

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

### *Roundtable*

#### **Reimagining International Student Mobility (ISM) Futures: 'Wish Lists' from Researchers, Practitioners, and Policymakers – What Would You Like to See (not) Happen?**

Roundtable organizers:

**Dr Peidong Yang**

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Discussants:

**Prof Johanna Waters**, University College London



**Prof Rachel Brooks**, Department of Education, University of Oxford



**Name and biographies of roundtable panelists (in the order to speaking)**

1	Dr Miguel Lim, Manchester University		Dr Miguel Antonio Lim is Senior Lecturer and REF lead at the Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester. He is lead researcher for the intra-ASEAN scholarship programme of the ASEAN secretariat.
2	Zheng Zou, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore		Zheng Zou is currently a Doctor of Education (EdD) candidate at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She is an international education practitioner with extensive experience in international collaboration institutions. She currently manages programs at the Stanford Center at Peking University.
3	Dr Ying Yang, Education University of Hong Kong		Ying Yang is a postdoctoral fellow at the Education University of Hong Kong, an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Manchester, and a WG2 Co-stakeholder Advisor of COST Action ENIS Network. Her research interests include education agents, access to international higher education, international student recruitment and application, and longitudinal qualitative research methods.
4	Dr Sazana Jayadeva, University of Surrey, UK		Sazana Jayadeva is a Surrey Future Fellow in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey. Sazana is an Associate Editor of the journal <i>Sociology</i> and co-convenes the International Research and Researchers' Network of the Society for Research into Higher Education in the UK.
5	Dr Cora Xu Durham University UK		Dr Cora Lingling Xu (PhD, Cambridge, FHEA) is Associate Professor at Durham University, UK. She is an executive editor of British Journal of Sociology of Education and an editorial board member of multiple international journals, such as <i>Cambridge Journal of Education</i> and <i>Critical Studies in Education</i> .
6	Prof Catherine Gomes RMIT University, Australia		Catherine Gomes is a Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University in Melbourne. She is known for her work in the three interrelated areas of communication, culture and identity, international student wellbeing, and transient migrants. Her latest book <i>International Student Visibility: Living and Participating in Community</i> is open access.
7	Dr Jing Yu University of Wisconsin Madison, United States		Jing Yu, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of international higher education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis and a faculty affiliate in Asian American studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interests include international student mobility, intersections of race, class, and nationality, and international dimensions of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.
8	Dr Diotima Chattoraj, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore		Dr Diotima Chattoraj is a Research Fellow at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information in Nanyang Technological University. A qualitative researcher, she focuses on Asian migration, international relations, consumer psychology and advertising effects. She has authored more than 25 journal articles, 6 books, 10 book chapters in leading journals. Additionally, she is the Deputy Editor of <i>South Asia Research</i> (Sage).

## Names and biographies of discussants

1	Professor Johanna Waters, UCL		Johanna Waters is Professor of Human Geography and co-Director of the Migration Research Unit at UCL. She is Director of the MSc in Global Migration. Johanna is co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal <i>Global Networks</i> (Wiley). Previously, she has enjoyed working in geography departments at the universities of Liverpool, Birmingham and Oxford. She is Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales and visiting Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford.
2	Professor Rachel Brooks, University of Oxford		Professor Rachel Brooks is Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Education at Oxford and current President of the British Sociological Association. She is also chair of the executive editors of the <i>British Journal of Sociology of Education</i> , a member of the editorial team of the journal <i>Sociology</i> , and co-editor of the 'Research into Higher Education' book series, published by Routledge and the Society for Research into Higher Education.

## Summary of roundtable contribution

1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Southeast Asian Visions for a 'Common Higher Education Space'</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Miguel Antonio Lim</p> <p>This is a 'practitioner' perspective informed by my positionality as a policy researcher for the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEAN aims to build a stronger socio-cultural and political community among Southeast Asian countries and international student mobility could play a role in this ambition.</p> <p>Southeast Asia (SEA) is an important region for international higher education. Taken together the ten countries of the Association of Southeast Nations enroll over 12 million students across over 7,000 higher education institutions. As a region, SEA is the 3rd largest source of international students. However, our research shows that over 90 percent of students who study outside their home country go outside the region for their studies.</p> <p>ASEAN policymakers want to see whether more intra-regional mobility is possible both to mitigate brain drain but also to build a political / socio-cultural community among 'neighbours'.</p> <p>My wish list:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Southeast Asian countries, HE institutions and policymakers help themselves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- our research of stakeholders across the region showed that they are willing but not necessarily ready for intra-regional mobility;</li> <li>- SEA HEIs have to work to make themselves more attractive to students from the region;</li> <li>- Those countries (and HEIs) which are attractive have to be more open to Southeast Asians in their societies. An example would be to extend the post study work visa in Malaysia to other Southeast Asians (and not just global 'North' nationals).</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. That external partners help SEA stakeholders achieve their ambitions for intra-regional mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are a range of TNE providers (e.g. from the UK, Australia, etc.) operating in SEA. Could they use their branch campuses and TNE platforms to promote intra region mobility (rather than just mobility from SEA to the 'Global North')?</li> <li>- Global north institutions seem to have the intention of recruiting students away from the region, but more could be done within the region itself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. That Southeast Asian partners and diaspora communities in HE in the global north help promote intra-regional mobility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is a challenge to researchers and teachers from the region in the global north to examine how they could contribute as bridges but potentially also 'on the ground' in SEA.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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2	<p><b>Embracing the global without leaving home: “internationalization at home” in Chinese higher educational institutions</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zheng Zou</p> <p>My first wish regarding this field is to expand equal access to international education for all the students from different background. Secondly, I wish for solutions for the challenges that ISM met during the current era of global uncertainties which the previous speakers have mentioned, especially in China. To make such wishes come true, I hope to stress the approach of Internationalization at home, which has gained momentum in China recently, especially after the Covid pandemic.</p> <p><b>An alternative/supplement to international student mobility</b></p> <p>When it comes to international student mobility, we tend to highlight the physical flows between the home countries and host countries. But not all students can travel abroad and have an equal chance to get the overseas education opportunities. Financial burdens, Language barriers, visa policies, and personal circumstances, present obstacles for some people. International education is a privilege for some wealthy families in China. Not only that, the rise of anti-globalization and geopolitical tensions, the unexpected pandemic have slowed down personal mobility. In short, physical mobility has constraints and high costs. Hence, the concept of “internationalization at home” (IaH) has become popular in China. The focus of this concept is on the absence of physical cross-border mobility.</p> <p><b>Internationalization at Home (IaH) in China</b></p> <p>Chinese universities have implement this strategy and build their IaH infrastructures in different ways: Firstly, Curriculum and Teaching: universities are bringing global perspectives into courses. They are using internationally sourced materials, case studies from global contexts. Sino-foreign universities and program are launched everywhere. Bilingual or multilingual language are offered in more and more schools.</p> <p>Secondly, Virtual mobility: digital development is reshaping how people teach, learn and collaborate across borders. The tech provides the possibilities to let physical mobility shift to virtual mobility.</p> <p>Students can engage in group projects, discussions, and co-learning experiences with their international peers without leaving home.</p> <p>Thirdly, Campus Internationalization: Universities are working to create a multi-cultural environment. Extracurricular activities are designed to share or develop intercultural awareness.</p> <p><b>Implications for traditional mobility</b></p> <p>In all, we saw that IaH has reshaped traditional models. It reduces reliance on traditional mobility. It reduces the cost of international travel. Another benefit that the government wants to see is, it enables students to stay in home countries, which strengthens students’ ties to the home countries and avoids the brain drain problem caused by traditional ISM. As such, IaH is not a plan B but a necessary supplementary way to train more global talents. Through this approach, students could embrace the global without leaving home.</p>
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3	<p><b>Who is conditioning (un)certainities in international student recruitment campaign?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ying Yang</p> <p>My presentation draws on my PhD study to address the question, “<i>Who is conditioning (un)certainities in international student recruitment campaigns?</i>”</p> <p>My PhD project is a longitudinal study, spanning two years from November 2020 to July 2022, investigating the role of education agents in Chinese students’ choice-making regarding studying abroad from both perspectives of education agents and students. This project highlights that the issues of information asymmetry and information absence are central to the challenges faced by UK universities, Chinese international students, and education agents during the application and recruitment processes for international students.</p> <p>From the perspective of Chinese international students, the very first question is what they need to know. As the number of students studying abroad increases, the information associated with applications for overseas universities spreads, in multiple forums and locations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then where to glean reliable and effective information becomes an important question. At the same time, confronted with immensely fierce application competition, the question of how Chinese students interpret the relevant information and position themselves came along. In this sense, Chinese students’ considerations about studying abroad function as a source of uncertainties in international student application and recruitment.</p> <p>Many Chinese agent-user students are conscious that UK universities tend to evaluate their quality and competence (exclusively) based on the first-degree awarding university, GPAs, standard language test scores, and GRE/GMAT scores. However, these sorts of requirements are untransparent, while general admission requirements appear to be clearly listed on the UK university websites. In the market logic, UK universities do not clarify their products to potential students, spelling product information asymmetry. In other words, UK universities are conditioning uncertainties in the international students’ admission process.</p> <p>My recent publication (Yang, 2025) shows that many Chinese agent-user students perceive education agents as symbolic dominant in university applications through promoting the information of UK universities and taking ownership of application information (i.e. databases of prior application cases, strategies for selecting potential programmes and routine application procedures). That is to say, education agents serve to disseminate and reproduce the pre-existing uncertainties.</p> <p>At the same time, education agents’ advice is an embodiment of uncertainties. On the one hand, education agents, acting as pioneers, continually test admission criteria. To enhance students’ competence, education agents often encourage them to participate in various fee-based programmes and projects developed by third parties, who are frequently the agents’ business partners. However, agents were not clear how UK universities evaluate those experiences and whether those programmes are helpful or not in the application competition.</p>
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	<p>On the other hand, cut-throat peer competitions between education agents tend to condition their disposition to prioritise their business ambition over applicants' long-term interests, which breeds uncertainties in Chinese international students' applications. To gain more clients, many education agents over-promise the application results that students can achieve, creating a dilemma for those who truly consider the applicants' best interests. Consequently, education agents observed that Chinese agent-user students tend to hold high expectations or overestimate their potential for admission into certain programmes during the consultation phase. They urged agents to choose top-ranked universities; otherwise, some students would not sign an agreement with agents who did not meet these expectations and would select different education agents.</p> <p>Many education agents find themselves exaggerating applicants' qualifications, encouraging them to select programs at highly ranked institutions, or negotiating with admission officers - fully aware that this could jeopardise students' long-term interests and academic experiences. Thus, under the pressure of peer competition, education agencies of varying sizes, experiences, and qualifications operate with differing levels of integrity. This undoubtedly complicates the evaluation of the field by Chinese agent-user students and reproduces the uncertainties they initially face, especially when confronted with negative appraisals of education agents' work.</p> <p>We can see that all the aforementioned uncertainties are related to admission criteria – the rules of application competitions, which give rise to an important question for UK universities to consider: What do PGT programmes mean for UK universities? In the marketized context of international higher education, it is not feasible for UK universities (apart from those at the apex of the international higher education system) to downplay reputation establishment, competition for high-quality students, income generation, as well as the rivalry and excludability of the private goods they produce. In other words, different programmes possess distinct characteristics and particular responsibilities, assigned by their department, faculty, and university. Therefore, admission criteria should be closely linked to the design and categorization of programmes, which should be considered according to their strategic functions. Specifically, programmes are suggested to be differentiated, categorized, and even stratified as first-tier, second-tier, and mass-market brands, so that the admission criteria reflect the purposes for which the programmes were developed and the types of students targeted for recruitment.</p>
4	<p><b>Access to study abroad and transitions to employment</b></p> <p>Sazana Jayadeva</p> <p><b>ISM to India</b></p> <p>The first item on my wish list is to do with research focus and research practice: I'd like to see more research on student migration to India and the internationalisation of Indian HE. There is a dearth of research on this topic, despite substantial developments in the internationalisation of Indian higher education, both in terms of policy and practice. While there are some very interesting projects by India-based researchers underway on these topics, a huge problem is that there is very limited funding for social science research available in India. This can limit the kinds of projects that India-based researchers can envision and carry out.</p>



What's **not** on my wish list is for this 'research gap' to be filled by researchers from the Global North, perhaps with Indian research assistants. What I'd like to see instead is more meaningful and ethical collaborations between India-based researchers and researchers in other countries on internationalisation of Indian higher education and ISM to India. Also on my wishlist would be the conditions for such collaborations to develop: so, inclusive and accessible research networks, workshops, and conferences through which mutual research interests and collaborations can be discovered and cultivated.

### **Disability and ISM**

A working group of the European Network of International Student Mobility, which I'm part of, recently conducted a systematic literature review of the scholarship published between 2000 and 2022 in nine languages on inequalities mediating access to ISM. It was led by Sylvie Lomer. One striking finding was that there is very limited scholarship on how disability mediates access to study abroad: there were a total of 5 studies on this topic to be exact. There is similarly not a huge amount of research on the impact of disability on international students' experiences of study abroad, their transitions to employment, and their graduate outcomes.

We know from the growing scholarship on domestic students with disabilities in higher education, the many barriers such students can face, and burdens and often unacknowledged labour they have to undertake in negotiating their studies. International students with disabilities are arguably in a more precarious situation in some respects.

So, on my wish list would be more research on disability and ISM, designed in collaboration with international students with disabilities, and drawing on intersectional and social justice approaches. I would also like to see disability being a focus in more research on inequalities in ISM, more broadly.

### **Social media**

The final item on my wish list would be more research on the role of social media in shaping access to and imaginations of study abroad. Social media is now such a big part of the migration infrastructure facilitating ISM but there's still, surprisingly, a dearth of research about how prospective and current international students, education agents, and universities are drawing on social media to seek or share information about study abroad – and with what effects.

A focus on social media groups used by prospective international students, or on the highly popular study-abroad social media accounts run by international students who have become study-abroad influencers, for example, can also be a good lens through which to explore prospective international students' motivations to study abroad, inequalities in access to study abroad, and so on....

I'd especially like to see more interdisciplinary projects that bring together ISM research and media studies to theorise these developments, and more comparative, cross-national research that might be able to throw light on different cultures of social media use.



5	<p><b>Time inequalities in international student mobilities</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cora Lingling Xu</p> <p>My wish is for researchers and practitioners in international student mobility to pay more attention to time and time inequalities. This wish stems from an observation I have had over the past decade or so of research – while space and place have been given significant attention (and rightly so), time is yet to receive substantial enough attention in this area.</p> <p>With this view, I draw on the ‘time inheritance’ framework that I propose in my recently published book <a href="#">‘The Time Inheritors: How Time Inequalities Shape Higher Education Mobility in China’</a> (SUNY Press, 2025) to argue that intergenerational transfers of privilege or deprivation manifests in and through time. This ‘time inheritance’ framework accentuates how time wealth/debt can be passed down from one generation to the next at the familial, national and international levels.</p> <p>Specifically relevant to the international student mobility literature is about how higher education institutions in the ‘global west’ tend to be better able to accord their graduates higher amounts and quality of temporal privilege, due to their structural advantages in a globally unequal playing field (Altbach, 2004; Marginson, 2008), which has arguable origins in imperialism and colonialism. Similarly, the globally dominant status of the English language, which has seen English serving as the language of much of global research, teaching and dissemination, has accorded HEIs and their graduates from Anglophone countries considerable temporal advantages. Such temporal advantages can be seen through how being a ‘native-speaker’ (being critically aware of the problematic nature of this term as understood in contemporary sociolinguistics) of English language and/or a degree holder of qualifications from HEIs in the ‘global West’ can translate into more job opportunities, less time spent on the job market, and better remuneration of work time as facilitated by higher salaries and better compensations. More crucially, these individuals not only inherit temporal wealth in a quantitative way, but also qualitatively in that, as <b>The Time Inheritors</b> argues, they develop this ‘entitled, secure, and at ease’ approach / disposition towards time and towards what is gradually unfolding in the future. As such, they are better able to make informed decisions that will benefit them in the long term, concomitantly ending up saving and even gaining more time.</p> <p>This time-focused perspective thus opens up new avenues for understanding important issues in international student mobility, e.g. what drives students and their families to move across space and borders to pursue higher education? How have students from different socio-economic and geo-political backgrounds benefited from or got disadvantaged by international student mobility? What roles do higher education institutions both in the global ‘West’ and ‘East’ play in facilitating international student mobility? What can other stakeholders (e.g. educational agents, higher education researchers and practitioners) do to level the unequal temporal spheres in international student mobility?</p>
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	<p><b>References:</b></p> <p>Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the University: Myths and Realities in an Unequal World. <i>Tertiary Education and Management</i>, 10(1), 3-25. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1023/B:TEAM.0000012239.55136.4b">https://doi.org/10.1023/B:TEAM.0000012239.55136.4b</a></p> <p>Marginson, S. (2008). Global field and global imagining: Bourdieu and worldwide higher education [doi: 10.1080/01425690801966386]. <i>British Journal of Sociology of Education</i>, 29(3), 303-315. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690801966386">https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690801966386</a></p> <p>Xu, C. L. (2025). <i>The Time Inheritors: How Time Inequalities Shape Higher Education Mobility in China</i>. State University of New York Press. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.26932052">https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.26932052</a></p>
6	<p><b>The wellbeing turn and why International student wellbeing as an industry needs to be addressed</b></p> <p>Catherine Gomes</p> <p>There is a <a href="#">wellbeing turn</a> in international education in Australia where international student wellbeing is critical for student success. International student wellbeing, however, is an industry. This takes the form of government (e.g., information services such as legal rights) and non-government service providers. The latter includes purpose-built accommodation for international students in the CBDs of capital cities which are home to state and private 'for profit' education providers whose business model is the enrolment of solely international students. Non-government service providers also include advocacy groups and 'for profit' wellbeing companies. These companies, however, assume international students are vulnerable and sell products and services to students which focus on the culturally and linguistically diverse student insecurities. In Australia, international students are full-fee paying at undergraduate level with postgraduates also paying full fees if not on scholarship. Currently international student wellbeing is an unregulated industry in Australia. Like the regulation of international education, wellbeing also needs to be regulated in order for both student and host country to benefit mutually and with integrity.</p>
6	<p><b>Navigating U.S.-China Geopolitical Tensions: Decision-Making of Chinese International Students in U.S. Higher Education</b></p> <p>Jing Yu</p> <p>I will focus on Chinese international student mobility to the United States. Both China and the United States are the key players as home and host countries in the field of international student mobility. This unidirectional mobility has sustained for almost twenty years because of China's booming economy and relatively stable American environment. However, things will never be the same.</p> <p>I want to share some preliminary findings from my recent study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 50 Chinese international students, including undergraduate and graduate students from UW-Madison. I want to understand the changing politics and China's current economy that affect Chinese students' decision making and their coping strategies amid these uncertainties.</p> <p>The first finding is that many Chinese students reported they have safety concerns, which will directly affect their choices. First, when considering graduate schools, they</p>

	<p>prioritized countries or regions closer to mainland China. Singapore and Hong Kong emerged to be the “ideal” destinations in the context of political uncertainties. Second, if the U.S. is still the destination, they would more carefully select the location of universities. For example, Johns Hopkins University and University of Chicago, despite being highly ranked, were viewed as the least favorable in terms of safety. Third, Chinese students would develop heightened sensitivity to racism and discrimination, mentally preparing for potential racial incidents they may encounter in the U.S.</p> <p>The second finding is that China’s economic downturns will also affect Chinese students’ choices. First, many undergraduate students chose to work after completing their bachelor’s degree rather than pursuing a master’s degree. Second, when selecting universities, Chinese students would prioritize good value for money. For example, public universities located in the Midwest in the U.S. with strong reputations (like UW-Madison) were often preferred by Chinese students in times of economic uncertainties.</p> <p>In conclusion, both U.S.-China geopolitical tensions and economic slowdowns significantly influence Chinese students’ choices, but Chinese students also exercise their student agency in navigating political and economic certainties.</p>
7	<p><b>International Student Migration to India: Navigating their experiences of Inclusion and Integration</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Diotima Chatteraj</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Improved Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Programs:</b> Many students voiced a strong desire for programs aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of cultural differences to prevent misunderstandings and occasional instances of discrimination. As international students navigate their new environment, they often encounter moments where cultural norms and behaviors differ significantly from their own. Without sufficient awareness, these differences can lead to misinterpretations, making international students feel marginalized or even discriminated against. Educational initiatives, such as cultural sensitivity workshops or intercultural communication training, would help bridge these gaps by promoting mutual respect and understanding. These programs could equip both local and international students with the knowledge and empathy needed to appreciate diverse perspectives, reduce unconscious biases, and create a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment. By addressing these challenges proactively, universities can foster a more welcoming and culturally aware community where students of all backgrounds can thrive without fear of exclusion or misunderstanding.</li> <li><b>Enhanced Language Support:</b> Some international students expressed a strong need for better language assistance in their daily interactions, as language barriers significantly hinder both communication and integration. While many international students may possess adequate academic English skills, they often struggle with informal conversations, local dialects, or understanding cultural nuances in everyday life. This leads to feelings of isolation, difficulty forming relationships with local peers, and even challenges in navigating daily tasks like shopping or using public services.</li> </ol>

	<p>Offering enhanced language support—through conversational language classes, language exchange programs, or easily accessible translation resources—would not only improve communication but also foster a greater sense of belonging. By equipping students with better language skills for daily life, universities can help them feel more confident and connected, easing their overall transition and enabling deeper integration into the local community.</p> <p>3. <b>More Structured Social Integration Opportunities:</b> Respondents emphasized the need for more organized social activities and opportunities that foster deeper interaction between local and international students. The international students often find it difficult to fully integrate into the local social fabric due to a lack of structured opportunities for meaningful engagement. Casual interactions may occur, but these are not always enough to build lasting connections or cultural understanding. Organized events such as cultural exchange programs, group outings, or collaborative projects would create a platform for local and international students to interact in more meaningful ways. These activities would help break down social barriers, promote mutual respect, and encourage friendships that transcend cultural differences. By fostering more intentional opportunities for interaction, universities can help international students feel more connected to their local peers, while also enriching the cultural experience for everyone involved.</p> <p>4. <b>Racial and Religious Awareness Initiatives:</b> A few international students suggested that awareness campaigns or workshops focused on religious inclusivity could play a key role in reducing unconscious biases and fostering a more inclusive environment. For non-Hindu international students, navigating social interactions in India can sometimes be challenging, as they may face subtle forms of exclusion or alienation due to differing religious beliefs. These students expressed that locals, though often unintentionally, might overlook their cultural or religious differences, leading to moments of discomfort or isolation. Implementing educational initiatives such as workshops on religious diversity and inclusivity could promote greater understanding and empathy within the local community. By raising awareness about the varied religious backgrounds of international students, such efforts would help dispel misconceptions and encourage a more respectful, welcoming atmosphere where students of all faiths feel valued and included.</p> <p>5. <b>Bridging the Divide: Ensuring Equal Treatment for International and Local Students.</b> International students are often seen as privileged compared to local students, due to factors such as higher tuition fees, specialized support services, and university efforts to promote global partnerships. While these measures are meant to aid international students, they often create a perceived boundary, setting them apart and fostering a sense of inequality. This divide hinders social integration, as local students view international peers as receiving preferential treatment, while international students face their own unique challenges, like cultural adjustment and language barriers. To bridge this gap, ISMs prefer universities to promote equal treatment for all students, ensuring that support services and opportunities are accessible to both local and international students. This approach fosters inclusivity,</p>
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	<p>mutual respect, and a more cohesive campus environment, allowing all students to benefit equally from their academic and social experiences.</p> <p>6. <b>Streamlined Administrative Processes:</b> Many international students highlighted the need for streamlined administrative processes, particularly when it comes to visa applications and academic registration. These processes can often be complex, time-consuming, and confusing, adding unnecessary stress to students who are already adjusting to a new country, culture, and educational system. Delays or bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining visas or completing registration can disrupt their academic timelines and create feelings of uncertainty. Simplifying these procedures, providing clearer instructions, and offering better support from university administrative offices would greatly improve their experience. It would also allow students to focus more on their studies and integration rather than dealing with administrative roadblocks. Making these processes more efficient would contribute to a smoother and more welcoming transition for international students.</p> <p>7. <b>Mentorship or Buddy Programs:</b> Many respondents wished for mentorship or "buddy" systems to pair them with local students, which could ease their transition into a new cultural and social environment. These programs provide not only academic guidance but also help international students overcome language barriers, adjust to unfamiliar social norms, and reduce feelings of isolation. By fostering close connections, these systems create a sense of belonging and cultural integration, while also offering local students valuable cross-cultural exchange. Ultimately, such programs promote inclusivity, mutual understanding, and a more cohesive student community.</p> <p>These 'wish lists' reflect the international students' desire for an environment that promotes better understanding, social connection, and smoother integration.</p>
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### Summary of Discussants' Comments

I am going to structure my response to these great comments by keywords.

First, diversity. We need to consider diversity in ISM in relation to student bodies (links to Peggy's response), types of study abroad (including time – Cora), destinations (and sending countries - Sazana), student intentions, engagement and outcomes as well as linguistic diversity in study abroad. Jing made an excellent point about the lack of diversity – things are ostensibly getting less diverse or diversity is being resisted (e.g. in the US under the current administration). Sazana raised the point about disability, too, and how students with disabilities get access to ISM and experience ISM (we know so little about this to date, despite a widespread stress on widening participation).

Second, connections or – to be more specific – relationships. If we are serious about 'repair' in international HE, we need to consider how much of HE is about relationships between people (but also between people and states, institutions and so on). Repair is built on relationships. ISM should be (ideally) about building communities and relationships with neighbours, as Miguel raised. We should encourage regional mobilities for sustainability reasons, if nothing else. We should also be open about what's at stake, however, if we lose longer distance mobilities, in terms of exposure to different ideas/cultures etc. TNE may have similar consequences when it comes to closing down connections with other places and people. Finally, Diotima made the excellent point – let's ask the students what they want! What is on their wish list?

Third, materialities. Peggy and Sazana mentioned infrastructures that support ISM – these are so important. Infrastructures also support the well-being of students as well as their mobilities. Students with disabilities may need particular infrastructures to support their education (and lives). The stuff of international and transnational education is also important – books, passports, certificates, as well as the materialities of homemaking amongst international students (and the well being that using artefacts such as cooking utensils to feel 'at home' can invoke).

Finally, and briefly, information is important and – of course – disinformation. In an era of social media, how do universities keep control over information about study abroad and, indeed, should they? Is information being democratised with the growth in social media, assuming student access is patchy and uneven? And how might states use (and control) digital information about study abroad?

Johanna Waters