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**Supervising International Postgraduate Research Students:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

**“Internationalisation and International  
Research Students: the basic issues”**

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## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

### Symptoms of internationalisation:

- International rankings
- International orientation in curriculum
- International research projects
- Career trajectories across countries
- International competition for students & academics...

Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

...so, relevance for how we might be  
treating international research  
students but...

= recruitment of more international  
research students?

.... No!

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

### Internationalisation –

- questions tradition of the university based on national system, then made open to international students...
- ...where teachers are not really challenged
- (NB: risk of internationalisation agenda becoming anglo-western standardisation agenda, into other countries too)

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

... or does it mean that?

- International/global concerns can be part of provision in UK institutions
- but dealt with in a British way, our stance on universal questions of e.g. value
- Still a challenge to curriculum and delivery (especially if “value-free” !)

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

### Avoids:

- Syndrome of internationalisation by default, becoming international simply through recruitment
- Consequent loss of international student experience of British approach

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

### Adopting Internationalisation strategy:

- really a separate question from making student population more international
- leaves untouched questions how to manage RDPs and supervision of research students?
- (is there a curriculum? – recommended research focuses, skills agenda?)
- Anyway not a matter concerning supervision of ***international*** research students, more about home students

Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

## ***Supervising International Research Students***

- authored by Eunice Okorochoa
- series 2 no.4 of the SRHE Guides, *Issues in Postgraduate Education: Management, Teaching and Supervision:*
- Society for Research into Higher Education (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) July 2007



Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

**Improving the experience of  
international research students:  
Recommendations for supervisors  
and tutors for building good  
supervisory relationships**

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Orientate yourself to acquire information about other cultures. This can simply be a matter of keeping your eyes and ears open, which does not necessarily involve a great outlay of time. Or, should you so wish, it can involve reading books and attending social events run by or for international students.
- Be aware of cultural issues and of how they can lead to misunderstandings between supervisors and international students.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Examine your implicit assumptions about international students; try to make them explicit; and then question their validity.
- Initiate exploration with your international students to clarify the meanings behind any verbal or non-verbal communication which make you uncomfortable.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Show an interest in the welfare of your international students, but find out about appropriate support services so that you can make referrals to them should that become necessary.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- At the outset of each student's research programme, devote specific attention to negotiating the respective roles of supervisor and student and your mutual expectations of one another.
- Explain the professional etiquette for seeking help from other academics.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Pay particular attention to helping international research students to work within their time schedules and keep to their deadlines.
- Monitor the progress of your research students and give them regular feedback.
- Act before potential problems escalate and get out of hand.
- Where appropriate, lobby management to improve the provision for international research students

Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

**Improving the experience of  
international research students:  
Recommendations for institutional  
management**

**what it should provide...**

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- A member of academic or administrative staff with special responsibility for international students.
- The circulation of relevant codes of practice.
- Institutional facilities available during vacations, since research students, particularly international research students, work through vacations.



## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Full and regularly updated publicity on services and facilities in simple and clear English.
- A channel whereby international research students can give feedback to supervisors, departments and institutions without fear of repercussions.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- A face-to-face pre-admission interview or some other means by which all parties can check that the student, the department and supervisor are suitably matched.
- Realistic pre-admission information, including information on such services and facilities as the student union, computing, printing, counselling, banking, services to help with language problems, chaplaincies; accommodation; nurseries; careers; shops; eating places, etc. Pre-admission information should also include details about the host department and the academic interests of potential supervisors.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Cultural orientation on arrival.
- Institutional and departmental induction including guidance on access to facilities.
- Some form of repeat induction to accommodate research students who arrive at non-standard times in the academic year.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- A protected and adequate workspace.
- Departmental facilities available during vacations.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

- Encouragement, and where possible also modest funds, to facilitate involvement in international and national student societies, as well as to operate the local postgraduate student association.
- Ways to increase awareness among staff and students generally of the experiences and potential difficulties of international students, e.g. talks organised by the international/national student societies.

## Internationalisation and International Research Students: the basic issues

NB: research emerging out of Centre for  
Excellence in Preparing for Academic  
Practice

- Importance of individual relationship with supervisor
- Reason to apply as well as focus of desired experience

Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

What is the international research student  
anyway?

What are their needs?

Internationalisation and International Research Students:  
the basic issues

***Research Supervisors and the Skills  
Agenda: Learning Needs Analysis and  
Personal Development Profiling***

- authored by Martin Gough & Pam Denicolo
- series 2 no.1 of the SRHE Guides, *Issues in Postgraduate Education: Management, Teaching and Supervision:*
- Society for Research into Higher Education, July 2007



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