



# The view from the other side: How domestic students make sense of internationalisation of Malaysian higher education

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# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION HUBS IN ASIA



## Shift 8: Global prominence

Malaysia will be known as an international education hub to reach 250,000 international students by 2025, and reach new markets through more innovative programmes and partnerships.

It will also be a globally-connected higher education player that is renowned for its academic and research expertise, particularly in niche areas like Islamic banking and finance, or tropical related science and technology.



### HONG KONG

Plans announced in 2008 to develop as regional education hub. Promoting itself as 'gateway' to China, with world-class institutions, English-language instruction and over 1,000 TNE offerings. Vast majority of international enrollments currently from mainland China.



### TAIWAN

Plans announced in 2011 to develop nation as a regional education hub. Targeting Chinese speaking students and educators from neighboring SE Asian nations. Strong international enrollment growth, from 58,000 in 2011 to 92,500 in 2014.



### SOUTH KOREA

Two new purpose-built education hub projects currently under development. Incheon Global Campus has attracted 4 IBCs in last three years. Jeju Global Education City will be focused more on international secondary schools and language learning.



### MALAYSIA

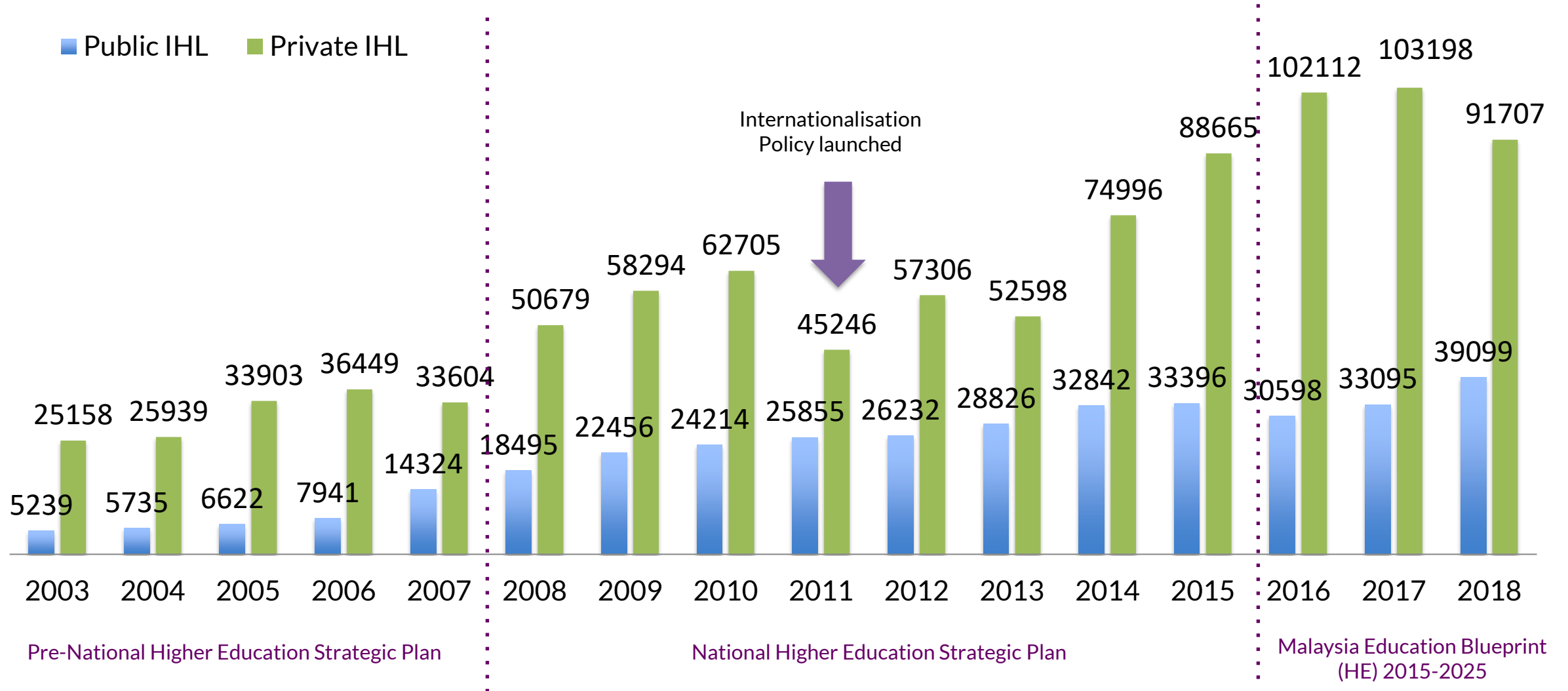
Two purpose-built higher education zones attracting international campuses. In addition, there are at least 7 standalone IBCs around the country. World's biggest market for TNE program offerings and enrollments. International enrollments growing, standing at 90,000 in 2012.



### SINGAPORE

Global Schoolhouse initiative launched in 2002, aimed at bringing in global talent and global institutions. International enrollment growth has stalled (75,000 in 2014; 90,000 in 2010), but internationalization remains strong: 11 IBCs, departmental collaborations with prestigious international partner institutions, thousands of TNE offerings.

# International students in Malaysia



Source: 2003-2007 (Laporan Kajian Pelajar Antarabangsa di Malaysia, NHERI USM), 2008-2019 (Higher Education Statistics, Ministry of Higher Education)

# Regionalisation of higher education?

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	Total, Top 10	Total, int student	% TOTAL
2008	IDN 9,385	CHN 7,966	IRN 6,604	NER 5,424	YEM 4,282	SAU 2,752	BWA 2,350	SDN 2,307	BGD 2,021	LBY 1,788	44,852	69,174	64.8
2009	IRN 10,932	IDN 9,813	CHN 9,177	NER 5,969	YEM 4,931	LBY 4,021	SDN 2,433	BGD 1,939	BWA 1,939	IRQ 1,712	52,893	80,750	65.5
2010	IRN 11,823	CHN 10,214	IDN 9,889	YEM 5,866	NER 5,817	LBY 3,930	SDN 2,837	SAU 2,352	BGD 2,041	BWA 1,911	56,580	86,919	65.1
2011	IRN 9,888	IDN 8,569	CHN 7,394	NER 5,632	YEM 3,552	BGD 2,323	SDN 2,091	UK 1,530	PAK 1,346	IRQ 1,329	43,654	71,101	61.4
2012												83,538	
2013	IRN 8,602	IDN 8,001	CHN 6,780	NER 4,826	YEM 3,926	PAK 2,951	BGN 2,442	IRQ 1,854	SDN 1,750	LKA 1,271	42,403	81,424	52.1
2014	BGD 27,154	NER 9,638	CHN 8,906	IDN 7,757	IRN 5,020	YEM 4,365	PAK 3,823	LBY 2,675	IRQ 2,146	SDN 1,880	73,634	107,838	68.3
2015	BGD 30,829	NER 12,947	CHN 10,775	IDN 8,956	YEM 5,294	IRN 5,204	PAK 4,507	IRQ 3,292	LBY 3,130	SND 2,744	87,678	122,061	71.8
2016	BGD 34,455	NER 15,262	CHN 11,718	IDN 8,653	YEM 5,942	PAK 4,507	IRN 4,055	IRQ 3,264	LBY 3,246	SND 3,002	94,889	132,710	71.5
2017	BGD 30,525	CHN 14,854	NER 13,529	IDN 9,762	YEM 6,248	PAK 6,033	LBY 3,317	IRQ 3,257	SDN 3,104	IRN 3,068	93,427	136,293	68.5
2018	BGD 22,158	CHN 16,361	NER 11,105	IDN 10,783	YEM 7,376	PAK 6,850	IRQ 3,645	LBY 3,309	IND 3,272	IRN 3,185	88,044	131,514	66.9

Source: 2008-2019 (Higher Education Statistics, Ministry of Higher Education)

# COVID-19 updates

Effective from 14th December 2020, all existing international students arriving in Malaysia must meet the following conditions:-

- i. All existing International Students **must undergo an RT-PCR COVID-19 three (3) days prior to their departure** to Malaysia.
- ii. The Ministry of Health has also decided to shorten the quarantine period from fourteen (14) days to **seven (7) days for incoming travelers that furnish their RT-PCR COVID-19 test results at the international arrival gates**. International travelers that are not able to provide RT-PCR COVID-19 test results will be subjected to a quarantine period of ten (10) days.
- iii. The RT-PCR COVID-19 test results must be in English so that it can be inspected by the respective authorities in Malaysia upon arrival.
- iv. International students who wish to enter Malaysia are required to make an online payment for COVID-19 detection test charges and quarantine cost before leaving for Malaysia. This directive is still applicable however cash payment at the international arrival gates will still be allowed until further notice.
- v. If the RT-PCR COVID-19 test results is dated more than three (3) days prior to the departure date, the results will not be accepted and the International Student must undergo the RT-PCR COVID-19 test at the international arrival gate once again. The International Students will then be subjected to a quarantine period of ten (10) days.
- iv. Kindly note that all fees imposed by the Government of Malaysia including COVID-19 detection test, **quarantine cost, and hospital admittance fee (if required) must be borne by International Students**.
- v. The quarantine cost remains the same as previously announced. International **Students are required to pay RM150/ per night and a fixed fee of RM 2,600 (Quarantine Station Operations)**. Kindly note that this amount does not include the cost for COVID-19 detection tests.

<https://bit.ly/3pU1WKM>

# Background

01

It has become increasingly common for 'home' students (i.e. those remaining to study in their home nation, as opposed to international students) to encounter international students in the classroom (*Harrison, 2015*)

02

Finding ways to contextualize internationalised learning outcomes 'at home' for students who have limited contact with other forms of internationalisation is an ongoing challenge (*Robson, Almeida and Schartner, 2017*)

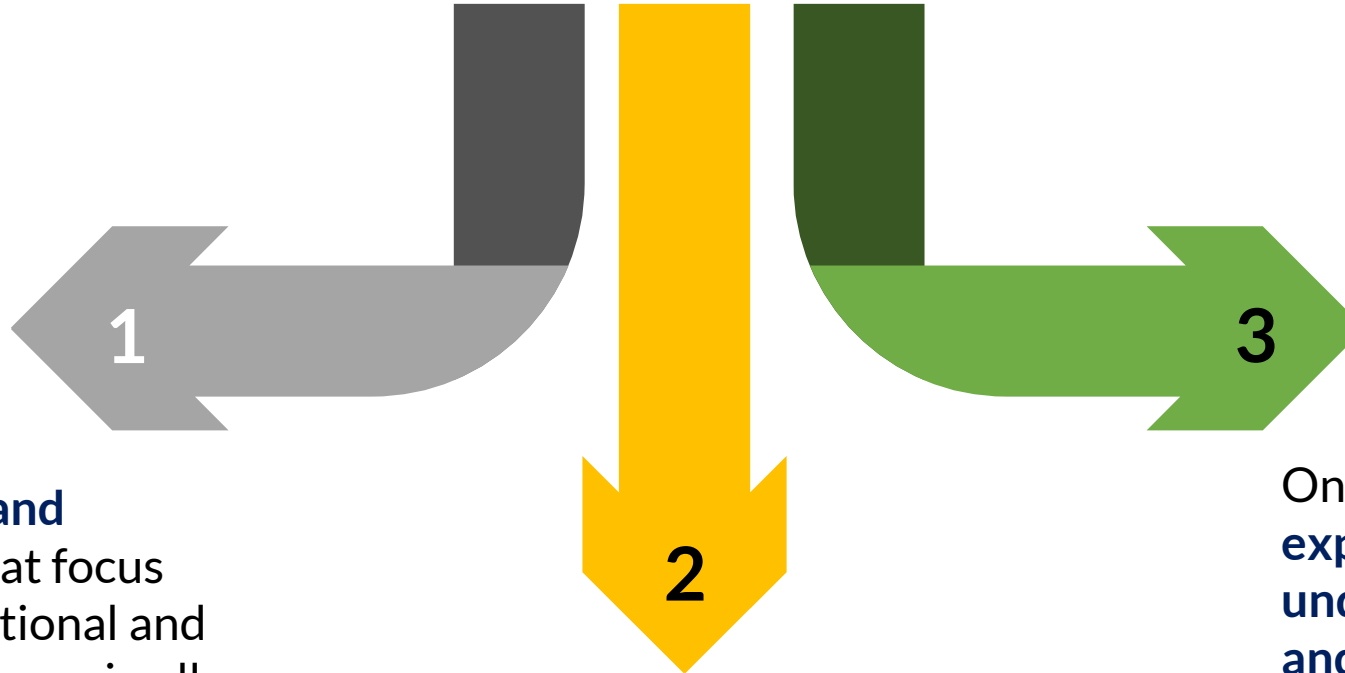
03

There has been very little research on how home students themselves perceive internationalisation (*Heffernan, Morrison, Magne, Payne and Cotton, 2018*)

02

For academic staff and practitioners, the main task now is to help local students expand their intercultural and cross-cultural competency (*Haigh, 2015*)

# Internationalisation at home (IaH) (Beelen, 2012)



**A set of instruments and activities 'at home'** that focus on developing international and intercultural competences in all students.

Formulated based on the assumption that, **while students will travel for personal reasons, the majority will not travel for study-related purposes**, although the latter option is not entirely excluded.

Only includes the **individual experiences of students undertaken during study and placement abroad** if these are **integrated into the home institution's standard assessment tools**

# Common components of IaH (Harrison, 2010)

Using the presence of international students to seed intercultural learning, by providing alternative perspectives and illustrative examples from other countries and cultures



Enhancing the curriculum with modules and programmes which have an overt international or global theme



Fostering a sense of global citizenship, agency and responsibility among students and staff

Developing intercultural communication skills through specific teaching techniques and general exposure to international students



Paying attention to the internal dynamics of the “international classroom” and the diversity of learners it contains



# Research questions

What do domestic students think about

1. The inflow of international students
2. The increased focus on international rankings
3. The increase of international collaboration

in their campus?

# About the study



Site of study (public research university in Malaysia)

Total students (2020): 27,069

Total international students (2020): 4,437. Out of this figure, 2,502 (56.4%) are pursuing studies at the postgraduate level



25 (15 male, 10 female)



02E77 (UTM Professional Development Research Management Grant – 1 year)



Focus group discussion (2-5 per group)

Snowball sampling (one student bring others into the group)

Sessions lasted between 45 mins (shortest) to 1 hour 30 minutes (longest)

Sessions conducted in both English and Bahasa Malaysia, recorded with consent

Transcriptions made from each focus group discussion

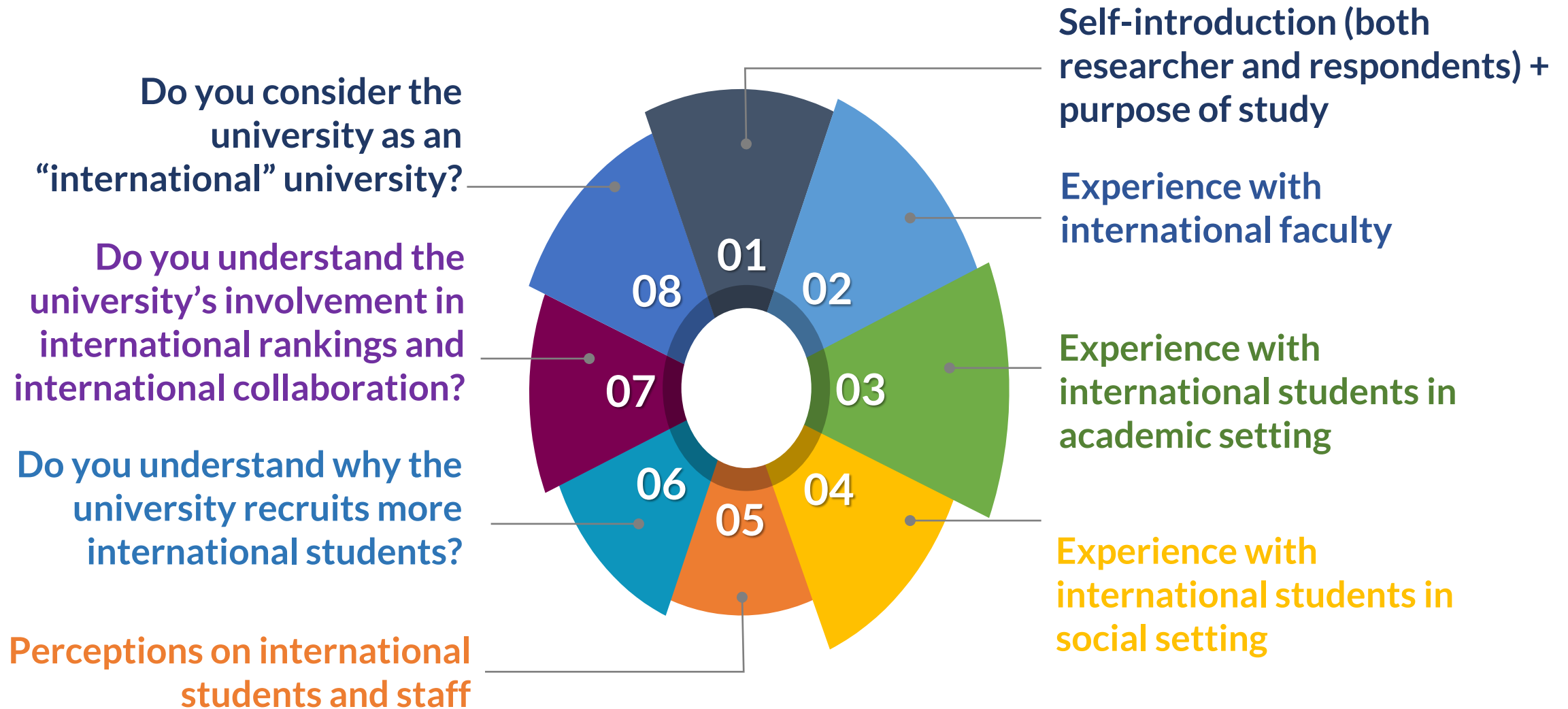


Summary notes derived from transcript

Themes extracted from the summary notes



# Questions discussed



# Finding #1: Student demography

All 25 students are undergraduates, 60% in second and third year of their studies

16 in 25 students have attended class where an international staff is the main instructor

4 in 25 students have been abroad (personal travel and/or represent university abroad)

All 25 students have experience interacting with international students in both academic and social contexts



# Finding #2: Experience with international faculty

“Sometimes we cannot understand them” - accent, pronunciation, speed

“They had a different way of teaching” - more industry-focused, more practical examples

“You need time to understand how he/she works” - respondents adjust to instruction style, rather than demanding the faculty to change

“What do you mean by internationalisation of curriculum?” - irrelevant for technical programmes, but significant for social science programmes

“They made us think” - relate one subject/discipline to another subject/discipline

This finding is not found within mainstream literature on IaH

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This finding is not found within mainstream literature on IaH

# Finding #3: Experience with international students (academic setting)

“It is difficult to do group work with them” - issues on working style & proximity to work beyond lecture hours

“They disrupt our schedule”  
– int students who enter mid-semester affect study flow of the course section

“They have language issues”  
– communication breakdown between local and international students

“They ask many questions” - local students accept knowledge readily, while int students question knowledge transmitted

# Finding #4: Experience with international students (social setting)

“They always go in groups” - preference to stay within their own co-nationals

“We had a functional relationship with them” - int students only ‘appear’ in classes and compulsory events/errands

“We can always find them at the library” - int students tend to congregate at a particular location on campus

“We don’t know where to start” - local students need help to make friends with international students

“We have to help them build trust” - commenting on low help-seeking behaviour of international students

This finding is new within mainstream literature on IaH

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# Finding #5: Perception on international students and staff

“It depends on which country they come from...”



Students / staff from East Asia, who are perceived as

- Kind
- Cooperative
- Eager to participate and contribute in group work

“We have no problems working with students/staff from Indonesia”



Students / staff from Middle East, South Asia, African regions, who are perceived as

- Loud
- Aggressive
- Argumentative

Students / staff from EU, who are perceived as arrogant / proud



## Finding #6:

# “Do you understand why the university recruits international students?”

“Yes” - revenue generation, increase competitiveness of the university

“Why are there many students from (region)?” - students questioning recruitment focus of the university

This finding is new within mainstream literature on IaH

“Can we control the quality of international students?” - students questioning selection process of int students

“It’s ok to bring in more international students, as long as we benefit from their presence here”

This finding is new within mainstream literature on IaH

“What is the cap?” - students questioning the maximum number of international students allowed

This finding is new within mainstream literature on IaH

## Finding #7:

# “Do you understand why the university is involved in international rankings and international collaboration?”

“Yes” - the university needs to build international reputation on the quality of its academic programmes and research

“Is it necessary?” - students argue that they don't experience tangible benefits of rankings

“It doesn't impact me” - students believed in business as usual even without international rankings / collaboration

“So many MOAs, but for who?” - students argue that the international collaboration didn't benefit them directly

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## Finding #8:

### “Do you consider the university as an international university?”

“Yes”- the university has a lot of international students, international staff, and international collaboration

“No”- the services and facilities are not up to international standards (referring to foreign universities that they have visited before)

“No”- the university still produces graduates for local needs, and proportion of local students is greater than international students

# Discussion (reflecting on Harrison (2010)'s IaH components)

Using the presence of international students to seed intercultural learning, by providing alternative perspectives and illustrative examples from other countries and cultures

#1: What are the systemic barriers that hinder organic interaction between local & international students?

Developing intercultural communication skills through specific teaching techniques and general exposure to international students

#3: What type of intervention (beyond training & professional dev) that we can work on, in order to enhance intercultural competency among staff?



Enhancing the curriculum with modules and programmes which have an overt international or global theme

#2: How might we leverage on technology to strengthen curriculum internationalisation? ["Internationalisation at a Distance" - Mittelmeier, Rienties, Gunter and Raghuram (2020)]

Fostering a sense of global citizenship, agency and responsibility among students and staff

Paying attention to the internal dynamics of the "international classroom" and the diversity of learners it contains



# Implications for policy and practice

## Implications for policy

01

Review internationalisation policy of Malaysian HE – social integration component

02

Review Malaysia Education Blueprint (HE) 2015-2025 - Shift 8, Global Prominence

03

Policies that ensure inclusive internationalisation?

04

Increase domestic student voice in policy related to internationalisation

Explain institutional internationalisation strategy to local students

05

As much as possible, ensure local students do not feel sidelined

06

Normalisation of buddy system and/or support structures between local and international students

07

Review practices that led to segregation of local and int students

08

## Implications for practice



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