Examples of 'international curriculum' development

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With thanks to those named below for use of examples from their disciplines

Teaching and learning approaches

Discipline: Architecture, undergraduate. **Lead:** Dr Giovanna Guidicini

Gap identified: Opportunity to introduce teaching and learning approaches from the European continent which present different perspectives and ways of studying and working.

Development: Summer School based in European country (initially UK) with mix of host students and staff, and mainland European students and staff. The teaching on the summer school is delivered by participating staff from all over Europe in the style typical of their home country/university. This offers the students a chance to experience a range of different teaching and learning approaches and adapt to new challenges and expectations.

Skills Development

Discipline: Architecture, undergraduate. **Lead:** Toshiko Terazono

Gap identified: Understanding of cultures that architects may work in. Opportunity for hands-on development of traditional building techniques in a heuristic, cross-cultural environment.

Development: Project trip to Japan during which students design and build a structure for a local community, using traditional timber construction, with the support of specialist carpenters. UK architectural practices regularly work in Asia and the Middle East (Jamieson 2010). A significant proportion of architectural programmes in the UK focus on the 'meaning of buildings' and design principles. The importance of teaching more technical (or construction) skills in architecture is currently under debate. This summer workshop places students in a cultural context and country very different to their own, thus offering them the opportunity to develop the aptitude and the capacity to work in such contexts, whilst also developing the craft of building with traditional materials.

Research opportunities

Discipline: Biomedicine, undergraduate. **Lead:** Dr Michael Jarvis

Gap identified: opportunities for undergraduates to engage in real research during their undergraduate studies.

Development: Student science research project centred around the long-term aim of producing a 'disseminating' herpesvirus-based vaccine to prevent bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in wild badger populations. This project is situated within an international collaboration between two laboratories (Robert Koch Institute (RKI) Berlin, Germany and Plymouth University, (UK) and funded by a grant from the Seale-Hayne Educational Trust. This provides an opportunity for students to engage in real research in a foreign country and experience the nature of international collaboration and expertise, whilst also living for a few weeks immersed in that culture.

Peer learning

Discipline: Business management, undergraduate.

Gap identified: Large cohorts of Chinese students and UK students. The two did not mix.

Development: When studying management styles the groups were set by the tutor and mixed. Chinese students brought case studies of management styles typical of Asian companies and explained these. UK students brought case studies of management styles typical of UK companies and explained these. The project was to explore and discuss why/wherefore/merits and challenges of the different approaches with the benefit of cultural understanding and explanation (from peers) to support discussions.

Peer assisted learning scheme

Discipline: Cross disciplinary. **Lead:** Carolyn Gentle & Julia Dawson

Gap identified: opportunities for experienced students (usually in their second or third year of study) to develop peer learning leadership skills, and for less experienced students to participate in, and benefit from, peer learning sessions within their programme to reinforce and discuss learning.

Development: The scheme is now in its 3rd year and available in a third of University programmes. A number of international students have benefitted by training and facilitating sessions as PALS leaders or by attending sessions as PALS students. This academic year there are international student leaders in Marine Biology, Chemistry, Architecture, Accounting and Finance, Nursing, Psychology, Computing and Economics. All 1st year students on participating programmes are allocated to a group where they have the opportunity to improve their academic work, develop their skills and their learning through exploration and discussion of disciplinary topics. Furthermore, PALS provides a space where international students can practice their English Language skills and become more familiar with British life and culture, particularly the expectations and culture of university life in the UK.

Alumni and networking

Discipline: Publishing, Masters level. **Lead:** Ms Miranda Spicer

Gap identified: Further opportunities to increase networking activities and make better use of successful alumni in the international arena, both in promoting the MA and in enriching the current cohort experience.

Development: As part of the course, students attend an international trade fair: London Book Fair. To make the most of this networking opportunity, students are set a number of tasks prior to the book fair, including contacting and making appointments to meet publishing companies exhibiting there. This ensures that students structure and optimise their time and it creates opportunities to engage with potential employers.

The programme team also maintain contact with alumni worldwide, in order to be able to invite alumni back to Plymouth to meet current students and share experiences of international publishing. This ensures current MAs are exposed to the most up-to-date opportunities and methods of approach in an international working environment.

Field work

Discipline: Geology, undergraduate. **Lead:** Dr Kevin Page

Gap identified: 10 day field-trip takes place in Spanish region renowned for its geological exposure. Disciplinary learning is immense, however opportunities for intercultural exposure, learning and awareness almost entirely missed.

Development: Include course content which relates to cultural, ecological and legal aspects of the international context. Develop collaboration with international (local Spanish) partners and provide opportunities for intercultural interaction in the classroom between staff and students from the partnering institutions. This will enrich the fieldwork experience through intercultural exchange and group work in addition to the disciplinary learning.

Cultural Cafe:

Discipline: Cross disciplinary. **Lead:** Carolyn Gentle

Gap identified: international students and staff and their families often feel they have extremely limited opportunities for social contact with members of the university community. The Cultural Café is a social space that is open in the evenings for those who don't want to be in an environment serving alcohol and who are keen to make new friends.

Development: The Cultural café has been operating since 2011 and seeks to be inclusive by welcoming anyone who visits and ensuring they can join in with any activity or event which is going on. This means there are not closed events or events for which entrance is paid. The range of activities so far has included Diwali and Christmas celebrations, Irish Music evenings, a Greek evening and a Romanian evening in association with Peninsula Arts. Students are always welcome to put on their own events including projects associated with their studies and just-for-fun things such as board games evenings. Finally the Cultural Café hosts a weekly Languages café for those who want to practise speaking and listening in a foreign language.

Critical reflection

Discipline: Social work. **Lead:** Hayley Smith

Gap identified: A need to support students to critically reflect on their experience both whist away on placement in developing countries and on their return to study.

Development: Weekly Skype contact is offered in an attempt to address isolation by increasing 'visibility'. This enables the tutor to see non-verbal cues regarding student well-being, which can then be discussed. Students who can see familiar surroundings via Skype report reduced levels of anxiety and the freedom to explore any domestic difficulties they may experienced such as questions about culturally appropriate challenges; gender-role expectations, or dress code in addition to social work based issues. On return to the UK the term is punctuated with meeting opportunities to offer support through the re-acclimatisation phase. This provides students to shift from a feeling of 'dis-orientation' towards a 'new consciousness', a re-framing of student understanding about self and their relative place in a wider world (Larson and Allen, 2006).

Writing Cafe:

Discipline: Cross disciplinary. **Lead:** Helen Bowstead and Christie Pritchard

Gap identified: Many international students struggle to produce written assignments that meet the demands of the UK higher education system. This may be because of issues with language but difficulties may also be the result of coming into a UK HEI from a different educational background.

Development: The Writing Café provides a welcoming and purposeful space where students can receive support with their written assignments from trained student Writing Mentors (some of whom are also international students) and/or members of the Learning Development team. In a relaxed and informal environment students are encouraged to talk about the challenges they face when writing with their peers and to explore strategies and techniques that can improve their written communication skills.

These examples are also available as part of a longer journal article:

Magne, P. (2014) 'Internationalisation and curriculum development: why and how? Vol. 4: 3'. Journal of Pedagogic Development, 4 (3). pp 74-81.

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Examples of enrichment within the curriculum (supplied by Polly Magne):

English Literature: how English authors have been influenced by travel to other countries

British History: the influence of immigration on Britain's working class

British Politics: influence of the EU on British politics

Computing: software adaptations for different cultural markets

Electrical engineering: international specifications and their impact on the design process

Fashion design: cultural norms and their impact on the design, status and function of clothing

Geology: practical applications of profit making enterprises related to geology

Maths: speaking maths - the only language where no other language is needed. Exploring research collaborations across borders

Midwifery: how different cultures support and celebrate birth and the implications for midwifery in the UK

Psychology: to what extent is our thinking influenced by our culture?

Social work: the role of the extended family in different cultures and its implications for practice in the UK