

UK Council
for International
Student Affairs



Understanding International

A trainers' guide

UKCISA

 **Understanding
International**
A toolkit for staff

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Student Affairs**

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Foreword

Since we introduced Understanding International (then called *New to International*), less than three years ago, more than 1,300 staff at our member institutions have registered to use it, and most say they would recommend it to colleagues.

Originally it was designed to help new staff get to grips quickly with international work, but feedback has shown that institutions are using it in a range of different ways. For example, some are interested in using it as a training tool with wider groups of staff – so not only as a stand-alone tool – but also as part of wider training and development activities.

Building on this, we asked for volunteers to help us explore other ways of using the resource, and have held a series of discussions over the past year with our pilot group. Their activities are a work in progress, but we have been able to draw upon their ideas and suggestions to compile this guide, and to design our own examples for ways of using Understanding International (UI) as part of training and development. (*To learn more about the pilot group's experiences, see the video clip on our website at www.ukcisa.org.uk/ui-experiences*).

This guide is a starting point for anyone considering how they might use UI as a resource for training and development in their institution. It suggests some approaches, but does not attempt to be prescriptive. It is a working document, and we hope that those of you, who try using it in different ways within your institution, will give us feedback, so that we can include more examples and suggestions in future editions. (Please contact training@ukcisa.org.uk with any feedback).

With thanks to Emma Gwynnett-Davies at the University of South Wales, Helen Eastham at the University of Birmingham and Niru Williams at the University of East London – and their colleagues – for contributing to the pilot programme, and to Victor Dejean, for co-ordinating the programme and writing this guide.

UKCISA
January 2014

How it works

Introduction

Understanding International: a toolkit for staff is a set of modules that contains information, case studies, interactive tools and video clips, designed to support those working within internationalised education – which means just about everybody. Because of the huge variety of experience that staff will arrive with, the modules should not be seen as a course, but a resource that you can cherry-pick from to suit your needs.

If you are new to international working, you will find a wealth of resources to help you find your feet, and get a better understanding of how things work, and relate to one another – not to mention the many cultural challenges that you will routinely face.

For the more experienced, there are case studies that will stimulate your thinking, and tools that should help you with more sophisticated management decision-making.

If you have moved roles or are taking on new responsibility within your existing role, the toolkit will enable you to research and explore this new area of work and provide you with a grounding in it, giving you the confidence to make progress quickly.

Ultimately, this toolkit is designed to help:

- build your knowledge and understanding of key internationalisation issues
- improve your skills and confidence
- enhance your performance
- review your institution's processes
- enhance the international student experience

The Modules

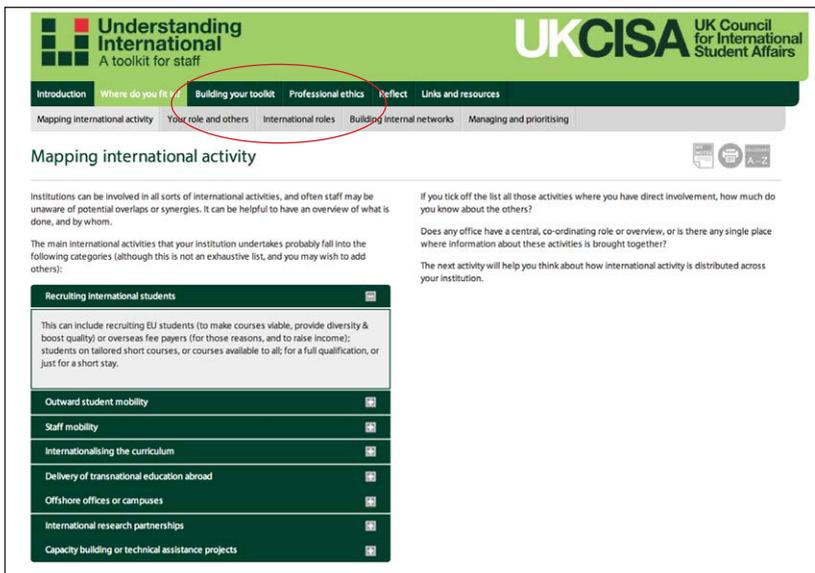
When you enter the toolkit, you will be offered a choice of modules. If you are completely new to international working, then we suggest you begin with '*Getting Started*' and finish with '*What next?*'. We'd also recommend that you look at '*Cultural awareness*' prior to '*Communicating across cultures*' as these two modules are related. Other than that, you can decide which modules you want to explore, and in what order.

NB. Each module will open in a new window, so be sure to disable your pop-up blocker if you have one installed.



Navigating the toolkit

Navigating each module is straightforward. There are two rows of tabs at the top of the screen.



You use these to work your way through the module. These operate like ‘index cards’. Select a top tab (the main topic), and then click on the bottom tabs (the sub-topic). The first time you visit a module, we suggest that you progress through the tabs from left to right.

How long does each module take?

You can choose how long you want to spend on each module. You can skim read the text of each in about half an hour – or to engage more fully with the text and the activities might take you one-and-a-half to two hours. Some of the activities can be tackled in more depth, eg by researching a particular aspect of your institution's provision, or engaging with some of the reading and resources suggested at the end of each module. The choice is yours. When you have completed a module, close the module window.

'Resume Session' bookmark

Because some of the modules may take some time to complete, you may wish to complete a module over several visits. To help you remember where you left off, you will automatically be presented with a 'resume session' flag when you return to a module.

The screenshot shows the 'Understanding International' website. The header includes the logo and 'UKCISA UK Council for International Student Affairs'. A navigation menu has links like 'Where do you fit in?', 'Building your toolkit', etc. A green notification box in the top right corner, circled in red, contains the text: 'We have stored your previous session. Click the bookmark to resume.' The main content area is titled 'Introduction' and contains text about the module's purpose and learning objectives. A photograph of two women is shown. At the bottom right, there is a 'Getting Started' button.

If you have viewed the module on a previous occasion, and would like to start from where you left off, click the resume session flag that appears on the first page of each module.

Interacting with other learners

Working collaboratively with others can add richness to the learning experience. One simple way of doing this is by starting or joining a discussion. Go to the Activities block on the left hand menu, and choose 'Forums' to read and add posts. Discrete discussion groups can be set up in this way.

Accessibility

We have tried to make this online programme as accessible as possible. It allows for text resizing, screen reading and keyboard-based navigation. Keyboard controls differ depending on your operating system and browser.

Text resizing:

- Internet Explorer (PC) - click 'View' from the browser menu bar, select Text Size, and then choose your desired text size
- Mozilla Firefox (PC) - hold down the Ctrl key and then press the + key to enlarge, or the – key to reduce
- Mozilla Firefox or Safari (Mac) - hold down the Cmd key and then press the + key to enlarge, or the – key to reduce

NB: In Firefox and Safari you will need to turn on the option to 'Zoom Text Only' from the View menu.

Keyboard navigation:

- PC: Use the Tab key to highlight the Toolkit tabs – press Return to load the page
- Mac: Go to System Preferences - Keyboard - Keyboard Shortcuts - select the 'All controls' radio button.

Activities

Throughout each module, you will be faced with a number of interactive activities. Each activity is clearly labelled on the screen, and most of the activities let you save your answers, which are then automatically loaded the next time that you visit the screen. There are two main types of activities:

On-screen

(eg writeable text-boxes, drag and drop, quizzes, charts, etc)

Most of the on-screen activities will include a 'Save' button or 'Send to Notes' button to save your answers. In most cases, you will be prompted to save your answers when you attempt to leave the page.

A cultural view

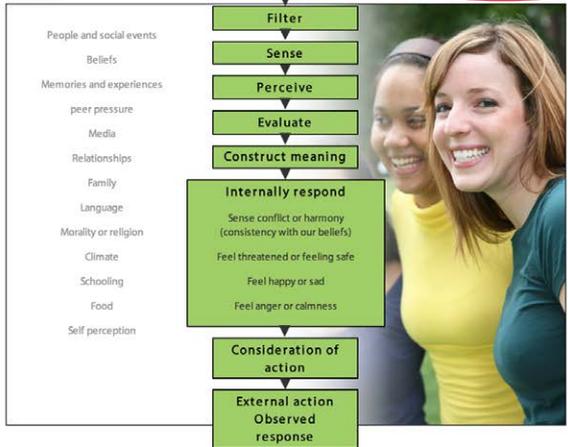
Much of our behaviour is influenced by the cultures we have been brought up with, which influence our perceptions of the world. We feel pain, happiness or puzzlement, but whether and how we display these is in part mediated by culture. Understanding how culture influences behaviour can help us get to grips with our own cultural bias. But how do we step away from our own cultural influences to see other perspectives on the world? This exercise helps you break down the steps of the processes by which we filter our experiences, construct meaning and frame our responses.

Activity

Use the buttons to navigate through the slides. On the first two slides click the blue boxes to reveal some examples. On the third you can create your own cultural view. On the final slide you'll be presented with some questions. Click the Save button to store your answers.

How does culture affect behaviour?

Example 1



PREVIOUS SLIDE NEXT SLIDE SAVE

Cultural Awareness

Drag-and-drop activity:

The screenshot shows the 'Understanding International' website interface. At the top, there are logos for 'Understanding International' and 'UKCISA UK Council for International Student Affairs'. Below the logos is a navigation bar with tabs: 'Introduction', 'How do you communicate?', 'Communicating effectively across cultures', 'Reflect', and 'References/resources'. The main content area is titled 'Communicating at work' and contains a text box on the left and a grid of role headings on the right. A red circle highlights a text box that says: 'Activity - In the exercise to the right, click on the blue headings which describe particular roles to clarify key functions. Then drag and drop the light blue 'nature of communication' box you think fits each one.' The grid of role headings includes: 'Frontline reception desk', 'Teaching and supporting learning', 'Counselling/Advice and guidance', 'Online written and verbal communication', 'Formal written documents', 'Leaflets and handbooks', and 'Communication with international partners'. A light blue box with a stack icon contains three options: 'one to one', 'short term', and 'confidential'. The bottom right of the page is labeled 'Communicating across cultures'.

Downloadable
(eg interactive PDF docs, case study Word files, etc)

The downloadable files are sometimes interactive PDF's, which means you can fill in information, give a rating to something, check boxes and sometimes receive feedback or a calculation. Everything can be saved, downloaded, and if you wish, shared.

The screenshot shows a 'Skills' assessment form. It contains six numbered items, each with a description and a rating scale from 1 to 5. Item 1: 'I can see how my values, beliefs, faith, cultural conventions, perceptions and expectations may appear to others.' Item 2: 'I can communicate effectively with people with a different first language to me - for example avoiding idioms, explaining acronyms, using pictures and diagrams.' Item 3: 'I recognise how my use of language, body language and tone of voice may come across to other.' Item 4: 'I know what is involved in active listening and can hear what others really mean.' Item 5: 'I have some ability to assess the cause of disputes and to manage them fairly.' Item 6: 'I seek to base my judgements on first hand facts rather than common perception or information or viewpoints received from others.' Below the items is a section titled 'Top 5 that you would most like to work on' with five numbered boxes for input. At the bottom, there is a copyright notice '© UKCISA' and the text 'Communicating across cultures module'.

Functions

Each module provides you with functions to support your learning.

Notes



The 'Send to Notes' button sends your answers to the Notes tool, which allows you to write notes throughout each module. To open the Notes tool, click the Notes button near the top right hand side of the page, and it will open in a new window.

You can create many different individual notes, which can be as long as you like. Enter a title, and when you have finished typing your note, click the 'Save to notepad' button.



You can then re-read at any time by clicking the 'Edit' link. To delete the note, click the 'Delete' link. All notes that you create will be automatically loaded into the Note tool next time you visit the module.

Print

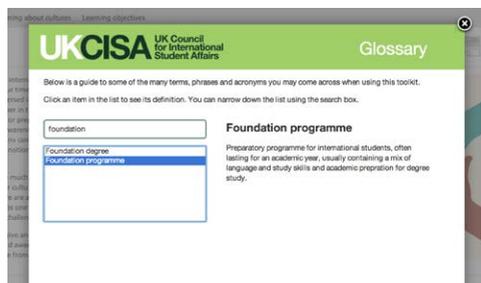


If you would like to print out the contents of any page within the module, click the 'Print' icon near the top right hand side of the page. In order to save ink, the printed page will not include the large coloured page header or the top tabs. To print out a note, click the 'Edit' link, and then the 'Print note' button.

Glossary



To help you understand some of the terminology that we use throughout each module, we have included a Glossary tool.



To open it, click the Glossary button near the top right hand side of the page, and it will open in a new window.

To search for a word, enter your word in the search box on the left hand side - and words in the glossary that contain that text will appear below. Select one of the matching words to view its explanation.

The Reflect Tool

Learning is richer and more enduring when you reflect on it afterwards. To support this, we have included a Reflect tool at the end of each module. This is designed to give you a structure to think over what you have learned in that section.

Reflecting on your learning enables you to:

- link the material in the modules to your own professional life
- focus on what is most relevant to you
- put some of it into practice

Understanding International
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UKCISA UK Council for International Student Affairs

Introduction How do you communicate? Communicating effectively across cultures **Reflect** References/resources

Reflect

Reflect

This pro forma is designed to give you a structure to reflect on what you have learned from each module. Reflecting on your learning enables you to link the material in the modules to your own professional life, focus on what is most relevant to you and put some of it into practice. Reflective learning is about creating a virtuous circle of action and reflection, so you may want to revisit your reflections at a later stage in the programme, or afterwards, to reflect on how your learning has developed over time, and as a result of testing it in real-life situations. Reflection can also help you to identify what further development you need.

You can save your thoughts and also create a pdf document that you can use as evidence of your CPD. If you are a member of the Institute for Learning (IfL) you may wish to upload this document as an 'asset' into your online CPD record.

Activity details

Date started: 10/03/2014 Date completed: []

Total amount: [] mins

Description of []

March 2014

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

1. Reason(s) for undertaking the activity

[]

SAVE EXPORT AS PDF

Communicating across cultures

Reflective learning is about creating a circle of action and reflection, so you may want to revisit what you have written at a later stage to consider how your views have altered as a result of testing out your ideas in real-life situations. It can also help you, of course, to identify any further development you might need.

How it works

You can save your thoughts and also create a pdf document that you can use as evidence of your CPD. If you are a member of the Institute for Learning (IfL), you may wish to upload this document as an 'asset' into your online CPD record.

Ways to use it

This section suggests a range of way in which the toolkit can be used. The examples given in italics are sample programmes (set out in the following section), which are intended to be tailored to suit the needs of the individuals and institution concerned, not as a definitive guide to how the toolkit ‘must’ be used.

Approaches to working with UI

The traditional approach to learning through technology, of course, is for someone to sit down on their own in front of a computer and work through on-line course materials. As we all have different learning styles, however, this might not suit everyone; and depending on the purpose of the training, other approaches might be more appropriate. The level of the participants, the nature of the topic, the time required, and the availability of staff, for example, may impact these decisions. Consider these:

Independent Learning

Individuals work through modules on their own, recording their learning as they go, and applying it to their work situation. This might be the requirement of a line-manager, so it might apply, for example, to new staff (“Where do I fit in?”) or those with a perceived skills or knowledge gap. Consequently, it could be used for staff development alongside mentoring or appraisal.

Shared Learning

A very powerful way of using technology is for colleagues to ‘buddy-up’ in pairs. This approach is extremely useful in situations where a new process is being designed, or an existing one developed, for example, with your institution’s risk assessment policy and practice. The prior experience that both parties can bring to the table, whilst activities are being undertaken, can be very powerful and accelerate learning. Shared learning can be particularly useful where a team member lacks confidence with using technology.

An extension of this, is using Discussion Forums as part of a follow-up to a traditional training session, or as part of an on-going cross-institutional project, for example, implementing an *Internationalisation/Globalisation Strategy*. This has the benefit of being more cost-effective in terms of time and money, whilst maintaining the conversation.

Group Sessions

Pragmatically, getting people together for training can be difficult. Everyone is busy. Nevertheless, you can't beat face-to-face contact and the opportunity for colleagues to share their experiences and expertise. Often, these kinds of sessions are used for delivering information and updates, as well as exploring their implications. They can of course be used very creatively to develop teams, for example, in the area of *Dilemmas in International Work*.

The toolkit can be used as an integral part of this type of session, where the trainer would introduce the group to one of the activities centrally, then allow them to work through it in pairs.

NB: This would normally be followed-up by a feedback element that opens up the issues to group discussion, etc, as part of *blended learning* (see next section).

Blended Learning

As the name suggests, this is a mixture of the traditional and technology, and has the benefit of combining a range of learning opportunities. It might be as in the situation described above, that is 'breaking out' from a large group; or it could be where participants are required to undertake an activity in advance of a face-to-face session, either in pairs or individually, for example with planning *International Students Induction*.

Tips

Training and technology can meet with resistance. Sometimes this is through a lack of confidence of the individual and at other times through a sense of cynicism. Combined they can be destructive, so here are a few tips for your consideration:

Context

Colleagues respond better when they can 'see the point':

- Use the toolkit to support a genuine initiative or project not as a tick-box exercise

Confidence

A lack of content knowledge/ICT skills:

- 'Buddying-up' gives mutual support and builds confidence.

Benefits

The thought of extra work - whatever the reason - can be a significant barrier to buy-in:

- Highlight the benefits to the individual (eg saves time, easier to use, more effective)

Plan B

Sometimes technology will go wrong, eg crashes, frozen screens, lost data:

- Always have a back-up/contingency plan in place! For example a spare laptop, paper copies, etc.

Example Outline Programmes

Below we provide three examples of how the Understanding International modules can be used to address a variety of training needs. The aim is to inspire trainers with ideas for how to use it and consider how other modules or parts of modules can be used in different ways.

1: Addressing specific training needs: dilemmas in international work

Purpose:	Increasing staff awareness of cross-cultural issues in ethical dilemmas
Course participants:	Any staff engaged in international work
Duration:	2 hrs
Module:	<i>Getting Started</i> (Section: Professional Ethics - Case Studies)
Method:	Group session (blended learning)

Introduction (15 mins)

Choose a video clip of international students, showing misunderstanding or challenges, from the Communicating across Cultures module. Is this familiar? Explain the purpose of the session, and how it could benefit them and the students.

Activity 1 (45 mins)

You will need to demonstrate beforehand on a central screen that there are three stages to work through:

- the scenario
- the issues
- the commentary [our thoughts]


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UK Council for International Student Affairs

Introduction
Where do you fit in?
Building your toolkit
Professional ethics
Reflect
Links and resources

Introduction
Who regulates what?
Case studies

Case studies

The following are illustrative case studies of ethical issues that can arise in a number of contexts. You may find that even those which are not of direct relevance to your work situation will help illustrate some of the issues that can arise.

For each scenario, see if you can identify the ethical issues that arise, and consider how you might approach such a case. Use your notepad to record the issues that you identify for each scenario.

Gift-giving

Conflict of interest

Disagreement with a colleague

Request for preferential treatment

Differences in educational systems

Scenario
Issues
Commentary
Cultural commentary

Scenario

A new student comes to see you, the international student adviser, and hands you a bag saying "I have brought you a very special gift". You are standing in the reception area when this occurs, with various waiting students looking on.

Do you

1. accept the gift with grateful thanks
2. politely decline the gift, and say that you are unable to accept it?

Getting Started


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Gift-giving

Conflict of interest

Disagreement with a colleague

Request for preferential treatment

Differences in educational systems

Scenario
Issues
Commentary

Issues

- As an adviser, you have a duty of confidentiality to the student, and a responsibility to ensure they are aware of regulations that affect them and the potential consequences of breaking them
- Institutions are required by UKBA to report students who infringe their visa conditions, and failure to do so could jeopardise the institution's future ability to act as a sponsor for international students
- There may be a conflict between the role of an adviser in terms of confidential relationships with a client and their role as an employee of an institution which has to comply with legislation requiring disclosure of certain information

Getting Started

The screenshot shows the 'Understanding International' website, a toolkit for staff, with the UKCISA logo (UK Council for International Student Affairs). The navigation menu includes 'Introduction', 'Where do you fit in?', 'Building your toolkit', 'Professional ethics', 'Reflect', and 'Links and resources'. The 'Case studies' section is active, displaying a list of scenarios on the left and a detailed view of the 'Conflict of interest' scenario on the right. The detailed view includes a 'Commentary' section with two options and a reflective question.

Case studies

The following are illustrative case studies of ethical issues that can arise in a number of contexts. You may find that even those which are not of direct relevance to your work situation will help illustrate some of the issues that can arise.

For each scenario, see if you can identify the ethical issues that arise, and consider how you might approach such a case. Use your notepad to record the issues that you identify for each scenario.

Scenario | **Issues** | **Commentary**

Conflict of interest

Commentary

Option 1: Advise the student to regularise their position and ensure they understand the potential consequences if the UK Border Agency discover the breach.

Clearly the role of the adviser requires them to ensure a student understands any relevant regulations and the consequences of breaching them. However, is this action in itself sufficient? See 2 and 3.

Option 2: Tell the student that you will have to report the infringement immediately to UKBA.

Is it the role of the adviser to police a student's behaviour, or merely to inform them of relevant rules and regulations? This may depend on how your confidentiality policy is drafted, and how it addresses disclosure and compliance issues. Staff in non-advice roles who were told this information by a student might not be bound by confidentiality, and might have a clearer case for reporting. They might not always understand

Getting Started

In pairs per computer, they work through two or three case studies, taking notes. Depending on the nature of their job roles, you may wish to pick out particular case studies, which are most relevant to the group, or to specific pairs. (25 mins)

They feedback to the group how well they perceive the 'commentary' resolves the issues, or how they could be better addressed. Take notes on flipchart or electronically 'on screen'. (20 mins)

Activity 2 (45 mins)

Discussion in small groups:

- What other kinds of situations occur that are like this?
- Why do you think they occur?
- How could you deal better with these situations?

Plenary (15 mins)

Using the recorded notes as a prompt, consider as a group:

- What lessons have been learned from the session?
- What approaches could be adopted to improve communication?
- What general approaches could be adopted to resolve issues?

2: An aid to planning: International student induction

Purpose:	To brainstorm ideas for international student induction
Course participants:	Frontline staff, support services, academics, students
Duration:	1 term
Modules:	Any, but especially <i>Keeping safe</i> , <i>Cultural Awareness</i> , <i>Communicating Across Cultures</i> , <i>The International Student Journey</i> , and <i>Education Systems and Culture</i>
Method:	Blended learning

This approach is aimed at a range of staff and students (both ‘home’ and ‘international’), either across the institution, or from within a faculty or department. It works on the assumption that to develop an induction programme that is effective requires representation from all parties.

Initially, a senior manager needs to instigate this process to ensure buy-in, although meaningful contributions need to be made by all sides, as part of this collaborative process. In order to be inclusive, colleagues, home students and incoming students all need to understand one another.

This could work by setting up either functional-specific groups or cross-functional groups, but should include existing international students where possible.

1. Identify the key issues for the induction programme:
 - what international students need to know that is different from home students
 - what the Faculty can do to facilitate their initial post-arrival situation

These might include the following:

- British culture how we communicate, behave, etc
- Personal Safety going out at night, emergency services, etc
- Everyday living accommodation, shopping, transport, paying bills, etc
- Expectations of students self-study, critical thinking, assessment, etc
- Administration visas, payment, assignment submissions, exams, etc

2. Having decided your priorities, it could be a good idea to put together working groups to approach each one.
3. Direct each working group to the appropriate modules within the Toolkit to inform and facilitate addressing their area. These might include:

- *Keeping Safe*
- *Cultural Awareness*
- *International Student Journey*
- *Education Systems and Culture*

They could work through these in pairs, as groups, using blended learning and using the Discussion Forums. The sharing of information and collaborative thinking is critical here. Ultimately, this task should be focused on adding to the design of the programme, not just completing a course; and should be supported by regular working group meetings.

4. Finally, pull together the draft programme for review by all parties.

3: Developing expertise: 'International Champions network: lunchtime series'

Purpose:	to develop the skills and understanding of Champions, and indirectly frontline staff, support services and academics through a collaborative approach
Course participants:	International Champions (ambassadors), International Office Manager
Duration:	1 hour weekly/bi-weekly/monthly
Modules:	Any, but especially <i>Getting Started</i> , <i>Cultural Awareness</i> , <i>The International Student Journey</i> , <i>Education Systems and Culture</i> , <i>International Partnerships</i> , and <i>Outward Mobility</i>
Method:	Blended learning (group sessions)

The concept of the 'champion' is one where a member of staff takes responsibility for promoting the international agenda within their department or faculty on behalf of the International Office. [NB: There is no suggestion here that they should be assuming the role(s) of the International Office]. Often, they are working in isolation and there is little time given for the post – if any – so a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly approach to this may be the most appropriate.

The idea is to create a network of 'champions' who have the opportunity to share their experiences, and explore together potential solutions to challenges. They probably have no official line-management function, so instigating change can be difficult. As they are also likely to come from a range of backgrounds, they will bring different expertise and skills. These can be harnessed to develop the team and strengthen its position.

1. The Champions – in conjunction with the International Office - will need to agree key areas for their own development. This may surround areas such as:
 - Skills or knowledge gaps
 - ‘International’ roles
 - ‘International’ Processes
2. Having identified these, either individually or ‘buddied-up’, they can work through the relevant modules; build on their knowledge through face-to-face lunchtime meetings; and keep in touch through the on-line Discussion Forum. Notes, tools, completed activities and reflections can all be shared.

Depending on their experience, modules might include:

- *Getting Started*
 - *Cultural Awareness*
 - *International Student Journey*
 - *Education Systems and Culture*
3. If the Champions are more experienced, they might be happy to drive the institution’s international/global strategy within their faculties, or support the International Office in identifying and meeting needs. This could be particularly helpful in improving and standardising processes, and filling skills gaps amongst staff. Once again, having a better understanding of how systems work would help them help others, through modules such as:
 - *Internationalisation*
 - *Partnerships*
 - *Outward Mobility*

