

***CURRICULUM DESIGN BASED ON HOME STUDENTS'
INTERPRETATIONS OF INTERNATIONALISATION***

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Abstract

Newcastle University has acknowledged the importance of educating culturally aware and diverse students by developing the strategic objective: “to deliver international excellence in our learning, teaching and scholarship activities, whilst providing an excellent all-round student experience”. One way of achieving Newcastle University’s objective of developing itself as a truly international learning environment is to improve home students’ exposure to such international learning. This research focuses on the internationalisation of home students, in particular stage-1 undergraduate students within the University’s School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AFRD). Since this group of students is generally characterised as not being culturally diverse, the attempt was to understand their attitudes and perceptions of internationalisation with the ultimate goal of developing new modules that are truly internationally focused. A two-phased, mixed-method approach was used to determine students’ perspectives on their needs for internationalising the curriculum. The first phase of the research involved conducting focus groups which revealed that whilst stage-1 students from the School of AFRD are apparently unaware of internationalisation or its benefits to their education,

they are enthusiastically receptive to having such concepts incorporated into their degree programmes. For the second phase of the research, quantitative data was collected using TurningPoint technology in a class of stage-1 students to determine effective ways of introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum. Results of phase two indicate that students believe that internationalisation is the responsibility of the entire university, not just lecturers developing curricula. They also considered that working with international students provided a valuable learning experience thereby suggesting that lecturers can play a role in internationalising the curriculum by incorporating group work of mixed students into teaching and learning methods. Limitations of the research and prospects for further investigations are discussed.

Keywords: *internationalisation; curriculum design; attitudes; perceptions.*

Introduction

“Global businesses are increasingly recruiting globally. Graduates who have international experience are highly employable because they have demonstrated that they have drive, resilience and inter-cultural sensitivities as well as language skills. They are a self-selecting elite. If UK graduates are not to be disadvantaged against their internationally more mobile peers, they must appreciate how the...bar has been raised”.

Brown, Archer and Barnes (2008, p. 5)

It is statements like this that have led Newcastle University to demonstrate its commitment to promoting internationalisation by making this

issue the centre of a strategic framework. In keeping with this framework, the School of AFRD has recognised that its internationalisation is limited to a small number of postgraduate students. While recruiting a greater balance of international students to the School's degree programmes is a medium to long-term solution, a shorter term and complimentary solution is to incorporate internationalisation in current curricula and motivate students to learn about the international learning environment.

Newcastle University's School of AFRD is deeply interested in internationalisation issues. There are currently several pedagogical research projects running in the School that include practical application of academic adjustment for international students and how best to educate home students on the benefits of having an international education. The School's Agribusiness Management (ABM), Environmental Science (ES), Rural Studies (RS) and Countryside Management (CM) degree programmes collectively attract approximately 50 first-year students each year. These degrees rarely attract international or female students and are students generally characterised as being well-educated, well-travelled, lively and sociable but not very culturally or gender diverse. The long-term intention of the research is to understand how these students can best be exposed to international learning and how such learning can be incorporated into new modules for their degree programmes.

Therefore the key objectives of this research are:

- To understand what internationalisation knowledge our students currently possess,

- To understand what internationalisation knowledge our students currently do not possess,
- To understand what would be the most effective ways of introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum.
- To achieve these objectives by collecting and analysing data from focus groups and surveys of stage-1 ABM, ES, RS and CM students.

Literature review

In this section, we aim to compare and contrast current knowledge on internationalisation of home students. We aim to define the term ‘internationalisation’ in the context of this research and also seek to understand how the literature describes students’ current knowledge of the concept. We also review the literature on curriculum development to understand scholars’ recommendations for introducing internationalisation into the curriculum.

What is internationalisation?

For research on internationalisation it seems prudent to briefly set the scene and explore the literature on how prominent authors define this term and indeed what criticism the concept has recently attracted.

It appears that many authors look to the definition of internationalisation proposed by Knight (2003, p. 2): “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education”. Other prominent authors on internationalisation look to Bill Rammell (2007), the former Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who commented: “In an increasingly globalised world

there is wide spread acceptance of the importance of ‘internationalising’ higher education and giving students the skills to enable them to operate effectively across boundaries.” These definitions are apt for the present research since they do not ignore the idea of internationalising home students and encompasses tertiary education.

In one of Knight’s papers that considers the boundaries and meaning of internationalisation, Knight (2004) also comments on the multi-level nature of internationalisation in higher education: an argument particularly important for the present research. Knight’s discussion explains that internationalisation crosses many realms of the education sector. She considers the institutional and national/sector levels of internationalisation; however our research takes an even more micro view of internationalisation by further exploring the caution highlighted by Luxon and Peelo (2009). These authors warn about the gap that can form between university policy and those responsible for implementing internationalisation initiatives which we aim to explore in our research.

Another argument that seems to reoccur in the literature is that associated with the synonymous nature of the terms globalisation and internationalisation. Jiang (2008), Jordan (2008), Hanson (2010) and Knight (2004) all provide in-depth discussions about how internationalisation was born from the evolution of globalisation. It is argued that globalisation and economies of knowledge have broadened the opportunities for people (students and staff alike) to move between institutions thereby creating a demand and interest in internationalisation of post-secondary education. Therefore globalisation has provided the catalyst for internationalisation. A more cynical view of where

internationalisation has emerged is based on tuition fee structures (Jiang 2008). It is argued that tertiary institutions are going to great lengths to market themselves abroad in order to generate income from international students (Knight 2004).

From a broader perspective, de Wit (n.d.) advocates that the meaning of internationalisation covers three critical components: it is a process, it is a response to globalisation and it is holistic (in that it accounts for domestic and international students). The way that de Wit attempts to understand this extremely broad and complex concept is to distinguish four groups of rationales for internationalisation: academic, social/cultural, political and economic rationales. Each rationale provides a background to explain the phenomenon of internationalisation and has gained much attention from scholars, such as Jiang (2008) and Qiang (2003), in the process of developing more inclusive, applicable policies, strategies and approaches to internationalisation.

While there are many scholars who are endeavouring to understand internationalisation so it can be nurtured and promoted in post-secondary educational institutions, there are also those who disparage the concept. Ippolito (2007) and Jiang (2008) provide excellent commentaries on the criticisms that have been made of internationalisation. Essentially, they discuss literature that has pointed to internationalisation: 'dumbing down' curricula, leading to a loss of distinctiveness of a nation's higher education practices, over shadowing home students by international students receiving different support services to home students (thus widening the gap between the two

student groups), leading to the massification of higher education and pushing higher education to the limits of being a commodity. In addition to these arguments, Hyland et al. (2008) caution the impulsive tendencies to prefix mundane module or degree titles with the term ‘international’ in an effort to create the perception of a modernised course content. These authors suggest that student perceptions may be that such courses are targeting international students thereby having a narrowing effect on student diversity.

It has been demonstrated herein that internationalisation is a broad concept that has supporters and critics. To conclude, Caruana and Spurling (2007) and Shiel (2009) concede that there is no consensus on the meaning of internationalisation in the context of higher education.

Students’ knowledge of internationalisation

We know a number of things about the effects of exposing students to an international education: the most positive being that students are generally enthusiastic about being included in international learning experiences (Montgomery 2009; Hyland et al. 2008; Ippolito 2007). Conversely, Jordan (2008) raises the point that the disparity of what ‘internationalisation’ means has the knock-on effect of giving students within nations, universities, faculties and schools a varied experience of the concept. Once again, it is the complexity of internationalisation that is contributing to how students are internationalised (Dunne 2009; Hyland et al. 2008; Knight 2004). Further to this, there are a number of other issues that need to be considered in relation to students’ knowledge of internationalisation.

Probably the most obvious hindrance to home students' acceptance of internationalisation is the barrier of language and the extra knowledge required to adapt to varying communication styles. Dunne (2009) cites a version of speech accommodation theory which suggests that home students will alter their communication styles by: moderating their accents, slowing their speech and, in particular, avoiding slang and certain types of humour. Hyland et al. (2008) found that international students also consider language to be a significant barrier to developing multi-cultural relationships as they find it difficult to understand dialects, colloquialisms, jokes and gestures. It is these aspects of interpersonal relationships that turn acquaintances into friendships so since the issues are occurring for both home and international students, there is little wonder about the difficulties with assimilating the two groups.

Attitudes to academic work have also been raised as a major barrier to the development of intercultural relationships amongst students. While Dunne (2009) discusses how home students perceive international students (as having a stronger work ethic and more engaged with the learning process), Turner's (2009) study highlights some astounding differences between how the two groups perceive each other. It appears that the views are diverse and far from complimentary (summarised in Table 1). Dunne's (2009) work considers how cultural differences fragment class groups and thus inhibit cross-cultural interaction while Turner's (2009) work brings to our attention some hard-hitting attitudes which show an intolerance or frustration of cross-cultural interaction.

Table 1: Students' view of home vs. international students (Adapted from Turner (2009, p. 249))

U.K. students' views of international students	International students' views of U.K. students
Poor English skills	Intolerant of L2 English speakers
Quiet – able to participate?	Talk animatedly; show-offs who are not always right
Not-task-focused	Very direct; confrontational or aggressive
Cannot work individually	Unsupportive of the group; individualist
Seeking help from U.K. students	Difficult to get close to; will not socialise
Slow to complete tasks	Work and talk too fast; impatient
Seeking leadership and direction	Cultural ambassadors
Changing over time to become more participative and more "like us"	Dominate the group; controlling and opinionated; assume leadership

Peacock and Harrison (2009) and Dunne (2009) agree that students are naturally attracted, in terms of academic and personal relationships, to others of similar backgrounds. A phenomenon Dunne (2009) discusses as homophylic tendencies. The findings of these authors points to the notion that cross-cultural interaction can be inhibited by students' perceptions of proximity and comfort thereby naturally forcing students against informal, non-curriculum-based internationalisation.

A final point to support the inclusion of internationalisation and international experiences into a curriculum is that made by Parsons (2009) who studied student tendencies to travel and study abroad. This research concluded that students with an internationalised education and frequent patronage of international events scored significantly high on a range of scales designed to measure various international skills. These findings are congruous with the philosophy espoused in the opening quotation of the present paper, and also the research of Shiel (2009) who advocates that students with an internationalised education are students who are aware of the global world.

Two things should be clear from the above literature review: that the meaning of internationalisation remains unclear and that we know quite a lot about the psychological and pedagogical barriers influencing internationalisation of home students. Such barriers include (but are not limited to): language, varying attitudes to academic work, homophytic tendencies and tendencies to study abroad. Something that may not be so clear is the desperate lack of literature that specifically discusses how students define internationalisation and how aware they are of this much-debated and studied transition to which they are being exposed. The strength of the present research is that it will contribute to this under-studied area of the literature.

“One of the most profound...challenges...is the implicit drive to internationalize local student populations, giving them through their education intercultural competence...” (Turner 2009, p. 240). This statement embodies what we are trying to achieve as proponents of internationalisation. However it is interesting to enquire as to whether students know that they are being internationalised and that they are part of a transformative process.

Introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum

Curriculum development is by no means a new source of enquiry and considerable scholastic thought has gone into the idea of internationalising higher education curricula. A plethora of knowledge exists about this concept but it is Leask’s (2009) approach to making sense of internationalisation curriculum development activities that seems to fit well with the present research in terms of making sense of all the available literature. Leask (2009) considers internationalisation of the curriculum from formal and informal

perspectives. She defines the formal curriculum as "...the sequenced programme of teaching and learning activities and experiences organised around defined content areas..." whereas the informal curriculum is defined as "...the various extracurricular activities that take place on campus: those optional activities that are not part of the formal requirements of the degree..." (2009, p. 207). The distinction between these two groups is important as it allows a review of the literature to focus on two important elements of an internationalised learning environment: the in-class activities and the softer, more-tacit knowledge that students gain to help them become more globalised citizens.

The informal curriculum

Knowledge about the informal curriculum suggests that universities which provide students with extracurricular activities enhance skills development and graduate more internationalised students (Leask 2009; Shiel 2009). Opportunities include: students engaging in study abroad initiatives, having international events that celebrate multi-culturalism (Parsons 2009) and finding ways to take advantage of informal relationships developed between home and international students (Hyland et al. 2008; Montgomery 2009).

It is also vital to note a small but critical element of internationalisation-style curriculum development that appears to be somewhat overlooked. Whose responsibility is internationalisation? It seems that internationalisation is a complex system that ebbs and flows between lectures/teacher and students. Wrong. Leask (2009) and Peacock and Harrison (2009) both argue that internationalisation extends far beyond the linear lecturer/teacher student

dynamic. It is advocated that because internationalisation is an holistic concept, people across institutions, such as administration, research, custodial and support staff who are often international themselves, are required to be involved with the internationalisation agenda because it is these staff who often develop lasting relationships with students and contribute to what Leask (2009, p. 207) describes as the “hidden curriculum”.

It is by providing these sorts of opportunities for students that so many authors argue contributes to a true internationalised experience. However, the purpose of the present research is far more micro than this. We are considering curriculum development at the module-level so our attention should focus on the formal curriculum.

The formal curriculum

The importance of internationalisation and indeed internationalisation at Newcastle University has been demonstrated in Sections 2 and 3.1 of this paper. In a small effort to contribute to this transformative strategy, we seek to develop a new module for stage-1 ABM students. This module and student group are ripe for an internationalisation intervention due to their demographic (described in Section 2) and the globalised nature of the food and fibre industries. With this context and research aim in mind, it is necessary to explore the literature on what makes an internationalised module and what ideas the literature has to offer on the best ways to incorporate internationalisation issues into a module.

A sensible place to start is with the findings of Haigh (2009) and Luxon and Peelo (2009): students prefer internationalisation to be embedded within traditional curricula rather than new courses constructed which purely focus on force-feeding internationalisation. With this knowledge in mind, we can now look for ways to incorporate, rather than initiate, internationalisation into a stage-1 ABM module. The literature looks at this from two perspectives: the physical learning space and the pedagogical learning space.

As lecturers, we have control over the physical learning space. This term relates to the classroom and how students can be better integrated using space. Dunne's (2009) research found that students feel more comfortable communicating and interacting in small groups, in smaller-sized classrooms. She also found that international (and mature-aged) students physically segregate themselves from home students in lecture halls: home students tend to sit at the back while international and mature-aged students tend to sit at the front. The consequence is, of course, that lecturers/teachers must be mindful of such segregation and make an effort to mix cultures (and age groups) when assigning in-class activities.

In terms of the pedagogical learning space, Oxford Brookes University's Centre for International Curriculum Inquiry and Networking (CICIN) provides an extensive list of ideas for developing internationalised course content and associated learning activities. Some of these ideas are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Ideas for internationalising course content and teaching and learning activities relevant to the development of a stage-1 ABM module¹

Ideas for course content	Ideas for teaching and learning
Include case studies, projects, examples from a range of different cultures	Encourage students to use examples from their own experiences
Include real or simulated instances of cross-cultural negotiation and communication	Utilise international contacts and networks in the discipline/professional area
Include specific reference to intercultural issues in professional practice	Focus on international issues, international case studies or examples
Include investigation of professional practices in other cultures	Require students to consider issues and problems from a variety of cultural perspectives
Include specific reference to contemporary international and local content	Include simulations of international or intercultural interactions

The beauty of the information shared by Oxford Brookes University is that it heeds a criticism of international modules raised by Hyland et al. (2008). These authors discuss how the term ‘international’ is often used in teaching material without any consideration of the intended learning outcomes, pedagogy or graduates’ professional practice.

Another re-occurring issue in the literature which is addressed by Oxford Brookes University (although not listed in Table 2) is the use of reflective learning practices. Oxford Brookes University’s CICIN suggests that an internationalised curriculum can 1) encourage students to reflect critically on what they are learning in relation to their own cultural identity and its social construction and 2) encourage students to reflect critically on what they are learning in relation to their own cultural and geographical context¹. Reflective learning was also incorporated into intercultural learning by Ippolito (2007) who noted positive outcomes of this teaching and learning technique. However, it is Robson and Turner (2007) who discuss and advocate the benefits of reflective discussion to promote cultural inclusiveness. These authors suggest that students would welcome the opportunity to collectively reflect on teaching

material; as would staff to talk about and reflect upon their own internationalisation experiences.

A final teaching and learning strategy that Oxford Brookes University's CICIN largely overlooks but is prominent in the literature, is the use of group work to stimulate cross-cultural interaction. Peacock and Harrison (2009) found that home students are generally resistant to working in a group with one or more international students principally because it is believed that the weaknesses of the international students drag the home students' marks down (Hyland et al. 2008). On the other hand, Montgomery (2009) found that over a ten-year period, students' attitudes to group work with international students have changed (for the better). At the end of the ten-year research period, students were reported to value the cross-cultural experience of working with international students. This contrasted with findings from the beginning of the research period which showed that conflicts existed in groups (but not because of cultural differences).

So the conclusion is that when thinking of methods to ensure a new module is internationalised, there is a range of techniques that can be called upon based on the experience and research of scholars. Oxford Brookes University's CICIN offers an excellent practical list of ideas while other research suggests that reflective learning and group work are effective ways of internationalising a curriculum.

From this review of the literature on student perceptions of internationalisation and introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum, the following research questions are proposed:

- What internationalisation knowledge do our students currently possess?
- What internationalisation knowledge do our students currently not possess?
- What would be the most effective ways of introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum?

Methodology and methods

A two-phase, mixed method approach was taken to the research with paradigm emphasis being placed on a qualitative methodology (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). Once students' attitudes and opinions of internationalisation had been gathered using a qualitative paradigm, a quantitative approach was adopted to understand the best ways of introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009).

The overall approach to the research is illustrated in Figure 1.

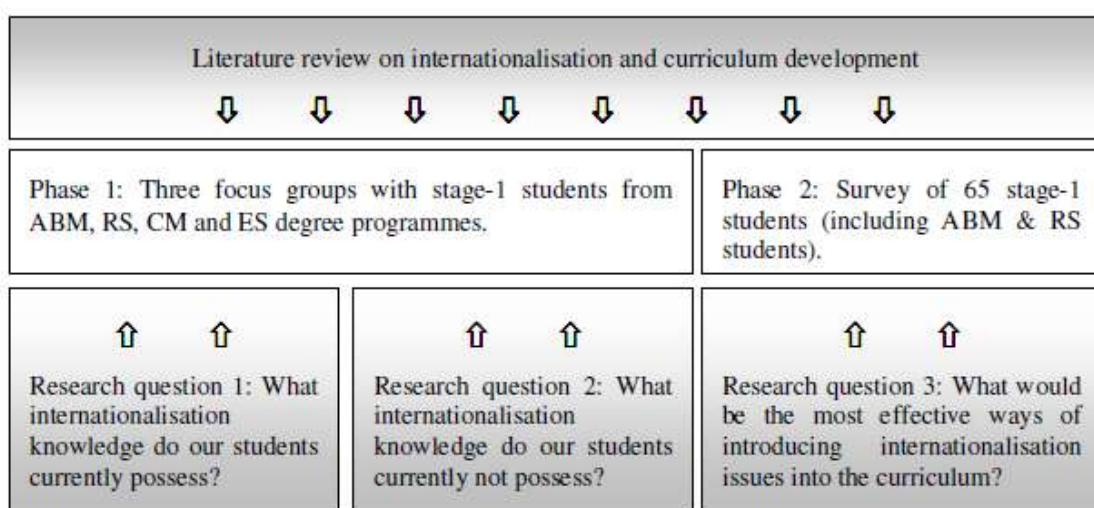


Figure 1: The two-phase, mixed method approach to the research

Phase one – Qualitative research

One of the aims of this research was to identify gaps in students' understanding of internationalisation compared to that of the University's interpretation. In order to explore this dynamic by encouraging discussion and debate, focus groups were selected as the data collection method (Berg 2001). Three focus groups were conducted in mid-November 2009 with a total of 15 first-year students from the University's ABM, ES, RS and CM degree programmes. For the focus groups, an interview guide with a series of open-ended questions (available upon request from the researchers) was developed to mirror the research questions and aims (Yin 2003).

Each focus group began with a brief introduction of the researchers and the background of the project. Participants were then provided with cards and pens to write down words or phrases which they associated with "internationalisation". This followed a group discussion of what students perceived as internationalisation compared to the University's charter (which was electronically projected onto the wall). Further questions were asked about students' experiences with internationalisation, their expectations of studying at an international university and what international aspects of learning would they enjoy having incorporated into their degrees.

Following the focus groups, *verbatim* transcriptions of the discussions were made and thematic analysis was conducted to depict and structure the common ideas and opinions raised during the discussions (Attride-Stirling 2001).

Phase two – Quantitative research

While the aim of phase one of the research was to determine students' understanding of internationalisation, in phase two we sought to understand how students think internationalisation could best be introduced into the curriculum. This phase saw the development of a questionnaire that was administered to a stage-1 class of 65 students, of whom 14 were ABM students and five were RS students. While not all the students were from the degrees represented in the focus groups, the quantitative approach to this phase required a sample size greater than the total cohort of the ABM, ES, RS and CM degrees. Therefore the opportunity was taken to survey students in a class in which ABM and RS students participated.

Due to the absence of an existing survey instrument that considered students' ideas of incorporating internationalisation in the curriculum, a survey was designed from a review of the literature on internationalisation and curriculum development. The survey instrument contained 12 questions which combined nominal (yes/no) and ordinal (preferences and 4-point Likert) scales. The survey instrument and the theoretical sources of its development are presented in Appendix 1.

To conduct the survey, TurningPoint technology (Turning Technologies 2008) was used. The students were familiar with this technology, having used it in the class before, and it was an inexpensive and fast method of collecting data. A total of 65 responses were gathered in this exercise however most questions have missing data due to lack of student response to individual questions.

Discussion of results

The literature reviewed in Section 3 suggests that there is no conclusive meaning of the term “internationalisation” and that students are generally happy to engage with formal, curriculum-based learning on the premise that they have “time to acculturate and reflect on the differences between their previous and current experiences of learning” (Hyland et al. 2008, p. 27).

Following three focus groups, analysis of the data revealed three basic themes:

- “Internationalisation” is an academic term.
- Students have no expectation of gaining an international education from Newcastle University.
- There is enthusiasm for having international learning incorporated into modules.

The following sections will further explore these findings in relation to our research questions and the literature reviewed in Section 3.

Students’ knowledge of internationalisation

In our search for students’ definition of “internationalisation”, terms that arose in the focus groups were generally related to the business environment, such as “globalisation”, “multinational”, “global business” (Table 3 provides more detail). There were, however, a lot of words used that communicated students’ feelings of frustration (“unknown”, “brain drain”) and scepticism (“foreigners into the UK”, “foreign”, “immigration”) about the concept of internationalisation. In exploring these terms with the students we learned that they do not associate the word “internationalisation” with the University or

academic life. In fact one participant said: “There’s not a central message that we want to become an international university”. Further to this, there was no mention by any participant that they perceive Newcastle University to be an internationalised institution. Hence, it appears that the University has not effectively transferred this term from being academic in nature to a term that students associate with learning, much like Luxon and Peelo (2009) warned. They said that there is a danger of a gap forming between policy and practicalities when it comes to internationalisation. From our interpretation of students’ comments, we can see that this gap exists with AFRD students as they are largely unaware of the University’s internationalisation agenda.

Table 3: Focus group participants’ interpretations of the term “internationalisation”.

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3
Foreign	Immigrant	Unknown
Diversity, foreign, multinational	Brian drain	Globalisation
Global business, expansion	Multiculturalism	Multiculturalism
Multi-national, global, foreigners	Foreigners into UK	Integration
Global expansion of business		Immigration
Spread of something from or through many different countries globally		Integration with national residents and vice versa regarding students
Mixing of cultures, expansion to international areas		

An unexpected finding was that students did not have any expectations of gaining an international education at university, nor did they have any expectations of learning in an international environment. Sadly, the general feeling communicated by participants was that Newcastle is a party town where one can have a good time with similar types of people whilst working towards a tertiary qualification. This finding echoes the concerns of Dunne (2009) about the homophylic tendencies of home students in the UK. In the group of

students studied for the present research, it seems that the phenomenon of homophylia is alive and well.

The literature on students' attitudes towards internationalisation is extensive. As discussed in Section 3.3.2, students are generally enthusiastic about an internationalised learning experience (Montgomery 2009; Hyland et al. 2008; Ippolito 2007). But what if students do not know about internationalisation? What if they do not know about the benefits of an internationalised education? The data showed that Newcastle University's internationalisation charter has in no way influenced students' decision making about this institution and they had never considered the benefits of an international education. Once again, this points to Luxon and Peelo's (2009) warning about the gap between policy and practice. It seems that students entering the ABM, CS, RS and EM degree programmes have not been exposed to the professional benefits of internationalisation.

Upon exploring students' international experiences we found them to be largely limited to informal experiences such as international peers at school, holidays abroad and gap year abroad. While these experiences appear to be limited in a university environment that has a specific internationalisation agenda, the literature shows that these are valuable experiences in developing students who are aware of the global world (Parsons 2009; Shiel 2009). Students said that they enjoyed these experiences which can be taken as a cue for those developing internationalisation. This enthusiasm can be carried through into valuable extracurricular activities and future skills development, as recommended by Shiel (2009).

Overall, it was found that the students are enthusiastic about internationalisation. Upon discussing course content and learning activities about internationalisation, participants became excited by the prospect of learning about international business practices and the strong likelihood of pursuing careers in the international commercial environment. Many students openly expressed a desire to have internationalisation incorporated into their degree programmes so they are better prepared to operate in diverse environments as graduates. This is very good news for the internationalisation agenda. Once students knew about internationalisation, how it is practiced and its benefits, they were most enthusiastic about it.

Introducing internationalisation issues into the curriculum

Ways of introducing internationalisation into the curriculum were assessed by a survey of 65 stage-1 students (of whom 14 were ABM students and five were RS students). The results of which are presented in Appendix 2. Of the 12 questions proposed to the survey participants, there were two encouraging conclusions.

An overwhelming majority of participants (87.3%) strongly agree that internationalisation is the responsibility of the entire university. This is encouraging since it indicates, as suggested by Leask (2009) and Peacock and Harrison (2009), that students view internationalisation as an issue concerning students, lecturers, administration staff, the student union and indeed the University as a whole.

The other encouraging finding was that 77.8% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that a valuable learning experience can be gained from working with international students. Exactly how this can be achieved is still unclear. In keeping with findings of Montgomery (2009) and Wicaksono (2008), we suggest that students value the cross-cultural experience of working with international students through group work. We asked students how strongly they agree (or disagree) with developing such relationships through group work and 61.3% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed. So it seems that group work would be one way of fostering cross-cultural relationships, although due to reasonably low favourability of students, it would be sensible to support group activities with some of the recommendations made by Oxford Brookes University's CICIN¹ or incorporate some reflective learning exercises into the curriculum as applied by Ippolito (2007) and recommended by Robson and Turner (2007).

A finding that was contrary to views in the literature is that events which celebrate multi-culturalism will help in internationalising a university. We asked two questions about students' attitudes towards events that celebrate cultural diversity. The first of the two questions asked if students think they will become internationalised by attending such events. The majority of respondents (64.5%) said no and similarly, 62.3% of students said that they had not attended such an event in the past 12 months. So while authors such as Parsons (2009) and Shiel (2009) advocate multi-cultural activities, it seems that the group of students studied for the present research are unresponsive to this method of promoting internationalisation.

Conclusions

This research aimed to address three research questions which primarily focused on what students know about internationalisation and how it can be incorporated into a new module for stage-1 ABM students. A two-phase, mixed-method approach was taken and there were generally two main findings. Focus group research led us to the conclusion that stage-1 students from four under-graduate degrees run within the University's School of AFRD were alarmingly unaware of the internationalisation agenda and the benefits of an international education. Following this, a small survey of 65 stage-1 students showed that students, once they understand the concept of internationalisation, believe that it is a valuable part of higher education and is the responsibility of all members of the University environment. However, the second of the two main conclusions of the research is that, for these particular students, only using group work to foster cross-cultural learning is insufficient.

There are two major limitations of this research which need to be highlighted. The first is the small sample size of the focus groups and survey. The first aspect to consider is that the population of stage-1 ABM for 2009/10 is 25 students so our sample population was already very small. However, it is interesting to note that Hyland et al. (2008) also experienced similar difficulties in recruiting students to take part in research related to internationalisation. Such difficulties led these authors to conclude that there is a general lack of interest amongst students towards internationalisation. It would be rash to draw the same conclusions about the present research but there are definite

lessons that can be learnt about students' lack of knowledge about internationalisation and its strategic importance to Newcastle University.

The other limitation that needs comment is associated with the survey instrument used to attain student ideas about incorporating internationalisation into the curriculum. Whilst the survey questions all have a theoretical basis (as shown in Appendix 1), it would have been better to include more ideas about learning activities from the literature, such as those suggested by Oxford Brookes University's CICIN¹ and Robson and Turner (2007).

There are certainly areas for further research. Students' preference for incorporating internationalisation into the curriculum definitely needs deeper investigation. For this to be achieved, a more comprehensive survey needs to be developed and tested on a sample of students more specific to ABM. At an institutional level, more knowledge is required to bridge the gap between internationalisation policy and developing students' knowledge about the existence and benefits of the concept.

Overall, this research has yielded some valuable information that will help in the development of a new, truly internationalised module for stage-1 ABM students. For the development of the module, group work with international students needs to be incorporated as does some case studies on international agribusiness issues and possibly some reflective learning activities. With the lessons learned from this research, it is envisaged that the new module will not only present stage-1 students with exposure to global agribusiness issues but students will be well engaged since their peers have provided input into 'what works' in their learning environment.

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Appendix 1: Theoretical justification of survey questions

Question	Source materials
1. Whose responsibility is internationalisation?	Haigh (2008), Haigh (2002), Peacock & Harrison (2009).
2. Integration of students who stick together	Peacock & Harrison (2009), Montgomery (2009).
3. Challenge cultural stereotypes	Peacock & Harrison (2009), Montgomery (2009), Turner (2009).
4. Different cultural practices	Haigh (2002).
5. Student perceptions of other nationalities	Turner (2009).
6. Learning about international issues	Black (2004) (with ideas from Peacock & Harrison (2009), Montgomery (2009), Turner (2009))
7. Group work between students	Peacock & Harrison (2009), Montgomery (2009), Parsons (2009).
8. Students attending international events	Parsons (2009)
9. Actual attendance of international events	Parsons (2009)
10. Internationalisation is important	Montgomery (2009), Jordan (2008), Leask (2009).
11. Working with international students	Parsons (2009), Montgomery (2009), Jordan (2008), Ippolito (2007).
12. Swamped with international issues	Harrison and Peacock (2009).

Appendix 2: Descriptive results of phase 2 survey

1. Whose responsibility is it to promote internationalisation?

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Students	1.59%	1
Lecturers	1.59%	1
Administration staff	3.17%	2
Student Union	4.76%	3
All of these (our entire University)	87.30%	55
None of the above	1.59%	1
Totals	100%	63

2. All University staff should work harder to better integrate groups of students who tend not to mix with others.

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree	19.05%	12
Agree	28.57%	18
Disagree	38.10%	24
Strongly Disagree	14.29%	9
Totals	100%	63

3. It is important to somehow challenge cultural stereotyping.

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree	14.52%	9
Agree	66.13%	41
Disagree	17.74%	11
Strongly Disagree	1.61%	1
Totals	100%	62

4. Lectures should educate students about different cultural practices.

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree	20%	12
Agree	38.33%	23
Disagree	30%	18
Strongly Disagree	11.67%	7
Totals	100%	60

5. Lecturers should educate students about how students perceive other students from different nationalities

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree	14.75%	9
Agree	37.70%	23
Disagree	29.51%	18
Strongly Disagree	18.03%	11
Totals	100%	61

6. I would best learn about international issues by:

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Working with international students in group projects.	18.46%	12
Watching and analysing movies with international issues in class.		
Playing interactive games that focus on international issues in class.	10.77%	7
Doing assignments that specifically relate to international issues.	27.69%	18
All of the above.		
None of the above.	12.31%	8
	12.31%	8
Totals	100%	65

7. Group work with local & international students mixed together would be a good way to promote and develop the concept of internationalisation amongst students.

	Responses	
	(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree	22.58%	14
Agree	38.71%	24
Disagree	27.42%	17
Strongly Disagree	11.29%	7
Totals	100%	62

8. I will become an internationalised student by attending events that celebrate cultural diversity (inside or outside the University)

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
Yes		35.48%	22
No		64.52%	40
	Totals	100%	62

9. I have attended an event that celebrates cultural diversity in the past 12 months (inside or outside the University)

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
Yes		37.70%	23
No		62.30%	38
	Totals	100%	61

10. I believe that a valuable learning experience can be gained from working with international students.

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree		22.22%	14
Agree		55.56%	35
Disagree		12.70%	8
Strongly Disagree		9.52%	6
	Totals	100%	63

11. Please don't let us get swamped by international issues!

		Responses	
		(percent)	(count)
Strongly Agree		30.65%	19
Agree		40.32%	25
Disagree		22.58%	14
Strongly Disagree		6.45%	4
	Totals	100%	62

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