



**Enhancing the engagement of
international students in student
associations**

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1. Introduction to the Internationalising Students' Unions Project.
2. Progress of the project
3. Findings of the project so far
4. How you can get involved
6. Discussion

- **Internationalisation** – integrating an international dimension into all students' union activities and operations
- **Students' Unions** – used generically to encompass students' unions, students' guilds and students' associations.

About the Project



Work in progress....

Pilot Project 2008-9

- 4 HE Students' Unions participated
- Resulted in a report and audit tool:

Internationalising students' unions in higher education. A strategic framework and audit toolkit for students' unions

- Two-year project running from **January 2010 to December 2011**
- Funded by the **Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI)**
- Part of a funding stream dedicated to **improving the international student experience** in the UK
- **40 students' unions** taking part, 20 per year.

Participating Unions

Participating Students' Unions 2010

- Anglia Ruskin Students' Union
- De Montfort University Students' Union
- Durham Students' Union
- Exeter Students' Guild
- Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association
- Goldsmiths Students' Union
- Kent Union
- King's College London Students' Union (KCLSU)
- Lancaster University Students' Union
- Leeds University Union
- Leeds Metropolitan University Students' Union
- Loughborough Students' Union
- Newcastle University Union Society
- Northumbria Students' Union
- Reading University Students' Union
- St Mary's University College Students' Union
- Strathclyde Students' Association
- Surrey Students' Union
- University College London (UCL) Students' Union
- University of Central Lancashire Students' Union (UCLAN)

- Support 40 students' unions to **audit their work with international students**, and to **develop and implement an international students' strategy**
- Pilot **training for student union staff and officers**
- Research and share **examples of best practice**
- Produce a **resource pack** of case studies, training materials and tools for use by students' unions

1. **Audit Team**

- ✓ Build a strong and diverse team of people to work on the project, including both officers and staff
- ✓ Identify one person to take a lead
- ✓ Involve international students throughout
- ✓ Work closely with the international office and with student support services

2. Research

- ✓ Do background research into your international student population
- ✓ Use the Internationalising Students' Unions audit tool to evaluate your current work with international students
- ✓ Carry out additional research with international student members

3. Planning

- ✓ Use the results of the audit to identify priority areas for action
- ✓ Develop an international students strategy

4. Preparation

- ✓ Staff and officers take part in training
- ✓ Hear best practice examples from other students' unions

Progress of the Project

5. Action

- ✓ Put plans into action
- ✓ Pilot new projects

6. Evaluation

- ✓ Monitor success of pilot projects
- ✓ Reflect on your experiences with the group
- ✓ Identify what went well and what didn't
- ✓ Share best practice with other students' unions

Audit results show that international student engagement tends to be strong in

- Student clubs and societies
- Course reps
- Volunteering
- Leadership development programmes
- Advice services

International student engagement tends to be less strong in

- Democracy
- Campaigning
- Student association leadership
- Student association governance

Further observations

- International students are not a homogenous group, and different groups face different barriers to engagement
- Chinese students are the most numerous group of international students in most HEIs, but tend to be the least engaged in the students' union
- It is useful for student associations to work in partnership with the university, student services and student societies.

Areas for Action:

- Monitoring involvement of international students
- Pre-arrival communications
- Induction
- Increase election participation
- Working closely with international student societies
- International Students' Forum
- Support and training for international student officers
- Fostering integration – buddy schemes, events

How can my student association get involved?

1. Carry out an audit at your students' association using the Internationalising Students' Unions audit tool
2. Sign up for the Internationalising Students' Unions newsletter
3. Look out for the resource pack and toolkit which will be published at the end of the project

Questions for discussion

- Do the findings correspond with your experience?
- What is going well in your students' association?
What would you like to improve?
- What would you like the Internationalising Students' Unions resource pack and toolkit to include?

Questions for me?