

Aberystwyth University

Problematifying strategic internationalisation

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Published in:

Globalisation, Societies and Education

DOI:

[10.1080/14767724.2017.1413979](https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1413979)

Publication date:

2017

Citation for published version (APA):

O'Connor, S. (2017). Problematifying strategic internationalisation: Tensions and conflicts between international student recruitment and integration policy in Ireland. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, (3), 339-352.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1413979>

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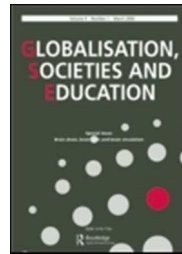
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Problematizing strategic internationalisation: tensions and conflicts between international student recruitment and integration policy in Ireland

Journal:	<i>Globalisation, Societies and Education</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Special Issue Article
Keywords:	Higher Education, Student Mobility, Social Inclusion, Ireland, Internationalisation, Integration

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Abstract

Internationalisation of higher education in Ireland has been identified as a pathway to economic recovery through encouraging student mobility and attracting highly skilled human capital. International students constitute one element of recent Irish immigration trends, presenting new challenges for a society in which diversity is a relatively recent phenomenon. In this light, here I explore the contradictions and tensions that arise from the drive to recruit international students with the need to embed policies that enshrine the integration of migrants more broadly. As highly-skilled migrants, international students are often perceived as 'the best and the brightest', who exhibit high levels of social and human capital. However, they occupy a contradictory position within a hierarchy that values the economic investment they make in Irish education, but categorises them into a fixed identity that does not recognise the diversity of needs to better facilitate their social inclusion. Analysing both government migration policies and university recruitment strategies reveals how policies at different scales shape hierarchies of desirability, wherein students are appraised for revenue generation but subject to surveillance, racialisation, increasing restrictions and divisive rhetoric depending on their status as non-EU students. To address this imbalance requires the implementation of holistic internationalisation strategies and migration policies.

Keywords: Higher education, student mobility, social inclusion, Ireland, internationalisation, integration

Introduction

Irish society has witnessed unprecedented social change over the last two decades, as the economy underwent rapid and sustained growth, bringing with it a reversal of long-established outward migration trends. During this period, immigration to Ireland has encompassed economic immigrants, asylum seekers and international students, resulting in a dramatic increase of diversity in Irish society (Glynn 2014). This diversification is enhanced by Ireland beginning to assert itself in the international education mobility sector, attracting

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3 greater numbers of full-time, fee-paying international students from regions outside of the
4 EU, and indeed, prioritising these flows over non-fee paying students. Today,
5 internationalisation strategies have become central features of university development
6 initiatives in order to enhance their international profiles, while mitigating the effects of
7 significant cuts to exchequer funding. In tandem with this growth, the Irish government has
8 sought to fill particular labour needs, shaping migration flows to Ireland in order to meet
9 economic imperatives. As a result, certain 'hierarchies' of immigrants have emerged,
10 encouraging migration flows that are able to contribute to those highly-skilled and
11 tolerating less 'desirable' migrants or those who are able to contribute to economic growth
12 (Gilmartin 2015; McDowell 2009). This paper explores the contested position international
13 students maintain within this hierarchy, as they represent both economic and social value
14 through positioning Ireland and its universities as cosmopolitan, diversity-friendly spaces.
15 Such hierarchies also serve to obscure international students' experiences of racialisation
16 and other barriers to their inclusion, which remain under-explored in institutional contexts.
17 Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature of international student experiences in smaller
18 contexts like Ireland, where multiculturalism is a recent demographic feature of society.
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31 International students have often been perceived as an invisible and transitory
32 category of migrant (Findlay 2011). They are frequently positioned as consumers whose
33 priorities centre on attaining (a western) education (Waters 2012; Madge *et al* 2015).
34 Assumed by governments to be 'the best and the brightest' and as a lucrative source of
35 potential skilled labour, the supposedly unproblematic nature of international students is
36 evident (Riaño and Piguet 2016). In this paper, I adopt a more critical approach. Building on
37 King and Raghuram's (2013) argument that conceptualisations of international student
38 migration must move beyond limiting categorisations of students, this work contributes to
39 studies of internationalisation through connecting university and government policy to the
40 lived experiences of international students in Ireland. Drawing on their everyday, lived
41 experiences in Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), I demonstrate the tensions
42 that arise from the piecemeal and limited nature of these policies, arguing that the social
43 inclusion and integration of students and migrants requires a broader cultural shift that
44 recognises multiple identities. Linking policy to the everyday geographies of students
45 contributes to a more complex conceptualisation of international student mobility.
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Contextualising migration and integration in Europe: establishing hierarchies of desirability

In recent years, European nations have become increasingly concerned with controlling migration flows in particular those of non-European Union immigrants (Joppke 2007). Issues of socio-economic inequality, racism, xenophobia, and perceptions of migrants and minorities living 'parallel lives' have also become prominent features of discourses surrounding immigration as well as policy responses to it (Phillips 2006; Castles *et al* 2015). European states such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France have been associated with particular integration models – multiculturalism and assimilation – yet recent times have seen such states beset by a sense of failure in the face of rising populism and the continued marginalisation of immigrants and their descendants (Joppke 2007). The relationship between migration control and integration has often privileged the former; as Joppke (2007: 1) asserts in the case of France: "state attention had always been fixated on refining instruments of immigration control", while integration policy remained 'badly defined in its objectives and principles', 'incoherent', 'contradictory' and 'insufficient' (Cour des Comptes 2004: 9f). This contradiction between migration control and integration as they co-exist in policy is also outlined by Gilmartin (2015: 26):

The desire to treat people equally and to foster social togetherness comes into conflict with the desire to protect the state and its citizens. In the conflict, it is often immigrants who lose out.

The knowledge economy has further delineated migrant entry conditions, as highly-educated migrants are given priority of access to enter the state (Gilmartin 2015). They are valued as a source of human capital, and furthermore, for their perceived capacity to integrate quickly (Shachar 2006). Ireland has followed other EU states to some extent in recreating these classifications of 'desirable' and 'undesirable' migrants in accordance with skills, language competence and economic value. Such hierarchies are further inscribed by 'whiteness', whereby white immigrants experience greater privilege in the 'hierarchy of acceptability' (McDowell 2009). McDowell (2009) asserts that this categorisation of desirability permeates migration management and labour recruitment. Whiteness –

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3 mediated by class, gender, religion, age, language, etc. – is thus another aspect through
4 which such hierarchies reassert themselves, for example, through the general assumption
5 that white immigrants will find integrating more straightforward. International students, as
6 a heterogeneous and highly-educated category of migrants, inhabit a contested position
7 within such hierarchies (Gilmartin 2015). On one hand, they are privileged through their
8 status as highly educated and generally, their language competence. On the other hand, this
9 must not presume that students are not subject to racialisation and social exclusion,
10 particularly as many non-EU students are non-white, thus requiring policy intervention to
11 create opportunities for their inclusion. Recognising the heterogeneity of international
12 students means we must analyse further how their lived experiences are mediated by
13 frameworks that privilege certain characteristics in order to move beyond thinking of them
14 as an “unproblematic category of mover” (Findlay 2011: 171).
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27 **Situating migration and integration policy in Ireland**

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29 Ireland’s economic prosperity began in the 1990s and transformed long-standing migration
30 trends: having historically been associated with high levels of emigration, it became a
31 country of net immigration for the first time in 1996, the last EU country to do so (Ruhs
32 2009). While Ireland had not been entirely homogenous to that point, the newfound
33 prosperity of the 1990s marked a seminal moment where new minorities were becoming
34 increasingly visible in Irish society (Lentin 2008; MacEinri 2007; MacEinri and White 2008). In
35 the 2011 Census, a growth of 143% of non-Irish nationals was recorded between 2002 and
36 2011, expanding from 5.8% to 12% of the population (CSO 2014). The demographic features
37 of diversity in Ireland have radically changed. For decades, UK nationals had been the
38 largest minority in Ireland, but they have now been superseded by Polish nationals. A
39 marked increase was also noted in the number of non-EU students arriving in Ireland during
40 this period, with a growth of 49% between 2005 and 2008 (Ruhs 2009: 3). Simply put,
41 diversity is becoming a more prominent feature of Irish society. The recent and rapid nature
42 of this change makes Ireland unique in comparison to its neighbouring countries, many of
43 whom have a longer legacy of post-war immigration and integration policy. As a result,
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3 integration policy has often focused on promoting the rights of Irish emigrants living abroad,
4 while encouraging return migration (Gray 2006).
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7 Reflecting the changes taking place in Irish society, in 2008, the Ministry of State for
8 Integration was established and published a comprehensive report outlining the deficiencies
9 of legislation and funding for migrant integration. The report adopted a broadly inter-
10 culturalist approach, focusing on promoting language skills, fostering intercultural dialogue
11 in communities, as well as promoting intercultural competence through schools,
12 workplaces, etc. (Glynn 2014). It published a number of worthwhile suggestions, which were
13 wide-ranging and intended to work at diverse scales, for example, through increasing
14 funding for English language provision in schools, as well as for Local Authorities, sporting
15 organisations, NGOs and other support services. To date, none of these initiatives have been
16 implemented. In 2008, austerity took hold; despite relatively stable levels of immigration
17 during this time, the issue of integration was largely shelved (Gilmartin 2015).
18 Unemployment tripled in 2010 and the emigration of Irish adults reached record levels
19 (Glynn 2014; Glynn *et al* 2013). Fluctuating levels of emigration from Ireland, combined with
20 austerity and high unemployment, have long been a political concern for a government
21 mindful of the loss of human capital in tough economic circumstances, resulting in the
22 prioritisation of promoting the return of Irish emigrants once more. Consequently,
23 responses to the experiences of diversity in Ireland have been reactionary, as Boucher
24 argues below:
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39 [Ireland's absence of a co-ordinated integration policy]...is more about maintaining
40 social cohesion and social order by individual immigrants adapting to the existing
41 Irish national society, rather than the government or Irish society adapting to the
42 changes arising from immigration and cultural diversity. It also defines integration in
43 terms of facilitating Irish national social cohesion and social order, by encouraging
44 immigrants to individually integrate by themselves through de facto assimilation, not
45 by retaining their own cultural identity. (2008: 13)
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51 The absence of a methodical, thoughtful integration policy that explicates the values
52 underpinning Irish society's stance on its recent diversification has led to this 'de facto
53 assimilation'. While the UK has been associated with a multicultural approach that
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3 encourages recognition and respect for multiple identities – for example, respecting the
4 customs, practices or beliefs of one’s religion – Ireland has not outlined a specific policy that
5 reflects such a position toward diversity whereby the right to difference is enshrined. There
6 is still no over-arching framework that embeds the requirement that diverse identities must
7 be recognised at all scales; in schools, workplaces, etc. Although the rhetoric of inter-
8 culturalism and respect for difference was adopted, none of the necessary incentives or
9 funding have been put in place, leaving a vacuum in which migrant individuals must adapt
10 themselves to the majority culture.
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17 The response to immigration and the integration of migrants in Ireland has been largely
18 reactive and fragmentary in nature. This is evident still by the absence of a nationally co-
19 ordinated integration strategy. In recent years, the economic recession has also accelerated
20 the desire to increase student recruitment (ICOS 2013). As students are subject to national
21 management policies and official immigration procedures, their everyday lives and
22 experiences of social inclusion are subject to the regulations of policy that responsible for
23 promoting integration and inclusion. Improving national policy may lead to substantial
24 changes to the overall student experience, to student mobility flows and to the
25 opportunities of students to remain in Ireland post-graduation. For internationalisation
26 strategies to effectively work towards the social inclusion of students requires a deeper and
27 more critical engagement with the changes that have arisen from mobility to Ireland,
28 specifically building a culture that recognises and supports the diverse identities present in
29 Ireland today.
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43 **Methodology**

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45 This paper draws on quantitative and qualitative data gathered from doctoral thesis
46 research investigating the geographies of international students and their experiences of
47 inter-cultural interaction at a University in the Republic of Ireland in 2012. Due to the
48 sensitivity of information presented and to protect the anonymity of interviewees, the
49 University is not named. It draws upon data retrieved from an extensive online survey sent
50 to 806 full-time, non-EU international students (with a response rate of 23%), 25 in-depth
51 semi-structured interviews with students from across the international student body, and 6
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3 interviews with international education support and recruitment staff, campus
4 accommodation management and the Director for the Student Experience. Non-EU students
5 were chosen as a sample because the majority of EU students are ERASMUS and stay in the
6 country for a maximum of one year, while non-EU students pursue degrees. As non-EU
7 students pay much higher fees than EU and Irish students, they are also the primary focus of
8 internationalisation strategies. For the purpose of the research, extensive content analysis
9 of internationalisation strategies and policies related to international students was carried
10 out. These were drawn from a range of sources, including the internationalisation strategies
11 of the Republic of Ireland's major Universities¹ and publications pertaining to international
12 student mobility from the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)², the Higher
13 Education Authority (HEA) and the Department of Education and Skills.

22 International students are often homogenised as a singular identity (King and Raghuram
23 2013) and so to speak to a multiplicity of identities, the study drew on students from a wide
24 range of backgrounds; the majority of survey respondents were from the USA (28%),
25 Malaysia (27%) and China (13%), with 22 countries represented in total. Seventy-one
26 percent of the survey respondents were undergraduates, primarily studying medicine and
27 other science subjects. The interview participants were recruited through the survey and are
28 representative of that sample, again, most of whom are from the USA, Malaysia and China
29 respectively. They are non-EU nationals, and these students were sought out because they
30 committed to studying in Ireland for at least three years. Sixty-eight percent (17) of the
31 participants were female. They ranged in age from 17 – 49 with a median age of 22. The
32 survey and interviews aimed to engage with students' feelings of belonging, and how their
33 encounters with others in private and public spaces in the city and university contributed to
34 their inclusion and /or exclusion. Ethical approval was acquired, and as an Irish, English-
35 speaking researcher engaging with diverse cultures, I was mindful of the need to
36 consistently reflect on my own positionality in relation to the participants. The interviews
37 lasted between one and two hours, were conducted in English, and were audio-recorded

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54 ¹ University College Cork; University of Limerick; Trinity College Dublin; University College Dublin; National
55 University of Ireland Galway; NUI Maynooth

56 ² ICOS advocates for the rights of international students and makes recommendations for internationalisation
57 policies; it is not state-funded.

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3 with the participants' permission. They were coded using NVIVO software, while the survey
4 data was analysed using SPSS software.
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7 Choosing a case study allows the researcher to engage with specific theories, while
8 understanding how those materialise and are influenced by their geographical situation (Yin
9 2003). The data gathered from the University studied, although specific to one case study,
10 represents the localised experiences of internationalisation and of student mobility and
11 integration at a specific institutional scale. As this work is concerned with engaging with the
12 relationship between national and institutional policy, this case study allows for the analysis
13 of how national policies have influenced practices directly engaged with students' education
14 and their everyday lived experiences, providing qualitative depth to the lived outcomes of
15 specific policies.
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26 **The National Strategic Value of International Students in Ireland**

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28 International students – particularly full-time, non-EU students – represent part of the
29 recent wave of highly-skilled migrants moving to Ireland. Internationalisation of Irish Higher
30 Education Institutions (HEIs) has been recognised as a potential avenue of economic
31 recovery, contributing significantly to university revenue – but also to the economy more
32 generally – in the desire to position Ireland as a leader in the provision of high-level
33 education (ICOS 2013). Revenue is generated through their tuition fees; Irish students'
34 tuition fees are subsidised by the government, but they pay an annual registration fee of
35 approx. €3,000. Tuition fees for international students depend on the institution and
36 programme, varying between €9,750 – €20,000 for an Arts and Humanities degree, and
37 €45,000 – €52,000 to study Medicine (Education in Ireland 2017).
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46 Table One shows the proportion of international students at each of Ireland's
47 Universities. University College Dublin ('Ireland's Global University') maintains the highest
48 proportion of international students in its student body, and is also involved in a number of
49 collaborative degree programs in overseas campuses in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and
50 China (UCD 2015). The figure of 10% at University of Limerick represents full-time students
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3 and excludes ERASMUS and JYA (Junior Year Abroad)³. The most recent profile of University
4 College Cork (2014) states that there are 3,000 international students, without
5 distinguishing between short-term visiting (such as ERASMUS and JYA) and full-time
6 students. In actuality, this figure does not represent the number of fee-paying students
7 enrolled, but is used in such a way as to reinforce the marketing of UCC as a diverse and
8 international campus (Brooks and Waters 2014).
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14 [Insert *Table One: Proportion of International Students in Irish Universities* here]
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17 Between the academic years 2010/2011 and 2014/2015, there was an increase of
18 almost 10,000 international students from outside the EU studying in Ireland (Department
19 of Education and Skills 2016: 52). The following table illustrates the origin by domicile of
20 these students:
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24 [Insert *Table Two: International Students by Domicile or Origin 2010/2011 and 2014/2015*
25 here]
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29 As the chart illustrates, Asia has clearly been the source of significant growth and
30 student recruitment for Irish universities in the last number of years. Internationalisation
31 strategies have focused on marketing a western education in an English-speaking country in
32 order to increase student recruitment from China and India particularly. The strategic value
33 that is placed on international students is evident in government strategies which seek to
34 intensify internationalisation of Irish Higher Education. The National Strategy for Education
35 2030 (2011: 81) outlines this importance:
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41 From the national perspective, international education can be seen as an investment
42 in Ireland's global relationships... The higher education system has a crucial role to
43 play in promoting Ireland's international profile, forging strategic links with partners
44 overseas, reinforcing ties with Ireland's diaspora and developing a new global
45 network of influence among Irish-educated alumni who will act as advocates and
46 agents for Irish interests in parts of the world where we have not traditionally had
47 strong links.
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57 ³ These are short-term exchange programmes which typically involve three months to a year of study abroad
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3 This perspective aligns with the type of 'strategic cosmopolitanism' outlined by
4 Katherine Mitchell, where diversity is harnessed as a tool to remain globally competitive at
5 the expense of "the creation of the tolerant, multicultural self" (2003: 387). Such
6 perspectives have been critiqued for intensifying the commodification of education at the
7 expense of fostering other benefits of internationalization (DeVita and Case 2003). The
8 National Strategy for 2030 also refers to the need for a holistic approach to student
9 recruitment and support, including the integration of students during their studies.
10 However, this is not defined, and methods of supporting integration are not outlined.
11 Encouraging the retention of international students as a potentially vital source of human
12 capital after graduation is also neglected.
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21 The theme of becoming part of an international network of Irish alumni is expanded
22 on in the most recent strategy by the Department of Education and Skills: 'Irish educated,
23 Globally Connected', 2016-2020, which aims to increase the value of Ireland's international
24 education sector to €2.1b by 2020 from its current value of €1.58b (Department of
25 Education and Skills 2016). It estimates that the average total international students spend
26 annually on non-tuition items, such as rent, food and socialising is approximately €182m
27 (Department of Education and Skills 2016: 19). Increasing recruitment by 33% is the primary
28 goal of this strategy, bringing the proportion of international students across Irish Higher
29 Education Institutions to 15%, while increasing the significant revenue students already
30 generate. Students are allowed to work for up to 20 hours a week during term, and up to 40
31 hours during the summer break, making them "inadvertent migrant workers" (Gilmartin
32 2015: 64). In comparison to the National Strategy, it does make reference to encouraging
33 "high performing students" to remain according to specific labour needs and language skills
34 they fulfil.
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46 However, while there is an emphasis on increasing student numbers, they are still
47 subject to broader policies of migration restriction. Anxieties about bogus language schools
48 has led to tightened access to education; the doubling of visa renewal fees to €300 in 2012,
49 placing greater costs on immigration registration, is but one example. Similar to recent
50 measures adopted in the UK, others include limiting the number of programmes open to
51 non-EEA (European Economic Area) students, inspections, and increasing the mandatory
52 number of hours non-EEA students must attend class. Consequently, immigration policy is
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3 used as a way of controlling student mobility and further delineating access to the desired
4 type of student. While international students have substantial economic value to the Irish
5 economy, symbolically, they also serve neo-liberal logic as they are showcased as evidence
6 of Ireland's diversity-friendly, cosmopolitan credentials.
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10 **The Strategic Value of International Students: Perspectives from an Irish University**

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12 Building on this neo-liberal logic, in 2012, the University published strategies promising to
13 establish a diversity-friendly campus that will "further the pluralist, multicultural yet Irish
14 nature of the campus community" (University Strategy 2013 - 2017). These strategies focus
15 specifically on strengthening flows of students to Ireland. Internationalisation is also used a
16 marketing tool to represent the university as a cosmopolitan, diverse and globally-
17 connected institution, constructing international students as the medium through which
18 domestic students develop inter-cultural skills and cultural capital (Brooks and Waters
19 2014).
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27 As a result of this recruitment, Irish universities are now characterised by much
28 greater levels of diversity. The University presented here has recognised internationalisation
29 as a key strategic goal, with the intention to increase the international student population
30 from 12% to 17% by 2017. The USA, China and India are predictable markets for this
31 recruitment, providing substantial numbers of students on campus already, but the
32 University is also looking to expand into 'emerging markets' such as Latin America and other
33 growing economies. The Faculty of Arts and Social Science has put strategic emphasis on
34 doubling the number of Junior Year Abroad (JYA) from the USA at undergraduate level, and
35 increasing the number of international doctoral students (who already make up
36 approximately one third of their PhD students). The Faculty of Science and Engineering aim
37 to increase the number of full time fee-paying undergraduates from Eastern Europe and
38 other non-EU countries such as Brazil. The Faculty of Medicine and Health do not refer to
39 internationalisation in their strategy, operating independently of the other disciplines in
40 terms of recruitment. This reflects the absence of co-ordination in the establishment of a
41 "diversity-friendly campus".
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54 Other elements of internationalisation, such as fostering a global outlook,
55 internationalising curricula, or a multicultural campus space, remain nebulous or have not
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3 come to fruition. The Plan lists projects such as changing campus signage, anti-racism
4 policies, inter-cultural training and peer support initiatives as the relevant steps in
5 facilitating a “diversity-friendly campus”, yet to date, these projects have not been
6 operationalised. These recommendations mirror the inter-cultural rhetoric of inclusion
7 adopted by the Irish government which have also not materialised. Efforts to promote
8 students’ social inclusion are lacking in specificity and scope. For comparison, in the UK,
9 UKCISA (the UK Council for International Student Affairs), commissioned a comprehensive
10 report evaluating research on internationalisation, data on inter-cultural interaction across
11 UK universities, and detailed case studies of successful initiatives to promote integration of
12 students across the University (UKCISA 2014). The 44-page report acknowledges that
13 awareness of diversity and the promotion of inter-cultural interaction should be embedded
14 in the culture of the institution itself. In Ireland, this has not been outlined by Strategies,
15 and there is no comparative initiative to support inclusion in similar detail.
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26 The absence of an effective framework through which to provide support to
27 students has garnered criticism from staff, who were also critical of the feasibility of
28 recruitment targets. Interviews with international education staff reveal the lack of
29 communication between those working directly with students and those devising strategies:
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33 *Well I think it is probably unrealistic in many senses because... they're, very often*
34 *when they're sitting down looking at strategic plans and looking into the future,*
35 *there's no sense of: 'well, this might be if everything goes well'. So when we, in our*
36 *original strategic plan, 2008-2013, the figures were just completely doubling them.*
37 *And then you had the worst economic recession since the 1930s... So there is, from an*
38 *institutional perspective - there's no point in saying otherwise, there is a disconnect*
39 *between what they would like and what the reality actually is. (Acting Head of*
40 *International Education Office: Informant)*
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48 *I would just like the systems to line up here internally, and I would like the national*
49 *systems to - if you're serious about an internationalisation policy and you want to*
50 *bring in more international students - then you need to provide more facilities. I*
51 *would like our systems to actually take account of our international students, and I*
52 *would like the national framework to actually work, as in [the Department of]*
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3 *Education and [the Department of] Justice to actually talk to each other.*

4 (International Student Support Officer: Informant)

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7 In June 2016, the University unveiled 'Internationalisation 2.0', setting out the financial
8 imperatives now facing the university – with government funding cut by two-thirds to
9 approximately €27m – recruitment of full-time international students is the most viable way
10 of recuperating revenue. Internationalisation has become a symptom of the strategic
11 cosmopolitanism that is becoming a prominent feature of Higher Education. This form of
12 cosmopolitanism does not centre on the social inclusion of students, but rather, places a
13 value on their presence so as to increase the social capital of domestic students while
14 generating revenue.
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21 **Inclusion of Students: University Policy and Support**

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24 As outlined in previous sections, policies have failed to adopt measures recommended to
25 facilitate the social inclusion of both migrants and international students. Despite the
26 significant contributions of international students, actions for their social inclusion remain
27 piecemeal and largely unfulfilled. This section engages with existing measures that have
28 been enacted in university accommodation, illustrating the importance of using students'
29 lived experiences to highlight weaknesses in existing policy. The experiences outlined below
30 demonstrate that international students are also susceptible to some of the same barriers
31 to inclusion as other migrants. I argue that an holistic understanding of internationalisation
32 must be centred on the recognition of a multiplicity of student identities, providing specific
33 measures for their inclusion.
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42 Accommodation is a key site for inter-cultural contact between students (Van Mol
43 and Michielsen 2015), and is one of few spaces where the integration of international
44 students has been planned for. The PBSA complexes are unique in that the management
45 attempt to affect a strategy of integration for their students, a practice that differentiates
46 Irish campus accommodation from those of other studies, where the segregation of
47 international students is linked to privately-developed PBSA that is almost exclusively
48 marketed to foreign students (Fincher and Shaw 2009; 2011). In the University in question
49 here, there are limitations to the number of co-nationals who can share apartments, with
50 efforts made to distribute students of different nationalities relatively evenly throughout.
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3 For example, a five bedroom apartment may have two Irish, two continental European and
4 one North American student placed in it. This measure was adopted to prevent to the
5 clustering of particular groups, and is described by the Manager of Campus Accommodation
6 as being in line with the University's internationalisation strategy that aims to produce
7 globally-minded graduates.
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12 This approach creates problems, as there is no clear official strategy beyond hoping
13 that mixing the students will allow international students to integrate. The exact definition
14 of this 'integration' is not made explicit. Others have acknowledged that proximity does not
15 necessarily foster intimacy (Valentine 2008; 2010; Fincher *et al* 2014). Accommodation, as
16 an intensely intimate space, can then become a site of considerable contestation, and
17 integration strategies should be keenly sensitive to the different needs of students – for
18 example, their religious observances. The mixing strategy does not always work, which the
19 management of campus accommodation attributes to the lack of openness of Irish students
20 to difference, as well as the tendency of Irish students to return home every weekend:
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29 *...We find that a lot of Irish people do not want foreigners... We had a recent one just*
30 *before Christmas - a mother said: "could we not...?"... There were two Chinese, a*
31 *continental European and two Irish girls, and one of the Irish girls couldn't accept*
32 *living with foreigners, and her mother rang the manager repeatedly and there were*
33 *several meetings about it, and the final plea from the mother was: "could we not find*
34 *some nice girls from Kerry for her to live with?" (Informant: Manager of Campus*
35 *Accommodation)*
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41 The Manager of Accommodation has inadvertently described an issue that is a significant
42 barrier to inclusion for students and migrants; many Irish students have not been brought
43 up in a culture where they are taught about multiculturalism or plural identities. The
44 'labour' of social inclusion and integration is particularly one-sided, resulting in the
45 normalisation of assimilation on behalf of the student. In that instance, the Irish student was
46 not willing to accommodate difference or to put in the kind of inter-cultural labour
47 necessary to learn to negotiate difference. On another, practical level, mixing students in
48 accommodation can isolate students because Irish students return home at weekends, and
49 so policies to foster encounters between students should consider other spaces and
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3 activities that might produce more equal and fruitful interactions. The time-space
4 divergences of students' habits are felt keenly by those living in University accommodation:
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7 [At the weekend] *just hanging around with my Chinese friend. But that only usually*
8 *happens at the weekend. Monday to Friday I just stay with my Irish room-mate but at*
9 *the weekend I hang out with my Chinese friend.* (Informant: China, 20, Electrical
10 Engineering)
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15 *I was definitely close to the Canadians because again, the Irish students just go home*
16 *on the weekend, and in first and second year we didn't have class on Fridays, so*
17 *people would go home on Thursday night or Friday morning. But even now, people*
18 *are like 'how fast can I get home?' so it's really hard to make friends when you're*
19 *there 4 days a week and people have extra-curriculars.* (Informant: USA, female, 24,
20 Medicine)
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26 Responses from the University to the divergences between students connect to wider
27 discourse about self-segregation of migrants, showing that students – despite their relative
28 privileges in relation to other categories of migrant – are not immune to such rhetoric. Here,
29 the University campus accommodation manager discusses Malaysian students:
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34 *Then as I say, we had a lot of Malaysians, and definitely for them - they had very little*
35 *interest in Irish culture - their focus was: "the government is paying us, this is an*
36 *amazing opportunity, I will come to Ireland and I will study and I will give back to my*
37 *community and my family and all of those who have invested in me and trusted in*
38 *me". So they used - we have a private common room that you can book, there's a*
39 *private one and a public one - the private one is beautifully furnished, there's a*
40 *kitchenette, you can cook meals - they do their prayers in there on a Friday, the*
41 *women on one side, the men on the other side, they study together on a Saturday*
42 *morning, they're not interested on ANY level in mixing.*
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51 However, the results of this mixing have resulted in the marginalisation and racialisation of
52 students. Racialisation involves "endowing the characteristics, appearances, traditions and
53 lifestyles attributed to groups of different 'others' with negative signifiers that are deemed
54 to be natural or insurmountable" (Lentin 2008: xv). The clustering of Malaysian and Chinese
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3 students on campus, particularly in PBSA, is perceived as 'self-segregation' (Fincher and
4 Shaw 2009; 2011; Holton and Riley 2013). The university's response to this demonstrates
5 the ways in which this issue is deemed to be inevitable, upending dominant representations
6 of international students as unproblematic.
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10 The Manager explicitly draws on their religious and cultural traditions as a way of
11 reinforcing their 'otherness' while naturalising their marginalisation. They also overlook the
12 internal diversity of the Malaysian cohort, which incorporates Malay, Indian and Chinese
13 ethnicities, Muslims and non-Muslims. The racialisation of students elides more complex
14 reasons for their clustering in accommodation – not to mention the role of Irish students in
15 leaving at weekends. Survey data⁴ revealed that the majority (57%) of the 53 Malaysian
16 students surveyed agreed that they wished to become integrated into Irish University and
17 social life. Over two-thirds of the 196 student respondents expressed their dissatisfaction
18 with the levels of interaction they experienced outside of their co-national friendships and a
19 majority expressed a wish to experience Irish culture and to integrate with Irish people. This
20 illustrates that international students experience similar barriers to social inclusion as other
21 migrants, despite having strong language skills and sharing spaces with Irish students on a
22 daily basis. Closer attention needs to be paid to the policy of mixing students together as it
23 relates to particular nationalities, as it obscures the complexities of their experiences and
24 equates this form of segregation with an unsurmountable problem.
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37 The case of Canadian students here helps to illustrate how the 'hierarchy of
38 acceptability' operates through the lens of whiteness (McDowell 2009). Malaysian students
39 are not the only group reported to cluster; Canadian students are also described to live in
40 significant concentration in one particular apartment complex. Many of these students are
41 Graduate Entry Medicine students. They tend to be in their mid-to-late twenties, many are
42 married, and they may also prefer to avoid the traditional student lifestyle (Chatterton
43 1999). The Manager of campus accommodation describes them thus:
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50 *For example here in [Campus Accommodation], we have a lot of Graduate Entry*
51 *Medicine Canadians, they have their own Facebook page, they socialise together.*
52 *There's another group of them around in a private complex, like a lot of them are*
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55 ⁴ Students were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I want to integrate
56 into Irish society".
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3 *graduate entry, so some of them are married and they're leaving their spouses at*
4 *home so they're not interested in hassle, really... And they come here to study*
5 *obviously Graduate Entry Medicine, they want somewhere quiet, they want*
6 *somewhere conducive to their study, and they don't want party central.*
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10 Yet their dedication to study over inter-cultural interaction is not perceived as being
11 problematic, defined as 'self-segregation' or identified as a target for purposeful mixing
12 policies. They are accorded a greater degree of agency in their lifestyle and choice of
13 accommodation than Malaysian students. This is an example of how the categorisation of
14 students by the University can reinforce a distinctly racialised discourse that problematizes
15 the presence of Malaysians as a group whose relations with others set them apart and
16 require active management, while white western students are free to make their own
17 choices of who to socialise or live with. Ideas about desirability of particular students – and
18 migrants more broadly – have permeated university discourses in relation to diversity.
19 These experiences illustrate the necessity of recognising the heterogeneity of international
20 students. While they may be highly skilled, their opportunities for social interaction and
21 integration are uneven. The racialisation of Malaysian students serves to highlight how
22 universities unwittingly categorise their students along a scale of desirability that privileges
23 whiteness (McDowell 2009; Fincher and Shaw 2011). Although international students are
24 broadly constructed as 'unproblematic' (Findlay 2011), the findings presented here
25 contradict such representations.
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39 Students' experiences of accommodation also illustrate the absence of a broader
40 culture in which tolerance for diversity is fostered. As with Irish migration policy, the
41 rhetoric of inter-cultural dialogue has been adopted but 'de facto assimilation' is expected
42 from the international students in question (Boucher 2008). While American students may
43 be perceived as the kind of 'unproblematic' student referred to by Findlay (2011), they have
44 also reported dissatisfaction with their level of social inclusion in Ireland. Below, an
45 American student refers to the expectation of assimilation that is placed on students;
46 integration is not presented as a two-way dialogue involving equal amounts of
47 responsibility. She also draws attention to the role of accommodation in segregating
48 American students:
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3 *I think it kind of falls on the American student a little bit to try to integrate and so*
4 *there's a few Americans I know that were looking at coming over here to study and I*
5 *said: "first thing, stay out of student housing, find a house to share it with somebody*
6 *because it will help you integrate and don't just hang out with Americans, make*
7 *yourself hang out with the Irish". (Informant: USA, female, 26, Social Science)*
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12 This student lived with four Irish students, and deliberately avoided other American
13 students in order to immerse herself in Irish culture, portraying inclusion as an individual
14 responsibility. However, internationalisation should not simply function as a driver for
15 student mobility; in a broader sense, it should foster more profound learning opportunities
16 for the tolerance of different identities and cultures for all students (de Vita and Case 2003).
17 Through accommodation policy, we see the contradictions that arise from mixing students
18 to produce "globally-minded graduates", which cannot effectively foster inter-cultural skills
19 or dialogue as it fails to engage with the majority population. This student's experience
20 illuminates a number of contradictions in relation to policy; although a key site of
21 interaction, accommodation is not necessarily an ideal space in which to mix students in the
22 hope that they interact and form bonds. American students – English-speaking and
23 predominantly white and middle class – also experience marginalisation and need support
24 for their inclusion. Homogenising international student identities obscures these complex
25 experiences.
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40 **Conclusion**

41
42 This paper has sought to advance the literature of international student migration in two
43 ways. Firstly, I advocate the recognition of the heterogeneity of the international student
44 body. As studies – and policies – have frequently positioned international students as an
45 unproblematic and transient category of migrant, I have sought here to present a more
46 nuanced representation of their experiences that reveal the limitations of homogenising
47 international students (King and Raghuram 2013). Despite generally having high language
48 competence and levels of education, international students of various nationalities and
49 cultural backgrounds experience similar barriers to integration as other migrants, including
50 racialisation and marginalisation. They are not simply consumers in the Higher Education
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3 context; many maintain a specific interest in engaging with and integrating into Irish culture.
4 Considering their experiences and identities as more than students advances the
5 conceptualisation of international student mobility (King and Raghuram 2013).
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9 Second, by engaging with the experiences of international students through the lens of
10 national and institutional policy, we see that the diversification of Irish society has been
11 harnessed as a tool of economic recovery and a way of bolstering an imagination of Ireland
12 as cosmopolitan and diversity-friendly. The hierarchies of acceptability that have developed
13 around that have permeated various scales, resulting in a fragmentary and laissez-faire
14 integration policy that places the labour of inter-cultural interaction on the
15 immigrant/student. The University has demonstrated limited knowledge of the particular
16 needs of some students, relegating them into fixed categories based on their nationality.
17 They are tolerated for their economic contributions as students but not perceived as a
18 potential source of human and social capital after their period of study has come to an end.
19 There are no 'Study-to-work' programmes to facilitate the retention of their skills and
20 cultural capital. While changes have been made to allow international students to remain in
21 Ireland up to one year post-graduation, in order to stay, they are required to find
22 employment. As noted by Gilmartin (2015: 64) –
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34 Time as a student is time apart, offering partial access to Irish society, but in
35 exchange for significant economic investment. The work that students do is a crucial
36 aspect of their contribution and their experience but it is subjugated to their status
37 as students.
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41 The drive to encourage 'highly-skilled' immigrants reinforces the 'hierarchy of acceptability'
42 (McDowell 2009). However, international students occupy a distinct and contradictory place
43 within this hierarchy. As a complex and diverse group, they upend certain expectations with
44 regard to integration, particularly as the highly-skilled may still experience racialisation and
45 similar obstacles to integration as other migrants. Exploring the experiences of international
46 students can demonstrate the contradictory construction of the 'highly-skilled', and the
47 uneven consequences of the interplay of national and institutional policies in their everyday
48 lives. While the scope of this paper limits discussion to students' experiences of
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3 accommodation, further research may explore in more detail other spaces of interaction
4 and broader limitations to integration to students and other highly-skilled migrants.
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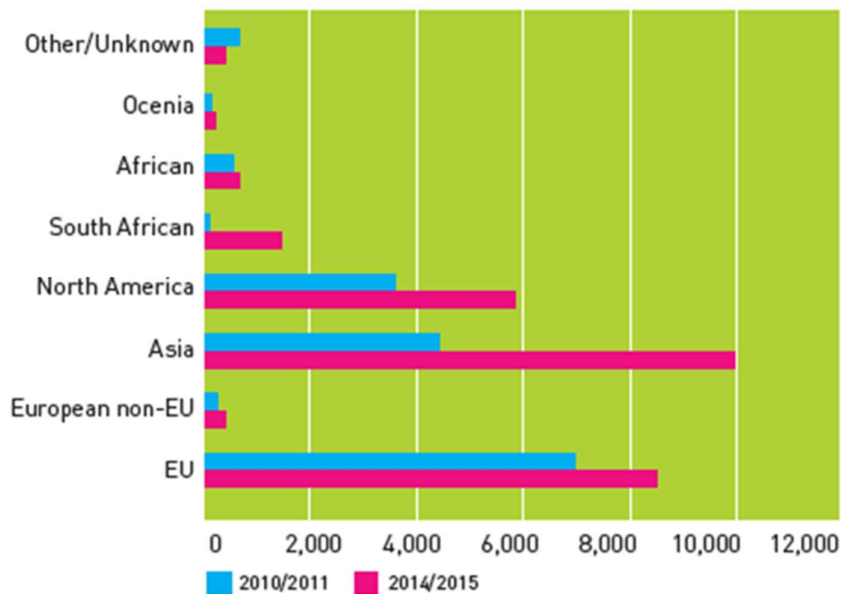
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7 Ireland offers a novel context in which to analyse internationalisation. The absence of a
8 broader multicultural outlook in society has repercussions for migrants at various scales. For
9 Higher Education Institutions, internationalisation policies should encompass a broader
10 scale of initiatives, not just in terms of enhancing mobility, but also in relation to fostering a
11 tolerant, multicultural outlook. This involves fostering a culture that encourages Irish
12 students to recognise and negotiate diversity, so that the labour of inter-cultural dialogue
13 and interaction is not as one-sided as it currently stands. This might advance inter-cultural
14 dialogue and tolerance beyond the university. Subsequent policy changes must emphasise
15 the imperative to recognise international students as a complex and heterogeneous group
16 who are also in need to support in order to overcome barriers to their social inclusion. Their
17 experiences demonstrate the uneven impact of policies; internationalisation strategies
18 cannot be disconnected from the broader national framework in which they operate.
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3 **Tables**
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5 Table One: Proportion of International Students at Irish Universities
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Name of University	Proportion of International Students in Student Body
University College Dublin	25%
Trinity College Dublin	16%
University College Cork	15%
National University of Ireland, Maynooth	15%
National University of Ireland, Galway	12%
University of Limerick	10%

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27 **Table Two: Origin by Domicile of International Students in Ireland, 2010/2011 and 2014/2015**
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50 Source:

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