The Students’ Union View of Internationalisation

Daniel Stevens (NUS), Fadi Dakkak (Sheffield SU) Silkie Cragg (Warwick SU)
• Some Context
• Why Internationalise!?
• Quick Introductions
• The NUS Toolkit
• Challenges
• Overview of Internationalisation in an SU context
  • Sheffield SU
  • Warwick SU
• Questions
Given the present climate for higher education, the circumstances and economics of international student migration are set to change, perhaps quite rapidly. The map of migration may look very different in as little as a decade. The economic balance of power, the methods of delivery (with ‘local’ campuses of ‘global’ universities), even the ecology of the linguistic map of higher education, may all see fundamental transformation. (Sovic, 2012)
The context of Internationalization

- The shift from aid to trade in the past thirty years.
- Explosion in international student numbers.
- International student population has changed dramatically in the past 10 years.
- Are Unions able to represent these students?
- Are international students able to truly put forward their views?
● “The ideal of transforming a culturally diverse student population into a valued resource for activating processes of international connectivity, social cohesion and intercultural learning is still very much that, an ideal.”
A 2004 survey from UKCOSA of 5,000 international students found that 59% interacted mainly with conationals and other internationals, 32% were friends with a mixture of British and international students, whilst 7% interacted primarily with British students.
Why are Students’ Unions Important?

2005: 69.4% of students had a desire for international students to be more closely integrated with home students. 84.7% of those who attended Orientation said it helped them settle. But 52.4% needed more from the Students’ Union. 78.7% would be in favour of a Buddy System/Mentoring Scheme for new arrivals.

2007: Only 56.8% of international students felt sufficiently informed about their Union. EU and international students were twice as likely as home students to state they have no knowledge of how the Union was run. International students feel strongly that the Students’ Union should commit itself to trying to unite and integrate the whole student community.
At Warwick it was found that “UK students hold the perception that international students prefer to stay together, don’t make the effort or are actively excluding. UK students themselves fear misunderstanding, leading to anxiety, embarrassment, and awkwardness. International Students still hold the perception that the Union is focused primarily on UK undergraduate 18-21 years. They feel that they are not adequately catered for despite making up a large percentage of the student population.” Internationalising the Student Experience. Pg. 13
Internationalisation - more focus on academic experience?
Do Universities try to do too much?
1. Honeymoon Stage
2. Disintegration Stage
3. Reintegration Stage
4. Autonomy Stage
5. Independence Stage

The Challenge of the 1 Year Masters
2nd best solution?
There are two main paths of internationalisation:

- Make sure your Union is more inclusive for international students.
  - Participation of the SU in international student induction, international student participation in democracy, commercial venues, course representation, Union communication, volunteering, etc.

- Create an inclusive environment for everyone through internationalisation.
  - Promoting opportunities abroad, cultural events on campus, language exchanges, etc.
Internationalising your union

**Internationalisation**

- Engaging, supporting and representing international students more effectively
- Encouraging opportunities for integration between home and international students
- Incorporating a global perspective in all areas of students’ union activity
Internationalisation challenges

- Participation in democratic and representation structures
- Responding to key issues
- Facilitating home and international student interaction
- Providing services that meet needs
- Establishing genuine, two-way communication
- Developing appropriate partnerships
- Creating a global union
In Groups- Introduce Yourselves and the Activities of your own Students’ Unions!
Internationalising your union

Building an Internationalised Students’ Union

1. Identify areas of development
2. Baseline Data
3. Audit
4. Review
5. Impact
Audit

- Democracy and representation
- Campaigning
- Activities and participation
- Service: Membership and commercial
- Communications
- Staff and Officer development
- Partnerships and collaboration
- International experience
We will ensure that all international students are able to participate in the democratic processes and representative structures of our students’ unions.

**Informing**

**Targeting**

**Engaging and supporting**

**Monitoring and evaluating**
We will campaign for positive change and make sure the voices of international students are heard locally, nationally and internationally.
We will create opportunities for students for home and international students to come together through societies and activities.

**Global perspective**
**Awareness of diversity**
**Monitoring participation**
**Engaging and integrating**
Membership services

We develop services that meet the need of our international student members

Holistic and diverse
Expert advice
Learning and responding
Participation and ownership
We will develop services that meet the needs of our international student members

**Diversity and influence**

**Accessibility and provision**

**Staff and training**

**Hearing feedback**
We will develop genuine two-way communication between our students’ union and our international student members and ensure our communication is accessible and appropriate.
We will develop and promote learning and development opportunities for officers and staff

Training
External memberships and events
Sharing best practice
Taking the lead
We will provide an international experience for all students, make unions a space where home and international students can come together and promote a global perspective in all areas of union activity

Worldwide culture
International projects and partnerships
Strategy for internationalisation
Exchanges and study abroad
Student Unions/Associations

- Too dependent on having a sabbatical officer or student volunteers with an interest in international students
- A need for an Internationalisation strategy as well as an embedding (mainstreaming) approach
- Need for **clubs and associations** to be more **mindful** of international students and the **Equality Act 2010**
International Students with Dependents

- Appreciate organised trips etc.. **BUT also**
- **Require more information about schooling** (non-standard entry), schooling systems, childcare, youth activities, further/adult education options, ESOL classes
Welcome to the building an internationalised students’ union toolkit

Welcome to the Internationalisation Toolkit for students’ unions in the UK. This will help students’ unions make a positive impact on the experience of international students in the UK and create a more international union for all students.

Make your selection of which toolkit you would like to use below.

- FE Toolkit
- HE Toolkit
As part of their internationalisation work, EUSA set up the 360º Society, to support students before, during and after exchange trips abroad.

The society brings together exchange students studying at Edinburgh, and Edinburgh students who have been (or are about to go) on an exchange trip abroad.

In addition to organising social activities, the society provides opportunities for students to share information, so that prospective exchange students can learn about their destination. The 360º Exchange Society won ‘Society of the Year’ at the NUS Awards 2011.
York University Students’ Union (YUSU) decided to increase the representative role of the International Students’ Association (ISA) by bringing it under the students’ union and making its President the part-time International Students’ Officer for the students’ union.

The ISA has a large membership, but had previously functioned independently from the union and focused on social events and activities.

The union hopes that under the new structure the ISA will be a channel for international students to get their voice heard in the union.
The University of Nottingham has overseas campuses in China and Malaysia. While the students’ union does not technically represent the students at these campuses, it offers support and advice to the students’ associations which do.

The students’ union officers act as educational consultants to these students’ associations, advising their overseas counterparts via video conferencing and an annual trip to the two overseas campuses.

The partnership between students’ representatives at home and overseas is supported by the university, who pay fund the annual overseas trip.

The VP Education will focus on ensuring that the Quality Manual is being adhered to, while the President will meet with the students’ association.

They will look at accommodation, student support facilities and campus issues, and advise the students’ association on how to handle problems. On their return, the students’ union officers will report back to the university on their findings.

The students’ union also hosts visits from students from the overseas campuses.
• The University of Bath Students’ Union works closely with the International Office and has over the last few years looked at ways of developing closer working relationships.

• In September 2007, the Chief Executive of the Students’ Union and the Senior Assistant Registrar with responsibility for the International Office put forward a proposal for a member of staff who would work across both departments.

• The remit for this member of staff is to work on student-facing issues within the International Office, including organising events for orientation week, while in the student union they take a more strategic role, to look at the current experience of international students and the barriers to participation in the union.

• There are many advantages to this joint role, including the fact that the knowledge of individual students’ aspirations and impressions which are gleaned from the face-to-face work in the International Office can be extremely useful when considering the current provision within the students’ union and possible changes.
What do you think the challenge is with Students’ Unions and Internationalisation?
From a Union side?
From a University side?
Perception: International Students have huge cultural and language! Many people won’t understand these difficulties until they experience them themselves.

Funding: It’s a very difficult time for Students’ Unions and many of them are going through restructuring.

Making the Case: Why is international more important than other students?
Warning! “Rome Wasn’t Build in a Day.”

This is the product of 6+ years of work. OWW has been around for even longer!

The most important thing to do is to build the support and resourcing to make sure internationalisation is a success.

Many people have fantastic projects, but no one to carry them forward the year after they leave.
So how to make it sustainable?

Step One: Contact Key People and Gather Previous Data

Step Two: Form a formal working group, conduct research and pass information to key individuals

Step Three: Develop a strategy, secure funding and resourcing

Step Four: Deliver the Project! Good luck!
University of Sheffield Students’ Union

Internationalisation: Defining the Global Perspective
History and Background

• 25,000 students, around 6000 international.

• Full time International Students’ Officer.

• Our immigration advisor wrote a paper that dates back to 1995 on internationalising students’ unions.

• Long history of celebrating the diverse cultures we have here on campus, e.g. International Cultural Evening, World Food Festival and World Week.
SU Strategy 2012-2016

OBJECTIVES & GOALS

STUDENT WELL-BEING
- PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT
- BUILD COMMUNITIES AND FRIENDSHIPS

RELEVANT QUALITY SERVICES
- DELIVER SERVICES FOR STUDENTS
- BE DIGITALLY INNOVATIVE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP
- BOLD AND EFFECTIVE STUDENT VOICE
- BE LED BY STUDENTS
- ENGAGE IN REPRESENTATION
- CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE

VALUES
- DEMOCRATIC
- INDEPENDENT & INNOVATIVE
- A GLOBAL COMMUNITY
- SUSTAINABLE & RESPONSIBLE

PURPOSE
- TO REPRESENT, SUPPORT AND ENHANCE THE LIVES OF UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD STUDENTS

ENABLERS
- COMMUNICATION
- GOVERNANCE
- PEOPLE
- FINANCE
- MAKING A DIFFERENCE
- RESOURCES & INFRASTRUCTURE
- ENTERPRISE & INNOVATION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO DEVELOP
- DEPLOY GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
- EXPAND AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES
- SUPPORT EMPLOYABILITY

WE WILL BE RECOGNISED AS A LEADING STUDENTS' UNION: EXCITING, DYNAMIC AND STUDENT-LED
Develop global perspectives

Create an environment that enables our students to benefit from intercultural experiences, enjoy international friendships and develop their global understanding.

We aim to achieve this between 2012 and 2016 by:

• Recognising and developing our civic engagement with home and international students in the local community.
• Working closely with The University on the internationalisation strategy.
• Removing barriers for integration between home and international students by encouraging international students to engage with departmental societies and home students to engage with national societies.
• Reinvigorating our services and events to enable students to develop their cultural agility and experience alternative cultures.
Development of the Global Brand

• To be used with any event organised with the purpose of bringing all sets of students together.
Quotes from the Strategy Consultation with Students

• “Home students think it just happens and don't appear to consciously recognise the benefits of making global connections, however when discussed at length home students begin to see the benefits and why it is important but it is not on their immediate radar”.

• “International students (both EU and non EU) on the other hand have come to an English University to gain this experience, they find it easy to connect with other international students but difficult to connect with home students”.

• “They also made the point that some events are advertised as only for international students and feel it should be open to all - this related to the home students comments above about it not being on their radar - how do we find a way of appealing to all?”
Quotes from the Strategy Consultation with Students

• “Interestingly home PGT students become more aware of their international counterparts than at UG level and recognise the importance of connecting with them”.

• “Many students both home and international believe that societies help bridge the gap and it would be good if there was some way of using them more eg)showcasing the extra global benefits gained from mixing in societies to other students”.
How do we take it from here?

- Global Ambassadors
- Open Space event:
  - Allow all sets of students to tell us what the global perspective means to them.
  - Break the taboo that is international and get all students to feel part of it.
  - Look into the way we advertise events, e.g. Society flashdance.
Campaign on the Value of International Students

• Oxford Economics report measuring the impact international students have on Sheffield.
• Report indicates that international students contribute annually £120 million to Sheffield.
• The SU in collaboration with the University decided to capture the stories that would give this report an even bigger impact.
We are all International Students!
A great example of Union-University collaboration

Mantra: Warwick – a Globally Connected University
Go Global Guide: Every student can have a truly global experience while studying at Warwick

Mutual aims:
- Internationalise the University experience
- Integrate home and international students
- Enhance employability
  - Opportunities to study abroad
  - Intercultural competency
• 2007/8 Union President, Joe Kirby, conducted substantial research and put together a very influential report entitled ‘Internationalising the Student Experience’

• “..there is a divide between UK and international students that is rupturing the student community. Many at Warwick undergo a divisive experience at the University because of this ‘magnitude gap’”

• Noted 4 key challenges
  – Arrivals
  – Accommodation
  – Student initiatives
  – Students’ Union provision
Success for Kirby would be “...a visible and vibrant cosmopolitan community on campus. All students would consider themselves international; all would actively choose, expect and pursue a global experience... [t]here would be no dividing line.”

Recommendations:

- **Arrivals:** Freshers’ and Orientation should be integrated

- **Accommodation:** ‘Immersion’ of nationalities within halls; Union Hall Societies should be set up

- **Student initiatives:** ‘Innovation Summit’: annual event to support growth and delivery of student-run initiatives

- **Students’ Union provision:** a buddy scheme
• Jointly-run Orientation Week

• Sabbatical Officers: cleared diaries, on-the-ground support

• 30 societies and sports clubs

• Overwhelming enthusiasm to welcome international students

• Satisfaction up 11.7% since 2011
• 2010/11 President Daniel Stevens began huge work with the International Office to turn Kirby’s recommendations into concrete achievements!

• Go Global is a SU and University initiative designed to get students thinking globally.

• Go Global Fund

• Go Global Guide
  – Erasmus/Exchanges
25 departments offer the chance to study abroad

163 different nationalities study here

36% of the student population is from outside the UK

38 language classes are run every week by world@warwick

12 different languages are taught by world@warwick - for free!

200+ Universities across the globe are linked to Warwick

39 societies represent different cultures at Warwick

12 different language qualifications are taught by the Centre for Lifelong Learning

50,119 Warwick Alumni in 93 countries across the world
A key part of ‘Going Global’ was facilitating student-led internationalism

Best New Society 2012
1500+ members – biggest at Warwick
Buddy Scheme
Language Cafés
Free language classes
Trips around the UK
W@W FC
Fortnightly internationally-themed nights in the Terrace Bar
• Societies as vehicle for integration/globally-connected thinking
  • Warwick Fused
  • OneWorldWeek
  • Warwick Globalist
  • Warwick International Development Summit
  • Warwick Economics Summit
  • Third Culture
  • Salsa, Belly Dance, Argentine Tango
  • Amnesty International
  • People and Planet
  • RAG
  • Emerging Markets
  • China Forum, Peking Forum, India Forum, MENA Forum...

• Intercultural competency → employability

• Strategic Alliance: Monash-Warwick Varsity competition
The developments in internationalisation via Go Global meant the Union needed to re-assess the role of students in its democratic structures

- Democracy review
- International students’ welfare
  - Visas
  - Fees
  - Hate crime
  - Orientation/Freshers
• International provision at Warwick Students’ Union would be insignificant without our collaboration with the International Office

• Where next?
  – Multicultural Teamwork, Centre for Applied Linguistics
  – Intercultural University Forums
  – Go Global Fund
  – Postgraduates

• Measuring impact: Autumn Wave ISB - 76.4% of all students reported that Warwick’s Globally Connected ethos was important to them - a rise of 15.4% on Summer 2012...

• More insightful than ‘tickets on the door’...?
ANY QUESTIONS?
Thank you!
Daniel.Stevens@nus.org.uk