

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND**

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## ABSTRACT

The internationalisation of higher education has changed many times in terms of what it means for 3<sup>rd</sup> level education institutions and national governments. It has been a reactor to government funding levels throughout the western world and it has gained momentum to keep pace with globalisation. Yet as Internationalisation matures, according to (Knight 2011, p 14) "it has also become a more confused and misunderstood concept as it becomes firmly embedded in institutional mission statements, policies, and strategies, as well as national frameworks"

This research investigates the attempts to understand internationalisation in Ireland, by expanding on previous research and applying it to the Irish 3<sup>rd</sup> level sector. By using questionnaires and interviews, the researcher was able to explore what it means for these institutions to be internationalised. It was also possible to visualise the current levels and ideal levels of internationalisation associated with each institution.

The results of this research have shown similar problems and levels of understanding, when compared to the literature review. It is also suggested that benchmarking may positively influence the development of internationalisation in Ireland.

## DECLARATION

I declare that all material included is entirely my own work and that all verbatim extracts contained in the dissertation have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged

Signed      Nicholas Kelly      \_\_\_\_\_

Date         27/08/2012

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Aveen, Caoimhe, Feena & Aidan  
Thank you for all your patience

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Professor Jimmy Hill for all the advice given throughout this dissertation

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## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

The direction taken in putting forward a research proposal for this dissertation was based on research already undertaken to 'visualise the internationalisation of universities' by (Elkin, Devjee & Farnsworth 2005) at The University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. This research developed a model to measure the level of internationalisation at a Higher Education Institution and compared it to an ideal level the institution would like to reach (the aspiration level).

### **Background**

*Internationalisation of Irish Educational Services*. A report of interdepartmental working group (Department of Education and Science), was published in November 2004. Its remit was to consider the question of the 'Internationalisation' of Irish education services. The report concluded that there is significant scope for expansion in the internationalisation of educational services. Demand is increasing across all sectors and it is in the national interest that all parties and agencies involved work together within an integrated and cohesive structure in order to achieve agreed common goals and objectives. "A comprehensive and co-ordinated approach is vital" (Department of Education and Science 2004, p 38). From this report, The Department of Education and Skills published a strategy *Investing in Global Relationships – Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010 – 2015* which promoted a primary objective of turning Ireland into a "world leader in the delivery of high-quality international education". Amongst its critics, (Lyons 2010, p 2), an economist based at Oxford University believes that this strategy "lacks ambition and detail". This statement is made with specific emphasis on the quality of the strategic objectives.

## **Why Internationalise Higher Education?**

SOCRATES and the sub-programme ERASMUS, were designed to “foster international cooperation and mobility in education” within Europe (Kehm 1999, p 369) The report ‘Education at a Glance’ describes how similar rationales in North America changed, with economic factors playing an increasing role (OECD 2010) Throughout this study, economic rationales at a national or institutional level appear as major factors in pursuing the recruitment of international students However, it will be noted also that as internationalisation evolves, many higher education institutions and theorists have attempted to tackle the whole concept of what it is they are trying to achieve in terms of trying to standardise the description of it, and to incorporate it successfully into institutional life Cooperation and mobility has evolved into revenue generation and financial gain for institutions and national governments The proliferation of cross border delivery of education is a result of globalisation, as student mobility which is driven by institutes in terms of exchange programmes has changed to mobility independence for students as they decide where to go when choosing to enter higher education abroad

## **Globalisation and Internationalisation**

This research will make plenty of references to internationalisation The term itself has evolved in the last Two decades when referring to higher education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) **Globalisation** is described by (Knight 2004, p 8) as “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values and ideas across borders” As a result of this flow, higher education as a service has crossed borders too, but the definition of internationalisation is continually being redefined in terms of what it means for Higher Education Institutions Knight 2004 (cited in Elkin 2008, p 86) “suggests that while internationalisation was changing higher education, globalisation was changing internationalisation”

## **What is the Internationalisation of Higher Education?**

It is accepted that globalisation has been the catalyst for the internationalisation of higher education through cross-border collaborations and staff, student mobility. Economic considerations have mainly driven internationalisation yet the meaning is not only associated as being a tool for funding institutions. Curriculum development will refer to internationalisation and so too will student welfare and associated support services. This applies to home students also as they will need to have some level of internationalisation experience before they go to compete in the global jobs market. The risks of the "homogenising effects of globalisation" (Knight 1997 cited in Kreber 2009, p 3) is an example of why our home students must "understand foreign languages and cultures and respect diversity and national culture" (Kreber 2009, p 3). In reading this dissertation, it should be noted that internationalisation does not only reflect a one-way flow of students and finance into Ireland, it is also how higher education is structured to compete effectively in a globalised society.

### **Statement of Research Question**

This dissertation seeks to investigate if Ireland's Higher Education Institutions are strategically aligned to effectively compete in a highly competitive market to attract international students and to sustain the internationalisation of Irish higher education.

### **Statement of Research Objectives**

- To investigate if Higher Education Institutions in Ireland believe they are 'Internationalised' under the perceived terms 'Internationalisation' in their approach to competing in the international market
- To identify what these institutions believe internationalisation is when reflecting on their own level of internationalisation
- To determine if previous research e.g. 'Star Model' or similar types of models used, can help Universities and Higher Education Institutions

with their decision making processes when identifying weaknesses in the institutional structure as they compete for international students

- To investigate how useful a framework model is in focusing institutions on what it means to be 'Internationalised' when competing long term in the international market

### **Overview of the Content of Each Chapter**

The introduction has given some background information on the term 'Internationalisation' and its link with globalisation. The literature review chapter will explore further the theories surrounding the 'internationalisation of higher education' and its effect on institutions, students and governments. Further investigation will offer answers to the idea of how internationalisation can be for the benefit of these institutions, students and governments. The research methodology chapter describes the approach, philosophies and data analysis & collection methods used for this research. The actual data will then be analysed using quantitative and qualitative techniques, and presented in graph, table and descriptive text format. Finally, the researcher will discuss the findings and offer conclusions based on the analysis, and linked to the literature review. Limitations to the research techniques used will be put forward, together with options for further study.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This literature review attempts to explore National and Higher Education Institutional approaches used in attracting international students as they compete in the global marketplace. The growth in 3<sup>rd</sup> level international student numbers has attracted the attention of Governments and Higher Education Institutions, and each has tackled the internationalisation issue in different ways. Many will see the obvious financial benefits associated with high student fees and will try to keep this flow of revenue going. It is this revenue generation which has sparked debate about who actually benefits from internationalisation. Issues surrounding the quality of the educational experience and protection for students have transformed how curriculum is designed, how strategies are formulated and how better to integrate home and international students and staff. This literature review will outline the drivers of internationalisation and the approaches used to understand it. Examples of conceptual models and rationales will be given, together with examples of how benchmarking can help when attempting to improve the internationalisation of institutions.

### **What pushes Internationalisation of Higher Education?**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), there were an estimated 2.8 million internationally mobile students worldwide in 2007, resulting in "national governments and higher education institutions promoting international enrolments for various reasons including, income generation, innovation and productivity by gaining access to talent" (Green & Koch 2010, p 9)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, Education at a Glance (OECD 2010, p 313), explains "the rise in the number of students enrolled abroad since 1975 stems from various factors. During the early years, public policies to promote and nurture academic, cultural, social and political ties between countries played a key role,

especially in the context of the European construction building mutual understanding among young Europeans was a major policy objective”

Green et al (2010, p 10) explained, “many factors shape the future distribution of internationally mobile students, including the attractiveness and quality of the educational opportunities in the receiving country, the success of the coordinated national strategy to recruit international students, and the relative ease of obtaining a visa”

Klesek, (ed 1992, p 177) believes that the “expansion of international activities and the internationalisation of Universities in the USA during the 80’s is closely linked to financial concerns and growing academic entrepreneurship, especially in what was seen as a highly competitive market” This economic rationale will be explained further by (Knight 2004) and expanded upon by (Jiang 2008)

With new technologies and a globalised network of nations, it is now much easier for students to travel abroad As theorists developed models to understand how better to drive internationalisation of higher education, the view has moved from practical (institutional) operational level issues to a higher level that “examines inter-relationships with other nations and to consider more effective ways of building cooperation and collaboration” (Jiang 2008, p 354)

Knight (2007, p 9) highlights “commercialisation and an increase in low-quality providers as risks associated with the internationalisation of education” and describes the “planned approach by institutions to internationalisation as positive but describes as inadequate, the attention given to internationalisation by national governments as they do not play the role that they should in terms of national policy and funding to facilitate international research, mobility, and development of projects” This statement could describe many nations at different stages in their economic cycle It was however, directed at the Australian model of the last decade which saw less government funding and more entrepreneurial, private sector funding

Economic and commercial considerations may be major drivers in the internationalisation of higher education. Reductions in public funding from national governments for their higher education institutions can be a catalyst for some to see international students as a way to compensate for future shocks. With increased globalisation, (Jiang 2008, p 348) believes that globalisation has led “these institutions to prescribe neoliberal policies in the cross-border trade of educational services globally”. The commodity is knowledge and education but the effects on the student or institution may not be fully appreciated.

The strong belief here by Jiang is that “the internationalisation of higher education is becoming increasingly dominated by economic imperatives that focus on exporting education and generating income from overseas students” (Jiang 2008, p 347). Further reference to this view of internationalisation is made by (Brandenburg & De Wit 2011, p 16) in their descriptions of globalisation and internationalisation “internationalisation is claimed to be the last stand for humanistic ideas against the world of pure economic benefits allegedly represented by the term globalisation. This constructed antagonism between internationalisation and globalisation ignores the fact that activities more related to the concept of globalisation (higher education as a tradable commodity) are increasingly executed under the flag of internationalisation”.

### **What is the alternative method?**

If economic factors are not the dominant drivers for recruiting international students then the ability of an institution to remain internationalised will remain strong if it has become expert in what (Elkin, Farnsworth & Templer 2008) believe is showing a complete focus on research and postgraduate studies as opposed to ‘teaching intensive’ undergraduate programmes.

However according to (Elkin et al 2008, p 87) there is “currently no clear consensus on what a strategy of internationalisation actually involves”. This literature review may highlight how it (strategy) might stem from standard economic, management, marketing and strategic concepts found in the business world and applied to higher education. Some strategies may be



typical knee-jerk reactions to environmental factors and some strategies may involve more systematic approaches. This can be evident at national and institutional levels.

This is also not a recent reaction to globalisation of the last two decades. According to (Davies 1992, p 187)

“Universities had traditionally been internationally minded in terms of research and scholarship, and the focus and implementation of this has often been at the departmental or individual level. Institutionalisation may be viewed along two dimensions: some universities will take aboard international elements in a sporadic, irregular, often knee-jerk way, with many loose ends in terms of procedure structure. Others will develop precise explicit procedures in an ordered and systematic manner. For some universities, internationalism is essentially a relatively marginal activity, while for others, internationalism is highly central to their work and permeates every aspect of institutional life”

### A Conceptual Model Approach

A conceptual model to show these approaches is shown in **Figure 1**. Davies (1992) describes each quadrant by referencing typical operating characteristics at the level of the institution, within each quadrant. These characteristics range from weak and Ad Hoc operations to being more systematic, robust and focussed.

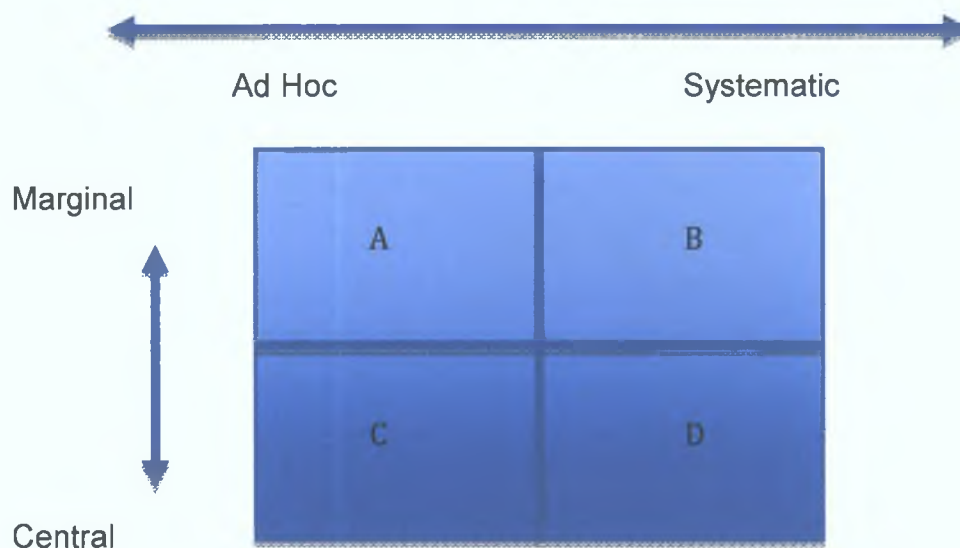


Figure 1

Source: (Davies 1992, p.190)

The position of institutions within this matrix will depend on a number of factors. However, it is important that honesty is used when evaluating just where an institution fits. Progression from one quadrant to the next will depend on internal and external circumstances.

### National Approaches

Knight (2004, p.18-19) further categorises national level approaches into five areas. The approaches result from the “changing and chaotic world in which higher education is functioning”. The following rationales are described:

Programs: allowing for programmes to be funded thus creating mobility and research.

Rationales: asking the main question as to why internationalisation is needed at national level.

Ad hoc as discussed already in this research, the knee-jerk reaction to outside influences which come about as opportunities to take advantage of the idea of internationalisation

Policy national level policies which addresses issues like greater cultural awareness or increased trade

Strategy internationalisation is seen as a key strategy in reaching goals

The dominant priorities according to (Jiang 2008) of national or institutional level hierarchies plays an important role in how these approaches are used to drive internationalisation of education

### **Eastern Vs Western Approach**

Elkin et al (2008, p 99) further categorises this by comparing Eastern and Western approaches to internationalisation and observes that "Universities in all parts of the world have addressed the importance of internationalisation, but in the management education field, Western universities continue to dominate simply because of the long history of internationalisation and the high regard held by Eastern universities" There is also a desire for Eastern universities to build institutional links and increase staff mobility to Western universities, which will increase their research strength, while students from Western universities are less likely to attend Eastern universities because of lower educational standards (Elkin et al 2008)

### Internal and External Approach

Davies (1992) uses Keller's (1983) conceptual model in identifying two sets of factors in the development of international strategy. These are External and Internal. The components of the six elements of this conceptual model are highlighted in (Figure 2).

#### Elements in the Development of International Strategy in Universities

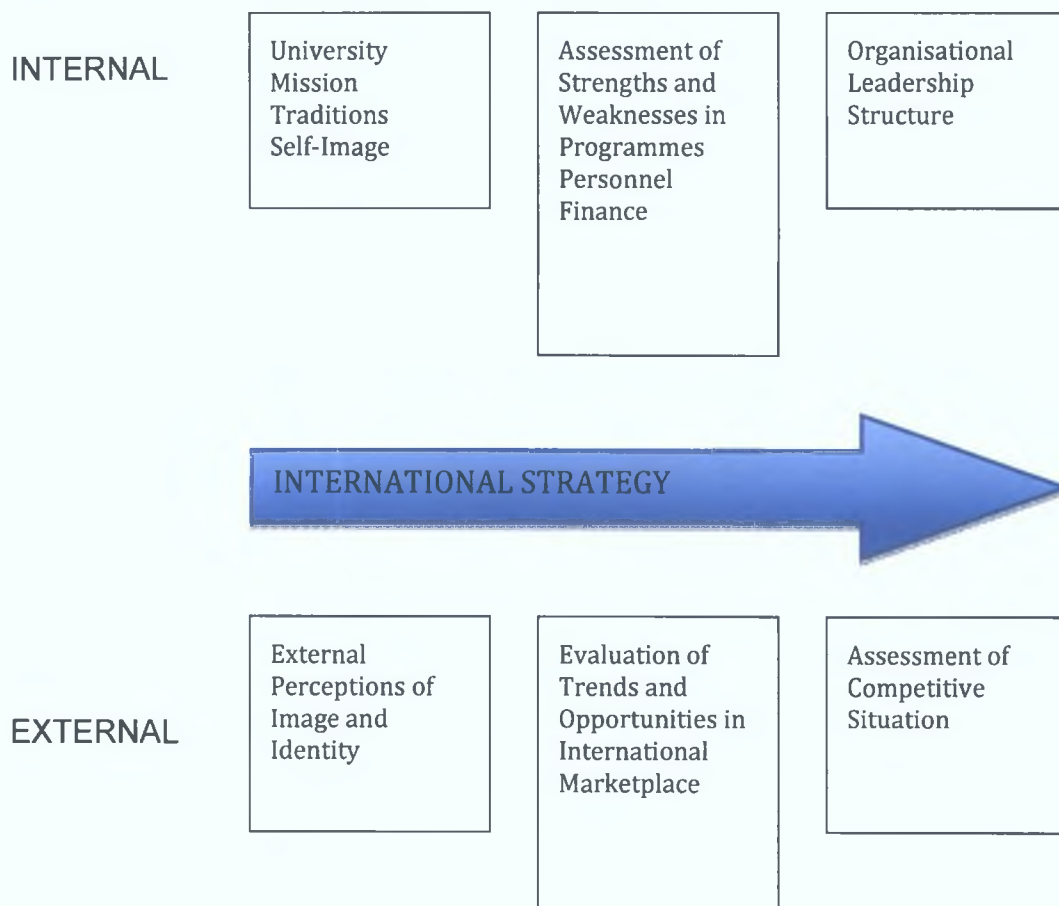


Figure 2

Source: (Davies 1992, p.190)

### **The Visualisation Approach**

It was (Elkin et al 2005) from the University of Otago, New Zealand, who developed their model to “conceptualise and visualise the internationalisation of universities. The model displayed both the current and ideal level of internationalisation in visual form for a participating institution in the research” The star model (Appendix 1) “could be used to make systematic decisions about future institutional activity resource investment” (Graham et al 2005), although national priorities will heavily influence these decisions. It could be a case that during this time, the New Zealand government was just as enthusiastic as Australia to generate wealth from the expanding Asian economy.

“In New Zealand’s case, the number of international students at universities rose from 3,402 in 1998 to 28,195 in 2004 reaching a peak of 115,197 international students in total in 2004” (Xiaoying & Abbot 2007). However the export of international education in New Zealand was narrowly based and very reliant on students from China. “With this source now drying up, institutions need to broaden their attraction away from China” (Xiaoying & Abbot 2007). With the future throughput of English language students from New Zealand’s English language schools falling (Xiaoying & Abbot 2007), higher education institutions could use this model to evaluate how they propose to attract foreign students directly by evaluating their current capabilities.

### **National & Institutional Rationales**

Rationales for internationalisation of higher education are grouped by (Knight 2004) into social, political, academic and economic. Each rationale either overlaps or becomes more dominant during certain times. Jiang (2008, p 351) explains how these rationales “combine or differ between stakeholders due to differences in the hierarchy of priorities and interpretations of internationalisation, and changes over time”. Over the past ten years, according to (De Wit, 2011) “it has been possible to observe the emergence of a whole new group of terms that had not been actively present in the

debate on the internationalisation of higher education. These are much more related to the cross-border delivery of education and are a consequence of the impact of society's globalisation on higher education: borderless education, education across borders, global education and international trade in educational services". This is further reflected by (Jiang 2008, p 352) by stating "most of the voices arguing for internationalisation are western, particularly the powerful voice of the OECD, supported by the World Trade Organisation (WTO)". It is Jaing's view that for China, the marketplace is becoming unequal and it's the poorer universities that are losing out.

The priorities at this time for Ireland may be reflecting economic rationales at a national level and be equally reflected at institutional level. They could however contradict each other. At this stage, it may be difficult for institutional level rationales to be realised due to the hierarchy of priorities problem. This research has highlighted that 80% of respondents believe national and institutional level policies and strategies in terms of internationalisation, can prevent each other from competing effectively in the international market (Figure 3).

One respondent taking part in this research makes reference to national policies and asks if "*Ireland's national policies are aligned with the stated aspirations of growing international student numbers, and are they (national policies) enabling institutions to deliver what they want, or what is wanted of institutions*"?

The impact of globalisation according to (Elkin et al 2005) has meant that many Western universities have not prepared their graduates to compete in emerging economies like India and China. This has been expressed by one respondent by stating "*It is very easy to get exchange programmes going to English speaking countries but the challenge is to go to non-English speaking countries*". This is echoed by (Elkin et al 2008) in referencing the barriers to internationalisation because of funding problems and also highlights that "prominent among these obstacles to internationalisation were issues of language and culture. Many people in Eastern societies learn English as a

second language but few Westerners learn Eastern languages. Such barriers may hinder the willingness of students and faculty to go to foreign universities, especially when those universities are in very different cultural milieus” For this reason, the respondent has indicated that all honours degree students will be required to spend some part of their studies abroad. It was assumed by the researcher that these programmes will require students to travel to non-English language countries as part of their studies.

#### Rationales Driving Internationalisation

National	Human resources development
	Strategic alliances
	Commercial trade
	Nation building
	Social/cultural development
Institutional	International branding and profile
	Income generation
	Student and staff development
	Strategic alliances
	Knowledge production

Source (Knight 2004, p 23)

It is easy to see above how a hierarchy of priorities can be dominated by national strategies over institutional strategies considering how simple visa regulations can have such an effect on strategic alliances for institutions, or when social & cultural tensions arise as was the case in Australia. With small populations, countries like Ireland & New Zealand could feel the effect sooner. The common travel area between the UK and Ireland also plays a part in deciding what nationalities are allowed to enter into Ireland. Institutional strategies should take this into consideration. Knight (2004, p 28) concludes that the internationalisation of higher education is both an “actor and reactor in the new realities facing education”

## **Ireland's priorities in terms of Internationalisation?**

Internationalisation of Irish Educational Services A report of interdepartmental working group (Department of Education and Science), was published in November 2004 Its remit was to consider the question of the 'Internationalisation' of Irish education services The report concluded, "there is significant scope for expansion in the internationalisation of educational services Demand is increasing across all sectors and it is in the national interest that all parties and agencies involved, work together within an integrated and cohesive structure in order to achieve agreed common goals and objectives "A comprehensive and co-ordinated approach is vital" (Department of Education and Science 2004, p 38)

As a result of this report, Investing in Global Relationships Ireland's International Strategy 2010-15 (Department of Education and Skills) was published in September 2010 Ten high-level actions were proposed to enhance Ireland's competitive position and elevate it to become a world leader in the delivery of high-quality international education

They are listed as

- 1 Ireland will enhance its performance through partnership and collaboration
- 2 The Education Ireland brand will be redeveloped and national promotion and marketing will be strengthened
- 3 Quality will be at the heart of Ireland's international offering
- 4 Ireland's visa, immigration and labour market access policies will be strong and competitive
- 5 Ireland's higher education institutions will be globally competitive and internationally orientated
- 6 Ireland will develop targeted and relevant international education offerings
- 7 Government policies and actions will be consistent and supportive
- 8 Ireland will strengthen its networks of influence
- 9 Outward mobility by Irish staff members and students will be encouraged



10 North-South and EU co-operation will enhance Ireland's international education performance

Source (Department of Education and Skills 2010, p 13)

In attempting to compare these high-level actions to (Altbach & Welch 2011, p 21) and their view on Australia's policies on internationalisation of education, the view was that "the higher education sector was motivated to make money from international education because of government budget cuts and underfunding"

### **The Myths about Internationalisation**

As internationalisation of higher education becomes ever more embedded in the strategies and goals of Higher Education Institutions globally, it has moved from "a reactive to a pro-active issue, from added value to mainstream, and also seen its focus, scope and content evolve substantially" (De Wit 2011, p 242) The level of internationalisation has taken shape over the years and has reacted to commercialisation and the increased movement of students to overseas higher education institutions This is identified by (Klesek, ed 1992, p 186) in his assessment of universities and their competitive situations, and highlights that the "nature of competition will differ in terms of market segments in terms of types of activity such as undergraduate and postgraduate education, sponsored research and technology transfer What particular roles an institution might play in particular markets is not only a function of its own capabilities, but also the competition's strength and weaknesses"

So being a leader, challenger, follower, struggler or nicher in the market would determine the difference between the ideal and actual level of internationalisation within an institution To illustrate further on the competition's characteristics, (De Wit 2011, p 245) defines the "changing landscape of international higher education as a consequence of the globalisation of our societies and economies, is manifested in many ways increasing competition for international students and academics, the growth of cross-border delivery of programmes, the emergence of international for-profit

providers in higher education and the changing position of countries like India and China in the world economy and in the higher education arena”

As internationalisation matures according to (Knight 2011, p 14), it is becoming a more and more complex process. Yet, it is also becoming a more confused and misunderstood concept. Internationalisation is definitely past the “new flavour of the month stage and is firmly embedded in institutional mission statements, policies, and strategies as well as national frameworks”

According to (Knight 2011, p 14-15), assumptions have developed over the years about internationalisation. They are listed as

**Myth One Foreign Students as Internationalisation Agents** more foreign students on campus will produce more internationalised institutional culture and curriculum but reality often paints a different picture. In many institutions, international students feel marginalised socially and academically and often experience ethnic or racial tensions.

**Myth Two International Reputation as a Proxy for Quality** the more international a university is in terms of students, faculty, curriculum, research, agreements and network membership, the better its reputation. Evidence indicates cases of questionable admission and exit standards for universities highly dependent on revenue.

**Myth Three International Institutional Agreements** that the greater number of international agreements or network memberships a university has the more prestigious and attractive it is to other institutions and students. The practice shows that most institutions cannot manage or even benefit from so many agreements.

**Myth Four International Accreditation** International accreditation from external national quality assurance agencies offers the premise that the more international accreditation stars an institution has, the more internationalised it is and ergo the better it is.

Myth Five Global Branding The incorrect assumption that the purpose of a university's internationalisation efforts is to improve global brand or standing This confuses an international marketing campaign with an internationalisation plan

Further misconceptions are put forward by (De Wit 2011) in his analysis of Knight's myths They describe "internationalisation as not being an objective in itself, it is not simply studying abroad or teaching an international subject" An emphasis on getting back to basics is put forward in the current knowledge economy The question of why we are internationalising higher education needs to be answered

My research has indicated that for some institutes, elements of the five myths above are seen to be important factors to them (see Results & Analysis chapter) The following research on benchmarking expands on this notion and on the factors believed to be associated with internationalisation

### **Benchmarking Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions**

Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalisation (IMPI) is a European project made up of 6 institutions specialising in research and consultancy for the higher education sector in Europe The project was to establish an effective toolbox of indicators which will allow higher education institutions in Europe to move their internationalisation strategies from peripheral objectives to core strategies Creating indicators that are understandable is one of its key objectives As discussed in this literature review, defining internationalisation can be difficult enough The many different answers given just in this research may indicate that if this concept is not understood, or understood differently by key staff within the sector, it may be difficult to benchmark the performance of internationalisation strategies, curriculum development, collaborations, recruitment etc

Elkin et al (2005) created 13 scales (Appendix 1), with each scale representing an indicator of what it means to be internationalised This was eventually reduced to 9 because of possible overlapping It is then possible to

create a large sub-set of indicators attached to each scale. For example, the question "What is the actual level of internationally focussed programmes at your institution"? This can have many indicators to reflect the entire question. IMPI give an example of this in their data collection questions. What is the proportion of curricula having mobility windows incorporated? The mobility window question could be taken as a meaning for all programmes at the institution however, this indicator could be broken down again to undergraduate level, postgraduate level etc. The results could easily show bias towards certain types of programmes. This would ask the question why are some programmes perceived as effectively internationalised and some are not? Could some students and staff be benefitting less because of this?

### **Quality Assurance, Self-Evaluation and Indicators**

In their report (Beerkens, Brandenburg, Evers, Gaalen, Leichsenring & Zimmermann 2010, p 9) state that "three important interrelated developments are causes of the increased demand for better data on internationalisation and internationality

1 With the shift from peripheral to mainstream activity, internationalisation has become a more complicated and more comprehensive process. One is not only demanding quantitative indicators for internationalisation, but the quality of internationalisation is gaining priority

2 The emergence of an accountability culture in higher education based on evaluations

3 Through increased global competition and the importance of rankings and league tables in higher education, institutions need indicators to profile themselves"

With reference to development number 2 above, the need to somehow quality assure the procedures used when dealing with international students needed to be developed. This is explained by (Nair, Murdoch & Mertova 2011) in their observations on the trends occurring as internationalisation expands. They

highlight “universities are subsequently required to participate in quality reviews in which they need to demonstrate that they have clear procedures and processes in place to ensure quality for their students beyond the learning and teaching environment” Nair et al (2011) further prescribe the need for student evaluation on services, curriculum, and teaching by using questionnaires or surveys, which are then evaluated for improvement purposes

Two open questions are presented in the researcher’s questionnaire They are

- *Why does a Higher Education Institution believe it must be Internationalised?*
- *How can an Institution measure itself in terms of being internationalised?*

Many of the answers returned indicators such as “numbers of international students”, “numbers of internationalised curricula”, “the number of exchange programmes” It is evident also that some institutions either do not meet their ideal levels associated with these indicators, or they currently overachieve these levels A question could be asked about how these Government funded institutions vary so much considering they may be required to meet national targets Assuming that national targets are not vague or politically motivated

The use of indicators to benchmark internationalisation within higher education institutions in Ireland, for the purpose of this study, should not be confused with benchmarking for the purpose of international rankings According to (Knight 2008, p 6-7) there is a “worrisome trend is the treatment of quality assurance and accreditation as strategies for ‘international branding’ and market position rather than for academic improvement purposes The international ranking ‘game’ is another illustration of a preoccupation with international standings based on questionable and biased indicators” The indicators should be viewed as easy to justify, understand and is acceptable to those who develop strategies and set goals and for those who create curricula, manage student services, recruitment, pastoral care etc Beerkens

at al (2010, p 12) stress the difficulties of creating these indicators but add “the days that the international nature of the institution was determined solely by the number of international students or the number of Erasmus exchanges are long gone University leaders and managers now demand a much wider set of indicators”

In compiling the IMPI project, (Beerkens et al 2010) provide examples of 8 projects designed to “create a comprehensive overview of indicators for internationalisation” The benchmarking tool MINT, described in the next paragraph highlights the purpose of this benchmarking tool *Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (Nuffic) Mapping Internationalisation (MINT)*

This tool was developed for the purpose of allowing institutes in the Netherlands to benchmark their performance against others and, more importantly, as a self-evaluation tool MINT was “designed to launch a broad discussion about making strategic choices in internationalisation, the coherence between internationalisation objectives and activities, identifying internationalisation indicators and defining standards to measure the impact of internationalisation” (Beerkens et al 2010, p 47)

This self –evaluation report can be accessed by higher education institutions upon registration There is a sample report available online An example of an indicator used to evaluate an institution’s internationalisation **services**, together with visual illustrations can be seen in (Appendix 2)

### **Examples of Staff Involvement**

It may be accepted that most attempts to internationalise higher education is driven mainly by market forces and revenue generation However, (Kreber 2009) offers examples of how it is possible to have “desirable side effects” within institutions Kreber (2009) describes how a mid-sized college in the US embraced internationalisation for the same economic reasons as many others do This “entrepreneurial effort had lead academic staff across the college to become more sensitised to, and educated in, the notion of

internationalisation” (Kreber 2009, p 10) This eventually leads to changes at curriculum level for the college to reflect new social and cultural understandings

A further example is given, this time in Canada The college faculty development unit had decided to “remodel their courses to make them more internationally relevant and sensitive to intercultural issues” The faculty staff wanted their students to be “educated for *world-mindedness* as the term implied raising awareness among students and staff of issues of diversity and intercultural sensitivity, and the full integration of these considerations would be put into the curriculum” (Kreber 2009, p 10)

In exploring the term global citizenship further, (Kleber 2009, p 11) looks at more philosophical advice given which suggests we “recognise and challenge our own privilege and dissociation from others’ suffering” and possibly moving away from Western educational frameworks to those found in India

### **Internationalisation and Academic Standards**

There are of course different views to those described throughout this literature review, which suggest that internationalisation is a “product and agent of globalisation and as such, does not have any particular educational merit” (Harris 2008, p 353) Harris (2008) describes how “neo-liberal and progressive universities are more concerned with becoming inclusive, representative and entrepreneurial Such entrepreneurial activity however, can result in dilemmas within the academic community – for example, in the price paid for securing international partnerships when the criterion used is economic rather than intellectual” (Harris 2008, p 348) Progressive universities are more likely to offer ‘pick and mix’ modules to represent the needs of the students and their background, instead on the basis of intellectual challenge (Harris 2008)

An alternative put forward, is to offer cultural internationalisation, which recognises the differences between nations and cultures, yet does not attempt to change curriculum design simply to address these differences This

conflicts with Knight's (2004) view of internationalisation as being a continuous process of integration. The view of (Harris 2008) would seem to contradict (Vainio-Mattila 2009, p 100) in his statement that "discourses on the internationalisation and on experiential learning emerge from pressures, both internal and external, that universities face today to connect the experience of learning in a university with the world outside the ivory tower"

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has looked at the topic 'Internationalisation of Higher Education' and described how many approaches have been used to develop a greater understanding of what it means to be internationalised. It also looked at who it affects, and what has been done to make this a positive experience for those who are involved with it. Protection for the student seems to be at the core of any attempts to address how it is to evolve in the future, particularly as huge revenue generation is at stake if institutional and national approaches do not take a long-term view of how it should develop.

This long-term view should not change as economic cycles move from peak to trough. This has been the case for some countries and will probably continue to happen in the future. However, as market forces drive internationalisation, there are plenty of opportunities to properly integrate domestic and international students, staff and curricula. Each model, approach, and rationale has tackled the core issues of internationalisation to some degree of success, and this is evident in the increasing numbers of mobile students choosing to travel across borders to access 3<sup>rd</sup> level education.



## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Through researching relevant literature within the topic of 'internationalisation of higher education', it was the researcher's intent to study the perceived hierarchy of priorities problem that exists between higher education institutions and national governments, and how this problem may hinder the progress of internationalisation of either, or both. However, a new direction was taken and the area of benchmarking and the ability to see clear differences between actual and ideal levels of internationalisation was chosen for the simple reason that strategies could be formulated to achieve these ideal levels if required. It is also intended to identify if the hierarchy of priorities issue was agreed to exist. Further research on the perceived meanings of 'internationalisation' was carried out.

### Research Aims and Objectives

*The purpose of this study is to explore internationalisation and what it means in 3<sup>rd</sup> level education in Ireland at institutional level*

This study seeks to investigate if Ireland's higher education institutions are strategically aligned to effectively compete in a highly competitive market to attract international students and to sustain the internationalisation of Irish higher education.

The objectives are

- To investigate if higher education institutions in Ireland believe they are 'Internationalised' under the perceived terms 'internationalisation' in their approach to competing in the international market
- To identify what these institutions believe 'internationalisation' is when reflecting on their own level of internationalisation

- To determine if previous research e.g. 'Star Model' or similar types of models used, can help universities and higher education institutions with their decision-making processes in identifying weaknesses in the institutional structure when competing for international students
- To investigate how useful a framework model is in focusing institutions on what it means to be 'internationalised' when competing long term in the international market

### **Research Design**

According to (Collis & Hussey 2003, p 113), "determining the author's research design will give the author a detailed plan which will be used to guide and focus this research" However, "before constructing the research design, a pre-determined Paradigm (a progress of scientific practice based on people's philosophies and assumptions about the world) will be needed" (Collis et al 2003, p 46) "This research philosophy adopted contains important assumptions about the way in which the author views the world" (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2008, p 101)

At an early stage of this research, the author has understood that in trying to establish the numerical value which accurately reflected the 'ideal or 'current' levels of internationalisation within an institution, it was expected that the answers given may be based on the perception of the respondents answering the questionnaire

### **Research Philosophy**

The resulting research philosophy may have developed from the researcher's view that the perception of what level an institution is, in terms of being internationalised, as recorded by the respondents is still important even if it is not absolutely accurate. The reason for this may lay with the number of institutes taking part in the research, which will represent a visualisation of this perception. The visualisations can vary dramatically and at the same time, show clear similarities between institutions. This should lead to further questions about how an institution can change if it was agreed that the levels perceived were either wrong, or should be investigated. It is evident from the

literature review that even the term 'internationalisation' can encompass many factors (what indicators should be used to measure performance), which are used in benchmarking tools

The philosophy adopted here can be described as taking the Epistemological position and particularly *Interpretivism*, which is described by (Saunders et al 2007, p 106) as "an epistemology that advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors" It is further described by (Collis et al 2003, p 53) that "phenomenology is the science of phenomena a fact or occurrence that appears or is perceived"

### **Research Approach**

The researcher has adopted a deductive approach to analysing question 11 and question 12 Its objective is to do what (Saunders et al, 2008 p 487) describe when seeking to "use existing theory to shape the approach adopted to the qualitative research process and to aspects of data analysis" It is believed that the answers given to these questions will reflect the observations recorded in the literature review when describing or listing the key factors associated with the term 'internationalisation' and what it means to be 'internationalised' The researcher has developed a theory (hypothesis) and designed the "research strategy to test the hypothesis" (Saunders et al (2007, p 117)

The researcher has also adopted an inductive approach to the research philosophy Questions 1 to 9 were used to return specific values (either yes or no) and numerical values (1 -10) The inductive approach allows for "alternative explanations of what is going on" (Saunders et al 2007, p 119) It is the intention to offer explanations of why the ideal and current levels of internationalisation results were given a specific value This reflects the view that institutional data returned may reflect national policies and strategies

### **Mixing Research Methods**

Saunders et al (2008, p 109) believe that mixed methods can be highly appropriate and state that it is possible to “study what interests you and is of value to you, in different ways which you deem appropriate, and use results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within your value system” Furthermore, in any exploratory study for example, (Saunders et al 2008 p 107) believe that the “knowledge development embarked upon may not be as dramatic as a new theory but may be a relatively modest ambition of answering a specific problem within an organisation”

### **Research Setting**

This research is a continuation of previous research carried out by (Elkin et al in 2005 & 2008) The author contacted Professor Graham Elkin by email to request copies of the questionnaires used for the original study These questionnaires were returned by email with additional information, which addressed the (Elkin et al 2008) study This study looked at dividing institutions into two separate categories (strategically focussed & non-strategically focussed) These questions form part of the questionnaire It is not the purpose of this research to establish how strategically focussed institutions are however, it was decided that these answers could be used help to determine the level of understanding of what internationalisation means

### **Data Analysis and Collection**

Quantitative data analysis techniques were applied to data which could be easily quantified The results are displayed in table and graph form Quantifiable data is described by (Saunders et al 2008 p 409) as “those whose values are measured numerically as quantities This means the quantifiable data are more precise than categorical as you can assign each data value a position on a numerical scale”

Qualitative data analysis will be applied to all non-numeric data collected from the questionnaires These data types are either from open-ended questions asked specifically in the questionnaire or during interviews According to (Saunders et al 2008 p 470) “complex qualitative data such as in-depth

interviews, in order to be useful should be analysed so as the meanings of the data are clear and understood”

This study involved emailing questionnaires to key personnel who were responsible for international relations within the University, Institutes of Technology and not-for-profit Higher Education Institutions in Ireland

It has been stated in this study that even the term ‘internationalisation’ can be ambiguous. Many indicators have been used to collect data, which represents a snapshot of an institution in terms of benchmarking. These can be very specific and used in everyday administrative activities like student support, accommodation types and numbers of students using accommodation, to higher level actions like developing research collaborative agreements with overseas partners. It was necessary to give some explanations to respondents in each email, which explained the background of my research. Some follow-on phone calls were needed to explain how to populate the answers in the questionnaire.

This study was extended beyond teaching institutions. Enterprise Ireland is a government organisation responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in world markets. Irish traded services like education is represented by Enterprise Ireland. In taking part in this research, it was possible to get its view on the ideal level of internationalisation that these institutions should aim to achieve. Questions asked during an interview were also put to this organisation in relation to the obstacles it faces when representing Irish higher education abroad. The answers are given in the results section of this research.

Quantitative research was carried out using interviewer-administered questionnaires. These were a mix of telephone questionnaires and structured interviews. Only yes or no questions or questions requiring either an answer of A or B were asked for the purpose of quantitative research. Results were then analysed.

Quantitative research was also carried out using email questionnaires and a literature review. These questions were identical to the above interview and telephone questions. Results were then returned for analysis.

Qualitative research was also carried out using structured interviews. These questions were based on the same open questions represented in the questionnaire. There was no deviation from these questions during the interviews. Interviews were held within the grounds of the participating Institution. These interviews were recorded.

### **Categorising Qualitative Data**

“Categorising data is the process of classifying data into meaningful categories” (Saunders et al 2007, p 479). Questions 11 and 12 will be open-ended questions, which will allow the respondents to freely express their views. Classification systems are described by (De Vaus 2002, p 147) as “reflections of particular social and political arrangements. They are historically and culturally relative and change over time and differ between countries”. Many pre-coding systems use standard codes to classify age, gender etc. However, if this is not possible, then post-coding is required for open-ended questions in order for the data to be categorised. The researcher had categorised the responses into classifications that closely match the terminology used in the literature review.

### **Participants**

A total of 21 institutions were chosen to take part. Each institution was sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Of the 21 contacted, 10 responses were returned. Of these 10 responses, 6 responses were returned by email. The remaining 4 respondents requested an interview. The research was carried out between May and June 2012. This may reflect the low number of responses received as some respondents were either travelling on institutional business or taking annual leave.

## **Materials Used**

The questionnaire was broken into separate categories. Questions 1 to 7 were analysed by populating an Excel spreadsheet with the number of yes answers returned compared with the numbers of no answers returned. A graphical representation of this was created to illustrate the findings.

Questions 8 & 9 used 9 indicators using Likert scales ranging from 0 to 10. This represents the method used by (Elkin et al 2005) and the resulting radar chart was used to illustrate the findings. The visual representation displayed the current and ideal answers returned by the respondents. A further illustration (Ideal Average) was also added to quickly show how each institution compared to the average of all the responses.

Questions 11 & 12 were open questions and the respondents were free to answer these in their own words. This data was not reduced and the extended text version is displayed in the results and analysis chapter. Due to time constraints it was not possible to reduce this data for display purposes. It was, however, possible to interpret the data for the purpose of categorising the terms associated with internationalisation and being internationalised. This was achieved by referring to the literature review for similar explanations of the terms.

Question 10 proved to be difficult to analyse, as respondents did not follow the instructions given in the questionnaire. In further discussion with the respondents, it was noted that rankings were duplicated across many questions. Instead of giving each indicator a single value (1, 2, 3 to 9) that was not duplicated in the rest of the question, many answers were returned with duplication, i.e. 1,1,2,2 etc. As a result of this confusion, analysis of this question was not carried out.

The time horizon for this research strategy is to get a time stamp of each institution. This research is therefore 'cross-sectional' because of time constraints.

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS & ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The following results represent facts based on answers given to the research questionnaire. In the initial email sent to each possible participant, an option of completing the questionnaire online and returning it was given. There was also the option of taking part in an interview. Some participants preferred to take part in an interview instead of completing the questionnaire by email.

### Quantitative Results

As explained in the previous chapter, quantitative data analysis techniques were applied to data which could be easily quantified.

This questionnaire set out to achieve the following research objective listed in the research aims and objectives chapter:

*To investigate if higher education institutions in Ireland believe they are 'internationalised' under the perceived terms 'internationalisation' in their approach to competing in the international market*

Question 1 was used to establish if all participants agreed that there should be a strategy on internationalisation in their institution. There was no definition given to the potential respondents of what internationalisation is perceived to be. It was assumed that each would have their individual opinions on the term. It was important not to give the researcher's opinion on the meaning of the terms 'internationalisation'. The respondents' opinions would be established in the latter part of the questionnaire. The question required a **yes** or **no** answer.

### Question 1

*Should internationalisation be a strategic policy?*

100% of respondents agreed that internationalisation should be a strategic policy. This result was expected and indicates the awareness of internationalisation as a strategy.



### Questions 3 to 7

This led to the next series of five questions (Question 3 to 7 on the questionnaire) being asked to establish the level of strategic focus in terms on internationalisation. The questions required a **yes** or **no** answer and the result is illustrated in **(Figure 3)**:

1. *Does your Institution identify internationalisation as a strategic objective?*
2. *Does internationalisation appear in the mission statement of your Institution?*
3. *Does internationalisation feature in strategic planning of your Institution?*
4. *Does your Institution have a campus abroad?*
5. *Does your Institution have customised programmes for international students?*

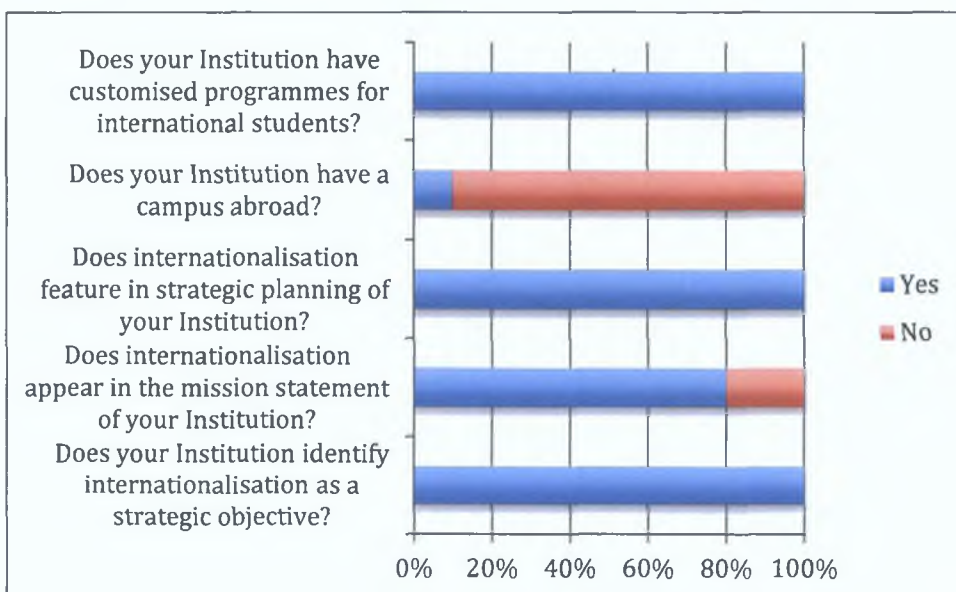


Figure 3

It was expected that not all of the institutions would have overseas campuses. However, only 1 of the 10 answered yes. It was surprising that not all of the 4 universities taking part in the research had an overseas campus. It is possible that overseas offices are more common.

A further question was given to determine if participants agreed with the possibility that a hierarchy of priority problem could exist when implementing an internationalisation strategy. The question required a **yes** or **no** answer:

**Question 2**

*Can national and institutional level policies and strategies in terms of internationalisation, prevent each other from competing effectively in the international market?*

The result is illustrated below in **(Figure 4)**

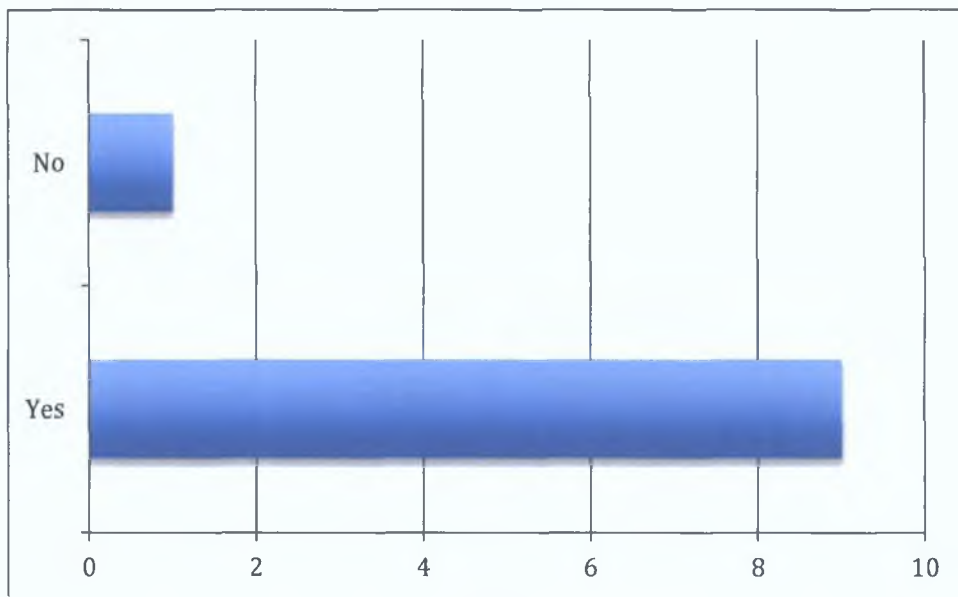


Figure 4

This question serves to establish if there is an agreement of the hierarchy or priority problem. With 90% in favour, it is still less than the expected 100% agreement. Although this will not be analysed too much, the literature research will attempt to gain more insight about this area.

The next two sets of questions (questions 8 & 9) required respondents to mark **A** for each indicator in question 8, and mark **B** for each indicator in question 9

### **Question 8**

*Ideally which level would be your Institution's aspiration for each of the items below as a contribution to being internationalised?*

### **Question 9**

*What is the actual level for each of the items?*

The results are illustrated in graphical and table form representing institutions A to J (**Figure 6 to Figure 15**) This attempts to reflect the following objectives

*To determine if previous research e.g. 'Star Model' or similar types of models used, can help universities and higher education institutions with their decision making processes in identifying weaknesses in the institutional structure when competing for international students*

*To investigate how useful a framework model is in focusing institutions on what it means to be 'internationalised' when competing long term in the international market*

### **Analysis of results returned to questions 8 & 9**

The average higher ranking dimensions recorded by the Four universities (institutes G, H, I and J) (**Figure 17**) largely reflects the results returned by (Elkin et al 2005, p 323) These results indicated that international institutional links, support for international students and attendance to international conferences were ranked higher at ideal and current levels This suggests that the universities have largely reached their aims in terms of internationalisation related to the questions asked Comparing this result to the Four Institutes of Technology, (institutes B, C, D and E) (**Figure 18**), none of the aims have been met in comparison to the universities Although individually, some Institutes of Technology have met their ideal levels in different areas Institution C (**Figure 8**) has reached its ideal level of internationally focused programmes of study, staff exchange programmes and student exchange programmes

In further comparing this research with that of (Elkin et al 2005), (Elkin et al 2005, p 323) suggests that student exchange programmes are a natural product of international institution links and recorded an ideal average performance of 9.0 for each indicator My research recorded an ideal average level of 8.7 for international institutional links yet 7.6 was recorded for ideal levels of student exchange programmes Average ideal levels of undergraduate and postgraduate international students scored higher at 8.0 and 8.0 for both Full ideal averages and current averages are presented in (**Figure 5**) and Table 1

This possibly reflects the view put forward by a respondent from institution A, that student exchange programmes are resource intensive and offers very little in return for the work carried out by administration staff It would suggest that institutional links are welcome for postgraduate research purposes, which generates revenue It also suggests that the revenue generated from international undergraduate students is more important This contradicts the results returned by (Elkin et al 2005) which suggested that student exchange programmes are more important as they compliment institutional links

It is not the intention of the researcher to analyse each institution individually as this would simply mean repeating what the illustrations are showing. The idea of these illustrations is to get a 'snap-shot' of the perceived current levels of international and be able to quickly compare these with the ideal levels and averages of the sector.

In doing this, questions can be raised about the need to further benchmark institutions which are similar. The logical separation here is Universities and the Institutes of Technology. This comparison has already shown a clear difference between their performance and is highlighted in **(Figure 16 & 17)**.

In attempting to explain why such a difference occurs, it could be related to the location of the Universities compared to the Institutes of Technology. All of the Institutes of Technology were located outside of the main cities. Although they are all still competing in the same global market for international students and are government funded too, with expectations to reach national targets as set out in Ireland's International Strategy 2010–15 (Department of Education and Skills 2010).

Table 1

	Current Average	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	5.2	8
Postgraduate International Students	5.3	8
Student Exchange Programmes	5.8	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	4.4	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	4.7	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	4.5	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	5.6	7
Support for International Students	7.2	8.7
International Institutional Links	6.9	8.7

**Illustration of Current and Ideal Averages**

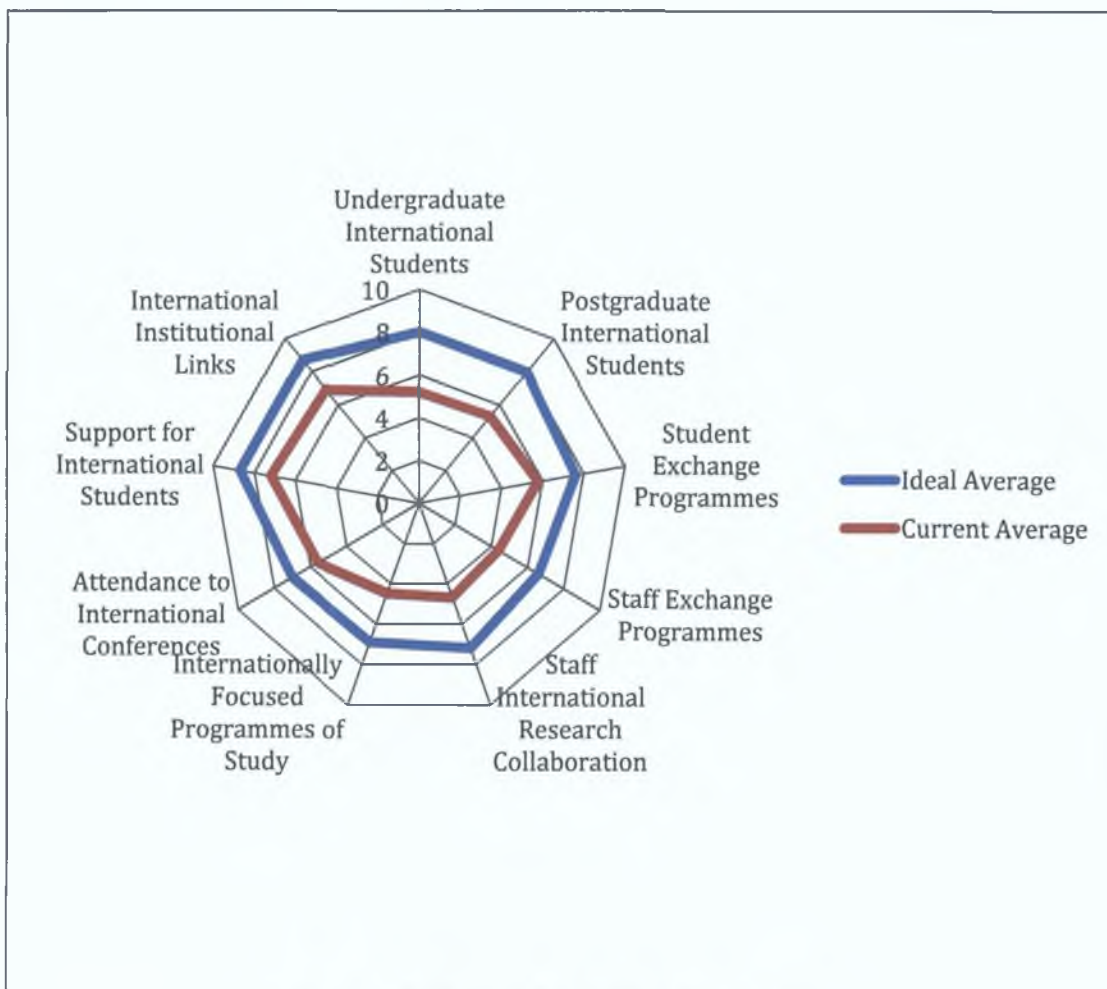


Figure 5. Current and Ideal Averages

Table 2

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	5	7	8
Postgraduate International Students	8	9	8
Student Exchange Programmes	8	6	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	3	4	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	6	9	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	7	7	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	7	4	7
Support for International Students	5	9	8.7
International Institutional Links	5	8	8.7

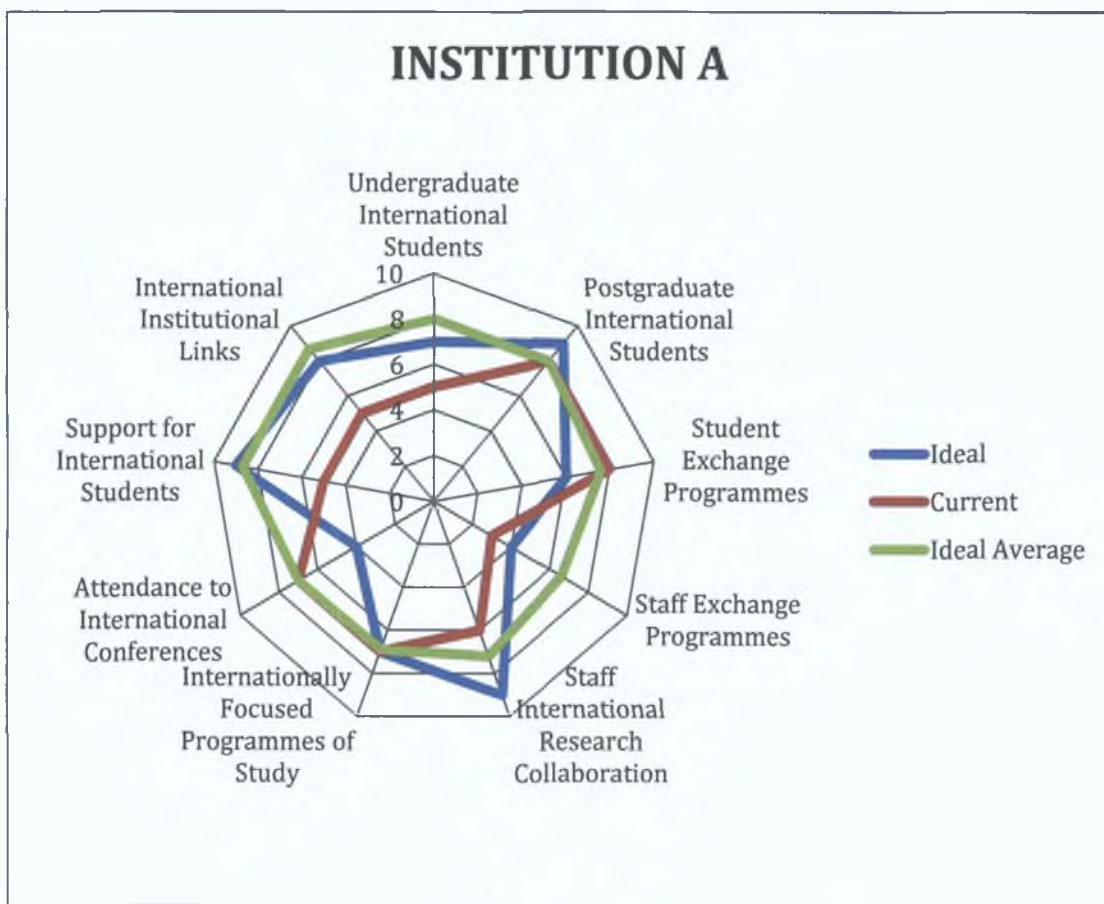


Figure 6

Institute A indicates that its current levels of students exchange programmes and attendance at international conferences are too high.



Table 3

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	5	8	8
Postgraduate International Students	4	7	8
Student Exchange Programmes	5	7	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	5	7	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	5	7	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	5	6	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	5	6	7
Support for International Students	6	7	8.7
International Institutional Links	6	7	8.7

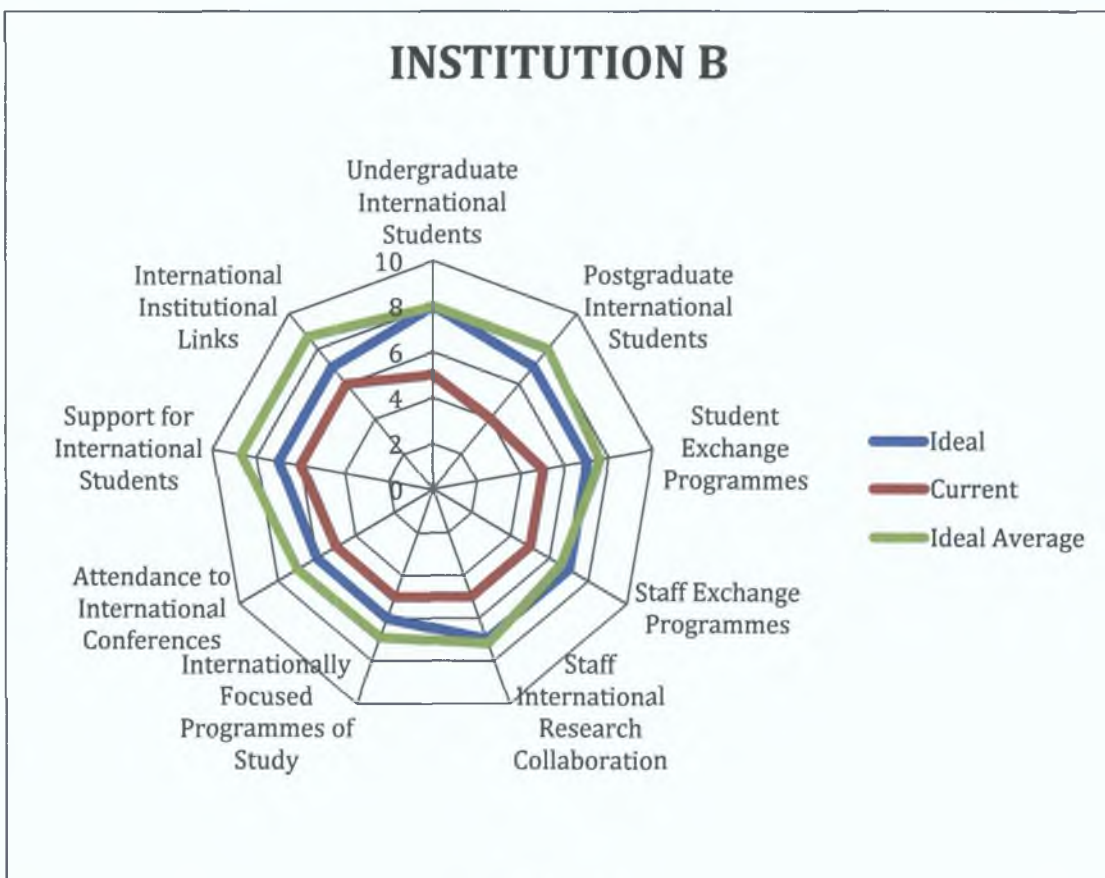


Figure 7



Table 4

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	6	8	8
Postgraduate International Students	1	2	8
Student Exchange Programmes	6	6	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	6	6	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	3	6	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	6	6	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	2	3	7
Support for International Students	6	7	8.7
International Institutional Links	4	7	8.7

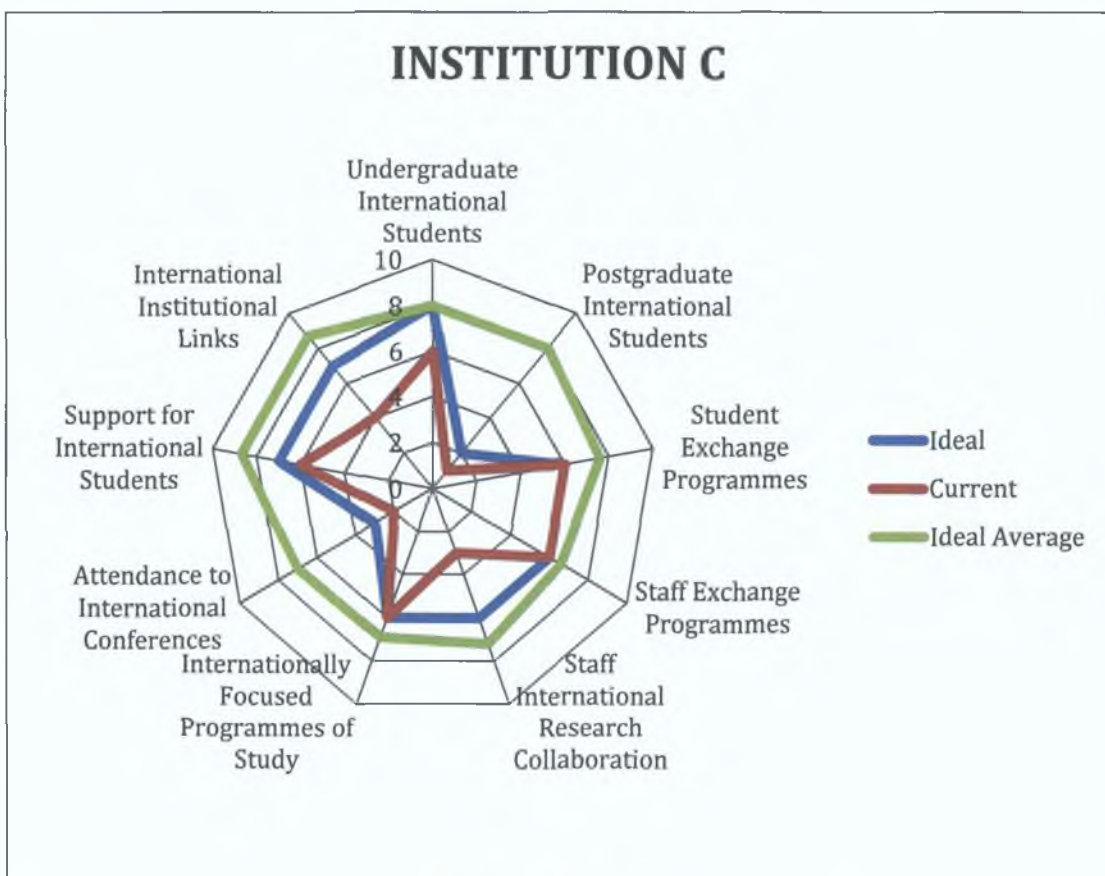


Figure 8

Table 5

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	7	8	8
Postgraduate International Students	3	8	8
Student Exchange Programmes	3	8	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	5	7	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	3	7	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	4	8	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	5	7	7
Support for International Students	7	8	8.7
International Institutional Links	7	8	8.7

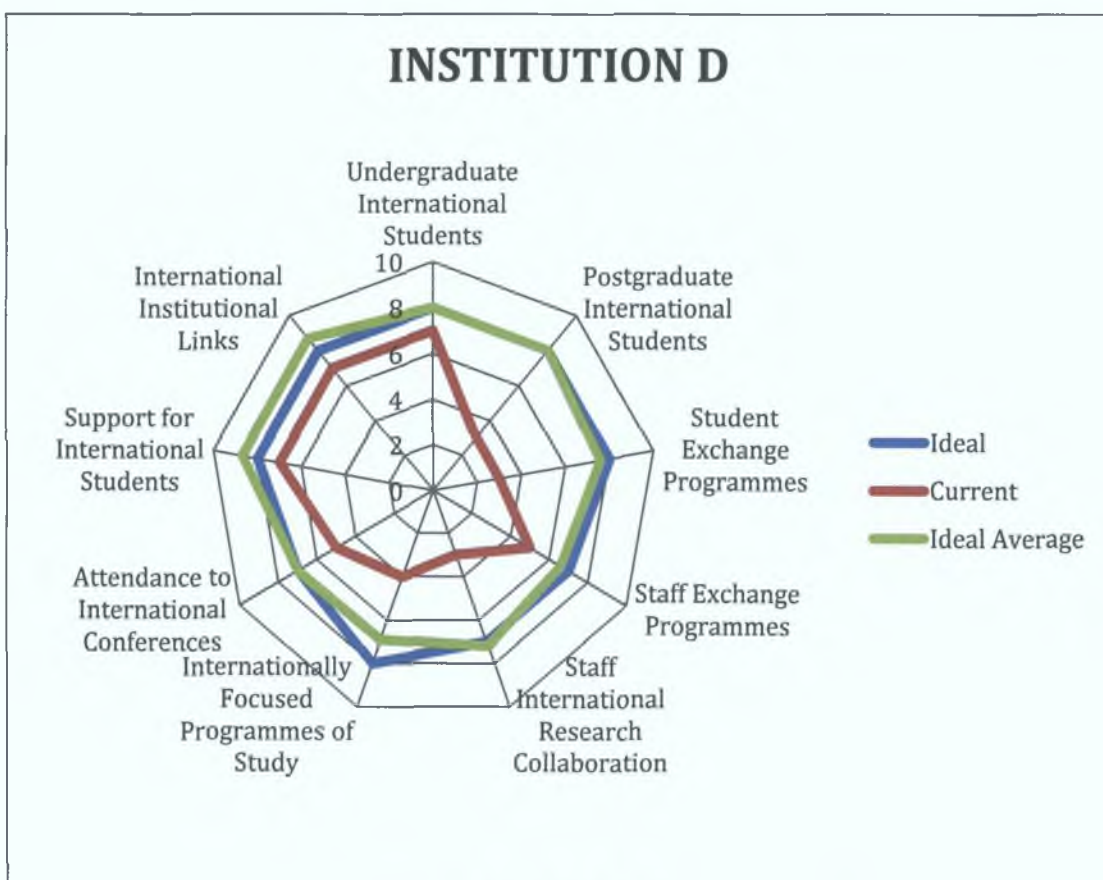


Figure 9

Table 6

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	7	10	8
Postgraduate International Students	6	10	8
Student Exchange Programmes	7	10	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	4	10	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	4	10	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	2	10	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	2	10	7
Support for International Students	6	10	8.7
International Institutional Links	6	10	8.7

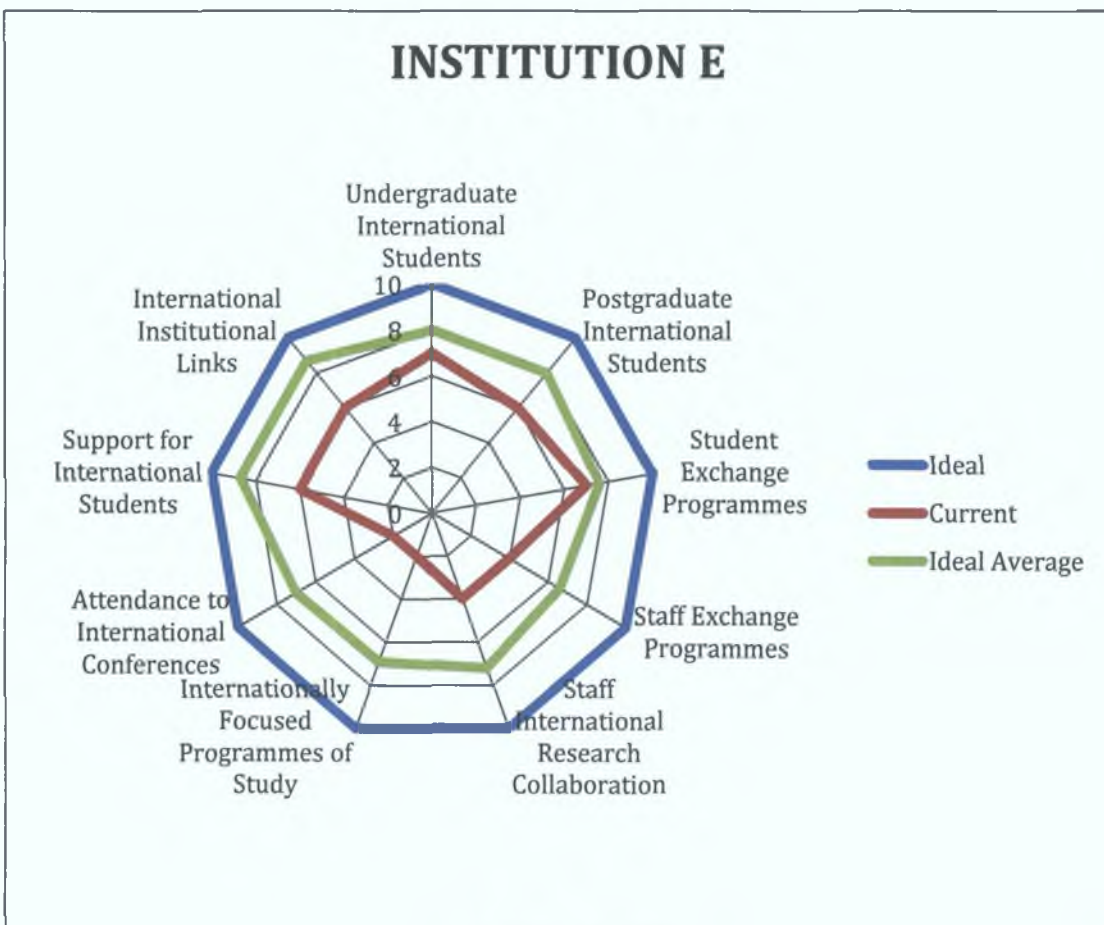


Figure 10

Table 7

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	3	10	8
Postgraduate International Students	8	10	8
Student Exchange Programmes	1	3	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	2	3	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	1	1	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	1	3	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	3	10	7
Support for International Students	6	10	8.7
International Institutional Links	6	10	8.7

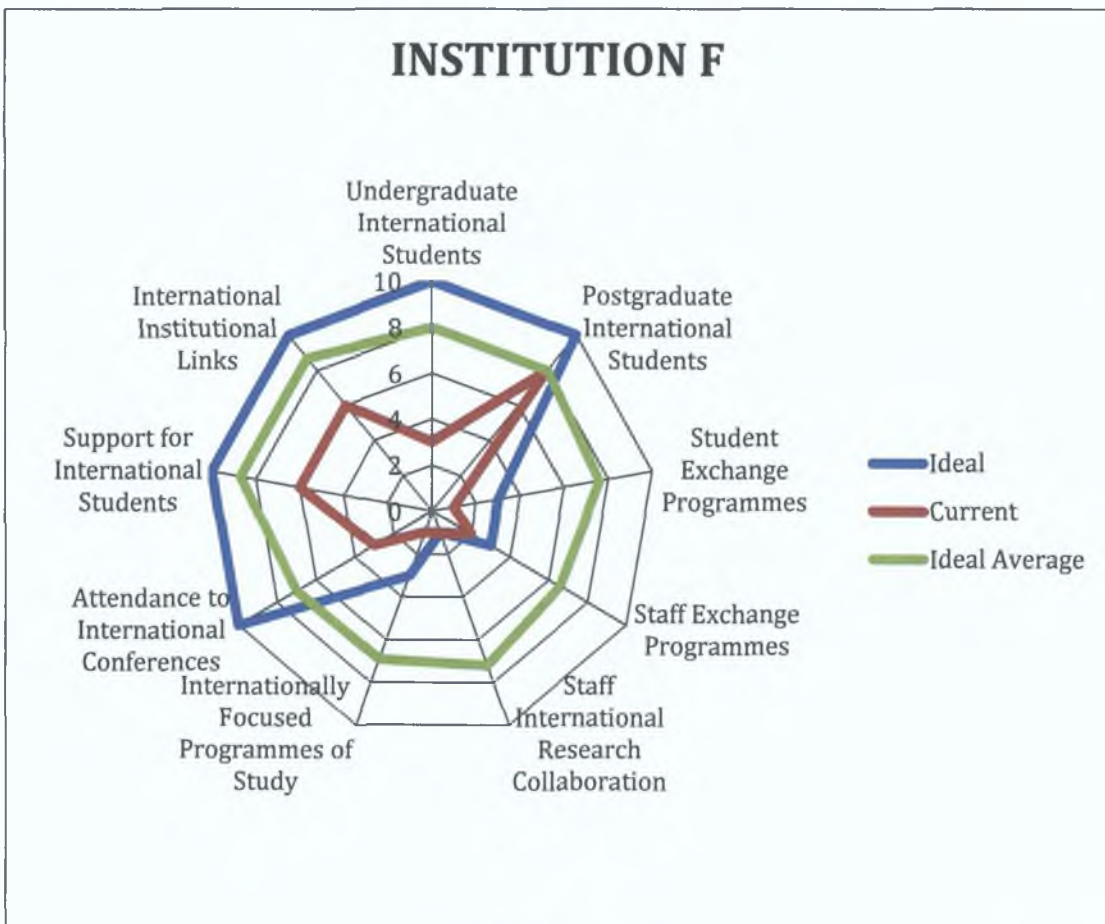


Figure 11



Table 8

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	5	7	8
Postgraduate International Students	6	8	8
Student Exchange Programmes	7	7	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	6	5	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	8	8	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	6	7	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	7	7	7
Support for International Students	9	10	8.7
International Institutional Links	9	10	8.7

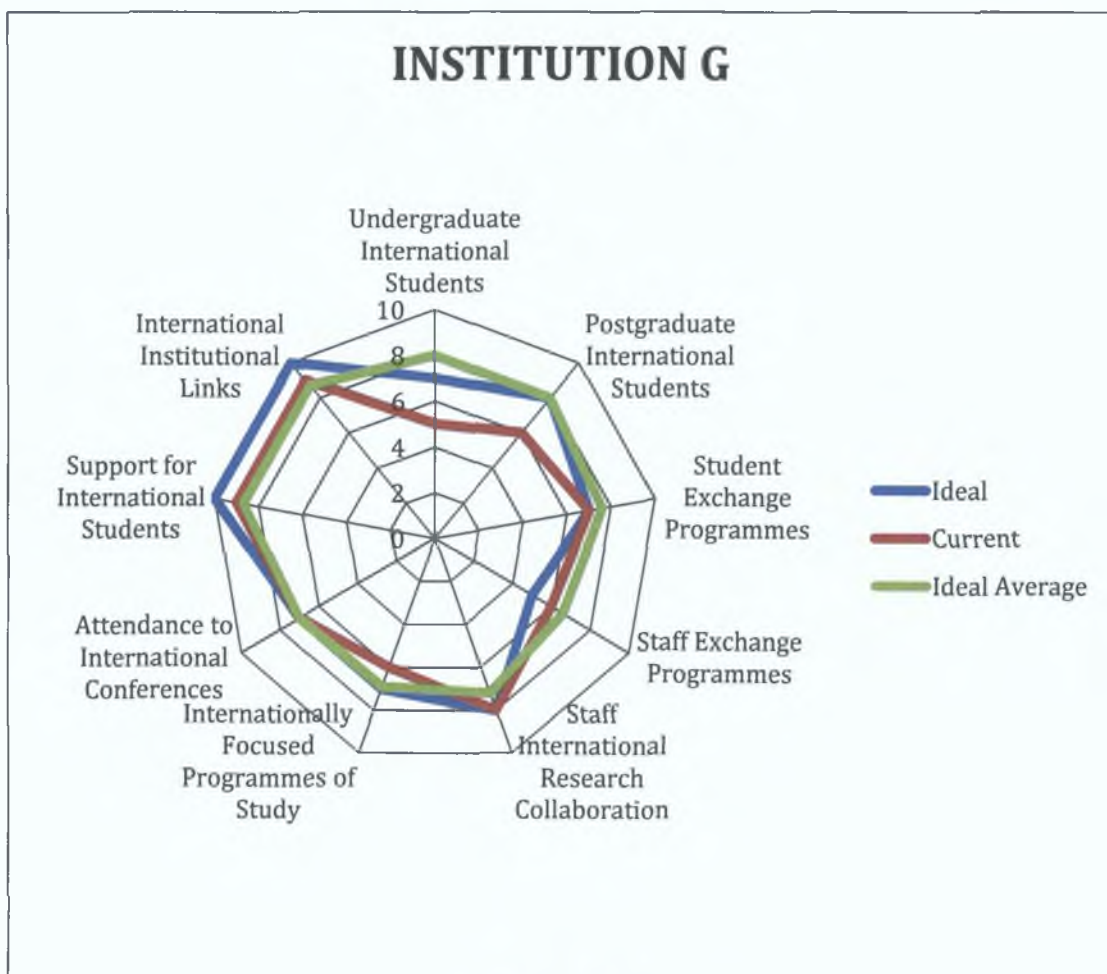


Figure 12

Table 9

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	3	3	8
Postgraduate International Students	4	7	8
Student Exchange Programmes	9	10	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	7	6	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	2	4	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	7	5	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	7	6	7
Support for International Students	9	7	8.7
International Institutional Links	9	7	8.7

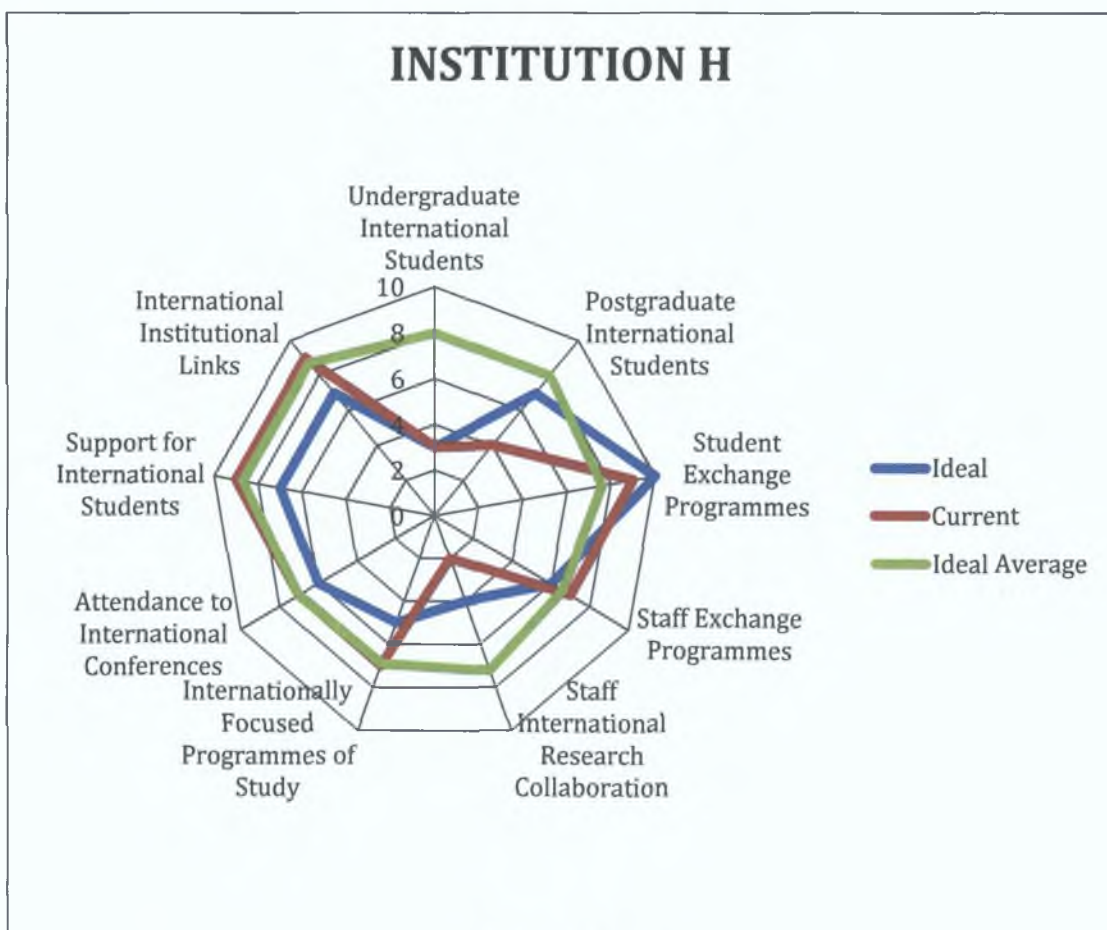


Figure 13

Table 10

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	7	10	8
Postgraduate International Students	8	10	8
Student Exchange Programmes	5	10	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	4	10	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	8	10	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	5	10	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	9	10	7
Support for International Students	9	10	8.7
International Institutional Links	8	10	8.7

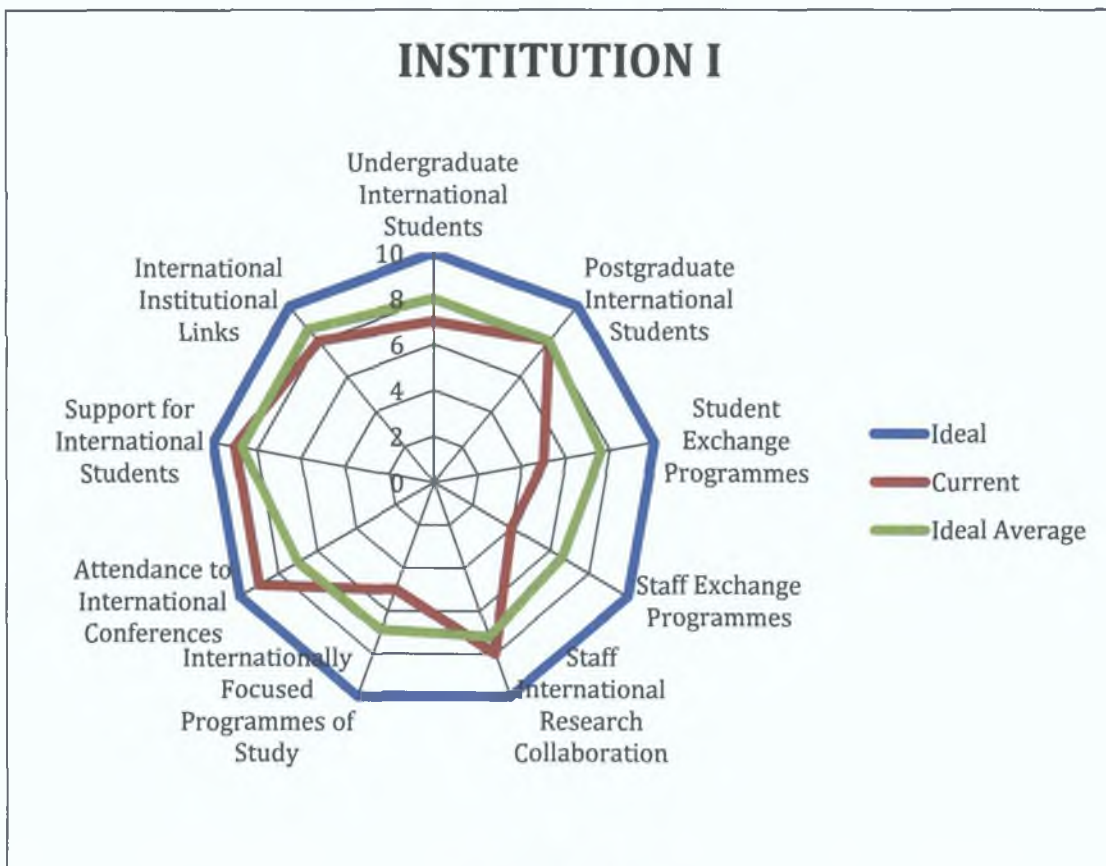


Figure 14

Table 11

	Current	Ideal	Ideal Average
Undergraduate International Students	4	9	8
Postgraduate International Students	5	9	8
Student Exchange Programmes	7	9	7.6
Staff Exchange Programmes	2	8	6.6
Staff International Research Collaboration	7	10	7.2
Internationally Focused Programmes of Study	2	7	6.9
Attendance to International Conferences	9	7	7
Support for International Students	9	9	8.7
International Institutional Links	9	10	8.7

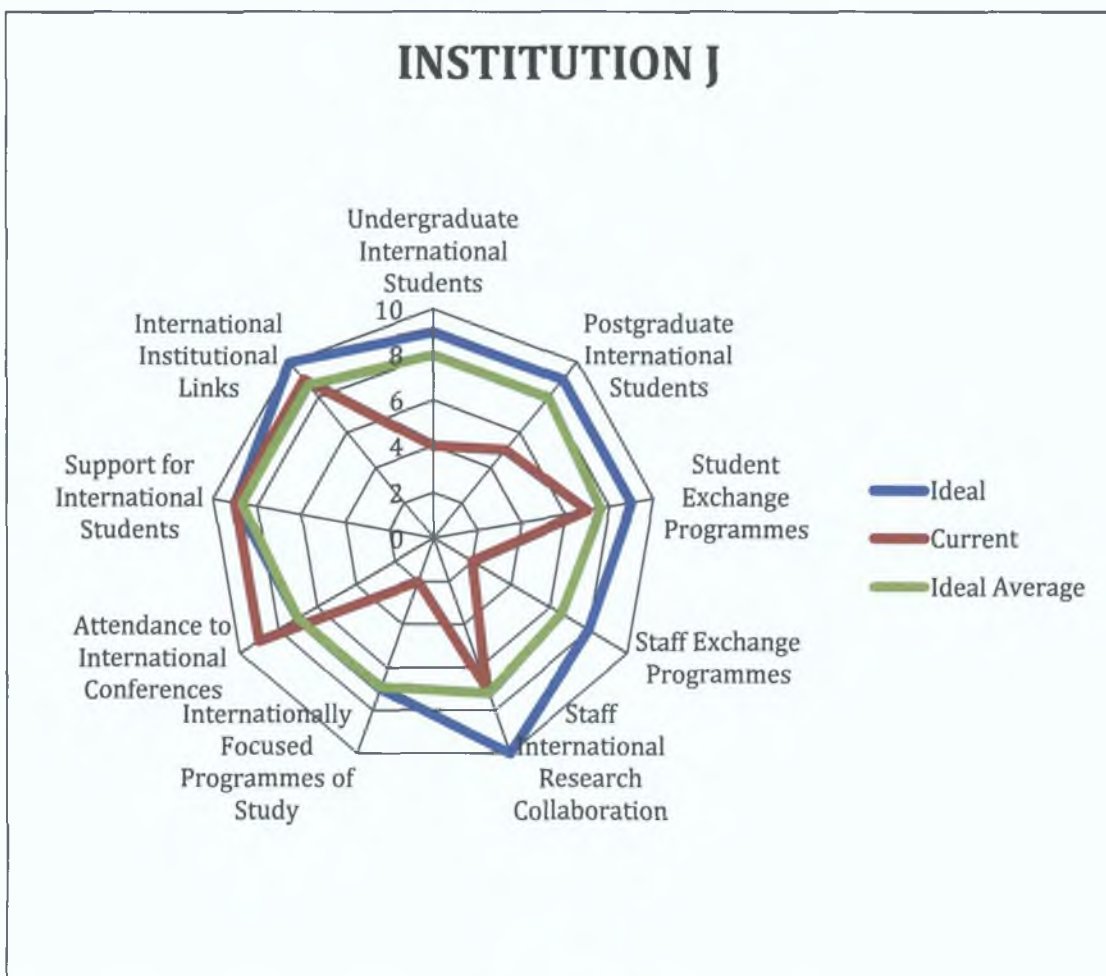


Figure 15



### **Analysis of results returned to questions 11 & 12**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the researcher has adopted a 'deductive approach' to analysing questions 11 and 12 based on the view that many respondents to the questionnaire will return answers which reflect similar theories described in the literature review. A word of caution however has been noted by (Bryman 1988 cited in Saunders et al, 2007 p 488) that "the prior specification of a theory tends to be disfavoured because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated". It was the researcher's intention to put these questions (particularly question 12) to the respondents to validate the views expressed by theorists in the literature review. The researcher will attempt to categorise the data to these questions. These questions did **not** require a yes or no answer.

### **The process of Categorising Qualitative Data**

"The first activity involves classifying data into meaningful categories, which may be derived from your theoretical framework" (Saunders et al 2007, p 479). The researcher has identified in the previous paragraph that respondents will return similar answers to describe what it means to be internationalised, to theories outlined in the literature review. The approach then to this "qualitative research will seek to build up a theory that is adequately grounded in the researcher's data" (Saunders et al 2007). Grounded theory is a strategy that is taken to analyse this data and is selected to not only analyse the results obtained in the qualitative questions but also to discover what other reasons are put forward in explaining internationalisation. This is important because it can be the stepping-stone to developing a strong benchmarking tool, which can be used by higher education institutes. Assuming that the meaning of internationalisation seems to change over time, it would be appropriate to say that benchmarking tools would need to change too. Questions 8 & 9 returned quantitative data, which can be analysed easily, yet it is still not known to the researcher how respondents measured their actual levels of internationalisation.

### **Categorising Qualitative Data for Question 11**

The answers returned for question 11 are linked to the following objective

- To identify what these institutions believe 'Internationalisation' is when reflecting on their own level of internationalisation

The literature review highlights various reasons why institutions attempt to become internationalised. Economic and financial reasons are mentioned throughout at both institutional and national level. In categorising the qualitative data returned for question 11, it has been established that 66% stated that 'financial' reasons are why higher education institutions believe they must be internationalised.

In categorising the qualitative data returned for question 11, it has been established that 77% stated that 'social' reasons are identified as the reason why higher education institutions believe they must be internationalised. In using the term 'social', it is the researcher's opinion that terms including globalised citizen, multi-culture, diversity, inclusion and student integration as returned in the answers are all related and can be categorised under the term 'social rationale'.

In categorising the qualitative data returned for question 11, it has been established that 22% of the answers stated that 'national policies' are reasons identified with believing they must be internationalised.

### **Categorising Qualitative Data for Question 12**

The answers returned for question 12 are linked to the following objectives

*To determine if previous research e.g. 'Star Model' or similar types of models used, can help Universities and Higher Education Institutions with their decision making processes in identifying weaknesses in the institutional structure when competing for international students*

*To investigate how useful a framework model is in focusing institutions on what it means to be 'Internationalised' when competing long term in the international market*

In categorising the qualitative data returned for question 12, it has been established that

- 90% listed the number of international students enrolled
- 50% listed international partnerships / collaborations

The remaining answers returned were not categorised by the researcher, as it was determined that not enough commonality was shown in these answers

## **Actual answers returned for question 11**

### *Why does a Higher Education Institution believe it must be Internationalised?*

*(The following answers were returned by email)*

#### **Institution B**

- Need for alternative income streams
- Likely change to HEI (Higher Education Institute) funding models
- Promote diversity and inclusion
- Become internationally recognised
- Make economic contribution (direct and indirect) to region
- HLWG (High Level Working Group) (national) priority
- Part of criteria for technological university assessment

#### **Institution F**

Because a higher education institution should reflect the real world as much as possible and the real work is a multi-cultural place where trade is globalised. In order for a HEI (Higher Education Institute) particularly on a small island like Ireland to be able to give its students a complete education it would be in an international environment.

#### **Institution I**

The prime motive for internationalisation should not be financial, although financial motive is important, internationalisation should be based on academic and development objectives. The institutional message about the importance of internationalisation needs to be understood by all academic staff and the strategy needs to be fully integrated with all other institutional strategies.

An internationalisation strategy is designed to have a dual purpose – being both University-centred, with a prime aim of enhancing the University's status globally and student-centred, aiming to offer students an experience of global citizenship.

### **Institution G**

To enhance and diversify the educational experience of its students and enable them to become global citizens

### **Institution H**

HEI's (Higher Education Institutes) are preparing students from a global environment – it therefore must be able to offer an international perspective as part of the educational experience

### **Institution E**

From my perspective, it is beneficial for educational, research, industry and income reasons. Different staff members share different views

*(The following answers were returned during interview)*

### **Institution A**

The first and obvious one is the short term economic gain in terms of the fee income that can be generated, particularly from non-EU students

The second side to it is that it can enhance and augment research capability within an institution, whereby we can access the physical infrastructure and other resources we don't have that they have and vice versa

The other side to it is that it allows an institution to (particularly in the Irish context) to extend its sphere of influence beyond the traditional migration routes of Ireland. It allows us to educate graduates from e.g. the BRIC countries where there are very few Irish people living traditionally, so it allows us to put graduates back into those countries (BRIC) which then we have a network affinity diasporas over and above the traditional Diaspora, which potentially can loop back in to developing exports for Irish companies, Irish Companies on direct investment back into Ireland from those countries at some point in the future that is a very hard one to measure, but I think that it is a critically important one given the rise the apparent rise of the BRIC economies and their influence in the global economies, so I see that as critically important for institutions. The other side to it is that the Irish economy in particular is one of the most globalised I'm not sure if it's 1, 2 or 3

but it's certainly one of the most globalised ones in the world We can't expect everybody to have gone out and travelled the world by the time they are 30 but one way we can help our students and train them to be of more benefit to industries is if they have had students from different parts of the world in their classroom learning side by side with them, learning, seeing and learning from them, learning the study styles that there is the whole cultural piece learning that there is a comfort zone around working with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds that is a huge bonus because when they go into the workplace in say likes of Google when there are 40/50 different

#### **Institution D**

- Primarily for the benefit of Irish students These students get an international experience on campus Irish students don't travel very well This is the only exposure they will get to international students and international culture
- We must fit into national policies as the Government funds us The Government has clearly outlined that we must meet certain targets
- Funding mechanisms in Ireland are starting to change There are greater challenges and a way to meet this challenge to fee income from international students

#### **Institution J**

*(Interviewee 1)*

Ireland is essentially globalised at this stage The idea is to get Universities globalised and internationalised by Internationalising the curriculum, internationalising the student population, as student integration is important for the Universities and the graduates

*(Interviewee 2)*

In our new strategy, the President (of the university) believes that a new graduate will be a well-rounded individual with some international experience Be that as part of their curriculum, be that as part of study abroad, or having international students in their class This is a key factor in our

internationalisation policy The bottom of our ranking is bringing in money It would not be our number one priority This is the case for some institutions but not for ours

**Institution C**

No answers returned

## **Actual answers returned for question 12**

### *How can an Institution measure itself in terms of being internationalised?*

*(The following answers were returned by email)*

#### **Institution B**

- Internal targets (metrics)
- EI (Enterprise Ireland) Annual Return on International Student numbers (by domicile)
- HEA (Higher Education Authority) Return

#### **Institution I**

- No of international staff and students
- Revenue stream generated from international student recruitment
- No of international partnerships
- No of joint publications with international researchers
- Offshore activity e.g. transnational education etc

#### **Institution G**

By numbers of International collaborations research and institutional, mobility of domestic students and numbers of international students studying at the institution

#### **Institution H**

It can benchmark criteria such as

- No of international students
- Number of programmes with an international curriculum
- % of domestic students who receive an experience abroad
- Number of staff motilities
- Number of international staff
- How important is internationalisation for senior management – i.e. is this part of institutional goals

#### **Institution E**

- International key performance indicators



(The following answers were returned during interview)

### **Institution A**

The simplest metric that you use is the number of international students that you currently have. That tends to be the metric that most people are using. That is a very one-dimensional measure to the internationalisation of an institution. You need to look at how many programmes you are running overseas and how many students you have in that and are you operating a campus overseas, research collaborations and functioning exchange programmes and in what geographies they are in. It is very easy to get exchange programmes going with English speaking countries but the challenge is to go to non-English speaking countries.

The remaining of this interview is unstructured and was not part of the questionnaire. The interviewee makes reference to the national policies and questions if *“Ireland’s national policies are aligned with the stated aspiration of growing international student numbers. Are they enabling institutions to deliver what they want or what is wanted of institutions”?*

### **Institution D**

There are generally accepted mechanisms for measuring yourself

- A certain percentage of the student cohort being international students. A certain percentage of staff travelling abroad.
- A certain percentage of programmes being delivered abroad.

Certainly it is far more than just the income and student number. It’s about the true internationalisation of a campus. Sometimes that is not as easily measured as some of the other metrics. Therefore, each institution has its own goals. But some of these (goals) are framed by national policies. For example, there is a national policy to double the number of international students in Ireland over the next number of years. I don’t know if that’s achievable or not. There are certain benchmarks out there that would be used.

## **Institution J**

*(Interviewee 1)*

- The percentage of international students studying with us
- The percentage of faculty that are from international countries
- The number of curricula that involve some international aspect
- The exchange programmes that we offer
- The number of students studying for degrees with partner Universities
- Collaboration in research from abroad

*(Interviewee 2)*

(No comments made)

## **Institution C**

(No answer returned)

### Response from Enterprise Ireland

The chart below (Figure 16) highlights the ideal level at which the (respondent) views Irish higher education institutions should reach in the context of this research. The question required the respondent to mark **B** for each indicator in question 9.

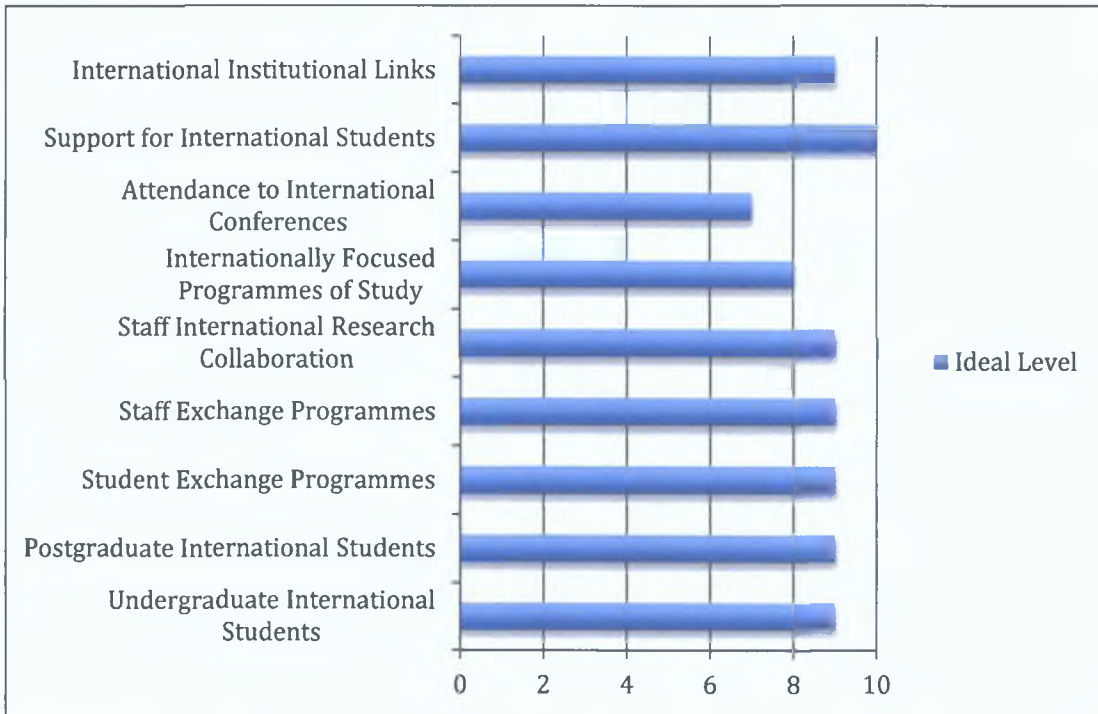


Figure 16

*(The following answers were given during interview)*

The researcher made reference to an article by Lyons (2010), which comments on "how education could be a €4bn export business for Ireland. But unfortunately, Ireland's new strategy document singles out the US Diaspora as a market for further tapping but fails to mention the world's biggest market, China". In answering this question, the interviewee stated, "the biggest problem if you go outside of North America is that the student, the buyer, doesn't know Ireland...when you go to Asia they (the student) knows England. The student will ask, where is Ireland and what do you offer? This is the biggest problem for us, we are not on the map".

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The results of this research is intended to provide an insight into the different levels of Internationalisation higher education institutions have achieved in their efforts to attract the international student. The current level of internationalisation versus the ideal level is easily understood by the graphical illustrations for each institution. It should also highlight that future options available to these institutions can change, as the term 'internationalisation' has yet to be fully understood. However, there may be a certain amount of subjectivity on behalf of the respondents in this survey. After all, it is the respondents' perception of how well they are achieving which is returned as data to the external researcher. Unless data are recorded in a quantitative way, how can this data be questioned?

### Conclusion

To illustrate this point in describing methods of data collection and data verification, (Beerkens et al 2010, p 25) highlights the option of "limiting the indicator set to criteria that can be checked externally (e.g. numbers of foreign students) as opposed to data about the quality of programmes". **Institution D** for example, has indicated that the current and ideal levels of internationally focused programmes of study are equal, suggesting it has reached its ideal level in terms of internationalisation. For benchmarking purposes, what indicators did the institution use for the respondent to come to this conclusion? As institution C is an Institute of Technology, a peer-review process should be undertaken with other Institutes of Technology. This would add weight to the result.

This research also shows how irrelevant aims and objectives can be at national level, compared to the aims and objectives of higher education institutions in areas related to internationalisation of education. To highlight this, the answer to **Question 5** in the questionnaire shows that out of the 5 Institutes of Technology represented, no institution has overseas campuses, and only 1 university has an overseas campus. Although in assessing

internationalisation, having an overseas campus is not considered an important indicator in being internationalised. To illustrate this, (Green 2012) describes how the Netherlands Flemish Accrediting Association (NVAO) looks at the programme level in determining their internationalisation and not the institutional level. It looks at learning outcomes, assessment, students, staff and vision. It's certainly less expensive but it does highlight Enterprise Ireland's view that if their goals (in this case, developing awareness about Ireland in Asia) are not being achieved, then institutions may need to look within the structure of their own programmes and use representative government bodies simply to market Ireland as a destination.

### **How to put a number on the indicator**

"The value of the indicator and how relevant the indicator is must be defined by the context in which one uses the indicator" (Beerkens et al 2010, p 50)

Internationalisation will have key components and supporting activities. Supporting activities like accommodation, student services are all important aspects of how internationalised and institution is, together with key activities like strategy and goals. So as each indicator is used to measure an element of internationalisation, then in designing a self-evaluation activity, the value of the indicator must be established.

This self-evaluation activity should then involve staff from each institution if they are similar in structure. The Institutes of Technology might share curriculum development staff to highlight the needs of foreign research students. Self-evaluation reports may indicate weaknesses in areas previously unknown.

**What can benchmarking between similar Higher Education Institutes tell us?**

Figures 17 & 18 are representations of answers (average of all 4) given by the 4 Universities and 4 Institutes of Technology. Questions may need answers about what indicators used to establish the current and ideal level of internationalisation? The question relating to (Support for International Students) illustrates that the average and ideal levels of internationalisation have been largely met by the universities but not for the Institutes of Technology. But it is unclear what data each respondent used in order to return an answer. Of course it was not possible for these respondents to accurately reflect the levels as in one case, the interviewee only saw the questionnaire when it was presented in the interview.

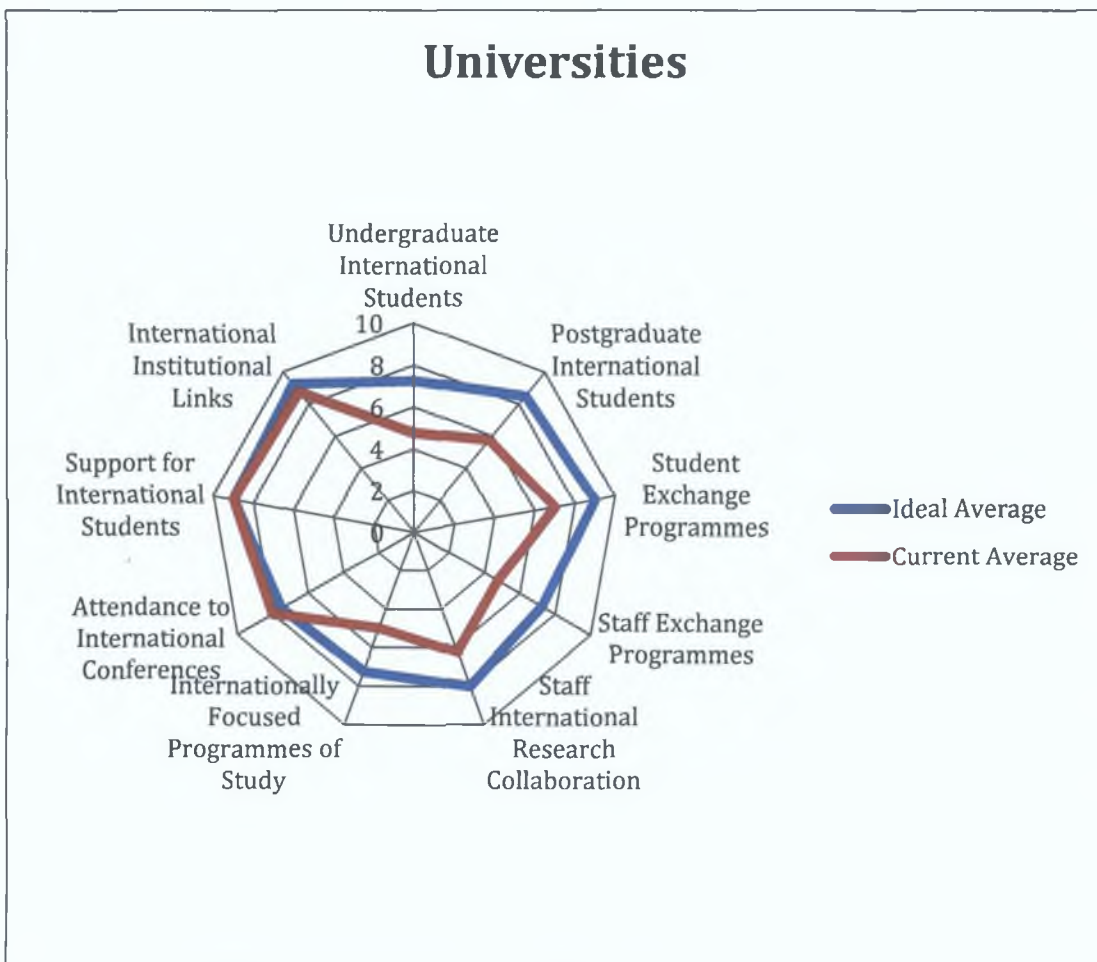


Figure 17

## Institutes of Technology

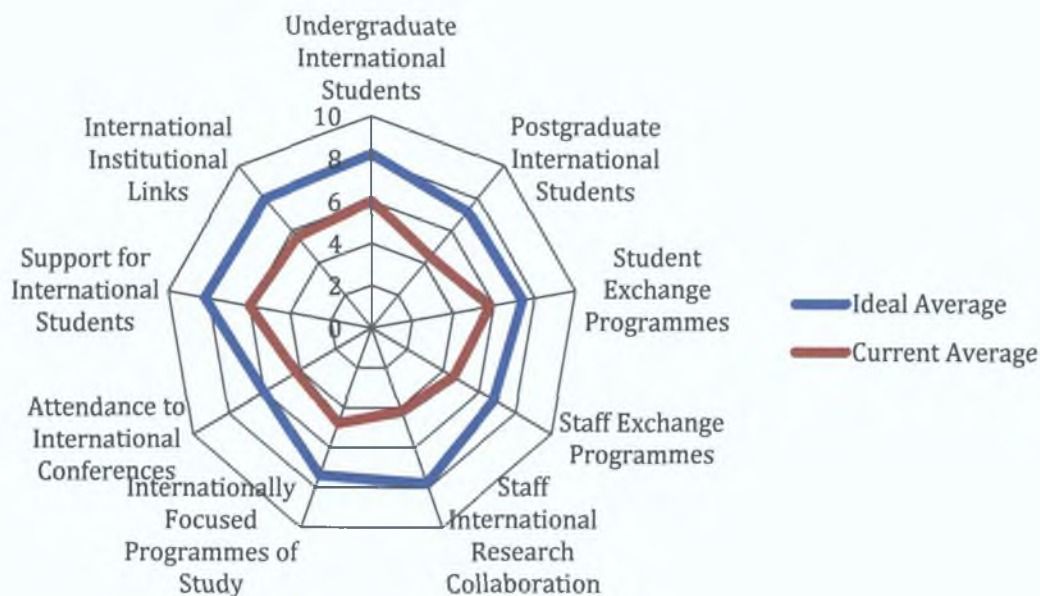


Figure 18

If an institution is prepared to benchmark itself against similar institutions e.g., The Institutes of Technology, then how it measures itself in terms of being internationalised should be similar in all Institutes of Technology, and the same indicators used should be similar. This can be established by using answers returned to questions 8, 9 and 12.

Although the questions are not aimed at the basic level of operations, they serve to offer guidance on how to establish these indicators. For example, the number of international students can have related indicators like the level of service being offered to them. This could be further broken down into the types of service an international student would need compared to local students. This again could be broken down into the types of support needed in academic English given to research students. To produce the same

standard of service throughout the Institutes of Technology, a simple change to one element identified as weak can be implemented in all institutes

### **Limitations of the Research**

It is not possible to confirm if strategic decision makers relating to internationalisation at each institution were also the same respondents taking part in this research. This was more evident during interviews. It is also not clear to what extent current levels of internationalisation are at, as the data or indicators used to establish the actual level is unknown to the researcher.

The number of respondents to the research was 10 from a possible 14 Higher Education Institutes who received the questionnaire. This gives a response rate of 71.5%, which is quite high. There is a possibility of having a further 10 higher education institutes involved in this research. These institutes would be considered as similar in type, to those institutes taking part in this research. Taking this into consideration, the total sample size is nearly 42% of the total population considered eligible for this research.

### **Further Research**

The statement of research question in the introduction to this dissertation highlights the task of investigating if Ireland's Higher Education Institutions are strategically aligned to effectively compete in a highly competitive market to attract international students and to sustain the internationalisation of Irish higher education.

The only link to research which represents the national government's view was the results returned from Enterprise Ireland. Further data from agents acting on behalf of the government would be helpful in establishing a better view at national level.

Although the illustrations served their purpose of visualising the levels of internationalisation at each institution, it is clear that proper analysis of how indicators are measured and developed is needed to return accurate data. This was evident in the answers returned for the qualitative questions in the questionnaire. It was difficult to categorise this data, as there was very little



commonality between answers With this information, a benchmarking exercise should take place between Higher Education Institutions in Ireland, to establish the levels of internationalisation

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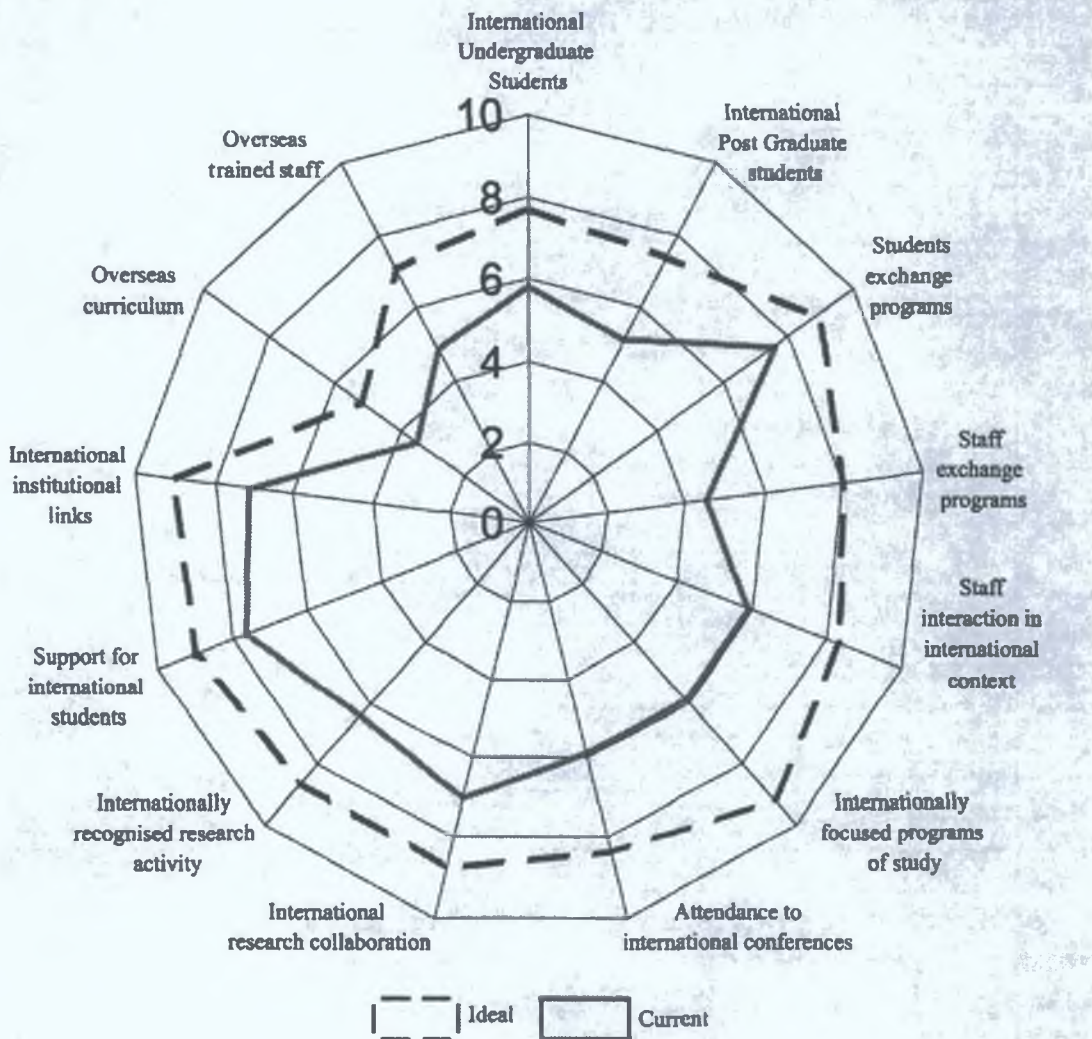
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## CHAPTER 6: APPENDICES (Appendix 1)

### Star Model





(Appendix 2)

**MINT Tool**

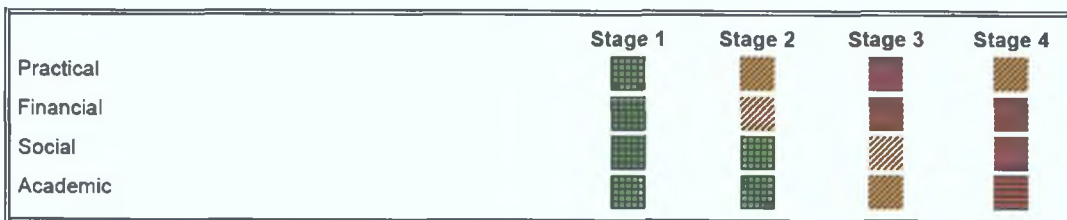
**3) Internationalization services**

This item focuses in more detail on the services, including partnerships that are available to the programme, to help it achieve its internationalization goals (and to support the activity clusters). There is information on:

- the type of services offered at programme level
- the importance of these services
- the target groups that may use these services

The following services are available to support the programme's international activities	Availability	Importance
<b>Practical</b>		
Accommodation	Always	extremely important
Information (practical)	Always	very important
Multilingual communication	Always	very important
<b>Academic</b>		
Advice	Always	very important
Information (academic)	Always	very important
Preparation programme	Always	important
<b>Financial</b>		
Scholarships	Always	important
Subsidies	Always	important
Advice on/help with application	Always	important
<b>Social</b>		
Guidance	Always	not important
Crisis team/procedure	Always	not important
Re-entry programme	Always	not important at all

Quality Assurance with regards to the programme's internationalization services can be visualized as follows:



Stage 1: The services are an explicit element of a policy plan  
 Stage 2: The availability of services is according to plan  
 Stage 3: The services are evaluated in a structured process  
 Stage 4: Evaluation results are used as input for the improvement of services

= Yes (fully)  
 = Partly  
 = No

Source: (MINT 2008, p.9)



(Appendix 3)

**Research Questionnaire**

**Question 1** (Yes or No answer only for questions 1 to 7)

Should Internationalisation be a strategic policy?

**Question 2**

Can national and institutional level policies and strategies in terms of internationalisation, prevent each other from competing effectively in the international market?

**Question 3**

Does your Institution identify internationalisation as a strategic objective?

**Question 4**

Does internationalisation appear in the mission statement of your Institution?

**Question 5**

Does internationalisation feature in strategic planning of your Institution?

**Question 6**

Does your Institution have a campus abroad?

**Question 7**

Does your Institution have customised programmes for international students?

**Question 8**

Ideally which level would be your Institution's aspiration for each of the items below as a contribution to being internationalised?

*Please mark the number that best corresponds to your view for each of the item's importance with an A.*

<u>Ideal level</u>	LOW										HIGH
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Undergraduate international students											
Postgraduate international students											
Student exchange programmes											
Staff exchange programmes											
Staff international research collaboration											
Internationally focused programmes of study											
Attendance to international conferences											
Support for international students											
International institutional links											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**Question 9**

**What is the actual level for each of the items?**

*Please mark the number that best corresponds to your answer with a B.*

<u>Actual level</u>	LOW									HIGH	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Undergraduate international students											
Postgraduate international students											
Student exchange programmes											
Staff exchange programmes											
Staff international research collaboration											
Internationally focused programmes of study											
Attendance to international conferences											
Support for international students											
International institutional links											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

**Question 10**

Please rank the following items from 1(*important*) to 9 (*less important*) in terms of importance for internationalisation of your Higher Education Institution:

Undergraduate international students	
Postgraduate international students	
Student exchange programmes	
Staff exchange programmes	
Staff international research collaboration	
Internationally focused programmes of study	
Attendance to international conferences	
Support for international students	
International institutional links	

**Question 11**

Why does a Higher Education Institution believe it must be Internationalised?

**Question 12**

How can an Institution measure itself in terms of being Internationalised?