**Home v International Law Student Expectations:**

**Understanding and Embracing Internationalisation within the Classroom to Facilitate**

**Peer-to-Peer Learning**

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Between 2013-17 empirical evidence was collated in order to identify what students’ expectations were of studying law. Similar surveys have previously been conducted by the Higher Education Academy.[[2]](#footnote-2) However, what differentiates this study from previously published work is the focus on the expectations held by both home and international students, notably the similarities and differences between the two groups. The core findings were that the majority of home students’ expectations focused on their career aspirations, employability and/or research skills. Meanwhile the expectations held by most international students focused on their desire to examine European/International jurisdictions, as well as opportunities to network. These expectations were developed further throughout each academic year, particularly as Careers Advisers and Legal Practitioners delivered guest talks. The challenge facing facilitators was how to provide learning opportunities that promote internationalisation, whilst reflecting student expectations, within the remit of module learning outcomes. This paper presents pedagogical theory, benefits and challenges posed by responding to students’ expectations and internationalisation. This investigation demonstrates that there is a pressing need to appreciate and respond to the home v international expectation-reality gap. This is so as to fully promote internationalisation and facilitate deeper, effective learning for all students.

**Introduction**

This action based project advances existing empirical research into the expectation-reality gap within UK legal education. It does so by investigating similarities and differences in these gaps when accounting for a student’s country of origin, by comparatively looking at home and international undergraduates. In implementing this study, such adopts the same methodology as Chester Law School’s Higher Education Academy (HEA) *Great Expectations* project,[[3]](#footnote-3) and has similar features to King’s College London’s Quality Assurance Agency commissioned *Student Expectations and Perceptions of Higher Education* report,[[4]](#footnote-4) and Dangerfields’ *Expection and Experience.[[5]](#footnote-5)* Bangor’s investigations revealed key differences in the expectations held by international students, as documented below.

Across the cohort, the class had high expectations as to the number of group work activities they were going to take part in, as well as the number of presentations they were going to be asked to make. As the current LLB programme does not offer a means of incorporating more summative practical experiences, other than mooting, this invention implemented an optional, extra-curricular *Legal World Series* project. *The Legal World Series* is a student led, multi-culturally themed, conference and social activities initiative, whereby seven student regional coordinators were each given the task of planning a minimum two-hour event combining both a specific ‘continent themed’ student conference and international cultural themed social activity. The aim of this initiative was to strengthen peer-to-peer learning experiences as well as facilitate further opportunities to promote internationalisation within the Law School.

The reason for doing so was so as to appreciate the rich benefits of having a multi-national integrated classroom, where international learners can share ideas with home students, rather than sitting in cultural/nationality segregated groups. The underlying objective was to help promote internationalisation via peer-to-peer experiences. Whilst the *Legal World Series* project was entirely voluntary, with students only gaining employability credits for their participation, there was favourable attendance at these events, and positive student feedback as to their experiences.

**Pedagogical Underpinning**

Internationalisation can be defined as ‘the process of integrating an international, inter-cultural and/or global dimension in the goals, functions (teaching, learning research, services) and delivery of higher education’ (Knight, 2004).

Previous studies have recognised an ‘inability’ of the indigenous education systems in most developing countries to satisfy growing demands for degrees.[[6]](#footnote-6) This means that students are looking towards western nations to secure places in Higher Education. By 2020 it is predicted by some that China and India will be unable to supply the 20 and 9 million university places respectively needed for their own student populations (O’Brien, 2007). This has, particularly in developing countries, led to an ever-increasing need for education beyond tertiary level. Figures from February 2009 show an 8% increase in demand in international students’ desire to study at western universities (Spencer, 2009), with the UK often being amongst the first choices for students from most of these countries (Arunachalam, 2008). Whilst today, in 2017, there have been some changes to the international student visa system (for example in relation to the post-study work rules) the UK continues to remain an attractive place for international students to come and study. Despite this increasing international student community, commentators have noted that, holistically, some universities appear to have done little to account for the cultural differences of international students (Parson and Fidler, 2005, and O’Brien et al 2007). Furthermore, previous studies have shown that failure to address these new challenges when they arise will result in a sub-optimum learning experience for students (Ramburuth and Mladenovic, 2004). This research responds to these concerns by highlighting differences in home and international student expectations, and thereafter facilitating an opportunity for inclusivity, across nationalities and cultures.

The pedagogical underpinning for these investigations largely stem from Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University,* and his principles for “setting the stage for effective teaching.”[[7]](#footnote-7) More specifically his findings on teaching international students, where he discusses the challenges of a multi-cultural class, and how social-cultural adjustments can be a stressful problem for international students. Furthermore, his findings that students from different cultures see ‘questions differently’ e.g. learners from Asia appear to be more inclined to descriptive ‘rote-learning’, which does not lend itself well to analytical problem-solving. Biggs finds that many university teachers report difficulties in teaching international students. These include not only language skills difficulties, but also learning-related problems that are seen as ‘cultural’ in origin, such as reliance on rote learning, passivity and teacher dependence.

The authors of this research were aware of similar challenges within their classroom amongst certain international groups. For example, amongst the French native learners, particularly when discussing structuring problem question responses. These students found it challenging to follow an Issue, Rule/Law, Application, Conclusion (IRAC/ILAC) structure, namely because they had been taught in their own jurisdiction to follow a Rule, Issue, Application (RIA) method. They claimed to be taught to never arrive at a conclusion as to the legal possibilities, as doing so would be to portray ‘arrogance’, as if they were trying to fulfil the role of the judge. These complexities can also be further exasperated for international learners when accounting for the specialism of legal study, i.e. an international learner is not only posed with the challenges of learning English, but moreover learning Legal English with its complex terminology that many native lay people would not be familiar with.

However, as Biggs recognises, these perceptions of international learners are, like most stereotypes, distortions of the reality. Rather, international students, much like home students, have some similar learning experiences, from level 1 blame-the-student view of teaching, to an inclusive level 3 view that engages students in effective learning, irrespective of their ethnicity. Biggs points out that this is not to say that misunderstandings will not arise when teachers and learners come from different cultural backgrounds, but that an inclusive view of teaching will minimise them.[[8]](#footnote-8) This *Legal World Series* project was viewed as a ‘stepping-stone’ towards embracing cultural differences within the classroom, and empowering students to be part of an inclusive learning community.

***The Theoretical Underpinning of the Student Expectation v Reality Study***

The pedagogical underpinning for the empirical quantitative investigation was that of Chester’s HEA research.[[9]](#footnote-9) Their project was based upon the suggestion that expectation-reality gaps have particular pertinence for law students (Sam Banks, 1999). They also identified that expectation was a key influence upon student experience/engagement (Biggs 1999). This suggests that, in order to encourage engagement, the reality of studying on the LLB should largely mirror what students were expecting at the start of the course. Chester identified that if this gap is ‘closed’ then there could be potential benefits to student retention.[[10]](#footnote-10) Other benefits include gaining a holistic understanding of what students expect from studying at undergraduate level (Pawson and Tilley 1997). One of the limitations recognised by Dutton was the extent to which these findings were replicated amongst non-UK students. This was owing to the reduced numbers of international students who were, at the time, studying on their LLB programme. Such limitations form a foundation for these further investigations.

It is appreciated that Chester is not the only pedagogical research project that has investigated students’ expectation. For example, Dangerfield’s study identified that students are not a homogenous group, and have varying expectations, with students’ expectations not necessarily reflecting what they need or want.[[11]](#footnote-11) Links here can be drawn with Dutton’s research insofar as their 2012 report states:

…in a system that puts students at its centre, meeting their expectations becomes the key to success…but simply responding poses dangers of commodification or reduction in quality; we must understand and manage expectation to enhance both experience and engagement.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In translating such findings to the Bangor study, this project is not just about recognising the expectation-reality gap, but also about managing those expectations in a realistic fashion. Furthermore, in implementing such a project one needs to be sensitive as to different students’ comfort, capabilities and preferences.

Dangerfield’s study consisted of approximately 5,000 respondents. It found that 90.6% of those surveyed said that lecturers/tutors teaching skills were the most important consideration. This was followed by 83.4% stating that interactive teaching group sessions were a key expectation. The least important expectations were internet discussion forums (48%) and their lecturers’ research record (47.7%). Within the context of interactive group sessions, Dangerfield found that students expected seminars that were ‘tying up loose ends, and preparing them for further lectures’ as well as facilitating an opportunity for ‘getting to know people that you wouldn’t necessarily meet.’ These findings can be used to further support *The Legal World Series* intervention, as such encourages learners to embrace differences; whilst getting to know other people in the class, as well as understanding their peers’ culture and customs.

Outside of legal studies, there are other similar investigations which have focused exclusively on international students, including those by Page, Rajkhowa and Webb within business studies.[[13]](#footnote-13) Whilst they did not compare home and international students, they did explore changes in Higher Education over the last decade, and thereafter documented the effects such has had on international students’ desire to study in the United Kingdom. Their key findings were that student motivations were largely guided by beliefs as to enhanced employability, as well as high expectations as to practical experiences as part of their degree. They also made reference to the ‘services’ provided in Higher Education, with students commenting that they had high expectations as to ‘service’ as a ‘paying customer.’ Similar arguments, whilst not entirely supported by the authors, have been made in support of metrics that allegedly gage student satisfaction and experience, including, but not limited to the National Student Survey (NSS),[[14]](#footnote-14) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).[[15]](#footnote-15)

***The Theoretical Underpinning of Peer to Peer Learning Exercises***

The *Legal World Series* is a student-led initiative whereby learners share their existing knowledge/interests and engage in peer-to-peer learning. Throughout HEA reports the message that students learn best from practical/interactive experiences is repeated.[[16]](#footnote-16) Peer-to-peer learning, also often referred to as peer supported or assisted learning,[[17]](#footnote-17) is where there is an open sharing of knowledge, experiences and practices amongst learners to support one another’s understanding and development.

Two of the most prevalent UK theorists to conceptualise the benefits of peer-to-peer learning are Capstick and Fleming,[[18]](#footnote-18) most notably through their *Peer Assisted Learning* projects.[[19]](#footnote-19) This research group has explored the benefits to a learner’s personal development when presented with plentiful peer-to-peer activities. The importance of such research is summarised by Professor Wirth and Perkins:[[20]](#footnote-20)

…we test our learning through action…That is our brain gets feedback about our thinking when we put ideas into action…this is also a good reason…for learning in groups; learning in social environments results in richer neural networks.[[21]](#footnote-21)

If active teamwork can lead to richer neural networks, teamwork via the *Legal World Series* project should assist students in deepening their understanding of fundamental legal concepts, and thereafter assist them in attaining higher marks.

Wirth and Perkins proceed by discussing how an American National Research Council study of memory and brain processes indicates that people’s memories of images and experiences are far more superior when compared with people’s memories of words:[[22]](#footnote-22)

Students who learn in cooperative groups exhibit markedly improved individual achievement…metacognitive thought…willingness…to assume difficult tasks, persistence, motivation, and transfer of learning to new situations.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Such is consistent with the concept that students learn best when they are performing tasks together, which underpins the purpose of the *Legal World Series.* It is also noted that within the student presentations there was heavy reliance on diagrams, colour, images and videos to disseminate knowledge, thus strengthening the impact of this benefit to this intervention.

However, some research institutes draw upon the practical limitations of higher education in using peer-to-peer learning.[[24]](#footnote-24) Some refer to how the ‘lecture-style’ setups force students to subjectively, rather than objectively, engage with the subject matter. Therefore, it is not always possible to facilitate a teamwork environment when LLB assessments are dominated by written exams and traditional essays that are closely monitored for independent responses and plagiarism. The consequence of this is that all too often there is not enough differentiation in classroom activities that are able to test the able learner. The benefit of the *Legal World Series* is that students are able to decide on the level they want to pitch their own presentation.

Wallace similarly recognises a need for institutions to facilitate more varied offerings of peer-led opportunities.[[25]](#footnote-25) Some of these criticisms are relevant to legal studies in general, i.e. in most institutions students are required to submit an essay and/or complete an exam which requires learners to memorise vast quantities of case law and recite various legal principles. One of the findings from this research, that is supported by its pedagogical underpinning, is that there needs to be a shift from the ‘academic staff simply lecturing model’ to a ‘student-centred model.’[[26]](#footnote-26) This should be achieved via activities that promote face-to-face learning experiences:[[27]](#footnote-27)

Greater cultural and ethnic diversity, among home and international students…requires strategies for supporting learning within a multicultural environment.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Through this project students inevitably worked with different classmates, many of whom came from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The concept of the student coordinators working together, towards a shared goal of delivering a conference programme, also created a sense of community learning.

Finally, within the context of legal education, Schwartz et al identify excitement as to students’ insights and questions as being a key contributing factor to promoting peer learning engagement:

Showing delight in student success appears to create a triumphant cycle. The students make great points in their peer groups, the professor gets excited, the students offer even better insights, and so forth…getting enthusiastic about students’ presentations in class…by offering compliments, encourages and reassures students to develop a professional, advanced mind set.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The *Legal World Series* helps promote an atmosphere of open sharing of ideas, where facilitators can share delight in learners’ peer-to-peer exchange of ideas and success.

**Methodology**

So as to understand the first-year cohort’s expectations, the expectation-reality empirical investigation was carried out in 2013-14 and then repeated again in 2016-17. In order to gather this information we adopted the methodology of using several questionnaires, in a similar fashion to Dutton’s earlier study pertaining to home students.[[30]](#footnote-30) These were distributed to new first year undergraduates. So as to identify any potential changes in these expectations over the course of the academic year, three questionnaires were distributed. The first captured the responses at the start of the academic year, in October, at the start of the first full cohort lecture. The second was distributed at the start of semester two, in January, and the final questionnaire was handed out at the end of the academic year, in March, just before the Easter vacation and the start of the examination period. So as to achieve as greater consistency as possible, these questionnaires were distributed to the same class, namely Legal Skills.[[31]](#footnote-31) The questionnaire asked students to identify their ‘country of origin’ and ‘native language’, so as to allow for comparative analysis within our findings. Such thereafter asked about expectations as to contact time; independent reading; assignments; group projects and presentations. Furthermore, at the start of the academic year, the questionnaire asked students to summarise, in one sentence, their expectations of studying on the LLB programme. In later versions (in January and March) this final question was replaced so as to enquire as to the students’ preferences as to group work over independent study.

**Expectations Survey Results**

***Original Findings***

**From our October 2013 questionnaire responses the following observations can be made from our initial findings:**

# In an identical fashion to Chester University’s results,[[32]](#footnote-32) we found that home students’ expectations (those that identified their country of origin as being United Kingdom, Wales, England, Scotland or Northern Ireland) were largely guided by career prospects and enhancing their employability skills.

Overall, at the start of the academic year, home students proportionally expected more contact hours when compared to international students.

Overall, at the start of the academic year, international students proportionally expected more assessments than home students.

Overall, at the start of the academic year, international students proportionally expected more varied assessments such as group work and presentations than home students.

**From our January 2014 questionnaire responses, the following observations can be made from our findings:**

In comparing our October findings to our January findings, there were fewer international students within the class, as a result of visiting, one semester only, Erasmus and Experience students.

By January 2014, both home and international students expected less contact time than they did in October 2013.

By January 2014, over 50% of the class expected 11-15 hours of contact time, this reflected the reality of the programme, but is significantly less than what they expected when they commenced the course.

By January 2014, both home and international students expected to commit to significantly less independent study, with the majority of the class now expecting between 1-15 hours per week.

By January 2014, the majority of home and international students expected between 1- 4 assignments per module, per year. However, 54% of home students still expected 3-4 assignments per module, per year. This is still significantly more than the reality of the programme.

By January 2014, both home and international students expected significantly less varied means of assessment. For example, 9% of the class did not expect to be involved in any group work or make any presentations. This drop in expectation is most strongly reflected in the international student responses. This group had higher expectations for assessments, in terms of number and variety, at the start of the academic year when compared to their revised expectations at the start of semester two.

In further exploring students’ expectations as to team work, it was noted that 74% of home students preferred working independently, rather than as part of a group. By contrast, 69% of international students favoured working as part of a group.

**From our March 2014 questionnaire responses, the following observations can be made:**

In comparing our October 2013 and January 2014 findings to our final questionnaire responses, there are the fewest international student respondents within the final study.

In comparing student expectations as to contact time, it is recognised that, at the start of the academic year, the cohort’s expectations were at their highest, with a significant proportion of both home and international students expecting in excess of 21 hours per week. There was, thereafter, in January 2014, a drop in expectations that more closely mirrored the reality of studying on the LLB programme, with the majority of the cohort expecting between 11-20 hours contact time per week. By March 2014 the expectation had risen, on the whole, to an average of between 16- 25 hours contact time per week. While around the time of assessments students’ expectations in this regard had risen, such was still less than their initial expectations at the start of the academic year.

Across the three studies expectations as to independent study consistently fell. By March 2014 no student, home or international, expected to commit 26 hours or more to independent study, and only 2 British students expected to commit to 15-21 hours. The majority of the class felt content that less than half of the recommended time for private study was sufficient to fulfil assessment expectations. This is in stark contrast to the expectations held at the start of the academic year.

By March 2014, students had the lowest expectations as to how many assignments they would receive per module, per year. In both October 2013 and January 2014 the majority of the class expected 3-4 assignments per module. By March 2014 the revised expectation was 1-2 assignments for the majority of students. It is recognised that international student expectations were, on the whole, consistent throughout the three studies.

In October 2013, the cohort had relatively high expectations as to the number of group work projects they expected to be engaged in per year. These expectations lowered in January 2014 and remained, on the whole, consistent in the March 2014 study.

By March 2014, students had the lowest expectations across the study as to how many presentations they would now be expected to make per year. In March 2014, a minority of respondents, both home and international, now expected to make no presentations throughout the course of the year. In addition, in both January and March 2014 no student expected to make 5 or more presentations. This is significantly different to the high expectations held by the class at the start of the academic year, with approximately 50% of the class in October 2013 expecting to make 3 or more presentations, per year, as part of the LLB programme.

***Comparing Original Findings to 2016/2017 Cohort***

In order to update the findings of the original quantitative empirical investigations, the authors repeated the study again in 2016/2017 so as to test the findings of the original study. The graphs below illustrate the comparative data across both studies (for 2013/14 and 2016/17)

***Student Expectations as to Contact Across the Academic Year***

It can be observed that between October 2013 and October 2016 the expectations held by British students had lowered, with more students now expecting between 11-15 hours of contact time. Between October 2013 and October 2016 the expectations held by International students had moved to be more focussed on between 11-20 hours of contact time, compared to a larger spread of expectations found in the original study. The expectations held by British students in January 2017 were higher than their peers in January 2014, whereas the opposite trend can be observed by International students. Finally, between March 2014 and March 2017 the expectations held by British students and International students had decreased.

***Student Expectations as to Independent Study Across the Academic Year***

The expectations held by British students remained fairly similar between the two October studies, whereas the expectations held by incoming international students increased. At the start of semester two the findings for British students remained constant again, although notably no students stated 26 hours plus in the new study. In the new study there were a higher proportion of International students expecting 21-25 hours contact time at this point in the course. Finally, at the end of semester 2, the expectations held by British students as to the number of hours of independent study time increased, and a similar trend can be observed amongst the International cohort at this point in the year.

***Student Expectations as to Number of Assignments Across the Academic Year***

The expectations held by British students between the start of the academic year 2013/14 and 2016/17 have remained relatively constant, whereas the expectations held by International students had increased overall. After Christmas, the expectations held by British and International students had declined between the two studies. Lastly, the expectations held by both groups had declined at the end of the semester across the two studies.

***Student Expectations as to Number of Presentations Across the Academic Year***

The expectations held by British students at the start of the course remained relatively constant, although notably, no students now expected to make 0 presentations, whereas there was an increase in the number of International students who held the expectation of 0 presentations. The expectations held by both groups had decreased at the start of semester 2 in the new study. Finally, between March 2014 and March 2017, the expectations held by British students had remained similar, whereas the expectations held by International students had risen with a 5% of the group now expecting to make 5 plus presentations per year in 2017.

***Student Expectations as to Number of Group Projects Across the Academic Year***

The new findings indicate that expectations held about group projects increased across both groups in the new study, with more students now expecting to have to take part in 5 plus group projects when they arrived at University. At the start of semester 2, these expectations had decreased in the new study across both groups. Between March 2014 and March 2017 the expectations held by British and International students had become more aligned to 1-2 projects per year.

***Student Expectations as to Independent v Group Work Between January and March***

The culmination of this study asked students whether they preferred to work independently or as part of a group, this question was posed in January and March in both studies. It is notable that overall more International students prefer to work as part of a group compared to their British peers. This was striking in January 2014, but this trend can be observed across the results. This preference can be supported and met by students engaging with the Legal World series, as discussed below.

**The *Legal World Series* Project**

Across the *Series* a total of seven events were delivered by seven student coordinators, between January and May each year.[[33]](#footnote-33) Students were invited to apply for each of the coordinator positions by submitting their CV and a covering letter. A briefing session was held for those students who were interested in applying, where it was explained that the coordinators would be expected to work as part of a team in delivering a minimum two hour conference and social programme that would promote internationalisation, inclusivity and cultural understanding. The attendees were advised that to be a student coordinator for a specific region they did not have to originate from a specific country within that area; they just had to have an interest in promoting awareness as to its customs. The group were also advised that what featured within the programme was entirely up to them, with the only condition being that the papers had to have a legal theme. After this meeting, seven student coordinators were appointed. They were reminded that whilst they were not securing academic credit for their role, they were able to gain Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) recognition for their contributions and commitment.

The concept behind this project was to be entirely ‘student-led’. So as to appreciate the benefits recognised by Healey, Flint and Harrington, namely that seeing students as partners within the learning process can lead to richer learning processes and engagement.[[34]](#footnote-34) Such an approach to teaching has led to the HEA producing a *Framework for partnership in learning and teaching* in July 2014. This report identifies empowerment, inclusivity, community and responsibility as key partnership principles and values for effective learning experiences.[[35]](#footnote-35) This project evidences all of these values by putting students at the centre of the experience, through coordinating their own events, as well as empowering learners to present their own papers. The group were advised that both of the authors would be the only staff attending the events, so as to keep the *Series* student focused, and so as not make presenters feel unduly nervous. Surprisingly this was unwelcome by some of the more confident student coordinators, with some wanting the entire faculty to attend. It was therefore later agreed that the individual coordinators were responsible for liaising with their presenters and inviting staff members if they wished them to be there. As the project was entirely voluntary, the *Series* also comprised of themed social events, so as to boost attendance and promote networking and internationalisation. From empirical investigations into international student engagement, it was known that some members of Asian community were deterred from attending events that were described as ‘social activities.’[[36]](#footnote-36) We therefore described such activities as opportunities to network and enhance interpersonal skills.

**Reviewing the *Legal World Series* Project**

Across the *Series* a total of 34 students from 21 different countries presented a variety of topics. Furthermore, in collaboration with 10 Student Union clubs and societies, such as Street Law, the Cooking Society, BU Dance, and the Afro-Caribbean Society, seven themed social events were delivered, including ‘A Taste of Africa’, Chinese tea, Middle Eastern films, salsa dancing classes, and afternoon British tea. Combined, students delivered 15.5 hours of extra-curricular activities. Over the course of the *Series* a total of 138 students attended from 25 different countries.

In order to assess the success of these initiatives, event feedback forms were distributed at the end of each event. These invited students to comment upon their reasons for attending, what they had learnt, what they felt went well; and what could be improved upon. These questions were asked so as to gage the effectiveness of the peer learning exercises, and assess the extent to which students were achieving internationalisation in their outlook.

Overall the feedback was complimentary as to the success of the project, with several written comments referring to a desire to organise a longer programme and include more speakers. The Africa event had the largest number of attendees (but also had the most participants originating from the region in the audience). From the feedback it is clear that peer-to-peer support was strongest amongst the African students. The Europe and Asian events had the largest mix of attendees from the most diverse number of countries. In both of these sessions, where the possibility to promote internationalisation was most opportune, written comments most frequently referred to meeting new people and learning about different cultures as a benefit of the events. The Middle East and Australia events had the fewest attendees, and lowest mix of nationalities. The majority of attendees said they enjoyed the activities, with the majority of non-EU students saying that felt empowered to present at future events. 33% of those presenting said it was their first time doing so. 94% said they had learnt something new by attending. 58% of attendees said they met someone new as a result of attending an event. Furthermore, 98% said they wanted more/similar initiatives to run in subsequent years.

In addition, several culture specific observations can be made. Firstly, from the reasons for attending the event, ‘support for a friend who was presenting’ was most commonly cited at the Africa event, in addition 87% of African respondents across the programme said they attended to support a colleague. The written comments from African students at the Africa event were very complimentary as to their peers’ performances within their presentations. This finding was particularly prevalent amongst the Sudanese students as to the quality of the Sudanese speaker’s presentation. By contrast European students, throughout the course of the programme, were critical of their peers’ performances, and frequently referred to how the sessions could have been improved.

**Facilitators’ Observations About the *Legal World Series* Project**

From a facilitators’ perspective several observations can be made as to the success of these initiatives. Firstly students were innovative/creative in utilising a variety of visual aids throughout their presentations, such as interactive maps, videos and sound bites. However in the future there may be a need to vet such material, so as to avoid causing offence, or cultural controversy. For example, within one of the Middle East presentations, a heated debate was ignited by discussions relation to religious texts and Kurdistan Whilst these discussions were academically grounded, there may be a need to revisit this. There may also be a need to put together guidelines as to the images that can be used. Some feedback referred to a need to be more sensitive when showing images of genocide or a murder scene in Romania. Another respondent referred to the need for censorship when including American slang.

In terms of the future, from a quality assurance perspective, the facilitators feel the benefits of these initiatives could be more greatly appreciated by aligning student papers with course content, so as to advance some of the discussions. For example, at the UK event some of the presentations as to devolution in Scotland and Wales were oversimplified. It is however noted that restricting presentations in this fashion may affect engagement or participation, and thus some of the internationalisation aims of the project.

Other observations pertain to the group dynamic amongst the student coordinators. On the whole, such was one of support and teamwork. The majority of the students attended each other’s sessions and actively contributed towards group discussions. Interestingly, the two student coordinators who did not attend other coordinator’s sessions also had the fewest number of attendees at their events. Both of these coordinators also gave themselves speaking sessions. This indicates that the publicity/marketing initiatives used by the majority of the group worked in securing a high turnout (unsurprisingly from each of their respective regions), while those who did not work as part of the team isolated themselves and had the fewest number of attendees.

Finally, several of the student coordinators asked to bring in guest speakers. These requests were denied as the project needed to remain student-led, and distinguishable from the Law School’s Guest Lecture programme. It was also felt that having guest practitioners in the room whilst students were presenting might deter some groups from fully participating. This is saving one exception, that being part of the Americas event where USA Attorney, William Levin, (Snoop Dogg’s lawyer) was permitted to deliver a guest paper via Skype as part of the event’s social programme, after the student presentations (so as to increase student attendance). Nevertheless, the coordinators’ desire to invite guest speakers as part of their programme is interesting, suggesting that in order for the Law School to increase attendance at guest lectures, students should be involved in the planning, marketing and coordinating of such events. These recommendations are consistent with the thoughts of Mowlam:

Student law societies often play a fundamental role in Law School life. The best student law societies provide experience in a range of worthwhile activates, developing vital skills and fostering engagement and a sense of collegiate harmony amongst all of the School’s stakeholders- in my view they are indispensable. Other groups, formal or informal, which encourage extra-curricular activities and bring students together fulfil much of the same role…[[37]](#footnote-37)

Mowlam’s findings are recognised as being transferable to the *Legal World Series* project, particularly in terms of the benefits such brings for all stakeholders, both learners and facilitators.

**Conclusion**

By comparing the empirical investigations in 2013/14 to 2016/17, such shows that expectations do not remain static, and that repeated studies are required in order to keep track of changing expectations. Nonetheless, the quantitative questionnaire method remains an effective methodology for facilitators to understand students’ expectations as to the delivery of the LLB programme, and thereafter either attempt to meet such expectations, or narrow the expectation-reality gap, as far as it is possible to do so. What is interesting is that different trends appear in different cohorts, and therefore it is not possible for us to generalise the expectations of all British and international students. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that there are a range of assessment methods, across the course, in addition to the provision of student-led group work activities, including extra-curricular projects.

In assessing the success of this project, while there are differing opinions amongst students as to whether they prefer working as part of a team or independently, it is clear that there is a demand for events such as the *Legal World Series* (with at least 50% of the student body favouring each event). In reflecting upon the findings of the surveys, it is also appreciated that even amongst those that indicated they preferred working independently; it is still possible that they may reasonably expect group work or presentations to feature as part of their LLB study.

So as to assess the impact of the group work initiatives, and the wider perceptions of peer-to-peer learning activities, the later versions of the expectation-reality survey sought to investigate any potential changes in student opinions. The January 2014 survey asked whether students favoured working as part of a team or independently. Prior to the introduction of the *Legal World Series* project, international students significantly favoured group work. By contrast, the majority of home students favoured working independently. These findings were replicated in both January and March 2014, and again in January and March 2017. When the survey was carried out again at the end of each year, after the *Series*, the support for group work grew amongst international students. What these figures show is a demand from some learners to have practical learning experiences.

For those that did attend the *Series* the students evidently enjoyed the events and wanted more. In terms of assessing whether internationalisation was achieved within the School, students felt they had learnt more about different cultures, and met new people. However, perhaps the greatest reward, from the facilitators’ perspective, is witnessing the classroom dynamic change after these events. The majority of the student coordinators, a mixed group of nationalities, could be seen on campus revising together around exam time. Furthermore, classroom discussions amongst the cohort are now livelier and evidence greater confidence, with less cultural segregation as to where students are sitting in the lecture theatre. Within module tutorials, international students compare jurisdictional insights as to the similarities and differences between the model in England and Wales and other systems. Whilst it is not possible to solely attribute this project to these benefits, it is evident that internationalisation is, at least at a prima-facie level, more prevalent post the *Legal World Series* action based project than before.

1. Email: s.clear@bangor.ac.uk and m.l.parker@bangor.ac.uk [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. CB Kandiko and M Mawer, ‘Student Expectations and Perceptions of Higher Education’ (Quality Assurance Agency 2013) available online: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/kli/People/Research/DL/QAAReport.pdf> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. C Dangerfield, ‘Expectation and Experience: A View from the Students’ (Salford Students’ Union, HE Zone Committee, NUS, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. S Page, G Rajkhowa and P Webb, ‘Bridging the Gap: Expectation versus Reality for International MBA Students Studying in the United Kingdom’ (Chester University Business School 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. J Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd edn Open University Press 2004) Ch 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See further: J Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2nd edn Open University Press 2004) p 120 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This suggestion is also supported by P Wakeling and G Hampden-Thompson, ‘Transition to Higher Degrees Across the UK: An Analysis of National, Institutional and Individual Differences’ (Higher Education Academy Research Series, April 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. C Dangerfield, ‘Expectation and Experience: A View from the Students’ (Salford Students’ Union, HE Zone Committee, NUS, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. S Page, G Rajkhowa and P Webb, ‘Bridging the Gap: Expectations Versus Reality for International MBA Students Studying in the United Kingdom’ (Chester University Business School 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See further the National Student Survey, ‘About the NSS’ (2017) available online at: <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/about.php> accessed 20 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See further HEFCE, ‘Teaching Excellence Framework (2017) available online at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef/> accessed 20 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. V Gunn, A Fisk, ‘Considering teaching excellence in higher education: 2007-2013. A literature review since the CHERI report 2007’ (Higher Education Academy Research Series, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. D Gosling, ‘Supporting Student Learning’ in H Fry, S Ketteridge, and S Marshall, *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (3rd edn Routledge 2008) p 121 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. S Capstick, ‘Benefits and Shortcomings of Peer Assisted Learning (PAL in Higher Education: an appraisal by students’ (Bournemouth University, 2004) S Capstick, H Flemming and J Hurne, ‘Implementing Peer Assisted Learning in Higher Education: The experience of a new university and a model for the achievement of a mainstream programme’ (Bournemouth University, 2004) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bournemouth University, ‘Academic Support-Peer Assisted Learning: The FDTL3-Funded PAL Project’ (Bournemouth 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. KR Wirth and D Perkins, ‘Learning to Learn’ (Manchester College, University of North Dakota, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. KR Wirth and D Perkins, ‘Learning to Learn’ (Manchester College, University of North Dakota, 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. National Research Council, How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School (National Academy Press, Washington DC USA, 2000) p 374 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See KR Wirth and D Perkins (above). See also DW Johnson, RT Johnson and K Smith, *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom* (Interaction Book Company, USA 1991). These observations have more recently been affirmed by M Prince, ‘Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research’ (2005) 93 Journal of Education 223 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Westminster Institute of Education, ‘What do we mean by enrichment?’ (Oxford Brookes University 2006) p2 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. J Wallace, ‘Supporting and Guiding students’ in H Fry, S Ketteridge, and S Marshall (eds) *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Kogan Page 1999) p175 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. D Gosling, ‘Supporting Student Learning’ in H Fry, S Ketteridge, and S Marshall (eds) *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Kogan Page 1999) p114 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid* one is also mindful of the need to support those with personal learning support plans, and additional needs, as documented in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. D Gosling, ‘Supporting Student Learning’ in H Fry, S Ketteridge, and S Marshall (eds) *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Kogan Page 1999) p115 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. MH Schwartz, GF Hess and SM Sparrow, *What the Best Law Teachers Do* (Harvard University Press 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. It is noted that the number of respondents within each of the three questionnaire period fluctuates. This is owing to early withdrawals from the course, non-attendance on the day, and some one semester only visiting Erasmus and Experiences students leaving Bangor after January. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. K Dutton et al, ‘Great Expectations: Managing Student Expectations and Enhancing Engagement with Undergraduate Study’ (Higher Education Academy 2012) available online: <https://www.slideshare.net/HEA\_Law/the-expectationreality-gap-and-undergraduate-law-student-experiences> accessed 6 March 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. These regions were divided as follows: Africa, United Kingdom, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas and Canada, Australia and the Oceania, and Asia. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. M Healey, A Flint, K Harrington, ‘Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education’ (Higher Education Academy Report 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Higher Education Academy, ‘Framework for partnership in learning and teaching in higher education’ (HEA July 2014) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. M Vittori, ‘Share and Inspire: Engaging International Students’ (Bangor University, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. E Mowlam, ‘Supporting Student Law Societies and Extra-Curricular Activities and Students’ in C Ashford and J Guth, *The Legal Academic’s Handbook* (Palgrave, 2016) p118 [↑](#footnote-ref-37)