

# FORUM

MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

*Discussing international education*

## INTERNATIONALISATION FOR ALL

### DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

06 FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND INCLUSIVE MODELS

15 STUDENT-LED INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

18 IN CONVERSATION WITH MELANIE AGNEW

30 PATHWAYS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS



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# CONTENTS

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## 04 EDITORIAL

## 05 CONTRIBUTORS

## 06 FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND INCLUSIVE MODELS

Time to challenge preconceived notions about internationalisation

## 09 INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Building community around existing organisational structures

## 12 HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONALISATION

The hidden messages in a student's study experience

## 15 STUDENT-LED INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

For truly inclusive internationalisation, students can't be left behind

## 18 IN CONVERSATION WITH MELANIE AGNEW

Creator of the 'Cultural Readiness for Internationalisation' model

## 22 BACK EDUCATORS TO BOOST INTERNATIONALISATION FOR ALL

How to equip educators with the tools for success

## 25 NEW LEADERSHIP MODELS FOR COIL

Replicating an immersive exchange programme in a virtual context

## 28 INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF IaH

Combining internationalisation courses under one umbrella

## 30 PATHWAYS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Recruiting from secondary schools with international programmes

## 33 RESHAPING POLICY FOR INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONALISATION

South Africa's new framework facilitates future strategies

## 37 EAIE BLOG SPOT

## 39 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## 06

“Many international offices have become offices for global engagement”

**FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND INCLUSIVE MODELS**

## 15

“In order to achieve internationalisation for all, it needs to be something in which students can see themselves reflected”

**STUDENT-LED INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME**



## 18

“The key message about using distributed leadership and doing it well is creating a culture of trust and respect”

**IN CONVERSATION WITH MELANIE AGNEW**

## 30

“International student services staff have an opportunity to recruit international students much closer to home”

**PATHWAYS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS**



# EDITORIAL

The Winter 2021 issue of *Forum* shines a spotlight on distributed leadership in international education. Recognising that internationalisation is pervasive and often framed as an institution-wide priority operating at multiple levels, the contributions in this issue seek to interrogate internationalisation actors outside the traditional international office.

In undertaking this exploration, the purpose was not to call into question the important leadership and coordination role played by an international office, but to highlight other sources of international engagement activity, including faculty, staff and students, noting that different drivers and barriers are often at play.

Research on internationalisation also points to the fact that understandings of internationalisation vary widely across an institution. Academic staff view international engagement differently depending on their field or discipline, and approaches to internationalisation of the curriculum are clearly shaped along disciplinary lines. Similarly, different narratives around internationalisation exist across the professional staff community.

Given these different drivers and multiple interpretations, it is not surprising that it can be hard to capture information and data about the more distributed forms of internationalisation, as they are driven less by formal strategy than by the individual commitment of staff and students.

Being aware that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to internationalisation in higher education, this collection of articles explores activities that might otherwise remain hidden or go unacknowledged within an institution. In so doing, we have sought to understand whether the distributed nature of international education activity reinforces and amplifies successful internationalisation.

The opening article, authored by Vicky Lewis, encourages us to challenge our as-

sumptions about leadership and delivery in international education. Based on detailed research into the international strategies of UK universities, Vicky looks beyond the pandemic to a future model of internationalisation which is distributed and empowering. A tangible example of such a model is presented by Samuil Angelov, who describes the establishment of a community of global actors among teaching staff to consider and respond to the needs of Internationalisation at Home.

Turning to the role of students, the steering group of the EAIE Expert Community *Internationalisation at Home* proposes a true partnership between academic staff and students in addressing the internationalisation of the hidden curriculum. Eve Court then describes a wide-ranging approach to inclusive internationalisation, where programmes and initiatives in global citizenship are delivered by way of the University of British Columbia's Global Lounge.

I am delighted that Melanie Agnew, Dean of Education at Westminster College in the USA, agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Having previously developed an organisational change model to understand cultural readiness for internationalisation, Professor Agnew shares her current reflections on distributed leadership and points to opportunities for academic staff to learn about internationalisation in the context of their discipline.

Keeping the role of educators front and centre, Marloes Ambagts-van Rooijen, Adinda van Gaalen, Simone Hackett and Suzan Kommers argue that we need to provide educators with the time, space and expertise to develop purposeful internationalisation activities for students. While time was not on anyone's side in the pivot from physical to virtual mobility in early 2020, Laurie Jensen, Nina Junterreal, Sarah Kagan and Maria White reflect on the changed leadership and coordination needs of online international programmes



in nursing and midwifery at the University of Pennsylvania. Not only did the mainstreaming of online programming require a more integrated leadership structure, but it changed roles and responsibilities too.

Looking at more long-term approaches to internationalisation in the curriculum, Juuso Loikkanen and Hanna Reinikainen describe an initiative to create a 'Studies in Internationalisation' module which enables students to combine otherwise disparate offerings across the institution under a single umbrella. Focusing then on the connections between secondary and tertiary education, Maureen Manning speaks about opportunities to create partnerships with secondary schools offering international programmes, thereby re-framing institutional efforts to attract international students by way of local pathways.

Closing out this issue, Tasmeera Singh outlines national and institutional approaches to internationalisation in South Africa, and points to how reshaped policies should enable international educators to focus on internationalisation for all.

With my thanks to fellow members of the EAIE Publications Committee Jos Beelen and Lucia Brajkovic who joined me in reviewing submissions; I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR  
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# CONTRIBUTORS

## *Vicky Lewis*

Founder and director, Vicky Lewis Consulting, UK

Vicky has studied and worked in France, Germany, Turkey, Cyprus and Thailand. After working as a freelance travel writer, her career in international education began when she settled in Wales as an International Officer.

## *Samuil Angelov*

Lecturer and semester coordinator, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

With a background in mathematics and computer science, Samuil's real passion is studying cultural differences. He has recently discovered a talent for cooking, especially recipes from different countries.

## *Ineke Huyskens*

Project leader, Global acting coordinator internationalisation, Fontys University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Ineke is an expert in international projects, collaboration and communication. She has polished and practiced these skills with concrete working and learning experiences all over the world.

## *Eveke de Louw*

Senior international officer, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Eveke considers herself a 'product of Internationalisation at Home'. She believes students should be provided with meaningful international and intercultural experiences, whether abroad or at home.

## *Tanja Reiffenrath*

Coordinator internationalisation of the curriculum, University of Goettingen, Germany  
Tanja is a PhD-level expert of Internationalisation at Home and has studied in Germany and the US. In her free time, she loves exploring outdoors and teaching about local wildlife.

## *Eva Haug*

Educational advisor internationalisation of the curriculum and COIL/VE, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Eva believes real learning can only occur by introducing diverse perspectives and realities. Her love for art is visualised on her skin with a tattoo of Frida Kahlo.

## *Alfonso Díaz Segura*

Vice rector for internationalisation and digital transformation, University CEU Cardenal Herrera, Spain

Alfonso has a genuine interest in connecting people and providing opportunities for students to broaden their vision towards a global understanding of the world.

## *Katarina Aškerc Zadravec*

Vice dean for quality, Ljubljana School of Business, Slovenia

Beginning her career in international education at the Slovenian Erasmus+ national agency, Katarina's expertise is in the implementation of Internationalisation at Home and internationalised curriculum.

## *Eve Court*

Program advisor, Global Campus Initiatives, University of British Columbia, Canada

A former international student in Canada, Spain, Mexico, Poland, Austria and the US, Eve is an expert in Global Citizenship Education and Internationalisation at Home.

## *Marloes Ambagts-van Rooijen*

Senior lecturer internationalisation and innovation, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Throughout her life, Marloes has observed how enriching it is to exchange perspectives with people who see the world through a different lens. She has recently taken up belly dancing.

## *Adinda van Gaalen*

Policy advisor research, Inholland University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Adinda studied and worked in tourism before transitioning her career towards internationalisation. She loves skiing and mountains, both reminders to her of the need to work harder to stop climate change.

## *Simone Hackett*

Senior lecturer and researcher, The Hague University of Applied Sciences and Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Simone's motivation for initially starting to internationalise her courses was for her students to gain some of the same experiences she enjoyed when living and travelling abroad.

## *Suzan Kommers*

Researcher, Nuffic, the Netherlands

Suzan believes that international experiences for students are essential to grow a feeling of shared humanity. In her work, she focuses on inclusive internationalisation and lifelong learning to inform national internationalisation policy.

## *Laurie E. Jensen*

Assistant director, Penn Abroad, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Studying abroad as an undergraduate inspired Laurie's passion for international education. In her free time, she is working to earn her private pilot's license and hopes to one day become a flight instructor.

## *Nina A. Juntereal*

Hillman scholar in nursing innovation, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, USA

Nina, who is also a professional organist, is dedicated to building community, increasing access and promoting equity in education. She is an advocate of the COIL model in her teaching.

## *Sarah H. Kagan*

Lucy Walker honorary term professor of gerontological nursing and clinical nurse specialist, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Sara fell into international education in the mid-90s when asked to develop an exchange programme for nursing students. She was instantly hooked and international education is now a major component of her academic work.

## *Maria S. White*

Advanced senior lecturer, University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, USA

Maria was drawn to new ways of thinking about nursing education and nursing practice by working with students on exchange programmes.

## *Juuso Loikkanen*

Coordinator of international affairs, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

With a PhD in systematic theology, Juuso is thrilled by the dynamic and challenging environment of international education. He works with master's degree programmes at his university.

## *Hanna Reinikainen*

Coordinator and career counsellor, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

A keen interest in foreign languages and cultures fuelled Hanna's work in international education. She has a degree in English literature and runs a 'one-woman club' for Russian and Soviet literature.

## *Maureen Manning*

Chief academic officer, Lingo Immersion, USA

Maureen's international education journey started at 16 on an exchange to Ecuador, and since then she has taught international programmes on four continents. She is also a vocalist and once serenaded a blind date which resulted in two sons and 20 years of marriage.

## *Tasmeera Singh*

Principal international advisor, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Tasmeera has worked in international higher education since 2000. She recently rekindled her love for poetry and had two poems published last year.

# FRESH PERSPECTIVES & INCLUSIVE MODELS



Inclusive internationalisation is more than simply involving staff outside the international office. The time has come to challenge our preconceived notions about internationalisation and to reconceptualise the international office by encouraging and empowering new voices and perspectives.

‘We cannot simply go back to pre-pandemic ways of working.’ This was a common refrain in a series of interviews conducted in the UK in February and March 2021 with 12 senior stakeholders involved in – or with an interesting viewpoint on – the development of institutional global engagement strategies. These interviews formed part of a research study on the current and future positioning of global engagement within UK university strategic plans. They explored what would be different about the next generation of strategies. It became clear that the notion of ‘no going back’ is as relevant to the conceptualisation, leadership and delivery of internationalisation as it is to any other aspect of higher education.

The Anglocentric, commercially-driven model of internationalisation espoused by many UK universities over recent decades was already looking outmoded before COVID-19 struck. There was growing focus on the role of higher education in

helping to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in supporting climate action and in addressing global social challenges such as equity and inclusion. The pandemic shone an even brighter spotlight on these issues.

In the report *UK Universities’ Global Engagement Strategies: Time for a rethink?*<sup>1</sup>, UK higher education institutions are urged to reconsider their approach to global engagement. It is argued that stakeholders well beyond the international office need to be involved in internationalisation and – taking things one step further – invited to challenge current models and assumptions.

#### INVITING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

When internationalisation strategies are developed, it is easy to have fixed ideas about what should be included and to draw on the contributions of the same enthusiasts time after time. To develop a more innovative, sustainable and relatable strategy, new voices should be sought out.





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We must always be conscious that, in the UK, our approach to internationalisation is conditioned by our Global North perspectives. We make assumptions about what terms mean and are sometimes oblivious to other interpretations. For some, internationalisation is synonymous with westernisation – with its potentially negative connotations. Within UK strategies and

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## To develop a more innovative, sustainable and relatable strategy, new voices should be sought out

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discourse, there has been a gradual shift in terminology from ‘international(isation)’ to ‘global engagement’. Many international offices have become ‘offices for global engagement’ (which sounds more inclusive and all-encompassing).

However, one interviewee suggested that the term ‘global engagement’ can itself hide inequalities and sweep problems under the carpet. Changing the terminology does not automatically change the underlying approach.

It is essential to involve people from the Global South and others with alternative perspectives who can spot – and call out – problematic notions. This means reaching out beyond the international office to academic and professional service colleagues, staff in partner institutions, students and alumni. The most distinctive strategies are informed by the reflective input of those who actively challenge preconceptions and stereotypes.

### RETHINKING LEADERSHIP AND DELIVERY

Interviewees commented on the need to spread the global ethos throughout the institution and broaden ownership. This was contrasted to centralised approaches which tend to treat internationalisation

as the responsibility of specific individuals and departments.

One Pro Vice-Chancellor observed that successful global engagement is more to do with culture and behaviour than with written strategy. They saw their job as explaining how global engagement aligns with institutional values and ensuring that global thinking informs decisions and behaviours.

In order to address perceived disconnects between leadership teams and academics and between academics and practitioners, it was suggested that leaders need to share their internationalisation dilemmas more openly. By explaining the consequences of certain courses of action, they can help academic colleagues to see the bigger picture. One interviewee felt that academics themselves could work on showing the linkages between their areas of expertise and internationalisation strategy and practice, observing that “it needs to be understood that developing an international university is everyone’s business”.

To optimise staff engagement, most interviewees advocated combining formal and informal mechanisms. While effective committees and processes were seen as useful to marshal efforts, it was also deemed necessary to plug into the less formal ecosystem of people with knowledge, interest and energy. This encourages dispersed leadership and supports bottom-up initiatives. The project-based ‘task and finish group’ approach, which entails smaller sub-groups working towards a specific objective, was seen as facilitating swifter progress than formal committees.

One interviewee observed that joining things up in a pluralistic culture requires you to recognise that apparently competing priorities (such as global engagement; sustainability; employability; enterprise; and equality, diversity and inclusion) can be tackled in a coordinated, mutually supportive manner. The challenge is to understand how different areas of work complement one another and to build on common objectives.

One example is international graduate employability, which requires close cooperation between those working in curriculum design, careers and employability, international student recruitment, alumni relations and marketing. Each party may come at the issue from a slightly different angle and bring a different skillset to the table. However, sharing the work (and costs) across different teams can be an ideal way to achieve institutional goals while simultaneously dismantling a silo-working culture.

#### RECONCEPTUALISING INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OPERATIONS

International office teams are familiar with people working remotely. However, the lockdown experience of having most staff distributed most of the time could pave the way for a new type of international office operation: one designed so that physical distance is no barrier to effective teamwork.

Before the spread of COVID-19, there were already moves in some UK universities to base a higher proportion of staff in the world region for which they were responsible, rebalancing resources between the home campus and in-country operations.

The 2020s may see this taken to the next level, with internationally mature universities building global networks of strategically located regional hubs or centres, each with a broad remit and staff base. These hubs will enjoy much higher levels of autonomy than a traditional overseas office and will be responsible not just for student recruitment from their region, but for partnership development and stewardship, alumni relations, and profile-raising with government, employers and opinion-formers.

There are several reasons to adopt this model. It reduces long-haul flights from the UK, contributing to a decrease in institutional carbon emissions. It means that business is less disrupted, should global pandemics or other events result in international travel restrictions. It also moves beyond what always felt like a colonialist model of operating, where UK-based staff descended on a country for brief periods, then returned home to direct operations from 'UK headquarters'. The new model benefits the university through locally informed decision-making and greater agility.

UK-based international office staff who are not constantly travelling could spend more time collaborating with colleagues in different parts of the institution, whether working with faculties on their internationalisation strategies or supporting other professional service functions with the international dimension of their work – perhaps by having staff based in those teams who can liaise with colleagues in the regional hubs.

It would be heartening if the experience of the pandemic helps to move us away from a centralised, carbon-heavy, top-down internationalisation model and towards a more distributed, environment-conscious and empowering one.

An inclusive approach to internationalisation means more than just involving staff working outside the international office. It means actively drawing on the expertise and insights of colleagues and other diverse stakeholders wherever in the world they are located – and inviting them to challenge preconceptions.

— VICKY LEWIS

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1. Lewis, V. (2021). *UK Universities' Global Engagement Strategies: Time for a rethink?* <https://www.vickylewisconsulting.co.uk/gsr>. This report draws on a review of 134 UK university strategic plans and 26 internationalisation strategies, along with in-depth interviews with 12 senior sector stakeholders and insights from recent conferences, webinars and publications.