Europe Note

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Action
For information

Results of the 2011 UK HE International Unit European Activity Survey of UK HEIs - UK

Introduction

1. This E-note informs UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and interested stakeholders of the results of the UK HE International Unit's 2011 European Activity Survey. Responses demonstrate that UK HEIs continue to increase their engagement with the European higher education agenda. The UK HE International Unit would like to thank HEIs for their assistance in responding to the survey.

2. The data from the survey was collected from November 2011 to December 2011 using an online survey tool. Separate E-notes have been developed with results for England and Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Visit the UK HE International Unit website for more information at www.international.ac.uk
KEY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 2011 SURVEY

- A total of 70 institutions responded to the 2011 survey, representing both UUK and Guild HE members. This is a slight decrease compared to the number of respondents in 2009. However, the results provide a useful snapshot of HEIs' European activity and suggest increased engagement with the European higher education agenda.

- There has been a 19% increase in the percentage of UK HEIs issuing the Diploma Supplement to students since 2007.

- There is continued confidence that UK credit systems and qualifications frameworks are compatible with overarching European systems. Where the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is not used for credit transfer or accumulation, the main reason given is that the credit systems already in use are compatible with ECTS.

- There are 294 one academic year or 12 months full-time (or equivalent) Masters degrees currently being offered by the institutions surveyed. This compares to 69 two-year Masters degrees and reflects continued confidence in the UK one year Masters programme.

- The percentage of HEIs offering Integrated Masters degree programmes in the UK has risen from 58% to 64% since 2009. HEIs are developing Integrated Masters programmes in a range of disciplines but MEng, MChem and MPharm Integrated Masters degrees are most common.

- In those institutions surveyed, collaborative degrees are most common at Masters level. The most regularly cited problems/obstacles to establishing these degrees are the administrative burden; curriculum compatibility; credit equivalence; conflicting quality assurance expectations; and legal issues. Nevertheless, 65% of those institutions which do not offer collaborative degrees are considering the possibility.

- Responses indicate widespread acceptance of UK qualifications in Europe. As in 2009, Spain and Greece are the two countries where recognition difficulties are most often experienced.

- When asked if the Bologna Process reforms and EU initiatives had improved the situation, 100% responded that the situation was maintained or had improved. While 55% thought that the Bologna Process had made no discernible difference, 45% felt that it had improved the situation.

- Compared to 2009, a growing number of institutions have both international and...
European strategies. There is a move towards European strategies being imbedded within international strategies.

- 53% of respondents felt that the Bologna Process had helped in the development of their institutions' European/international strategies. In particular, the ECTS was highlighted as a useful tool which ensures that students and staff are aware of compatibility of course load/learning outcomes when abroad.

- 46% of respondents have assigned a particular staff member/committee/group with responsibility for Bologna Process issues (24% in 2007); a clear reflection of the importance of the Bologna Process agenda in the UK.

- 74% of respondents have measures in place to promote staff and student mobility. The most common method of promoting student mobility is the use of previously mobile students as ambassadors. The most common method of promoting staff mobility is targeted emails.

- The UK HE International Unit will be using these results to inform its future work with regard to Europe.
Survey objectives and content

3. The 2011 UK HE International Unit’s European Activity Survey to assess UK HEIs engagement in European initiatives follows earlier surveys in 2005, 2007 and 2009. The 2011 survey included questions on the following issues:

- The Diploma Supplement (DS) and Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR);
- use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation system (ECTS);
- postgraduate Masters degrees, including Integrated Masters degrees and collaborative degrees;
- recognition of UK qualifications elsewhere in Europe;
- institutional strategies and responsibility for the Bologna Process; and
- student and staff mobility.

Analysis of respondents

4. A total of 70 institutions responded, representing both UUK and Guild HE members. This is compared to 92 in 2009. The difference is likely to be attributable to the fact that institutions were given a significantly shorter time to complete the survey (one month instead of three) due to a staff vacancy at the UK HE International Unit.

5. 76% of the institutions that responded were in England or Northern Ireland. 10% of institutions were in Wales and 14% were in Scotland.

The Diploma Supplement and the Higher Education Achievement Report

6. 79% of HEIs currently issue the DS – an increase of 5 percentage points compared to the proportion of HEIs issuing the DS in 2009 and 19 percentage points compared to 2007.

Table 1: Use of the diploma supplement 2005-2011
7. Of those issuing the DS, 82% use the standard format developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. This compares with 81% in 2009 and 58% in 2007.

8. 73% of the HEIs who issue the DS do so automatically while just over a quarter issue it on an ad-hoc basis. A paper-based format appears to be standard: 88% of HEIs choose this method of delivery, while 12% issue the DS electronically.

9. 52% of respondents do not include any information in Section 6.1 of the DS. Of those institutions that do, ‘Further information about degree and/or institution’ followed by ‘Any study/employment in another country or at another institution/organisation’ are the two topics most likely to be covered.

10. 72% of HEIs find that the DS is a useful tool for evaluating students’ achievements and supporting admissions procedures, 28% do not. Those institutions that do not find the DS useful stipulated that they receive very few and tend to base admissions decisions on other information sources such as transcripts, interviews and auditions.

11. 33% of respondents had not received the DS to date. 56% had received it from HEIs elsewhere in Europe and 36% had received it from HEIs elsewhere in the UK. In 2009, 49% of respondents had received a DS issued by HEIs elsewhere in Europe and 30% had received one from another HEI in the UK.

12. Of those institutions that do not currently issue the DS, 28% plan to introduce it in the future, 28% plan to introduce the HEAR and 28% have no plans to introduce either. 17% already issue the HEAR.

13. HEIs that do not issue the DS quote the fact that they are awaiting developments in the HEAR as the main reason. 19% also cite the costs and resources associated in production as a disincentive and 14% mention IT difficulties.

14. Currently, only 9% of the HEIs surveyed issue the HEAR. In all cases the HEAR is issued automatically. As with the DS, the paper-based format appears to be standard: only 30% of the HEIs that issue the HEAR do so electronically.

15. The information most commonly included in Section 6.1 of the HEAR is: information on additional awards (e.g. modules not contributing to final degrees or relating to employability); information on additional recognised activities (e.g. Students’ Unions, student representatives, society involvement); and information on university, professional or departmental prizes (both academic and non-academic). Information on any study/employment in another country is also salient in a number of cases.

16. Of those institutions that issue the HEAR, 44% find it useful in evaluating students’ achievements and supporting admissions procedures. 56% do not, mostly on the basis that it is still too early to tell.
European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

17. 61% of those surveyed use the ECTS for the purposes of credit transfer, 26% use it for accumulation. 34% use ECTS for neither transfer nor accumulation.

18. Of those that do not use ECTS, 75% record the equivalent number of ECTS credits in their degree transcripts or provide official translation between credits used and ECTS.

19. 62% of HEIs do not use the ECTS because a credit system which is compatible with ECTS is already in use. This suggests that there is confidence among institutions about the compatibility of UK credit systems and qualifications frameworks with overarching European systems. 17% of respondents also quoted a lack of demand from students and other stakeholders as an explanatory factor.

Postgraduate Masters degrees

20. There are 294 one academic year or 12 months full-time (or equivalent) Masters degrees currently being offered by the institutions surveyed. This compares to 69 two-year Masters degrees and reflects continued confidence in the UK one year Masters programme.

21. The breakdown by degree programme is as follows:

Table 2: Breakdown of postgraduate Masters degrees by subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Programme</th>
<th>1 academic year</th>
<th>12 months full-time (or equivalent)</th>
<th>2 academic years full-time (or equivalent)</th>
<th>Other (please specify duration)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master of Science (MSc)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Arts (MA)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Education (MEd)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Law (LLM)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Business Administration (MBA)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degree by research (MPhil)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. Examples of other types of programmes being offered include part-time Masters programmes over a three year period, as well as programmes lasting 18 or 24 months and distance learning generally. 83% of institutions surveyed allocate 90 ECTS credits (180 UK credits) at Masters level.

23. 64% of respondents offer Integrated Masters degrees. This is up 6 percentage points compared to 2009, when the total was 58%. Of those that do, offering MEng degrees, MChem degrees and MSci degrees is most common. Other programmes mentioned include MEnvSci, MGeog and MChiro degree programmes.

Table 3: Breakdown of full-time Integrated Masters degrees offered by HEIs surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPharm</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEng</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMaths</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSci</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MChem</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhys</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MComp</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MArch</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. In 82% of cases, HEIs providing Integrated Masters programmes only award a Masters qualification at the end of the Masters stage (this compares to 75% of HEIs in 2009). 9% offer a Bachelors qualification after the Bachelor stage and a Masters qualification after the Masters stage (12.5% in 2009) and 9% offer both qualifications at the Masters stage (12.5% in 2009).

25. 32% of respondents have incorporated work placements into the summer vacation, while 16% have incorporated teaching. In both instances the vast majority of this activity was within the UK.

26. None of those HEIs surveyed have extended the timescale for submission of the dissertation to extend the duration of the Integrated Masters degree programme.
Collaborative degrees

27. The 2011 survey asked HEIs to identify in which regions they were awarding joint degree or multiple/dual/double degree in conjunction with other HEIs. 47 institutions responded to say they award a joint degree or multiple/dual/double degree in conjunction with one or more HEIs. In total, survey respondents registered 48 joint, multiple, dual or double degrees awarded in conjunction with another HEI in the UK, 78 with an HEI within Europe, and 48 with an HEI outside Europe. In all instances, collaborative degrees are most common at the Masters level.

Table 4: Breakdown of collaborative degrees offered by geographical area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Within the UK</th>
<th>Within Europe</th>
<th>Outside Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joint degrees(^1)</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple/dual/double degrees(^2)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to tick all that apply

28. The most regularly cited problems/obstacles to establishing joint or multiple/dual/double degrees are: the administrative burden; curriculum compatibility; credit equivalency; conflicting quality assurance expectations; and legal issues.

29. Of those institutions which do not offer collaborative degrees, 65% are considering the possibility. 26% are either currently in the process of establishing a collaborative degree or have began discussions to this end.

Recognition of UK qualifications

30. Responses indicate widespread acceptance of UK qualifications in Europe. 74% of respondents are not aware of any difficulties experienced by graduates of UK Bachelors programmes. 72% are not aware of any difficulties experienced by UK Integrated Masters graduates and 80% are not aware of any difficulties experienced by UK one year full-time Masters students. This contrasts favourably with the 2009 results, when 66% of respondents were not aware of any difficulties experienced by graduates of UK Bachelor and Masters programmes.

31. For those HEIs that reported graduates encountering recognition difficulties, problems regarding further study (e.g. admission to Masters/Doctorate) were the most common, accounting for 46% of all reported problems.

\(^1\) Joint degrees - one degree given by two or more HEIs together for a single study programme.

\(^2\) Multiple/dual/double degrees - two or more degrees given by two or more higher education institutions for the same study programme separately developed by and implemented in every participating higher education institution.
32. Like in the 2009 survey, the countries where difficulties were most frequently reported were Greece and Spain. Other countries mentioned include, Australia, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Cyprus and Egypt.

33. Specific subject areas where HEIs reported difficulties include Engineering, top-up business programmes, PGCEs, Medicine, Dentistry and other professional healthcare degrees. A general lack of understanding regarding the nature of long-distance learning was also reported.

34. When asked if the Bologna Process reforms and EU initiatives (DS, ECTS, development of HE qualifications frameworks etc) have improved the situation regarding the recognition of UK degrees in Europe, 100% responded the situation was maintained or had improved. This is up 3% compared to the results of the 2009 survey.

35. While 55% thought that the Bologna Process reforms had made no discernible difference, 45% felt that it had improved the situation.

Institutional strategies

36. 86% of the surveyed institutions have an international strategy (compared to 82% in 2009 and 74% in 2007) and 53% have a European strategy (compared to 40% in 2009 and 41% in 2007). Of those HEIs with a European strategy, 75% have it embedded in their international strategy and 22% have it separate from their international strategies. This shows a move toward incorporated strategies as compared to 2009, when only 64% had imbedded European strategies.

Table 5: Breakdown of institutional strategies across the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International strategy and European</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategy (incorporated)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only international strategy</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only European strategy</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strategy</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37. European strategies appear to cover both teaching and research activities, as well as institutional collaborations. 16 HEIs specifically mention student and staff mobility as a strategic objective and 12 specifically mention the recruitment of international students.

38. In terms of the impact that European strategies have had, institutions pointed to an increase in EU student recruitment and international partnerships; growth in the number of successful funding bids; and more co-ordinated and focussed thinking on international activity generally.
39. 53% of respondents felt that the Bologna Process has helped their institution pursue its European/international strategy. In particular, the ECTS was highlighted as a useful tool which ensures that staff and students are aware of compatibility of course load and learning outcomes with regards to studying in Europe and vice versa.

40. 46% of respondents (58% in 2009) have assigned a particular staff member/committee/group with responsibility for Bologna Process issues. Academic Registrars, Heads and Assistant Heads of International Offices, Vice-Provosts, Directors of Quality, Deans, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Vice-Principals, UK Bologna Experts and academics are all involved in dealing with Bologna Process issues in UK HEIs.

41. Widening participation is the Bologna Process area for which HEIs most commonly have a specific strategy. Enhancement of the employability of graduates; Recognition of non-formal and informal learning; and Involvement of students in higher education governance are also common areas for strategic action.

Table 6: The implementation rates for specific strategies called for by the Bologna Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widening Participation</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement of the employability of graduates</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of non-formal and informal learning</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of students in higher education governance</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European cooperation in quality assurance</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked to tick all that apply

Staff and student mobility

42. In order to gauge the UK HE sector’s potential to contribute to the goal outlined in the Leuven Communiqué (20% of graduates in the EHEA to have had a mobility experience by 2020), the UK HE International Unit asked institutions if they had measures in place to promote student and staff mobility. 74% of respondents have measures in place to promote student and staff mobility, 12% have measures in place to promote student mobility only and 3% have measures in place to promote staff mobility only. 12% of respondents have no measures in place to promote either staff or student mobility. This is the same result as was recorded in the 2009 survey.

43. The most common method of promoting mobility is the use of previously mobile students as ambassadors. This is closely followed by the use of posters and leaflets; the creation of a dedicated website; work with the Students’ Union; and specific promotional events. Other measures mentioned include participation in specific mobility programmes, such as Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus as well as summer schools and summer placement opportunities.
44. The most common methods of promoting staff mobility is targeted emails. This is closely followed by the use of financial incentives and a dedicated website.

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