Is the UK developing global mindsets?

The challenges and opportunities for Internationalisation at Home in driving global engagement
As the former Universities Minister who published the International Higher Education Strategy over four years ago, I established the International Higher Education Commission – that includes VCs from universities from across the UK and former ministers from across all parties as well as other stakeholders – to create a new strategy with a bolder, more detailed vision and ambition than what has gone before. The commission has been producing reports as we progress, and I’m delighted to introduce this latest report, on the under appreciated but increasingly important issue of ‘internationalisation at home’. Our evidence taken over the past year has shown that the UK’s international education offer simply can’t be about attracting international students to the UK, we need to ensure that campuses are international with attractive international based curriculums, exchange programmes and inclusive facilities that ensure international students want to study in the UK because we offer the best courses compared to competitor countries. We need to think deeper and broader about what we must offer as the UK experience – that means thinking more about how campuses and courses are more relevant, more purposeful to the modern international world that all students will eventually work in.

When we launched the Commission 11 months ago the world was a very different place. However, the recognition of the place of higher education at the heart of civil society and its role in fostering social and economic development nationally and internationally remains clear, understanding of its potential impact has only grown and its importance to knowledge diplomacy is undiminished. In terms of both engaging young people effectively in defining and delivering our future and addressing the big challenges and opportunities facing us – from AI to climate change – ensuring universities remain sustainable, successful and strategically relevant is crucial.

The success of overseas student recruitment to the UK is a vital element in its broader success – the financial capital it brings not only subsidises research but in almost every UK university it is an essential part of subsiding the teaching of domestic students and we know that many post-graduate programmes would be unavailable were it not for the level of overseas student enrolment. The revenue brought by overseas students has funded growth in capacity and capability across the sector and enhanced all parts of Universities missions.

However, a key reason for launching the Commission was a recognition that a simple focus on overseas student numbers and revenue generation would not ensure the financial sustainability of the sector and there needed to be recognition of the importance of other forms of capital – intellectual and social – and the return on investment they generate for all stakeholders. There were voices even then noting that the growth in numbers recruited to the UK was unsustainable – that we were in a bubble reflecting the fact that the UK had remained “open” during Covid and the dynamics of competing markets – and that we were becoming dangerously reliant on post-graduate Masters students from a very small number of countries. The Commission was therefore a mechanism to enable the development of a new forward looking, more nuanced and sustainable approach – our initial proposal was outlined in our report in May 2023, “International Higher Education Strategy 2.0: Targeted Growth for Resilience”.

As the work of the Commission has progressed we have engaged extensively with the HE community and more broadly. We have so far explored issues through over 20 meetings including roundtables focussed on regions and devolved nations including Universities Scotland, Yorkshire Universities and London Higher. We have not limited our scope to the UK, but also met with the EU Commission and reviewed policy in respect of the other major English-speaking student destinations. We have also remained true to our commitment to an open and democratic process by opening a number of sessions to the public and focussing several events on ensuring we captured the student voice – and indeed two Commissioners are current students.

It is in this context that we provide this latest report which I believe goes to the heart of the nature and purpose of the Commission. In looking to the future we need a more sophisticated international strategy than simply focussing on numbers of students recruited to the UK or, as welcome as it is, expansion of TNE delivered by UK universities overseas.

Internationalisation at Home has to be a key element in this new strategy – enabling not just students but a wide variety of stakeholders with the means to build global competencies, enhance learning outcomes and employability, contribute to national talent pools and facilitate knowledge diplomacy. Historically student mobility was seen as the means to “internationalise” but, despite the Go Global campaign, the UK has historically had very low levels of outbound mobility and this has further declined with our exit from the Erasmus programme. However, the Covid pandemic led to a surge in interest in non-physical mobility and also facilitated a significant increase in efforts to internationalise the curriculum along with other forms of IaH.

In this report we detail just how significant this activity is, albeit that it is not well defined or sufficiently well measured or monitored to give it the recognition it deserves. We believe that there needs to be sustained and systematic effort to address these deficiencies in order to crystallise the obvious benefits for all parts of the UK sector and its stakeholders – IaH is relevant to everybody, it needs to be valued more and its contribution acknowledged.

We make a number of recommendations in this report for how we can better facilitate and capture the benefits of IaH and expect that the promotion and better recognition of the value of IaH will form a major element of the final IHEC report to be published in November.
1. Introduction, definition and benefits of IaH

Internationalisation at home (IaH) should be a central element of any International Higher Education strategy. Defined as “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Jones and Reiffenrath, 2019), IaH fosters internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask, 2015), global engagement, and makes a significant contribution to the creation of an inclusive learning environment.

For student communities, IaH strengthens intercultural understanding which supports personal development, social cohesion and civil society. By facilitating interaction and communication between students of all nationalities, IaH improves their overall experience.

For academic staff, particularly following the post-pandemic upskilling in online communications, new opportunities have opened up for sustained and strategic interaction with academic colleagues in partner universities overseas, founded on joint IaH activities. Such engagement often develops from academics’ shared teaching enthusiasms or mutual areas of interest and can create deeper and richer talent pools of social, cultural and intellectual capital.

For HEIs, IaH supports international student recruitment amongst other benefits. A key role is demonstrating to current international students how their diversity is valued and factored into the curriculum, supporting learning and fostering the transferability of qualification credentials. In parallel, it positively impacts student-led satisfaction and employability metrics such as NSS and Graduate Outcomes. One institution that leveraged this was Coventry University which implemented a ‘Model for Progression for International Students’ through its Centre for Global Engagement, from 2009 to 2017. This was a major driver for sustaining a world-class educational system, especially in the face of growing competition, then significant progress in the quantitative indicators underpinning the development and delivery of IaH.

IaH can also enhance the capacity of the UK workforce, through the sharing of international perspectives and the development of employability skills for future graduates. This is particularly important for those economic sectors which focus on globally orientated products and services and engagement with growing economies overseas.

For the communities in which universities sit, investment in IaH, by contributing to the process of intercultural skills sharing, can help address local and regional skills gaps.

At a national level it is clear that knowledge diplomacy – the role played by international higher education institutions in initiating and fostering bilateral and multilateral relations between countries – is going to be even more key for the UK in the future. Bringing home and international students together, through globally-engaged universities, supports community building, critical thinking and the creation of more transferable and adaptable knowledge-solutions.

However, it is important to recognise that developing IaH and securing the benefits that accrue is not a transactional or binary activity in which a service is simply delivered by one part of the sector to another – from Universities to students for example – or from domestic to overseas students or vice versa but rather it is a true opportunity for co-creation involving all the participants. It is through the collaboration of staff and students as partners, with adequate resources and clear strategic intent provided by University hosts, that opportunities to create real value can be crystallised.

It is also important to recognise that the qualitative approaches that have dominated “analysis” of IaH are not sufficient if we are to realise the benefits of this crucial activity. This paper therefore provides a qualitative analysis of IaH data that is available and makes recommendations in respect of the need for new data sources and a process for monitoring and management that will enable its development.

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Figure 1: Global competencies word cloud
2

IaH and international student mobility

The British Council has previously identified the central role of student mobility in delivering the many multifaceted benefits of Higher Education. This paper recognises the positive contribution of international student mobility and seeks to extend it through the opportunities provided by IaH.

Reference to mobility in the context of IaH will understandably jar with some commentators and practitioners, for whom IaH is seen as an inclusive means to foster intercultural competencies, given the inaccessibility of international student mobility for the overwhelming majority of students. More recently, IaH has been identified as a means to address the sector’s carbon footprint. Some even call for IaH to become the norm and for physical mobility activities to be actively reduced (de Pater, 2022) in favour of non-physical mobility supported through online technology, collectively known as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). COIL promotes the acquisition of intercultural competences for both students and academics through online peer-to-peer engagement in joint projects with cultural others. The role of COIL will be further explored later in this report.

The authors of this report do not subscribe to a polarised view and see the merits in a diverse matrix of internationalisation activities. We contend that a truly inclusive approach to internationalisation in HE should support IaH and varied durations of mobility, as part of a broader inclusive intercultural journey for both students and staff. We recognise that the diversity of our campuses is greatly enhanced through inbound mobility. Whilst this contributes to the carbon footprint of global high education our view remains that, currently, the carbon impact of well-defined and carefully curated international mobility activities is justifiable in terms of the value that it creates for the lifetime of the student and for wider stakeholders.

Specifically, the diversity of our campuses, in terms of the numbers of overseas students and the range of countries they come from, is what really sets the UK apart from all other countries. Australia has a similar proportion of overseas students but less diversity of origin and that is a crucial element in adding value for all stakeholders in HE. At its most simple, harnessing the knowledge, perspectives, values and skills of students registered at UK universities from more than 200 countries brings unique opportunities for the curriculum and value for our society.

With appropriate institutional policies, resources, academic leadership and pedagogical strategies, incoming students of all nationalities can be co-creators of new proto-forms of knowledge, skills and behaviours; we need to celebrate the diversity and collateral benefit they bring to IaH in an appropriate and effective fashion – this needs to be a new and explicit focus.

In addition, as noted by Manning (2023), the impact of the kind of activities which are comprised within IaH is likely to be different to the kind of intensive, transformative and immersive learning brought about by disorienting trigger experiences engendered through entering or living in an unfamiliar culture. In contrast, IaH recognises that not everyone has the funding or confidence to allow them to benefit from those kinds of profound developmental intercultural experiences. As international educators we have a duty to help students to widen engagement with international perspectives and cultures in a range of inclusive, incremental and accessible ways. We believe that there are increasing synergies and overlaps between IaH and mobility activities but that IaH is currently overlooked and underfunded. This represents a wasted opportunity to harness the international potential of our existing communities.

We contend that the non-mobile internationalisation activities which are characteristic of IaH represent an underexploited source of value which offers the potential to introduce different student and staff perspectives from around the world into the learning and teaching experience. This can be achieved through encouraging educational and social interaction on campus and through leveraging opportunities, collaboration and communication through online and virtual environments. These non-mobile elements can be categorised into different formal and informal IaH approaches, including COIL, Institution-Wide Language Programmes (IWLP), global leadership or citizenship initiatives, or celebratory events as part of orienteering or in-year festivals. This ability to uncouple learning from the constraints of the formal curriculum, geography, time and other resources – whilst reducing some of the carbon footprint associated with the essential task of educating the leaders of tomorrow – is a significant opportunity.

In addition, at times of ongoing concern regarding the use of curricula and should be decolonised or de-westernized, it is especially important to consider strategies, behaviours and preparatory activities that will help innovate the (Hidden) curriculum. This approach will help to embrace new third space types of teaching and learning experiences, such as international student advisory boards, or cross-cultural COIL project designs, which will help to be integral parts of building global mindsets in the UK HE landscape.

Figure 2: The virtuous circle of IaH and link to TNE/Mobility


* Includes credit and non-credit and IVES
3. Quantitative versus qualitative approaches

Much of the narrative around IaH is qualitative and dominated by case studies (see Hudzik (2019) or Green and Whitehead (2015)). Such narrative accounts are rewarding to read and encouraging to hear. This paper also features case studies to expand and further exemplify what typically constitutes IaH activities, but with a different and clear purpose in mind – to suggest and stimulate a basis on which IaH could, and should, be routinely quantitatively assessed – measured and monitored – at institutional and national levels.

If we are to embrace IaH as a means to facilitate the development of global mindsets in those studying in the UK, whether domestic or overseas students, and ensure the associated benefits to institutions and their stakeholders are crystallised, there needs to be a baseline established and ongoing measurement and monitoring of progress against the objectives that we set. The 2019 International Higher Education Strategy is a good example of where a clear ambition was stated allowing the consequences of policy changes to be assessed in the context of that stated aim.

In this paper, we identify quantitative indicators and give examples of how higher education institutions (HEIs) can evaluate and track their IaH efforts (whilst recognising that these measures should always be used alongside contextual data).

To provide a basis for comparison over time, the analysis we present here necessarily focuses on activities that are measured or reported to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). However, we make the case for additional quantitative measures to allow wider description of the activities taking place and their impact on growing numbers of beneficiaries. To that effect, the last section of this paper makes recommendations for the development of metrics suggesting additional measures that HESA should consider. We also welcome UUKi’s development of a new toolkit, through a working group led by the University of Kent, which will provide mechanisms and measures for individual institutions to contemplate in order to better foster IaH and crystallise its benefits.

4. IaH in theory and practice

As indicated in the previously cited definition of IaH (Jones and Reifferth, 2019), IaH supports students and staff in the process of co-creating opportunities for intercultural awareness and global citizenship skills. IaH is a vehicle through which students can learn about different cultures, and gain more awareness of their own cultural make-up as a result. This can be achieved through engaging in coursework, projects and co-curricular activities that address global challenges and foster intercultural awareness, without physically travelling abroad (Universities UK International, 2021).

Critical thinking, knowledge development and exchange are key ambitions for international universities and their civic and global strategies (Barnett, 1997). The diverse multiplicity of ways in which IaH presents is an excellent platform to support critical thinking skills (Dekker, 2020). As noted by Pedersen (1995), culture shock, as experienced during study abroad experiences, can encourage self-reflection and personal growth, resulting in heightened intercultural awareness. However, as the overwhelming majority of domestic students do not engage with study abroad, IaH can be seen as a meaningful, if less intensive and immersive alternative, unlocking access to international experiences and learning opportunities from within our on-campus communities, on a more incremental basis.

IaH should be seen as helping students and staff to unlock the rich lived-experiences and perspectives of their diverse communities so that they can be harnessed and contribute to the achievement of internationally transferable learning outcomes and stronger global solutions. In this manner, IaH can be viewed as a means of supporting international knowledge diplomacy (Knight, 2018), which is arguably a more inclusive and less colonial approach to international education than the rhetoric around Soft Power.

Well-developed IaH contributes to the creation of a more inclusive learning environment for international and domestic students through cross-cultural engagement and allows both groups to learn from each other.

It is useful to look at constitutive elements of IaH within the formal, informal and hidden curriculum (Leask, 2015).

At many institutions, IaH activities include some of the following features of the formal, informal and hidden curriculum (Kelly, 2009; Olivia, 1997; Wilson, 1990), as identified by the cross-sector IaH working group established by Universities UK International (UUKi, 2023).

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8 Video case studies in this report have been drawn from the Innovations in Internationalisation at Home Conference series, University of Kent (2021, 2022).
10 International activities delivered at home: showcasing impactful programmes, benefits and good practice
12 https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/networks-and-opportunities/networks
13 The 2019 International Higher Education Strategy is a good example of where a clear ambition was stated allowing the consequences of policy changes to be assessed in the context of that stated aim.
Formal curriculum examples

- active valuing and harnessing of staff and student diversity in the classroom
- internationalisation of learning outcomes to reflect global contexts, challenges and applications
- internationally diverse and decolonised reading lists
- differentiation in assessment types and outcomes, responding to culturally-diverse education practices (UNESCO, 2004b)
- focus on the development of globally-attuned employability skills
- opportunities for participating in COIL guest lectures or digital contributions from staff at international partner institutions

The acronym COIL was initially coined at the State University of New York (Suni, 2023), defining the framework as follows:

Notwithstanding a recent initiative by the CoIConnect10 which has been instrumental in collecting self-reporting data on the number of COIL projects in given institutions, there is a critical need for a more comprehensive means of measuring participation and impact of COIL; this is addressed in our recommendations. Interestingly, even though the self-reporting approach pursued by CoIConnect has certain limitations in accuracy, there is clear evidence that Europe lags behind other continents when it comes to participation in COIL projects.

Case Study Set 1: Formal curriculum examples

**Internationalised assessment at UCL**
This project explores inclusive approaches to assessment practice by engaging critically with traditional and broadly used assessment types and the cultural assumptions and constructions that may underpin them.

**Marketing Across Cultures at the University of Kent and Strathmore University, Kenya**
This area of practice focuses on a COIL Initiative devised and led by the University of Kent and Strathmore University. This project involved groups of students at both universities who investigated the role played by culture in marketing for businesses in Kenya.

**Transnational Education as a shared space in the Surrey International Institute, Dongbei, China**
This activity focuses on a co-constructive approach to the design and delivery of teaching and learning, informed by both the cultures of the UK and China.

Informal curriculum examples

- encouraging and supporting interaction between domestic and international students through activities, events and societies that foster cross-cultural exploration and dialogue
- developing international and intercultural perspectives through internationalised learning in the informal curriculum e.g. (both cultural artefacts and ways of thinking, doing and/or feeling)
- enabling students to engage with those from different cultures in the local community
- fostering engagement with international students, which may or may not include the learning of foreign languages
- wide-ranged activities, which may take place online, to include employability perspectives and the acquisition of intercultural management skills

## Case Study Set 2: Informal curriculum examples

**Tandem Language Learning Project at Kings College London**
This example of IaH has been designed to promote co-curricular language learning and Intercultural competence among students.

**The Global Officers Leadership Development (GOLD) Programme at the University of Kent**
The GOLD Programme involves home and international students in the creation of Internationalisation at Home events and activities which promote global leadership and global citizenship.

**Internationalisation at Home Connector Project at the University of Sussex**
This Connector Programme is a new initiative which fosters partnership working between staff and students who together focus on projects concerned with improving the student experience.
Hidden curriculum examples

- institutional strategies, values and behaviours
- equality, diversity and inclusivity policy
- systems, facilities and procedures
- onboarding and induction activity
- communication and sharing of diverse student and staff activity

Case Study Set 3: Hidden curriculum examples

### Leeds University Students’ Union’s International Student Advisory Board

The International Student Advisory Board promotes international student advocacy including the identification of suggestions for actions and change in international student support.

### The UKCISA #WeAreInternational Student Charter

UKCISA’s #WeAreInternational Charter promotes the consideration of international students’ needs in policies and systems in UK higher education.

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The different layers of Formal, Informal and Hidden Internationalisation and Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) and what those layers can include is shown in the figure below. The form of a globe is used to illustrate the different layers of curriculum internationalisation and IoC. The diagram also presents avenues and opportunities for approaching curriculum internationalisation within each layer.

**Figure 3: The curriculum internationalisation Sphere of Influence**

Potential blockers are represented by clouds lurking in the atmosphere around the globe. Rays of sunlight demonstrate how well-planned and designed IoC and curriculum internationalisation interventions can help develop and illuminate opportunities and objectives of Internationalisation in Higher Education (Manning and Marku, 2021).

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In terms of the wider opportunities, greater use of emerging styles of learning, such as hybrid models, and significantly shorter durations of student mobility for outbound and incoming students amplify the importance of IaH as a means to welcome and serve the needs of a diverse and rapidly changing student community.

Further, businesses are increasingly operating on a global scale. As a result, there is a growing demand for graduates with the skills and knowledge to work effectively in a multicultural environment so that IaH strands and activities could be more systematically introduced into employability programmes. This provision should include the acquisition of intercultural communication and management skills (beyond the language and business departments where these tend to be largely confined). This is already evident in the number of universities that run some form of Global Leaders programme to explicitly equip students with the competencies required for the global world of work, regardless of their disciplinary areas.

Finally, it should be recognised that IaH approaches ought to include those studying towards a UK degree in their home country. Relevant examples of innovations in IaH across the sector can be explored and viewed online and in written form (Manning and Colaiacomo, 2021)[25]; University of Kent, 2022[26].

5. Measuring and monitoring IaH

As noted above, the IaH discourse tends to be predominantly qualitative, with case study methodology used to evidence best practice. This paper seeks to quantify IaH, so that time series data can be used to track and measure its progress.

A significant limitation is that many relevant IaH activities run by HEIs are not formally part of the curricula or data is not collected about them. There have been both institutionally-based and other efforts to systematically collect information on IaH. The most well-known of these is the Global Engagement Index (GEI)[27] where IaH is one of the measures recorded as part of an attempt to systematically capture the endeavours of UK HEIs and track their success over time across a wide range of global engagement indicators. The GEI is an open-access resource, attuned to the UK’s diverse higher education sector and offering insights across 30 measures (using core data from HESA, OfS, SciVal) ranging from student engagement and IaH to sustainable development and environmental impact.

Indeed, it may be argued that changes in the sector have meant that is more difficult than ever to systematically measure IaH. A study by Universities UK International (UUKI, 2022) found that 63% of institutions surveyed introduced or expanded virtual mobility in response to the Covid-19 pandemic[28]. However, at present, there is no systematic data collection on virtual mobility. Further, the transition from the UK’s participation in the EU’s Erasmus to the home-grown Turing programme means that long-term mobility, which used to dominate study abroad, is now being substituted with mainly short-term mobility experiences. Short-term mobility is heavily under-reported (despite the fact that HESA has been seeking to collect short mobility data (from one week in duration) for a number of years), which means that our estimates are likely to understate the actual total number of UK students with study abroad experiences who arguably contribute to campus-based IaH on their return.

The introduction to this paper highlighted the growing importance of IaH for all students. We cannot then simply accept the status quo and say this is too difficult to measure – rather we have to measure what we can that is relevant and clearly articulate the benefits of new and better measurement systems that address the deficiencies of what is currently available.

This section discusses the research methodology and the details of the analytical approach. Section Four presents the analytical findings, which include the following:

(i) analysis of students with study abroad experiences 2017/18–2021/22;
(ii) trends in incoming and visiting exchange students (IVES) over the past four years;
(iii) take-up of modern and foreign languages (MFL) study; and
(iv) international themes in the curriculum.

The section below defines the metrics used in this study and discusses their methodology. The analysis in this paper is based on HESA data.

5.1 Students with study-abroad experiences

The metric on students with study abroad experiences uses the 2017–18 to 2021–22 HESA standard registration population. It captures UK-domiciled full-time first-degree students with study abroad experiences[29]. It should be noted that we seek to measure this activity in this context not specifically because of interest in mobility per se but rather for the impact which students with international experiences of mobility bring on their return to campus for the wider community’s global engagement. In this way, we see an alignment with the principles of IaH.

This analysis is broadly based on the approach advanced by Gittoes in HEFCE (2009)[30], where the analysis tracks the full-time entry cohorts of 2017–18 through 2020–21 to establish how many UK-domiciled students in each cohort had study abroad experiences. Given the limitations of the data, we were unable to apply in full the exclusions used in HEFCE (2009), which means the percentage equivalent of the study-abroad population is likely to be lower.

[26] University of Kent (2022). Innovations In Internationalisation at Home Conference, Canterbury https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1x4HfFeyry0&list=PLaDfOU6wyn8VhJeIxwrCAWj5Vo54Ch7M5&si=7c3ggm8VRlgcM9xo
Other data limitations include: the studied population only includes full-time first-degree UK students (part-time, non-degree and postgraduate students are excluded). At the point of this analysis, we have been unable to secure the data that would allow us to account for the cohort drop-out rates. This could have a significant impact on the reported percentage of students from each cohort who had study abroad experiences.

Tracking cohort-level mobility, we find that most study abroad in this data set takes place in students’ third year of study. Some study abroad takes place in Year 2 or Year 4 of study. However, due to poor data collection of short-term mobility, which is more likely to occur at various points during the student journey, and the fact that we will not know what systemic changes have occurred due to the pandemic and the other changes in the context of UK HE, we cannot say with certainty whether this is the current pattern.

However, this approach does shine a light on participation in study abroad at the cohort level over a relevant time period that should be factored into our decisions about IaH and strategies for the sector going forward. It attempts to complement the approach of Universities UK International (2019)[36] which focuses on the graduating cohorts that have previously responded to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey. The two approaches capture different aspects of study abroad.

5.2 Students learning modern foreign languages

The proportion of students studying Modern Foreign Languages metric uses the 2017–18 to 2021–22 HESA standard registration population. This metric only considers UK-domiciled full-time students and calculates the proportion of students studying languages. Additionally, any student studying a “Combined degree” with languages or a language has been counted as an MFL student. Prior to 2019–20, subjects were coded using the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS)[33]. However, since 2019–20, subjects have been coded using the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS)[32]. In order to compare the data over time, the subjects have been mapped using a transitional mapping specified by HESA[31]. We use a text-mining facility to calculate these proportions to interrogate the course titles submitted to HESA.

5.3 International themes in the curriculum

International themes within the Curricula: the metric uses the 2017–18 to 2021–22 HESA standard registration population. This metric only considers UK-domiciled full-time students. It uses text mining of the course titles submitted by HEIs to HESA. Our approach maps all students against courses identified as having an international theme. This metric is in a testing phase and treated as experimental[31].

5.4 International visiting and exchange students

Typically, visiting and exchange students are not a component of HEIs’ IaH activities. However, they are included in this paper to draw a more complete picture of the environment in which IaH takes place notably through extra- or co-curricular activities involving both UK and non-UK students.

Any reductions in IVES will have a negative impact on the overall student experience. In that context, a particular dimension of concern is the reduction in the number of European students on campus following the discontinuation of UK participation in Erasmus.

Students on credit mobility or other short-term mobility to the UK are not included in the international student statistics as part of the Standard Student Registration population but are recorded separately.

The proportion of “incoming visiting and exchange students” is expressed as a proportion of all UK-domiciled full-time entrants between 2017–18 and 2021–22[31].

6. Analytical findings

This section reviews the analytical findings across the studied metrics. The data focuses on UK full-time students from academic years 2017/18 to 2021/22.

6.1 Students with study abroad experiences

The cohort that entered university in 2016–17 was the last cohort unaffected by the pandemic. From that cohort, 23,370 students had study abroad experiences. Of those students, 35 per cent studied abroad in their Year 2 of study, 63 per cent in Year 3 and 4 per cent in Year 4. This largely reflects the pattern of engagement with Erasmus, which was principally a Year 3 activity and comprised a semester or a whole year.

The pandemic then significantly impacted the entry cohorts of 2017–18, mainly students in Year 3 and Year 4, but also those with mobility scheduled in the spring or summer semesters of Year 2, 2018–19 and 2019–20. The study abroad data for the 2019–20 entry cohort, while incomplete, shows a recovery.

This picture is complicated by the fact that we know that the number of students engaged in short-term mobility is increasing, but reporting to HESA is incomplete, and as a result it is underreported. The pattern for short-term mobility is different, tending to take place in Year 2. However, irrespective of pattern, it seems unlikely in the current climate that unreported short-term mobility has risen to levels such that we see benefits for individuals and institutions at pre-pandemic levels let alone those that would accrue if student mobility – either long or short term – were to approach the Go Global target of 13%; set in response to the levels of mobility seen in comparator countries. The global awareness and international experience benefits derived through short-term mobility are therefore currently both under-reported and under-exploited.

Figure 4: Students with study abroad experience by entry cohort (full-time first degree entrants)

Source: Analysis of HESA student record 2017–18 – 2021–22, full-time first-degree UK domiciled students.
We also note that the decline in long-term mobility is unlikely to ever recover to pre-pandemic levels – we need then a twin strategy of:

1. focussing on IaH to create global mindsets through mechanisms beyond the transferable benefits derived from students with previous mobility experiences.

2. recognising the contribution of short-term mobility especially as its value in terms of intercultural learning has been proven (Jones, 2012: 37–48). The framework for Turing has encouraged this focus on short-term mobility and given that recent studies have suggested that many of the benefits of a period of study overseas can be captured during mobilities of less than a year or semester. This is to be welcomed along with the reality that in the context of challenged university finances short-term mobility is more likely to be embraced as it is simply cheaper as well as easier to manage.

The benefits of short-term mobility can be systematically captured as part of a progressive global engagement strategy and demonstrated to show a significant Return on Investment for HEIs that foster it.

Figure 5: After your experience, do you feel more able/prepared to work with people with views and backgrounds that are different to your own?

Figure 6: How important are these opportunities to you in your personal development, including enhancing your employability skills and prospects?

6.2 Students studying modern foreign languages

There is a steady decline in the number of home students studying foreign languages in higher education. This is in line with the school-level decline in MFL learning, with the number of pupils taking foreign language GCSEs falling by more than 40 per cent, and A-levels down by around 25 per cent, over the past 20 years (The Conversation, 2022).

At the higher education level, the number of students studying MFL declined from 68,910 in 2017–18 to 57,395 in 2021–22 (17 per cent).

Figure 7: UK-domiciled students with MFL subject(s)

As of 2021, 11% of the UK student population had MFL subjects on their degree, with UK-domiciled students representing 7.5% of the total (HESA, 2021).

Table 7: Proportion of students with MFL subject(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion of students with MFL subject(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021/22</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021/22</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Analysis of HESA student record 2017–18 – 2021–22

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4 Adrey, J.B. (2012). Model for Progression in International Experience at Coventry University; Unpublished; (See Annex A).
The recent Education Policy Institute (EPI, 2022) report notes the ongoing decline in the number of students studying MFL in UK secondary schools that is the precursor to the pattern above at tertiary level. However, there have been a number of successful examples of the development and introduction of institution wide language programmes (IWLPs) in a variety of UK universities, data related to which has been collected for some time by the AULC (2021). For instance, at Coventry University, between 2009 and 2017, the Linguae Mundi programme grew to attract thousands of learners every year across over 20 foreign languages, illustrating the demand for language learning as a cultural experience for students from all disciplinary horizons.

These innovative approaches provide the opportunity at no or little cost for students to access credit and non-credit bearing language capability as part of their course or as a co-curricular activity – for example, IWLP programmes sit attractively between the formal and informal dimensions of IaH, both fostering interest in global engagement and facilitating and enabling it. The low level of outbound mobility from the UK has often been ascribed, in part, to the lack of language competency and therefore the systematic promotion of IWLPs across the sector is a major opportunity to promote all dimensions of IaH and wider global engagement.

6.3 International themes in the curriculum

The metric on international themes in the curriculum is in an experimental phase. There is, however, a strong indication that HEIs are increasing the number of courses that have international themes. Our data analysis shows a continuous increase in UK students accessing courses with globally focused dimensions.

Beyond identifying international content as part of programme or module titles, the above mentioned COIL framework constitutes a sophisticated effort to internationalise curricula at modular level, within all disciplines and sometimes across disciplinary boundaries, at affordable costs for institutions.

Figure 8: International themes within the curricula

6.4 Incoming and visiting exchange students (IVES)

The number of IVES students dipped significantly during the pandemic. This group includes student exchanges and incoming fee-paying student visitors. Non-EU IVES students were impacted more than those from the EU. The countries with the most significant declines in 2021/22 compared to their peak levels in 2018/19 are the USA (40 per cent fall from 7,210 in 2018–19 to 4,315 in 2021–22); China (from 1,990 in 2018–19 to 595 in 2021–22) and Canada (from 885 in 2018–19 to 300 in 2021–22) (–70 per cent each), and Australia (90 per cent fall from 1,110 in 2018–19 to 110 in 2021–22).

We underlined above the significance of that phenomenon in terms of reduction of cultural and linguistic diversity on campus and therefore of opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges both in the formal and informal curricula.

Figure 9: Full-time incoming visiting and exchanges students


IVES from the EU countries

IVES from non-EU countries
7. Summary

International themes in the curricula have become more commonplace over the past four years. Unlike the other measures of IaH, the curriculum was not impacted by restrictions on physical student mobility during the pandemic. Our findings show that HEIs strengthened their courses with international content when travel was restricted. This was evidenced by increases in hybrid learning models that have worked well in connecting classrooms across international borders. Anecdotal evidence shows successful outcomes for programmes that have developed COIL components, and as a result, institutions have strengthened their international virtual learning, internships and employer engagement opportunities. This also provides a good opportunity for collaboration between students on campus and those on TNE courses.

In contrast, the long-term decline in the number of UK students studying modern foreign languages shows no sign of abating with the numbers in decline for almost two decades, as EPI (2022) reported in its recent note on this topic. As a result, there would seem to be significant merit in more active promotion of IWLPs which have become a significant feature of the sector and in some instances have scaled substantially, but are far from ubiquitous.

In respect to IES, the impact of Brexit on the number of EU students in the UK, means we have seen significant reductions in the international diversity of students at the undergraduate level. The overall classroom experience has been significantly affected by the UK’s exit from the Erasmus+ programme, which has impacted both degree and credit mobility of EU students to the UK.

The decline in the numbers of students with overseas study experiences is extremely worrying – notwithstanding that the under-reporting of short term mobility means that the number of students having some form of overseas experience will not be quite as low as suggested, the shift from long to short term mobility has significantly reduced the average time that students have spent overseas and that will have substantial impact on the benefits they accrue personally and the intellectual and social capital that they can share with others on their return to the home campus through IaH.

It is clear then that we need to improve our understanding and reporting of the benefits of IaH. This approach will help the sector and our institutions to find new ways of harnessing a broader range of tools to internationalise in ways which can be engaged with by a larger group of students and be more systematically implemented. This approach will provide more predictable outputs in line with the country’s future International Higher Education Strategy.

The principles and practice of such an approach were well outlined by Hudzik (2011)10

Comprehensive Internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution’s external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.


This clearly reiterates the essential contribution of IaH within the wider spectrum of internationalisation in HE. The concept of comprehensive internationalisation acknowledges the need for internationalisation strategies to proactively rally and benefit all HE actors and HE ecosystems, Hudzik advocates an approach that structurally and functionally involves all participants in Higher Education Institutions’ both within and outside HEIs.

Key to this will be institutions adopting a more structured approach to IaH engagement and examples of such for UG and PG programmes are shown in Annex A.

To support this strategic approach, institutions need:

- A critical mass of practitioners
- Expertise in IaH and COIL developments
- A wide network of academic and corporate partners
- Better data management systems
- A clear understanding of how IaH creates value added
- A plan to undertake IaH cohesively and coherently

We also look forward to the publication of a new toolkit and supporting materials which we understand will soon be published and shared across the sector by Uuki’s Working Group on IaH (Manning and Marku 2023).11

8. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper has identified the contribution that IaH makes towards improving the international experience of all students on university campuses, particularly through internationalising the curriculum. It illustrates that IaH offers an accessible and inclusive form of internationalisation, which can support and improve international relations and intercultural competences by valuing and incorporating the different perspectives and lived experiences of both international and domestic students.

While acknowledging the limitations of available data in terms of accurately representing the full breadth of IaH, the metrics that we do have reveal a notable increase in course programmes which include international features or focus. However, the text mining approach we have adopted is experimental and stands in contrast to the more straightforward, although also limited findings, of the growth in COIL where Europe and the UK are clearly not exploiting the potential of these globally recognised developments have been identified in the prevalence of international curricula, and troubling trends have been noted in the reduction of campus diversity and language learning experiences and skills gained can sometimes appear as discrete, disconnected dots (Barrett, 2015).

Although the metrics identified in this investigation are restricted in scope in terms of their representation of the more qualitative dimensions of IaH, they still reveal interesting and important findings. Positive developments have been identified in the prevalence of international curricula, and troubling trends have been noted in the reduction of campus diversity and language learning experiences, which are rich and powerful resources that can contribute to IaH.

Our recommendations for policy and institutional consideration below are aimed at enhancing the discernible impact of IaH at both sector and local levels, to help overcome some of these challenges.

The university sector is accustomed to referring to, and being measured by international rankings and statistics including evaluating institutional success through measuring long-term study abroad levels and inbound student mobility numbers. This means that internationalisation and global engagement as core cross-sector missions are not well reflected as and being measured by international rankings and being referred to help overcome some of these challenges.

With this in mind, we recommend that further research is conducted to gain a better understanding of the impact of the many different facets of IaH and the benefits it brings to build on the growing body of evidence, such as the UUK’s IaH-related publication (2021) and the ongoing work of the UUK Working Group (UUK, 2023) on IaH, which is building an open-source handbook and framework to promote an evaluative and systematic approach to IaH. These resources will assist in the co-creation process and help staff and students to see the benefit. This is important as such rich international learning experiences and skills gained can sometimes appear as discrete, disconnected dots (Barrett, 2015).

1. Establish a clear definition of IaH that is fit for the strategic purpose of the UK sector so that it can support a national strategic approach.

2. Recognise that given the recent decline in long-term mobility and the long-term low levels of engagement with it there needs to be a focus on IaH to create global mindsets through other mechanisms.

3. Find new ways of promoting IaH to students and staff across the sector so that systematic approaches can be devised and engagement with IaH will be more highly valued.

4. Incentivise academic staff, through institutional policies and frameworks offering career progression rewards for engagement in IaH, as well as encouraging IaH-focused research and facilitating participation in international fora where IaH best practice is presented.

5. Take heed of the impact on UK HE diversity of the reduction in European visiting students and the decline of language study, whilst considering potential mechanisms to mitigate this negative impact in the formal and informal curriculum, as well as through accessible and shorter-term IVES opportunities.

6. Identify new and enhanced means of assessing and representing the benefit and impact of IaH through qualitative and quantitative data.

7. Support and promote data-led sector-wide investment in measures to collect data on IaH activities, particularly COIL and IWLP, by generating new data sources and harnessing existing data from organisations like the AULC (2021), in the case of IWLP, which can effectively measure and publish results to identify leading institutions.

8. Create rankings showing the most internationalised universities that include IaH activities (including COIL) and publish rankings systematically to incentivise data reporting and help guide students who are eager to acquire intercultural competencies in their choices of universities.

9. Bring incentives to universities to report what they do in IaH and the number of participants/beneficiaries to inform rankings; such incentives could help with funding capacity and capability-building projects in the way the Erasmus programme does it for EU member states.

10. Ensure there are development opportunities through which institutions can invest in building capacity and capability to deliver their IaH ambitions and the strength of the UK sector’s activity as a whole.

Whilst some other useful tools do exist in the sector which can contribute to the measurement of internationalised student experience, including the International Student Barometer (I-Graduate, 2023) and CeQuInt (NVAO, 2023), these are not all uniformly accessible to all institutions due to timing and resource implications and would also benefit from enhanced focus on the impact and value of IaH.

As a result, it is recommended that to support good practice, data collection, policy development and further research, as a notion we should:

Whilst this is already a positive step towards understanding and measuring the value of IaH, this paper recommends additional focus on mechanisms to measure student and institutional engagement with a broader range of IaH activities. This could include COIL and the qualitative impact of a broader range of IaH, which has been summarised earlier in this document.

This process could extend the representation of IaH in metrics like the GEI and encourage institutions to find ways to measure return on investment and justify future investment in this important area of internationalisation.


## Annex A

### Table 1: Model for progression of UG international experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key forms of international experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Short-term mobility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-term mobility – Year aboard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Embedding comparative perspectives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online international learning (OIL)</td>
<td>1. Reinforced ICC through further conceptualization and reflection + attitudinal models</td>
<td>Full(er) intercultural experience captured through: a) the year aboard module b) linguistically through accreditation</td>
<td>1. Post experience, reflective cultural learning and dealing with the reverse cultural shock 2. Culture-specific in-depth specialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer experience Year 1 / Summer school at JVs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intercultural competence (ICC) development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internationalisation of the curriculum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online dialogic interactions (embedded into modules) with students at international universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. One-week fieldtrip (Europe) 2. 10-day fieldtrip (outside Europe) 3. Winter schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internationalisation of the student experience on campus</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Intended learning outcomes:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence (ICC) development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge → Attitude → Skills</td>
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ICC – The ability to communicate and work effectively and appropriately in multicultural teams and contexts (inspired by Deardorff, 2006)

### Table 2: Model for progression of PG international experience (Adrey, 2012; unpublished)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-graduate taught</th>
<th>PG research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key forms of international experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suite of international experiences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intended learning outcomes:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence (ICC) development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge → Attitude → Skills</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ICC – The ability to communicate and work effectively and appropriately in multicultural teams and contexts (inspired by Deardorff, 2006)
Authors biographies

Dr Anthony Manning
Dr Anthony Manning is Director and Dean for Global and Lifelong Learning at the University of Kent. Through his role, Anthony is responsible for Global and Lifelong Learning activity which includes internationalisation of the curriculum, pathways to higher education, online learning and apprenticeships. Anthony is also a Principal Fellow of AdvanceHE and a National Teaching Fellow. He has a doctorate in Applied Linguistics and has lived and worked in five countries, including France, Germany, China and Japan. In addition to working at the University of Kent, Anthony is the current Chair of the British Accreditation Council’s (BAC’s) Accreditation Committee and is a member of the British Council’s English Language Advisory Group. Anthony’s publications focus on international higher education, academic literacy and language assessment.

Janet Ilieva
Janet Ilieva is the founder and director of Education Insight, a research consultancy specialising in international higher education. Janet’s research focuses on international student mobility, university partnerships, transnational education, and national policies for global engagement. Janet regularly researches higher education engagement for government departments, universities, and international organisations in Europe and Asia. Education Insight’s Global Engagement Index (GEI) evaluates UK higher education institutions’ internationalism and involvement with sustainable development. Education Insight is a co-founder of the TNE Impact repository.

Dr Jean-Bernard Adrey
Dr Jean-Bernard Adrey taught languages in France, the USA, England and Italy before moving into international higher education management and leadership in the UK and the US. During his tenure as Director of the Centre for Global Engagement at Coventry University he received several awards including Coventry City Council’s 2013 Award for Community Cohesion (Culturae Mundi project) and the EAIE’s 2014 Institutional Award for Innovation in Internationalisation (for the Model for Progression in International Experience). As founding Director of HE consultancy firm TJ Global Services, he provides internationalisation expertise to multiple UK, US, continental European and Middle Eastern universities, whilst leading on COIL projects for OIEG.

David Pilsbury
David Pilsbury is Chief Development Officer for Oxford International, a global educational services provider. He sits on the advisory boards of JISC, China-Britain Business Council, Times Higher Education, StudyPortals, EURIE, ECCTIS, Envirates Aviation University and Macao Millennium College. He is a member of the UK’s International Higher Education Commission. He was previously Deputy Vice Chancellor of Coventry University and led its transformation to become an internationally focussed university: as the UK’s 3rd largest recruiter of overseas students; the largest provider of programmes overseas; and host of the world’s largest global enhancement programme. His contribution to global higher education has been recognised by The Queen’s Award, EAIE’s premiere award and an Honorary Fellowship from Hong Kong’s VTC. Pilsbury was founding CEO of WUN, HEFCE Head of Research Policy and spent several years in the City after a D.Phil at Oxford.

Rebecca Finlayson
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