:

'I have met people from every part of the world and not just one country. I've understood different cultures and different peoples.'

'In my course there are 42 people from 35 countries... so there is a big mix of people... The mix of people makes the whole experience so different.'

This *'mix[ing] of people'* was seen as a strength of this university. However, it was also noted that this mixing is not universal across all nationalities. A number of students stated that British students can be *'quite insular.'* It was also felt that the Chinese students tend to *'stick together'*:

Another participant stated that they felt that all European students kept themselves apart from students from the developing world. It was noted though within the discussion that this was because most European and in particular British students tend to be undergraduates while most international students tend to be postgraduates. A number of students felt that this division was for the most part based on an age gap rather than any other factor.

Outcomes: Benefits of experience

All participants were in general positive about their experience in the UK despite the various challenges they had experienced. The opportunity to live in a multicultural environment and meet people from a number of different nationalities and backgrounds was highlighted as important with one participant in particular perceiving this to be a major benefit of their experience in the UK.

This social aspect was important for a number of students. The academic side of studying in the UK was also noted as being different from participants' experiences of education in their native countries. The available facilities and dedication of supervisors and lecturers were specifically highlighted as being beneficial.

In general participants also felt that living and studying in another country had given them an understanding of another way of life which they wouldn't have got if they had not been an international student. For many the life skills learnt as an international student- such as learning to communicate in another language, negotiating the banking and other structures in another country - are skills that they feel will prove to be transferrable to a number of other contexts.

Improving the inward mobility experience

As previously mentioned at the pre-departure stage, participants who had had the benefit of a representative from the university, an external agency or the British Council were fairly satisfied with the information and preparation they had received. However, students who had not had the benefit of this experience were not as satisfied. In particular they would have liked more advice on finances and the facilities that are available at the university, especially the facilities that are available for family members.

During the application process, the majority of participants would have liked to have been able to have chosen private accommodation instead of university residency. Even where they would not have chosen this type of accommodation, they wanted to have the choice. At the induction stage most participants were also dissatisfied with the fragmented nature of registration:

'The [induction] information is very disjointed. You have to run around lots of different offices.'

'I wasn't satisfied... I had problems with the registration and had to run from one place to another just to register.'

A student who had previously studied in Australia made the following observations regarding their experiences of being an international student there and also here in the UK:

'I can't help to compare here with my experience in Australia 'cause I studied there for four years. And when I compare Leeds with Australia I find that Leeds is quite far behind in dealing with international students. I think that there is quite a big cultural difference because in Australia they feel you are coming as a visitor and they kind of accommodate for you. While in England it is kind of like you are here just here and not really an international student. There is less going on for international students. It's a different attitude... It's very different here. Many things are very old fashioned in the bank for example all the systems they have. But I think that many students don't feel as a visitor. They feel just as anyone not because they integrate necessarily but because they are kind of forgotten by the system. That's just some people's experiences.'

In response to this another participant commented:

'I totally agree with the Australia thing and the way you describe it. I think its maybe because it's a cosmopolitan place that they've forgotten that there are people who are actually foreigners who come here for a short time and then they go... So they forget that you might not know certain things, certain traditions, certain customs... That you might not be accustomed to all of these things.'

As this discussion progressed it became clear that a number of students agreed with these sentiments. While these students felt accepted due to the city's multicultural nature they also felt forgotten as if being a temporary resident in the city was not a valid option but that the city's multicultural nature required everyone to be an intrinsic part of the fabric. They would have liked to have felt and been treated more like visitors particularly in regard to learning UK customs and traditions on arrival.

Linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

A number of suggestions were put forward as possibilities to link outward and inward mobility on the UK campus. Participants all felt that the barriers associated with this are not specific to the UK but are attributable to people worldwide regardless of nationality, race, class or any other factor. As a result of this, the suggestions are not specific to a British context.

It was noted that due to most European, and in particular British students being undergraduates, and consequently relatively young, it was difficult to link them to international students who tend to be postgraduates (and therefore by their very nature slightly older.) To counter this, it was suggested that efforts to link student groups should be focussed on linking mature home students with international students. Participants did not feel that this had to be specifically tied to linking outward and inward mobility students as *'older students are more mature and more likely to make an effort with international students.'*

In addition participants did feel that there was a benefit of linking the experiences of British students who have been abroad; whether that be on an outward mobility programme or for another reason, as they felt that they would be open to people from other cultures. As an extension of this, it was suggested that widening students understanding of global issues and different cultures more widely was a good thing to promote. One participant was keen to expand on a programme currently employed in British schools around demystifying Africa. They went on to say that *'students like ourselves could talk to other students.'* Creating a forum to discuss these topics was also highlighted as a useful tool.

F. Conclusion

Strengths of case study context

As well as offering different programme models, the University employs two distinct models of organisation within departments - academic and administrative run

programmes. The Study Abroad Office emphasises the benefits of the second model. They see this model as being the way forward, requiring universities to change their thinking to allow administrators to take on this role, and by default a lead in organising study abroad programmes at a departmental level; that has previously been thought of as an academic task. An administrative study abroad co-ordinator supports this, stating that study abroad *'is one area that doesn't have to be done by an academic'* but can be co-ordinated by an administrator who in most cases *'are able to give more time'* to the task. This in turn meets one of the institution's *'strategic objectives... to release academic staff time for research.'*

The study abroad and International Student Office work closely together to support incoming mobility students. The International Student Office also organises activities to try to promote links between home and international students. However, as noted above students have highlighted some areas where this good practice could be further improved.

A number of societies are also very active in involving international students in wider university activities. The position of faith and cultural development officer in the student union, whose role it is to encourage societies to be open to people from different backgrounds, is a strength of this institution. The main benefit of this structure is that societies are encouraged to make their activities accessible to all students through creating a natural environment for students to socialise as individuals. They are not perceived of as groups of 'hard to reach' students. In approaching integration in this positive way, international students are not seen as a problem or a challenge but are accepted in the same way that all other students are - as individuals with a variety of hobbies and talents to share.

Feasibility of linking outward and inward mobility on the UK campus

While some departments use incoming mobility students as a way of preparing their outgoing students for their time abroad, this does not appear to be consistent through out the university. Outgoing students who were able to take advantage of this highlighted this as an important support mechanism. Those who didn't receive such support stated that they would have liked to have been able to, also mentioning they would like to see this network promoted at an institutional rather than a departmental level to ensure consistency in pre-departure preparation. In response to an internal audit the Study Abroad Office are expanding the services they offer taking these points into consideration.

Both offices reported that many returning study abroad students are pro-active in getting involved in welcoming incoming students to the university. The International Student Office makes use of this enthusiasm through strategically linking outward and inward mobility students with the express purpose of supporting incoming students. The experience of being an international student as part of the study abroad programme has meant that the majority of our outward focus group

participants were more likely to get involved in such activities, though pressures of being a final year student were cited as limiting the amount of involvement people are able to have.

All focus group participants stated that any activity to link outward and inward mobility would have to be done outside of the classroom as it is very uncommon for any student to make friends with their classmates at Leeds. Because of this, participants mentioned that it is crucial where and how the university provides accommodation for international students. They see mixed accommodation as being a really practical way to facilitate links between home and international students. Focus group participants also cited the social activities organised by the union, individual societies and the International Student Office as a good way of mixing home and international students. The approach that the union is trying to promote in order to encourage this integration is to look at linking students on a personal and not a national or group level.

The impact that the mobility programme has had on motivating outward mobility students who participated in our focus group at an individual level to interact with international students on the UK campus is crystallised in this final extract:

'There was a social organised by the Study Abroad Office for international students to meet UK students and do this buddy system. A girl turned up from Germany and she had all her bags with her and just turned up to the pub. It was 9 o'clock at night and her accommodation had closed and she didn't know what to do. I helped her. Took her to the university security. Helped her to get into her accommodation. Even though it took ages - it took two hours but then I managed to get her somewhere to stay for the night. I know for a fact though that two years ago... I'd have felt sorry for her but I probably wouldn't have gone out of my way to help her. But now I stayed with her for the two hours.'