

IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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"We don't have the same cultural understanding as a student from the UK about what's a good uni essay-writing or studying skills, what's expected in social situations and so on."

(NPF members)

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Background to subgroup discussions

A subgroup of the Forum met to explore the challenges faced by international students applying to and studying at universities or colleges in the UK. We invited representatives from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and DfES to participate in our discussions and undertake a review of the key findings of the student group relating to international students to orientate our initial discussions.

The subgroup reported that international students are, by and large, satisfied with their experience in the UK. Many international students continue to believe that the UK education system is the best in the world – and most students do not think that they have been misled in this respect.

However, we believe costs and ineffective specific needs of a potentially under-served sector of UK education.

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NATIONAL STUDENT FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT 2008



National Student Forum

The ask

The struggle to be heard. Having grown up in a school system where they have little direct input into policy affecting their study lives, students reaching higher education now have a voice – one actually acknowledged and considered. To help them speak directly to government, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills set up the National Student Forum. And we were asked to produce its inaugural Annual Report.

The task

Our most important consideration was to ensure that what was discussed and agreed by students did not get lost in a swathe of information. This would have defeated the purpose of the Forum. So we designed the Annual Report of the first Forum – a report of minutes, subgroup discussions, background proceedings, forums, working groups, resolutions and policy recommendations – with the emphasis on ease-of-navigation. In an instant, Ministers, government department personnel, and the media could locate relevant subject matter. So students' voices could truly be heard – the first and most vital step towards action.

The proof

The Government made a formal response to the Annual Report, recognising its relevance and congratulating its innovative thinking. Some recommendations were acted upon immediately, others formalised as part of longer-term reviews, and still others sent to committee. As the Annual Report was the interface between the Government and the students, it's safe to state that it played a large role in establishing this relationship. And for students? Their voice is now coming through loud and clear.

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