

International recruitment of PGR students an institutional perspective

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Context of the Institution

- 20,000 students at Plymouth + 8,000 in regional partner colleges
- 1,000 academic staff
- Reputation for Teaching & Learning – 4 CETL's (£18M)
- Increasingly research successful – doubled the no^s of RAE submitted staff (45%) and doubled the RAE income



Institutional Goals

- **To increasingly internationalise the University**
(higher % of international students, greater number of productive international partnerships)
- **To double the number of Research Students within 5 yrs**
(from 600 to 1200)



Advantages of targeting international PGR recruitment

- There is demand – approx. one third of PGR students in the UK are international students.
- They pay full fees and are non-MASN bearing
- Can often levy additional bench fees
- They frequently have full stipends and travel grants
- They are motivated
- They are academically able
- They bring an important dimension to the institution



Challenges – institutional attributes

- **Institutional readiness and support**

“Support hungry”

- **Supervisor reluctance**

Perception that they are harder work

Perception that they are of lower ability

Perception that the supervisor will have to write the thesis!

Project definition problems

- **Dealing with the sponsors – e.g. Embassies**



Challenges – student attributes

- **English language competency**
IELTS/TOEFL vs Institutional English course
- **Getting settled and started**
Previous education from a very different system to the UK – lacking autonomous ability
- **Knowing what is expected of them**
Expectations are high that the supervisor(s) will tell them what to do
- **Cultural change and expectations**
Religion, prejudice, cost of living, families



Identifying the markets

- **Reputation going before you**
wait and see approach
- **Positive marketing**
Making the website and prospectus attractive
- **Strategic targeting**
A planned approach
- **“Mining” a seam**
Reinforcing a reputation



Markets

- Country funded scholarship students coming to the UK (1)

Middle East

Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, eastern Europe

Mostly these are junior academics in their own Universities and the goal is to capacity build



Markets

- Country funded scholarship students coming to the UK (2)

Malaysia, Africa (Nigeria), China, India

Markets are changing and exploring joint funding with UK Universities



Markets

- **Strategic international partnerships**
MoU's with International Universities to generate confidence and repeat business – special relationship.
- **Developing a link (“Catch 22”)**
You need an existing link
- **You need a “Champion”**
Often the best are research links



Special Markets 1

Partners without higher degree awarding powers but with research activity

These exist around the world in certain disciplines especially in Arts.
e.g. Italy, Switzerland, Canada

“Planetary Collegium”



Special Markets 2

Partners without higher degree awarding powers but with research activity

These also exist in certain countries where there still exists a binary divide of HE

e.g. Germany (Hochschulen)

“Networks & Communications Research Group”



Special Markets (3)

- Following successes the idea is spreading
- Germany – Business Management
- Canada – Creative Arts
- Hong Kong – Clinical Psychology



Ensuring Quality Control

- Candidates are Plymouth PGR students
- Governed by Plymouth Regulations and Procedures
- Supervised in-country (contract with Plymouth) with a 2nd supervisor at Plymouth
- Regular exchange of students and supervisors occurs
- Supported by a Plymouth based administrator



Other partnerships

- **Joint programmes**

Bilateral agreements to allow student mobility
between institutions

e.g. Marie Curie Training Networks

Joint research projects

Networks with a history of success

- **China, Brazil, Africa, Scandinavia**



Enduring relationships

- You have to work at it – one bad experience can counteract ten (or more) good ones
- You have to provide a good experience
- You have the opportunity for persistence if the PhD graduates gain academic positions – but generational changes threaten continuity



Threats to enduring relationships

- **UK change**

staff changes – loss of “Champions” and change in senior and middle management

- **Inflexibility**

dogmatic adherence to entry criteria

- **Changing the rules of engagement**

Increasing the English requirements

Raising the fees

- **Saturation levels**

Demand exceeds capacity to supervise



Turn these...



Brittany Field Trip May 2004



... into these!

