



## INTERNATIONAL OFFICE STRATEGY 2010-2015

### 1. Introduction

The importance of internationalising universities is well recognised across the UK Higher Education sector. In addition to enriching the intellectual and cultural diversity of institutions, the additional income generated by international students has become an important strategic goal.

For many years the University of Chester has had an international dimension to its activities. This has been repeatedly reinforced through the various teaching and scholarly activities of its staff and students and the importance of internationalisation is reaffirmed in the institution's *Corporate Plan*.

The International Office is at the hub of the University's international activities and developments. The Dean of International Development & Director of the International Office is Chair of the University's International Committee, which reports directly to Executive Group. 'International' encompasses all students from, and activities in, Europe and worldwide

### 2. Strategic Objectives

The *University International Strategy 2010-15* states three key strategic objectives:

- To raise the international profile of the University and position it globally as a vibrant and enterprising institution that attracts high quality staff, students and collaborative partners worldwide;
- To provide a teaching, research, learning and support environment that fosters intellectual, social and cultural experiences, preparing students for careers in a global marketplace;
- To strengthen and facilitate international student recruitment.

The role of the International Office is to help facilitate these strategic objectives both by its own initiatives and by working closely with Faculties and Support Departments across the University.

### 3. International Student Recruitment

The major responsibility of the International Office is the recruitment of fee-paying international students. The Deputy Director, International Officers and administrative support staff have responsibility for marketing and recruitment activities and strategic developments. This includes working with Faculties - to advise on course demands, market trend analysis, institutional partnerships, design of marketing materials, etc – and with Support Departments to ensure a coordinated approach to the total international student experience. Student recruitment is complex and requires a multidimensional strategic approach.

#### *Action Plan*

- Continued promotion of the University and its courses internationally, targeting existing clusters of countries, namely (i) China and Far East, (ii) India and Sub-Continent; (iii) Middle East; (iv) CIS countries;
- Explore other possible market clusters (e.g. Africa; Europe, North America; Latin America) and identify those which would be best suited to our University programmes and culture;
- Continued membership and attendance at national conferences of key network organisations such as British Council Education UK Partnership, BUILA (British Universities International Liaison Association) and UKCOSA (Council for International Education) and UKNARIC (National Recognition Information Centre);
- Continued attendance at selected in-country British Council and other Exhibitions and events;
- Continued use of a network of Preferred Education Agents;

- Explore development of a network of University Ambassadors – using selected alumni acting as in-country representatives;
- Continued selective use of educational advertisers (e.g. Hobsons, Hot Courses, etc);
- Development of marketing and publicity materials (e.g. International DVD and website; on-line University Prospectus and International Student Guide, etc);
- Working with Faculties to develop more appropriate marketing materials
- Development of in-country alumni networks;
- Progression agreements with UK-based education establishments hosting international students (e.g. boarding schools, colleges, etc)
- Targeting Embassies and Ministries of Education for sponsorship and partnership opportunities.

#### 4. International Partnerships

Key to the success of the *University International Strategy* is the careful management of a wide variety of relationships with staff, students, prospective students, alumni, partner Universities overseas, influencing networks, governments and funders.

##### *Action Plan*

The International Office will:

- Seek to ensure that partner organisations with which it collaborates reflect back the vision, values and standards of this University;
- Facilitate Faculty developments of Collaborative Agreements with overseas Universities (e.g. in Georgia and China) for undergraduate and postgraduate provision of programmes (e.g. dual degrees; 2+2; 3+1 UG courses; PG progression, etc..)

#### 5. Admissions

The International Office is responsible for responding to enquiries and the application procedures for international students, including design of forms (hard copy and on-line), receipt of applications, checking qualifications, forwarding paperwork to Departments, issuing acceptance/rejection letters following Departmental decisions, maintaining contact with successful applicants to facilitate conversions, receiving deposits and issuing CAS Certificates.

##### *Action Plan*

The International Office will:

- process and monitor the application procedures for full fee-paying international (non-EC) students - moving towards on-line submission of application forms;
- The Office will keep regular contact with enquiries and applicants using SITS to answer further queries and encourage confirmation of the University's offer of a place;
- The Office will liaise closely with the UKBA on immigration matters and issue international students with the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) on receipt of acceptance of the offer and deposit;
- The Office will inform Faculties, Senior Management and relevant Support Departments of international student recruitment by distribution of monthly statistical reports;
- The Office will facilitate Programme Registration and where appropriate, when approached by the student, will continue to give advice throughout their course on a variety of issues and concerns (e.g. welfare, accommodation, visas, finance, study skills, English language support, etc), or will direct them to the appropriate University Support Departments.

#### 6. Liaison with Support Departments

The University does not operate a 'one-stop shop' for international students but services student needs and requirements through a number of separate departments:

- International student exchanges (ISEP and ISEP Direct) are handled by the International Student Exchange Office, located in the Faculty of BELL.
- European staff/student exchanges and partner agreements funded by ERASMUS are handled by the European Office, located in the Department of Modern Language.
- The International Student Welfare Officer is located in SGSS
- English Language and Study Skills Support are the responsibility of LSS
- Accommodation, Finance and Registry have all significant roles dealing with international students
- The University Alumni Officer, who deals with all alumni relations (including international), is located in Corporate Communications Office

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- The International Committee and its Sub-Groups will aid effective co-ordination and communication between these Departments and Faculties;
- The International Office staff will continue to meet regularly with colleagues in other Departments and Faculties;
- Since the European Office, nor any other department in the University, has responsibility for marketing and recruitment of EU students, this important role should be undertaken by the International Office;
- Explore the development of a more integrated one-stop service for international students rather than the disparate one currently in operation – perhaps by re-locating some support services to the International Office.

## **7. Performance Indicators**

The *University International Strategy* lists as its Performance Indicators for 2010-15:

- a) Secure a 20% increase in the number of academic staff involved in international activities;
- b) Secure a 10% increase in the number of effective and sustainable collaborative partnerships with international institutions;
- c) Secure a 15% year-on-year increase in the number of fee-paying international students;
- d) Secure a 10% increase in the number of successful staff/student international exchanges
- e) Undertake further development of a multinational and multicultural scholarly community and curriculum within the institution;
- f) Achieve increased engagement of Faculties and Support Departments in development of an internationalised learning and support environment.

The International Office will seek to facilitate achievement of all of these performance indicators:

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- Continuing to seek to identify what it is that attracts international students to study in the UK and to ensure that our recruitment activities, programmes of study and support services reflect these factors;
- Actively promoting the integration of international students with home students so that the University truly benefits from the cultural diversity of its student population;
- Advising Faculties on international market trends relevant to curriculum development of existing courses and design of new courses;
- Facilitating collaborative agreements with international institutions for income-generating courses (e.g. 2+2; 3+1 courses in Georgia and China);
- Assisting Faculties to identify and develop niche programmes for In-country and distance learning delivery of (e.g. MSc Cardiovascular Rehabilitation & Weight Management; BSc/ONP Nursing in India and Ireland);

- Advising Faculties on design and production of course handbooks, promotional materials and marketing strategies;
- Encouraging appropriate Faculty staff to accompany International Officers at British Council and other Exhibitions and relevant overseas events;
- Liaising with European and International Student Exchange Offices to enhance their activities;
- Administering a questionnaire to monitor international student experience;
- Liaising closely with International Student Welfare Officer, Finance, Accommodation, Registry, Learning Support Services and Student Union to ensure a coordinated and high quality student experience;
- The University's international activities will be reported, discussed and monitored by the International Committee, chaired by the Dean of international Development.

## **8. Key risks**

8.1 The main risks that might affect the achievement of this Strategy are perceived to be:

- Current complexities in the global political and economic environment;
- The effectiveness of the recently introduced points-based student visa system for international students combined with a potentially complex UCAS application system;
- Inadequate resources to implement this Strategy giving rise to negative student experiences;
- An inappropriate portfolio of courses catering for the needs of international students;
- Inability to engage staff with relevant experience and expertise to manage the learning undertaken by overseas students either here in the UK or overseas.
- Fragmentation of current international support functions preventing effective coordination and action.