International Students' Social Integration
Value/Impact Evaluation
Why evaluate?

- Significant investment in social integration projects for international students
- Satisfaction with multicultural integration is in the bottom quartile in the International Student Barometer benchmarking study (Autumn 2012)
- Need to understand the reasons for it
- Need to demonstrate qualitative impact on the international student experience to the institution
Approach to evaluation

• AMOSSHE Value & Impact Toolkit

• Qualitative research initially through an online survey and two focus groups

• Cost analysis to follow after 31st August
Online survey

• Conducted in February 2013 for three weeks
• 17 questions, 197 respondents out of 3571, 41 countries in the mix

Aimed to find out
• what expectations international students had in terms of integration prior to arrival and whether they were met
• the level of satisfaction with the current ISST social integration offer and its impact on the student experience
Focus groups survey

- Conducted in April 2013 with 14 students
- Facilitated by an external consultant

Aimed to investigate further the reasons behind students' expectations of social integration and identify effective ways in which international students would like to integrate better
FINDINGS Online survey

- Strong expectation of meeting and integration with UK students (56%) and with other international students (64%)
- Only a third of respondents expected to meet students from their own country
- Only one in five respondents expected to integrate in the local community
### FINDINGS Online survey

Where respondents expected to meet....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>UK students</th>
<th>International students</th>
<th>Students from my home country</th>
<th>People from the local Sheffield community (non-students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On my course</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities/events I took part in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports activities/events I took part in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports activities/events I took part in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>88.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS Online survey

- Strong expectation of meeting UK and other international students at course level (which in some cases we can't meet) as well as in accommodation

- Strong expectation of integrating with the local community (non-students) at social events

- Unsurprisingly, satisfaction amongst respondents of meeting UK students and local community (~ 70% satisfied) was lower than meeting other international students (85%) and students from their country (76%)

- Over half of respondents said they expected help from the University to meet people
Only respondents who took part in ISST organised events were asked how strongly they agree and disagree with the following statements about the events and activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither/nor</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped me feel part of Sheffield Hallam</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me integrate with the student community</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me not feel isolated/lonely</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me not feel homesick</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me develop my English language skills</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me with confidence in classes</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me integrate with the local community</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FINDINGS Online survey

Impact of ISST integration activities on international student experience

- 83% of respondents agree that ISST events helped them feel part of Sheffield Hallam
- Over 70% agree that ISST events help them integrate with the student community, overcome loneliness, homesickness and develop their English language skills
- 65% agree that taking part in these events made them more confident in classes
- 60% agree that taking part in these events helped them meet local residents
Barriers
• Many of the integration issues raised by respondents in the online survey are around experiencing resistance from UK students: perceived lack of interest or readiness to integrate with people from other cultures; and language skills
• Social anxiety and lack of confidence were mentioned by only a few of the students

Recommendations
• more cultural awareness events for UK students
• better promotion of ISST events across the University
FINDINGS Focus Groups

Main messages

- There is a mismatch of expectations about making friends with UK students because of assumptions made by international students.

- Most international students are satisfied with the opportunities to make friends with other international students BUT such opportunities are more limited for students on mono-cultural courses.

- High satisfaction with ISST integration activities but desire to see more UK students involved.

- While local community events are welcome and appreciated, some international students prefer linking up with their UK peers.

"There were only old people there so I didn't go again"
REASONS FOR THE STRONG EXPECTATIONS OF MEETING UK STUDENTS

- 'Because we are in Britain'
- 'For me it was a given, I'm coming to the UK so there's going to be UK students'
- 'There was no one from the UK on my course so it was really difficult to meet people from the UK. I was quite surprised by that actually. Coming to the UK you think you're going to meet UK people'

While not all participants considered meeting and making friends with UK students as important, they were ALL disappointed that they did not have more opportunities to do so
FINDINGS Focus groups

Barriers to meeting and making friends with students from the UK

• Majority of international students expect to study with UK students but most PG courses are predominantly international

• Accommodation not mixed enough

• Cultural differences and perceived reserve/unfriendliness by UK students

‘one of the ways you can meet UK people is through clubs but I don't do clubs’

‘One thing I found with British people is that they are reserved, they keep things to themselves. Even though they're friendly, they're reserved’
FINDINGS Focus Groups

ISST events and activities

- Provision of social integration support was considered essential to the international student experience

- Respondents generally satisfied with help and assistance provided by ISST to integrate

"The University are actually doing quite a lot already"

- But activities considered successful in integrating and meeting other international students not UK students

"It's like the whole room was crowded but you very rarely see any British students"

"I went but I realised it wasn't meeting my expectations, I expected to meet more UK students but I didn't"
FINDINGS Focus group

Blue skies thinking!

Improving UK - International student integration

• Introduce cheaper/discounted fees for post graduate courses to UK students to encourage them to enrol

• Promote the importance/benefits of meeting international students to UK students

• Mix undergraduate and post graduate students on elective course options
Main conclusions so far

• The lower satisfaction with the multicultural experience is caused by the mismatch of expectations and the limited opportunities international students have to meet and make friends with UK students.

• We cannot lower the expectations because they are created by assumptions which are difficult to challenge. Satisfaction may increase if international students see willingness by the institution to address the issues.

• ISST social integration work is valued and has a positive impact on the international student experience.
Next steps

Cost analysis of the ISST social integration provision will be undertaken in Sept 2013

Qualitative findings of this research will be distributed to Faculty Heads of International Development
Any questions?

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