



Global Community Conversations

Exploring approaches to intercultural community-building at Leeds

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A global or intercultural community?



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"I feel as though **I have met and got to know many people** through my academic programme from different countries and religions. I also see many global and intercultural activities advertised on campus and email communications."

"I was able to develop **interpersonal skills**, especially with regards to **intercultural communication**. I was also able to give a scope to my language skills and practice translating information for students. I have learnt to be **adaptable** and discovered many **new perspectives** and cultures that have opened many new doors and **ideas for future career paths**."

"**Learning from each other** is an integral part of education and lifelong learning generally. More specifically, classroom discussions benefit from sharing and **listening to each others' perspectives, experiences** and understanding of content"

"There are **too many divisions/bubbles** between the home students and the international students. It almost feels as if the international students (usually bonding with other international students from the same country) are a separate community from the home student and , as an international student who has however grown up in the U.K., I can really sense this division."

"Many people seem **reluctant to actually mix with others outside their own small groups/circles**, particularly younger students. It is much easier to mix with other mature students."

"I feel like it's **hard to have heartfelt conversations** with friends from other culture. I am harder to open up to others from another culture and maybe it's because **I feel different** from them."

"Is there an intercultural community? Seems **predominantly white middle-class** to me."

"University of Leeds is a predominantly white middle class university with very limited diversity, particularly as a black female. **It is hard to feel welcome in this environment**."

About the project



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The **Global Community Conversations LITE project** aimed to gain a better understanding of different students' experiences of feeling (or not feeling) part of a global or intercultural community at Leeds, in order to:

- improve the design and delivery of social and co-curricular activities that support intercultural community-building
- improve university communications, to support enhanced awareness and engagement with relevant activities
- inspire a wider ethos of intercultural curiosity
- understand what else may need to change

Aspiration for the learning points from the project to influence the type of social and co-curricular activities offered, how these are communicated, and the overall support provided to help more students have a more meaningful intercultural experience at Leeds.

What methods were used?



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Following a student survey, the project brought together students and staff for workshops where they could share experiences and generate insights and ideas for action.

The aims of the workshop were for students and staff to:

- Participate in a **story circle** to better understand each other's experiences and perspectives
- Reflect and share insights arising from the story circle experience
- Participate in **activities designed to understand where we are now and where we want to be**
- Discuss ideas and recommendations for further action

Key aspirations behind the choice of methods:

- Story circles to explore the complexity of people's experiences, and enable participants to build relationships
- Students and staff to have an opportunity to work together and try to move beyond some of the more obvious suggestions/solutions that have been tried before
- Methods to model the kind of intercultural experience we hope people may encounter at Leeds, as well as taking inspiration from participatory approaches used in community development

Who participated?



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105 students/postgraduate researchers completed the project survey from 1 December 2022 to 5 Feb 2023:

- **38%** UG; **41%** PGT; **21%** PGR
- **53%** of survey respondents described themselves as an "international student"

24 students and **13** staff participated in **3** workshops (including a pilot) in January and February 2023.

Staff participants (including academic and professional services) were recruited through existing networks, and by targeted communications to teams most likely to act on the research findings.

Students workshop participants were recruited via the project survey:

- **66%** of student participants at the workshops had described themselves as an "international student" in their survey



What do you mean by 'culture' or 'intercultural experience'?

Overall approach: try not to be too prescriptive. The survey included this statement at the beginning:

For the purposes of the survey, we use terms including 'culture' and 'background' to refer to multiple individual and group identities, and life experiences. You are free to interpret these terms broadly, and to describe any aspects of your own (cultural) background, identities or life experiences in response to the questions, where you would like to.

We also invite you to interpret the term 'intercultural experience' broadly. The survey questions provide some examples of activities and experiences. However, you are free to provide alternative perspectives on what makes an activity, experience or community 'intercultural.' This might include various organised or informal opportunities to:

- *interact and build relationships with people from various (cultural) backgrounds*
- *share perspectives, find connections, discuss differences*
- *reflect and act on what you've learned*

When asking for "about you" information at the end the survey, we included this statement:

The following categories are often used within the University to help understand the experience of groups of students; however, we also recognise that these categories don't tell the whole story. Please feel free to select from these categories, to decline to select if you don't feel they fit, or to suggest alternative terms. You can also describe aspects of your individual or group identities in the free text box at the end.

What do you mean by 'intercultural community'?



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In the workshops we shared this quote, which the Global Community team often uses to help people begin exploring the difference between a “multicultural” or “intercultural” community:

*“**Multicultural** refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups. People live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other. For example, in a multicultural neighborhood people may frequent ethnic grocery stores and restaurants **without really interacting** with their neighbors from other countries.”*

*“**Intercultural** describes communities in which there is a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships. In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because **everyone learns from one another and grows together.**”*

Spring Institute for Cultural Learning. 2017. *What's the difference between multicultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communication?* [Online]. [Accessed 22 November 2018]. Available from: <https://www.springinstitute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/>

As we said in the workshops, this quote is only one point of view on a complex topic, but it's interesting to think about how these ideas and dynamics reflect our own experiences.

We also shared quotes from our University strategies and the project survey to help stimulate discussion in the workshops.

From our University strategies...



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These quotes from our University strategies were included on wall displays to help stimulate discussion in the workshops:

- "By bringing **different cultures and perspectives** into our University, we will **strengthen our community** and our research, education and societal impact."
- "We will **create a positive and inclusive culture**, helping all students and staff to feel and promote a **sense of belonging** as **valued** members of our community."
- "We will foster and embed an **international mindset** across all aspects of our activity."
- "We will deliver an **inclusive and intercultural student experience** focussed on **whole cohort integration, belonging and community-building**."

Key questions for the project: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? What will help us move forward?

What is a story circle?



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A 'story circle' is a structured small group experience that aims to create a space for sharing and learning from different people's perspectives. Story circles are used in a variety of settings, including community-building, mediation, restorative practices, and research. Story circles can also be used as a tool for developing intercultural awareness and communication skills (Deardorff, 2019). Story circles are based on some simple but important principles (Deardorff, 2019):

- **Every person has personal experience that can be shared**
- **We all have something to learn from others**
- **Listening for understanding is transformational**

Participants share a story about their own personal experience in response to a topic prompt that is provided in advance. Groups then participate in guided reflection and debrief activities. The prompt used for the Global Community Conversations workshop was:

Please come to the workshop ready to share a story (or stories) about experience(s) or encounter(s) at Leeds where you felt (or didn't feel) part of a community.

In this project the researcher did not participate in the story circles themselves, and personal stories shared within the circles remained confidential within the small groups. Reflections and debrief discussions were captured as part of the research data on reflective handouts completed by participants (individually, and in small groups), and in notes taken by the research team during whole group discussions.

As hoped, the story circle experience in the morning appeared to influence later discussions about ideas and recommendations in a positive way. Participants appeared to bring a deeper understanding of the complexity of the topics, and the multifaceted nature of different people's experiences and identities, into the idea-generating discussions later in the session.

Story Circles: key themes discussed



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- Personal and group identities, and group dynamics
- Discussions about languages spoken and its different impacts on sense of identity, relationships and groups
- Experiences of barriers and exclusion, including racism and discrimination, and the impact of negative experiences
- Positive experiences of overcoming challenges, connecting with and learning from others
- Discussions about motivation towards mixing; individual and shared responsibility for this; and the requirement for effort as well as greater institutional support

“Story circles provide a container for deeper connections, building empathy, seeing the multilayered aspects of people’s experiences”

"It gave me an idea how complex things actually are than it appears on the surface."

"Prompts and timings helps ensuring everyone get a chance to say their opinion and think of their own ideas"

- More detail about organising story circles, including benefits, risks and limitations, can be found in the project case study and toolkit: [Story Circles: Global Community Conversations Case Study and Toolkit](#)

Global Community strengths and assets (1 of 2)



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Academic life:

Classroom interactions
Academic group work
Student/staff co-research
Research into intercultural studies and communication
Discovery modules e.g. Languages for all
Cultural research being done at the University and fed back to the University
Research groups, seminars and symposiums

Languages:

Language Zone
Language Exchanges (formal and informal)
Language Groups (leading and participating)
Language skills of people in our community

Events and programmes:

Induction and welcome events
Campus Live
Plus Programme events
Lifelong Learning Centre events
World Unite Festival
University Buddy Scheme and socials

Chaplaincy / Unity:

Unity events / brunch
International Students Fellowship
Origami workshop
Queer Space (chaplaincy)

Global Community/International Student Office:

Global Café
Intercultural Ambassadors programme
Global Community Teams space
Intercultural workshops
Feeling at Home in Leeds workshops

Leeds University Union:

LUU societies
LUU spaces
Big Open Party Society
LUU Liberation coordinators
Society leadership roles
Student Action for Refugees
World Unite Festival
Society events
ISOC
Christian Union events
Hiking
Cultural societies

Global and local opportunities:

Study Abroad and exchange
Summer Abroad
Global Leadership Programme
Volunteering

Global Community strengths and assets (2 of 2)



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Jobs and volunteering

Part time jobs

Student internships

Joblink

Volunteering

- *Roles mentioned:*

International Welcome team / host

Lifelong Learning Centre hosts

Link to Leeds Ambassadors

E&D reps

School/course reps

Student Ambassadors (various roles – LLC,

Study Abroad, Welcome team, Schools)

Support:

Representation and safe spaces for specific identity groups/communities

Report + Support system

Support for Ramadan, Eid celebrations

Accommodation:

Residence life events / activities

Trips organised by Unipol

Food:

Food available, cultural needs and variety of cuisines

Refectory

Variety of local restaurants

Opportunities for free food (e.g. global café, vouchers)

Sports and Physical Activity:

Gym and sports hall

Watching football in Old Bar / generally

Rugby team

Volleyball club

Hiking trips

Climbing

Structures, spaces and networks for connecting (formal and informal):

Campus networks and networking

Diversity of students and staff

Spaces on campus to meet people

Sustainable garden

LUU spaces

Self-organised trips to local places

Talking to local residents

Online chats

Ai4I

Strike picket lines and rallies

University leadership/structure

- e.g. PVC International,

International Pro-Deans

Alumni networks

Making more of our strengths?



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- General sense that we have a lot of strengths and resources as a campus community, including activities and opportunities, but we could make more of these to ensure they deliver their full benefits and are accessible and meaningful to more people.
- Participants recognised the benefit of spaces and support for specific groups, particularly those who are under-represented and minoritised. There was also a strong desire for opportunities and support to connect across groups/boundaries:

*"The **people are our strength** in this community – the stories and experiences they bring, but **more safe spaces/situations are needed to make them feel included, appreciated and understood**"*

*"We have **societies, social events and spaces for people interested in 'intercultural' ideas but perhaps people still feel isolated**, unheard and distant"*

*"Activities have a tendency to focus on the **leading role of a certain culture** instead of providing an **equal atmosphere for everyone to share and discuss.**"*

*"**Lots of initiatives exist already** but often they aren't seen by everyone or best practice shared across different groups."*

*"The programmes are in place already – **potential for them to be run slightly differently** to avoid break-offs into groups"*

*"There is **good representation of and safe spaces for lots of different communities however this often keeps barriers in place** and limits intersectionality. I agree with the comment that says that we should "create all-inclusive events that engage students"*

- Key considerations discussed: facilitation; motivations; communications and terminology; institutional structures and support

Facilitation – ideas for mixing and connecting



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"We want intercultural rather than multicultural, and **we need some facilitation** for that - **'intercultural' cannot happen coincidentally (as people may form groups with people they want to)**" "Groups can often form on the basis of **assumptions** about what others want/need."

"What is a good **gateway opportunity? Free food/vouchers?** Connect people through **significant events** e.g. World Cup, action in response to world events? Bring people together for an experience (festival, travel, sports match etc.) then **support them to connect across boundaries**. Encourage societies to work together more e.g. cultural societies and sports societies - for **more intercultural sports**"

"More societies or **activities that don't involve drinking** or make sure its friendly to people who don't drink - can otherwise be a barrier/obstructive" "Advertise when things are alcohol free or how specific food requirements are catered for"

"**Having structure and clear roles can be easier than open socialising**. For example, part time work can be a good way for some people to access intercultural experiences." "Regularly occurring events / activities, that enable **staying in contact with the same people**."

"I believe **activities that get people together should be the initial focus**. For example, sport events, movie events, food events. All the mentioned will engage people and get them to start talking and interacting. **Cultural exchange comes after this initial step**."

"Bringing together students from different backgrounds/cultures but with similar interest to work together for a **common purpose** (ie. Campaigning against something/being part of a committee etc.). In this way any perception of 'difference' will be channelled into new ideas and initiatives and everyone can learn from each other"

"Good to have 'cultural' events open to everyone – but what does this mean in practice? What barriers may exist? How do we acknowledge **multiple identities**?" "Sometimes you can **feel like you're intruding** if you join a cultural activity that is not your own."

Facilitation – ideas for deeper sharing and learning



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"Things that are **integrated within the rest of the university** [are effective]. For instance, the buddy schemes are very effective because they are **open to all students but still place an emphasis on building intercultural community**."

"Important to **allow time and space especially in academic settings** to share stories and experiences to build connections and allow greater understanding"

"May be helpful to **focus on emotions and experiences, rather than (identity) labels**" "**Change** had a big part in our stories and this was a time when we all felt vulnerable – especially where our **reality was different from our expectations**. It's a challenge, it's not easy."

"**See the individual** rather than looking at types/groups (stereotypes)"

"Through the [story circle] exercise we have seen what does/doesn't work and seen the guidelines for feeling a sense of community – **importance of feeling safe, sharing opinions, having common interests to talk about**"

"Embed **empathy, listening and relationship building** more prominently so intercultural experiences moves beyond our expectations"

"**International staff and students share similar experiences** in terms of culture-based assumptions and stereotypes - **space to discuss** this could also help with student/staff divide and help us feel all part of same community."

"Everyone faces the challenge of 'fitting in' - should run exercises/ events like this all the way through where we can talk about challenges and realise we are all going through similar things, so we can realise **we all need to contribute to the change we want to see**"

Motivation, effort and leadership



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*"**Effort needed** from both parties to communicate and connect, everyone needs to share the same goal of achieving a sense of community in order to build one"*

*"**Negative experiences discourage trying to get involved** e.g. if people have been really trying to connect but **feeling demoralised** by others not trying/making the effort and sticking to their own social groups. Example of Global Cafe - maybe need some activities to help people interact (but optional, not forced)."*

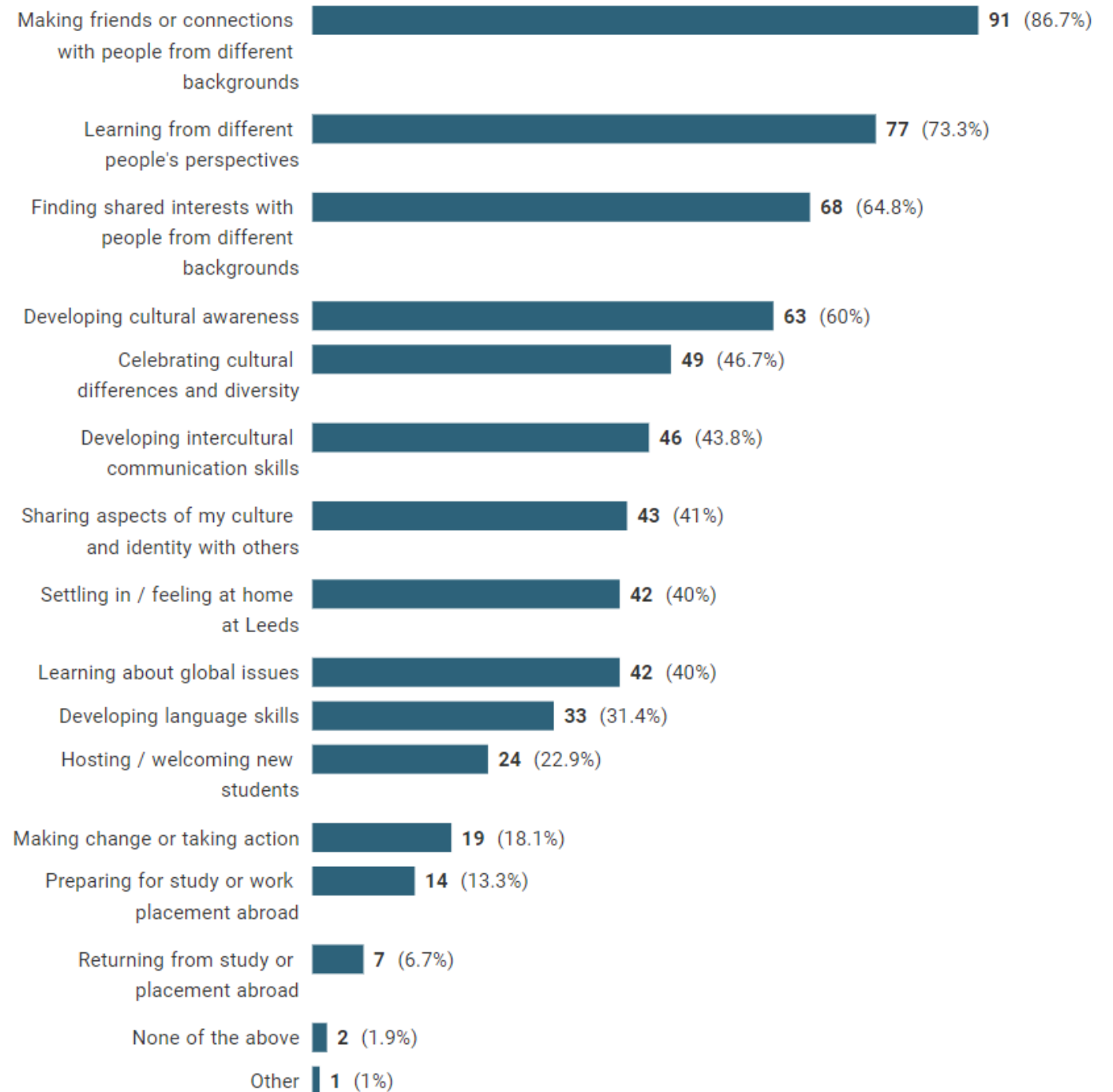
*"**Motivation comes first, but need external help from the university** with programmes or social ambassadors e.g. buddy scheme to help push you out of your comfort zone and **build social skills/confidence**"*

*"Motivation needs to be there - **tapping into different people's motivations to engage with different things at different times**. Motivation is also a balance between what you are wanting to get out/willing to put in. Sometimes motivation can come from frustration."*

*"Leadership is a theme from the conversations e.g. within student societies. **Offer more support to help student leaders be influential in this area.**"*

- We had discussions about building awareness of opportunities and benefits in authentic ways; providing initial incentives as well as forms of recognition afterwards; and ways of connecting people who are motivated and supporting leaders.

Motivations (or potential motivations) for seeking out intercultural experiences



From project survey: 105 total responses

Impact of workshop experience on participants' motivation



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	From final round-circle sharing	From feedback survey
Motivation to attend more (intercultural) activities	8	9
Increased effort towards interactions/relationship building	5	6
Learn from/use research methods and topics from this session	0	4
Gained personal insight (cultural adjustment, stereotyping, awareness of others' experiences)	0	4
Motivation to implement changes to practice	6	2
Motivation towards student voice/engagement/change-making	2	2
Motivation towards language learning	1	2

"I felt more willing to help other people even we don't share the same background; mentally stronger; more curious [to] get to know the cultural difference; easy to have conversation with other people, would not [be] afraid to start the conversation."



Ideas for action: Activities and their facilitation

- **Strong desire for more facilitation** to ensure people have opportunities to mix and connect through shared experiences, and across boundaries. This could benefit many groups of students who may struggle to feel part of a community.
- Recommendation that activity providers **engage participants in designing, testing and evaluating different approaches/tools** for facilitating general mixing, as well as deeper sharing and reflection. Particular 'test spaces' may be found at Global Café, within the Buddy Scheme Socials, and in student societies.
- We should also explore how to **build opportunities for mixing, connecting and sharing within academic and professional groups and networks**, which include both students and staff.
- **Learning points about what works in different contexts should be shared with wider networks across campus.** It would be helpful to offer training and recognition for student leaders and staff who support both general mixing, and deeper kinds of sharing activity.
- **Authentic recognition and celebration of cultural events, holiday and festivals** is important for some (but not all) students, who saw this as important for raising awareness and making the University feel welcoming and inclusive. However, it is important for decisions about how to do this to be led or informed by those students.
- Discussions generally concluded that activities are more likely to **'feel intercultural'** when we create space for understanding people's multiple identities and their different feelings/choices about their identities in different contexts. Vision for **"a space where we can be all aspects of ourselves and connect with others"**
- Many participants highlighted that the story circle experience provides opportunities for recognition of multiple identities, and deeper sharing and reflection. It was recommended that **story circles could be used in a variety of ways** to support community-building and mutual learning.

Institutional language and people's expectations/experiences



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- Some discussions identified gaps between institutional language and people's expectations/experiences, and a skepticism about "buzzwords":

*"The University itself is a Global Community – should be a principle of how we work rather than a collection of events. Sometimes **the way the Uni speaks about global community it is something separate (ie elsewhere)**"*

*"**Difference between the image of a 'global community' and living inside of it**" "Campus community: **need a better explanation of what it is.** Do people need to be invited? No one feels part of it immediately. People need to feel like they are welcome."*

*"I think there is a **big disconnect between the strategy and the reality** of what is happening"*

*[in response to previous point] "Yes, I agree, I often think people are focussed on **buzzwords**, saying the right thing, making themselves and their institution look great from the outside"*

*[with reference to strategy language] "**What is the University actually doing towards the aspiration?** How are we ensuring people feel valued? How are we embedding an intercultural mindset? Are these just buzzwords? Things exist but in isolated pockets of activities"*

*"I sense I tend to repeat **buzzwords** such as "community", "internationalisation" etc through reading university strategies and leaflets. I don't understand the meaning, but I have benefits from repeating the words."*

*"**Make it clear where institutional language is aspirational – share truer stories about what is happening; some narratives can compound negative experiences (e.g. if inauthentically positive); provide support for people who have negative experiences.**"*



'International,' 'Global' or 'intercultural'?

- **'Intercultural' seen as too complex, not well understood; while appealing to some, potentially alienating to others**

*"Global and world are good words to associate with, but at times I feel as if removing such phrases and words from events and simply creating inclusive events that welcome all will be more effective. It is important to advertise events as inclusive and open for all, but there is no necessary need for phrasing them as a "global" event. Simply speaking, I believe that people will get involved in fun and engaging events if advertised well to all. **Using a phrase to "globalize" events, derives focus away from the event itself.**"*

*"Try to think of other label aside from intercultural because people might think it's related to international. Choose an easier key word to understand. Other ways to advertise things, **make it less intimidating/potentially alienating**" "'Intercultural' is quite **an academic concept, too complex**"*

***"Are labels such as 'global' and 'international' creating barriers?** Some may choose not to get involved with events etc, if they don't perceive themselves as part of that group" "[Today I] learned that **'intercultural' could be a barrier to participation for home students** (as an international student who views this positively)"*

***"Labelling** the groups or activities as "international" can make the experience **superficial or demotivating**" "People who don't see themselves as 'international' shouldn't be called 'international'" "Doesn't need to be called intercultural, especially if **what is badged as such doesn't work**"*

***"Games/activities can be 'intercultural' without saying it** – maybe we don't need to use the word 'intercultural'? **Implies division** more than 'global'?" "The focus is too derived towards globalization and the relevant **branding** of that, rather than creating all-inclusive events"*

*"There should be **something that indicates the idea of eradicating barriers**. The names of these activities should encourage participation of not only international students (or students with an intercultural background) but also of home students as this is what will ensure that they will most likely mix and feel part of the same community."*



Ideas for action: communications and terminology

- General requests for more accessible/coherent promotion of events/activities, including year-round for people unable to engage at start – this essential endorses the direction the University is going in with Year-Round welcome project and enhancements to student communications
- Endorsement of more mindful use of terminology such as 'global' and 'intercultural' when advertising events, activities, or talking about student experience in general.
- Need for further research/testing into alternative phrasing/branding that “indicates the idea of eradicating barriers” - would be a good student project.
- ***"More awareness raising about the benefits of being part of a global or intercultural community and building respect for one another."*** Student stories reflecting on their actual experiences are most likely to do this authentically.

Question posed in one of the final discussions: What if we stopped talking about international/global/intercultural and just talked to/about all students – what would this change?

- *One person said they wouldn't want to see these labels abandoned because it would mean ignoring differences/ assuming we're all the same.*
- *Someone else said that in a utopia there would be no difference, for example, if there was no difference in international/home tuition fees.*
- *Another person said it comes down to individual choice and the university should try to give people a personal option of whether they identify with these terms or not. There was recognition that this could be complex in practice but could potentially be achieved by offering a range of activities that could be targeted/advertised to different groups in different ways.*
- *Question posed by someone else about how can we encourage UK students to engage in a way that feels authentic/persuasive? UK student suggested that you could make the offer more targeted to smaller groups e.g. “a special opportunity for students in X faculty to come to an Iftar event”, or similar.*
- This could also apply to specific groups that could also benefit from activities that support connections across boundaries (e.g. PGRs, mature students, commuters)
- Overall sense that some approaches and messages may be appropriate for a wide audience, while others may be appropriate only for more targeted groups. This would require considering the range of broad and targeted communication channels available.



Strategy, support and structures

Strategy and leadership

- *“It is necessary to engage university management in order to change policy – should invite people higher up into these conversations in order to influence university strategy and policy, and allocation of resources.”*
- Desire for concrete plans to underpin the strategic aspiration towards “an inclusive and intercultural student experience focussed on whole cohort integration, belonging and community-building.”

Recognition and support when people have negative experiences

- Report + Support noted as a positive
- Requests for “*a stronger response to students made to feel unsafe due to hatred of different cultures*” and questions about how well-equipped staff are to respond to problems.
- Benefit of faith-based support and awareness-raising highlighted (e.g. around Ramadaan)

Training and development opportunities

- Different views on the benefits of compulsory training on intercultural awareness, suggesting that any such training needs careful design
- People also suggested training and support could be provided to help students and staff who facilitate intercultural activities, or provide leadership in this area
- More opportunities for language learning and informal skill sharing - idea that everyone should have to learn another language to help with empathy for challenges/barriers and cultural understanding

Incentives, recognition and rewards

- Conversations about both funding and assessment as a means of motivating people to seek out intercultural experiences and reflect on what they’ve learned. e.g. have a free experience but must submit a reflective report to get the funding.
- Opportunities for staff to work temporarily abroad (especially professional staff)

A short note on curriculum considerations



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While this project did not focus on students' experiences within the curriculum, various topics and ideas came up:

- Questions about how we can use the curriculum to equip students with tools for participating/co-creating global communities, and foster intercultural curiosity
- Need time for relationship-building in academic spaces/networks - building in opportunities for mixing, connecting and sharing experiences: *"Important to **allow time and space especially in academic settings** to share stories and experiences to build connections and allow greater understanding"*
- Need for endorsement/leadership from academics to encourage community-building generally, and seeking out intercultural experiences
- Consider place of language learning within curriculum, and encouragement towards this at all levels. Note that even small amount of exposure to language learning can build understanding and empathy for people using additional languages.
- Provide support for positive experiences of group work

Researcher reflections



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- Our discussions generally concluded that activities are more likely to 'feel intercultural' when we create space for people to understand each other's multiple identities and their different feelings/choices about their identities in different contexts. If events or activities are described as 'intercultural' they should probably involve active facilitation to ensure that people are able to access this type of experience, and where relevant to reflect on what they have learned. If we are going to use the term 'intercultural', this should probably be used to support a process of reflecting on or learning from experiences, and used with caution when promoting social events and activities.
- Negative experiences such as wanting to mix but perceiving others to be unwilling, or not feeling supported, can impact on people's future motivation to engage and can contribute to the sense of terms like 'global' or 'intercultural' being used as superficial 'buzzwords'.
- Sharing stories about actual 'intercultural' experiences is more likely to appear authentic and meaningful, and will help more people to understand what the term can mean to different people in practice. As one participant put it, they wanted to see "**shared narratives of intercultural richness.**" Such narratives may help to raise awareness of the benefits of seeking out intercultural experiences, and illuminate how different types of activities may offer intercultural learning opportunities when people choose to engage in that way.
- Institutional support is needed and could include concrete actions linked to strategic aspirations; ensuring we are equipped to support students who have negative experiences; and offering appropriate training and forms of recognition.

What's next? Need to widen circles and continue conversations...



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Bringing people together; making more of our strengths; understanding and removing barriers...

- How to **facilitate more mixing, connecting and sharing** across boundaries: at events and activities? within existing groups/networks?
- For communications: recognising the **impact of certain terminology on expectations and engagement**, as well as **raising awareness of benefits by sharing authentic stories** about people's experiences
- Understanding and encouraging people's **different motivations for engagement** is a key consideration for both facilitation and communication
- Looking at what **institutional structures and support** are needed to build a strong and genuine sense of intercultural community, and ensuring these are visible and effective
- **Continually involving students and staff in these conversations** – the process of making change can be a community-building/intercultural experience in itself: *"[We are] In an educational institution where there is huge potential to question, discuss and reform ideas derived from words such as 'intercultural', diversity, global community. The focus should be on what these words mean for individuals."*

"Sessions like today are useful for students to share opinions on how diverse cultures can interact – could be done as a wider scale events, with opportunities to share opinions with those who run provided programmes to help improve them - more continuous process of providing feedback while connecting/socialising."

"I really liked the workshop! Maybe there is a possibility for 'regularish' informal meetings on the topic? Becoming 'ambassador' or formally involved ... might be too much for many people, however there seemed to be interest among many participants of the workshop to continue a form of informal exchange."

Interested in finding out more about the story circles used in this project?

- Explore the case study and toolkit here: [Story Circles: Global Community Conversations Case Study and Toolkit](#)

The story circle activity used in this project was adapted from:

- ❑ Deardorff, D. 2019. *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles*. [Online]. London: Routledge [Accessed 27 January 2022]. Available as a free open access download from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370336>

Other useful resources:

- ❑ UKCISA. 2009. *Discussing Difference, Discovering Similarities*. [Online] Pdf available from: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Resource-bank/resources/35/Discussing-difference-discovering-similarities>
- ❑ Seeds for Change. *Facilitation Tools for Meetings and Workshops*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 March 2023]. Available from <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/tools>

If you'd like to connect and share ideas with a professional team who are interested in intercultural opportunities and community-building...

- Contact: globalcommunity@leeds.ac.uk

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