

The Education Academy

Decolonising DMU Toolkit

Internationalisation of the curriculum

What is the issue/ problem this resource will help to address?



The drive to internationalise Higher Education has been a key strategical action for UK universities, which have had an increasing number of international employees and students in the last decade. During the academic year 2020-2021, 22.4% of the DMU student population were international students, slightly higher than the national average of 22% (HESA, 2022). During this current academic year of 2021- 2022, 7730 out of a total of 28,532 students who are currently studying at De Montfort University are non-UK nationals. Most of these international students, 3224 of them, are studying in the Faculty of Business and Law (DMU, 2022).

However, having large numbers of international students and staff is not automatically equivalent to a truly internationalised university (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2015). Likewise, internationalisation of the curriculum is more than just changing the curriculum content, **it is also about how the content is taught, learned and assessed, and how students are supported within the process** (Leask, 2009; Caruana, 2011).

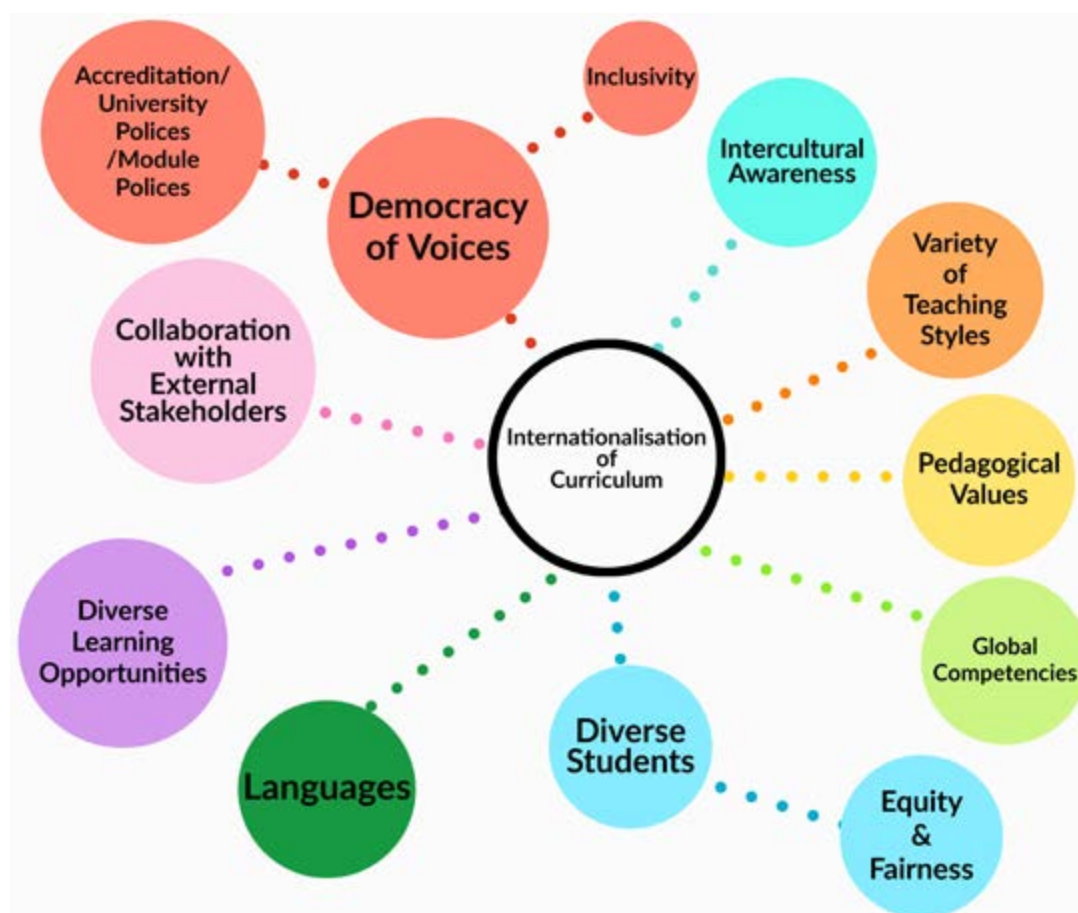
The following suggestions should be considered when working on internationalising the curriculum:

- Intercultural awareness development should be embedded within the curriculum as well as extra curriculum activities (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2015).
- The university should facilitate an integrated community that provides students with development opportunities for their global skills (Leask & Carrol, 2011).
- The process of internationalisation should be about being intercultural and inclusive, rather than only about being international or global in outlook. It should lead to discernible change our educational practice, rather than simply re-labelling and re-packaging existing practices (Caruana, 2011).

How should the resource be used and by whom?

This resource is useful for academic staff to consider how to integrate internationalisation into the curriculum and breaks down the ways in which module leaders and tutors can embed internationalisation of the curriculum through three key areas: preparation, delivery and outcomes.

The resource



Preparation: Aiming for an inclusive curriculum content, teaching and assessment methods

The design of the module should take into consideration the content, the assessment methods and the logistics of students working (including group work). We have some suggestions:

- **Diversify the content** - Include readings from international textbooks, journals, and newspapers etc. Use course content that promotes non-Western perspectives (international case studies, comparative studies, articles and texts). Explore case studies from different countries and/or cultures for comparative analysis and invite international guest speakers.
- **The course content should acknowledge and value a range of international perspectives (UAL, 2019)** - Explore how the subject knowledge might be constructed and applied in a variety of cultural contexts. Make it explicit to students that non-western views should be considered, such as asking them to present those views in assessment tasks and to compare and evaluate professional practices in more than one country.
- **Acknowledge the value of diversity within the classroom** - The presence of international students and/or home students with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Encourage students from different cultural backgrounds to contribute examples from their home country or community, e.g. professional practices, social norms, working practices, academic traditions, education systems.

- **Incorporate ethical issues of a globalised world** - Examine issues of social justice, immigration, equity and human rights, as well as related social, economic and environmental issues that require awareness of world trends. Encourage the debate of different cultural approach to solving these issues (Glasgow Caledonian University, 2013).
- **Create a glossary on commonly used concepts, terms and acronyms in student handbooks (Caruana, 2011).** - Most importantly, draw their attention to the glossary during class and emphasize as needed. Students have different perceptions of what information is important (e.g. whether student handbooks are important or not). Drawing their attention to important information in class and repeat it is an effective way to communicating the significant of the information.
- **Offer at least one lecture and seminar dedicated to the specific assignment** - This enables students to have the opportunity to raise questions directly with tutors and peers; these sessions can also provide guidance on study skills and English language requirements.
- **Make sure the assessment guidelines are written in a clear language** - If you use technical language and symbols, make sure they are unpacked and made explicit. Using an assessment rubric could help greatly with the assessment task and marking clarity.
- **Invite TNE partner institutions to jointly plan intercultural learning opportunities** - For example, giving students on different campuses the same group work task and requiring them to work together. It would be an intercultural learning opportunity for the lecturers themselves when they design the group task together, as well as a valuable experience for students to work with people from abroad.
- **Highlight intercultural placement experiences** - Encourage students to apply for international placement opportunities, or local placement opportunities within a diverse organisation or community, as part of the programme

Delivery: managing expectations and difference

When delivering your content, the following are useful considerations

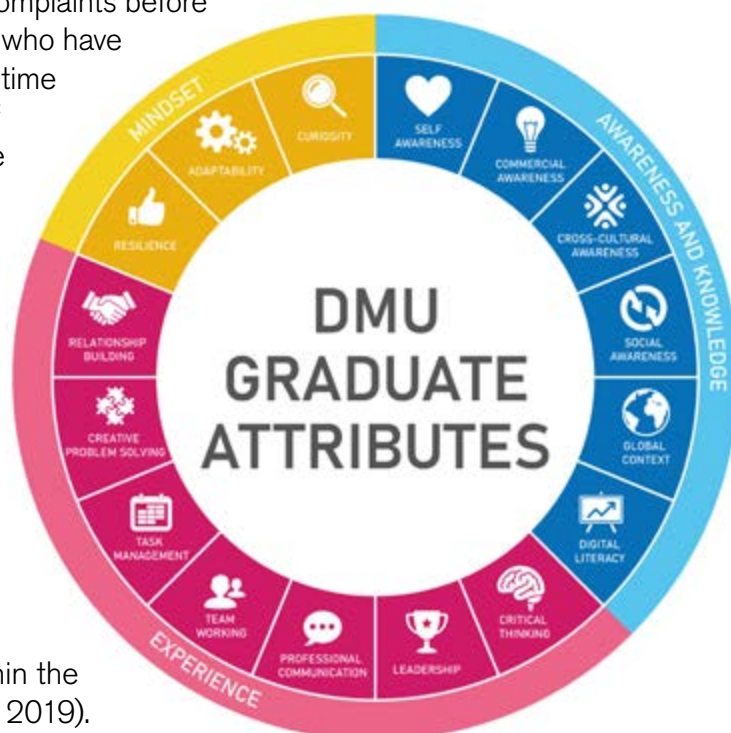
- **Reconsider your speaking speed** to help international students to adjust to the English learning environment.
- **Adjust the teaching language to make it more inclusive.** Consider using more visual aids, videos and podcasts to provide additional information (Loonat, 2022).
- **Invite students to discuss expectations on working with each other.** It is critical to embed self-reflection as part of the learning, either through an open discussion in class or through written self-reflection on their own experience. Students might change their attitudes if they are expected to discuss their own and each others' behaviour during working in multicultural teams.
- **Do not assume students understand unless they ask questions in class.** Practise checking their understanding by asking students to summarise key information in 2-3 sentences as regular intervals in lectures/ seminars/ tutorials. Students might have different expectations and understanding of what behaviour is appropriate in class, this could lead to them responding differently when they have questions and are being asked questions.

- **Have a discussion with students on how they would expect to communicate with each other outside of the classroom.** COVID-19 has had a massive impact on students' collaboration; face to face meetings are impossible as many international students could only join online from their own country at different time zones. The frequency of meetings, time, length and on what platform they could meet is an intercultural learning opportunity itself. E.g. students from outside of UK could have limited or no access to Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok and other popular social media and Instant Messaging apps that are dominating student communications in the UK, how do students plan to work with their peers that are not physically in the UK and are not familiar with the apps?
- **Include peer assessment.** Make it clear to students that they would not only be assessed on the final report or presentation, but more importantly they would be assessed on how well they collaborate with each other within the team.
- **Offer opportunities to embed mixed-national group work.** This can be facilitated by pairing home students with international students; allocate students into groups with multicultural backgrounds and set tasks which require discussion and analysis of international and intercultural issues. Encourage students to discuss their expectations on working with each other as this discussion of expectations from others and their working style could help reduce misunderstandings that might occur. Use mixed-national group work for both in-class discussion and assessment.
- **Integrate self-reflection.** This can be done either through an open discussion in class or through written self-reflections on the experience of working with others. Students might change their attitudes if they are expected to discuss their own and each others' behaviour during working in multicultural teams.
- **Be prepared for student complaints.** It is almost unavoidable to receive complaints when students are asked to work in groups. It is much easier to blame on culture and language rather than facing the reality of different working styles. Guidance and support should be available to students when they started complaining, especially if the complaint is about other cultures and students' English abilities. Developing a protocol for the complaints before they come in would be constructive to students who have to manage a more difficult group. Setting some time aside for discussing the rules and regulations of university with students will also help to manage student complaints.

Outcomes: an internationalised learning experience

By adapting these initiatives, we are embedding graduate attributes in the curriculum and preparing students to become global citizens. These are further outcomes:

- A more internationalised curriculum content which is suitable for students from various countries and cultures to work together. It facilitates social and academic integration within the student community (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019).



- By using mixed-national group work, the lecturers could achieve a more internationalised curriculum that keeps up with the institutions' 'developing global learners' initiative and prepare our students for becoming global citizens.
- Further opportunities for students' skills development, especially in the aspects of leadership, communication and self-reflection.
- Intercultural experiences for students that they might not have encountered before, where they could develop their intercultural awareness and competence.

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