

# FORUM

MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

*Discussing international education*



## THE NEW INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

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39 WHO IS EUROPE'S  
SENIOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICER?

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## 06

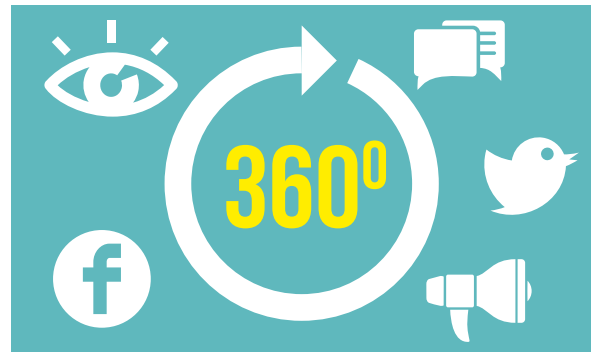
“Ongoing transformations leave their imprint on the job of international officers”

NEW TIMES, NEW CHALLENGES

## 29

“Without well-rounded communication, internationalisation reduces itself to the central international office and the activities of isolated groups”

360° COMMUNICATIONS



## 32

“I firmly believe in the value of sharing our experiences and learning from one another”

IN CONVERSATION WITH DENNIS MURRAY

## 39

“Everyone who identified as a Senior International Officer reported either leading or being involved in strategic planning efforts”

WHO IS EUROPE'S SENIOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICER?



# EDITORIAL

**C**reative. Collaborative. Knowledgeable. Nimble. Specialist. Generalist. Academic, advocate, or scholar-practitioner. Which way (or ways!) forward for the international officer of today and for the future? This is the fundamental question of the current issue of *Forum*, bounded in a discussion of what is needed to effectively manage internationalisation and move our institutions forward into new – both exciting and daunting – territory, as this very volatile 21st century unfolds before us.

The articles in this issue illustrate the many dimensions of the work that international offices and officers need to address, as well as the range of complex circumstances in which professionals in our field must operate. Common threads include the need to anticipate change, deal with ambiguity, and cultivate and sustain productive relationships with many different kinds of actors who have a stake in the internationalisation agenda.

Yulia Grinkevich's piece uses the term *bricoleurs*, which for me captures two crucial ideas relevant to our field. First, there is the constant call to **create**, to build out new programmes and new initiatives as new demands arise. There is a real sense of evolution in the field of international education. We see this, for example, in the context of Nigel Healey's article on the very new role of the international branch campus manager, and certainly in the inter-generational

reflections of (daughter) Sara Marie Ullerø and (mother) Héléne Bernot Ullerö, also captured in this issue. Second, the work of a *bricoleur* is done with whatever materials may be at hand. This requires a keen ability to understand one's context and to leverage the resources at one's disposal. Making the most of relationships – for example, between academics and administrators – is touched upon by contributor Douglas Proctor and others, while working to turn our international offices into 'classrooms', as suggested by Jane Edwards, also builds on this notion of making creative use of the particular resources within our reach.

Our interview with Dennis Murray, a 'founding father' of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), highlights key issues related to the future work of international education professionals, particularly in relation to creativity, adaptability and "*shared and distributed*" leadership. He also alludes to the notion of being attentive to 'surprises' – a powerful insight in a year that brought us Brexit and a thoroughly tumultuous presidential election in the United States, both developments with potentially profound effects on the global international education community.

Despite – or perhaps precisely because of – the inevitability of unexpected turns in the road, the need has perhaps never been greater to think and plan strategically, and to act on the basis of thoughtful, ethical vision and purpose. This goes



for individuals and for institutions. The EAIE's newly unveiled strategy for the period 2016–2020 provides an important roadmap for our organisation as we seek to navigate the uncertain – but certain-to-surprise! – period ahead. *Forum* and the EAIE's other publications will do their best to contribute to the realisation of the four strategic goals that underpin the Association's vision, and to foster wider conversation about the ways we can improve our individual practice and work collectively to make a positive difference in the world through international education.

—*Laura Rumbley*, Editor  
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# CONTRIBUTORS

 *Yulia Grinkevich*

**Director of Internationalisation, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russia**

As a true international educator, Yulia practices what she preaches: she takes her son on international trips so that he can experience different cultures and traditions.

 *Maria Shabanova*

**Deputy Director of the Academic Integration Centre, Office of Internationalisation, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russia**

When Maria isn't working with international students and faculty, she likes to get crafty. Currently, she's developing her crochet, embroidery and metal clay skills.

 *Luis Delgado*

**Executive Advisor, General Secretariat of Universities, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Spain**

Besides his work as a civil servant, Luis is a researcher in higher education. He spends the rest of his time very actively: travelling, swimming, cycling, sailing, and playing golf.

 *Totti Könnölä*

**Managing Director, Insight Foresight Institute, Spain**

Totti, who works as an innovation consultant, has over 100 publications under his belt. The more he learns about innovation, the more he sees it as a form of jazz.

 *Erin Paullin*

**Global Officer, Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin, Ireland**

When she isn't at work, Erin, a recent transplant to Dublin, enjoys visiting the city's many comedy clubs and experiencing the renowned Irish humour at its finest.

 *Rosemary Smith*

**Director of International Experience and Exchange, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University, UK**

Rosemary is a busy woman: she works with students and speaks Japanese, French and some German. Now, she's walking the coast of Wales – which is over 800 miles long!

 *Douglas Proctor*

**PhD candidate, University of Melbourne, Australia**

Douglas is a keen singer and sings baritone in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus. From February, he will be in Dublin and is open to recommendations of a good choir there!

 *Jane Edwards*

**Dean of International and Professional Experience and Senior Associate Dean, Yale University, USA**

Jane is a polyglot in its purest forms, speaking French, Spanish, Portuguese, Welsh and Esperanto. As if that wasn't enough, she has reading knowledge of Latin and German.

 *Laura Crane*

**Director of Academic Affairs and Operations, Faculty of Education, York University; PhD candidate, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada**

When Laura has any free time from work these days, she works a little more – on attaining her PhD from the University of Toronto.

 *Nigel Healey*

**Vice Chancellor, Fiji National University, Fiji**

All of Nigel's degrees are from UK universities, yet his most formative experiences are from countries he has lived and worked in (Australia, USA, Belarus, Russia, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, New Zealand and now Fiji)!

 *Marina Casals Sala*

**Director of International Relations, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Spain**

When Marina isn't working on international strategy, institutional processes, training in international education, or managing an international office, she enjoys salsa dancing.

 *Vicky Lewis*

**Independent consultant, Vicky Lewis Consulting, UK**

Vicky has lived and worked in France, Germany and Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, at just 18 years old, she spent some time volunteering at a children's home.

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# A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME & SPACE

Senior International Officers have a great amount of experience in the field of internationalisation. They have seen it change, they see trends ahead of time, and their knowledge can offer inspiration to those with less experience or seniority. Through interviews with eight leaders who have worked in 10 different countries, this article showcases some of the commonalities and divergences in priorities around the world.

In some countries, the international officer role is well-understood, with broadly consistent job descriptions and Master's level programmes aimed at those wishing to progress within the field. In other countries, there is greater fluidity – and career pathways are less explicit. So how do expectations vary in different national contexts? How has the field changed in recent decades? What qualities are looked for in new entrants to the profession and what future changes are foreseen? What advice do experienced international officers have for ambitious new recruits?

#### GATHERING EXPERT VIEWS

As someone who took up her first international office role (in a small Welsh university) in 1994, I am fascinated by the way expectations have changed within my own national context (the UK) during the course of my career. As such, I thought it would be interesting to speak to Senior International Officers from a range of different countries about the changing nature of the role of international officer – and their predictions for the future. This is not a rigorous academic study, but rather an attempt to gather views from a handful of experienced and well-informed individuals, to suggest conclusions to be drawn from these. I engaged with eight Senior International Officers (SIOs) working in a variety of institutional settings. Between them, they had held international relations roles in ten different countries.<sup>1</sup> Many common themes emerged – as well as some variations, often linked to national context.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICER PAST

Most of the SIO respondents had studied abroad themselves before taking up their first role in international higher education. Some had lived abroad for longer periods, some had studied languages or a related subject, some had worked in a commercial environment. One started out as an academic, another as a language teacher. Most emphasised that their language and communication skills, international experience and aptitude for relationship building were important when they entered their first role. A number of them started as Erasmus exchange coordinators and worked their way up.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICER PRESENT

When asked what they looked for in new hires nowadays, there were some variations, dictated largely by national context. Those working in non-English speaking countries stressed the importance of being able to operate in English – and ideally other languages too. International and intercultural experience are highly valued in Slovenian, Polish, Swiss and American institutions. In the USA context, demonstrating the ability to function in a multicultural team is important.

Many SIOs mentioned generic skills such as communication skills, team working, flexibility, creativity, problem solving, numeracy, IT skills and the ability to manage projects. Some look for character traits like tolerance, openness and enthusiasm. The SIO from Spain observed that evaluation of such qualities at interview is crucial. Generally, even for entry-level posts, a Bachelor's degree is now expected. However, the field of study is less important than being able to demonstrate the required skills and personal qualities for the role.

In a few of the respondent's countries, professional qualifications or evidence of specific aptitudes are sought. SIOs from the UK and Sweden look for marketing expertise (and qualifications) for a number of roles. Moreover, in these countries and in New Zealand, there is an emphasis on being able to quantify outcomes, work in a KPI-driven context, analyse complex information and develop resource-based arguments.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICER FUTURE

When asked what changes they expected to see in the next 10 to 15 years, respondents often mentioned the professionalisation of the field. In some contexts, this was linked to commercialisation and greater competition. So, for example, it was suggested that a marketing or sales background may be required for some roles in Spanish universities, and that qualifications in international higher education may be sought by Swiss institutions. Two SIOs working in quite different contexts (New Zealand and Slovenia) commented that passion alone is no longer enough and that, increasingly, a more detached, evidence-based approach

will be required. A UK SIO envisaged an increase in desk-based intelligence-gathering, data-crunching roles.

Growth areas such as online learning and strategic partnerships will need imaginative, flexible, problem-solver types. It was also suggested that future international officers will need a geographical specialism (Asia was mentioned as an area of interest by the SIO from Slovenia) as well as general cultural awareness. The need for academic staff to be part of this professionalisation was mentioned, as the expectation that they engage interculturally (with students from other countries, with partners and research collaborators) grows. One UK-based SIO saw the old UK student recruitment focused model of the international office disappearing – and a broader approach to internationalisation becoming embedded within academic functions.

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## It is advantageous to acquire experience within different types of institutions or different business sectors

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Another UK SIO foresaw less international travel for UK-based staff and greater reliance on in-country staff who can straddle two cultures – possibly individuals who have studied or worked in the UK but wish to relocate back home. A recurrent theme was the need for international officers to engage staff (academic and professional) right across their institution and to communicate compellingly with those in senior positions.

### ADVICE FOR NEW ENTRANTS

I asked the SIOs what advice they had for ambitious new entrants to the field of international education, who aspire to

an SIO role in the future. A key piece of advice was to develop breadth of experience. There were different perspectives on whether it was better to undertake a specialist role in another sector, then transfer

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## Examine your own values; be self-aware, open to change, and reflect regularly on the mental and emotional distance you have travelled as a result of your role

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your skills into a university setting; or to pursue a range of roles within higher education before homing in on a particular specialism. Whichever route an individual takes, it is advantageous to acquire experience within different types of institutions or different business sectors. Experience of studying or working for extended periods in other countries is also valuable.

Once in the higher education sector, employees should demonstrate a thirst for learning – starting with reading up on higher education internationalisation, but potentially including Master's or Doctoral level study in the field. The increasing emphasis on research-informed internationalisation strategies means that evidence of analytical thinking is highly valued.

The SIOs emphasised the importance of understanding the context in which one is operating – institutional priorities, how different functions work together, what competitors are doing, national internationalisation priorities and broader global developments. New international

officers were urged to learn from colleagues, attend conferences and training, volunteer for roles beyond the institution (*eg* regional or national working parties) and get involved (*eg* present a poster at

a conference, ask questions at sessions). Another piece of advice was to examine your own values; be self-aware, open to change, and reflect regularly on the mental and emotional distance you have travelled as a result of your role.

Whilst the precise emphasis of international office roles and the nature of future requirements varied somewhat from country to country, there was a universal sense of professionalisation within the field. The advice for ambitious individuals at an early career stage was fairly consistent: know yourself; understand your operating context; build broad experience; and keep learning.

— VICKY LEWIS

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1. I would like to thank the eight individuals (who have worked in France, Morocco, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA) who generously gave their time to respond to my questions, providing such rich content for this article.