UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Intercultural Connections:
Reflections on Cultural and Social Experiences at the University of Southampton

Victoire Boulegroun-Ruyssen, Lien Bui, Madalina Cretu, Ian Forbes, Maya Nedyalkova, Jane Ra

http://blog.soton.ac.uk/ics

LLAS Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies

Introduction:

- Who and why?

- What?
  - ✓ activities, clubs and societies on offer
  - ✓ connections taking place
  - ✓ social/cultural student interests
  - ✓ level of intercultural interactions
  - ✓ interventions recommended

Introduction:

- How?
  - ✓ online survey
  - ✓ society interviews/questionnaires
  - ✓ focus groups

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Data collection and analysis:

1. Student experience in Southampton

(a) language

(b) culture

(c) courses

(d) living in the UK

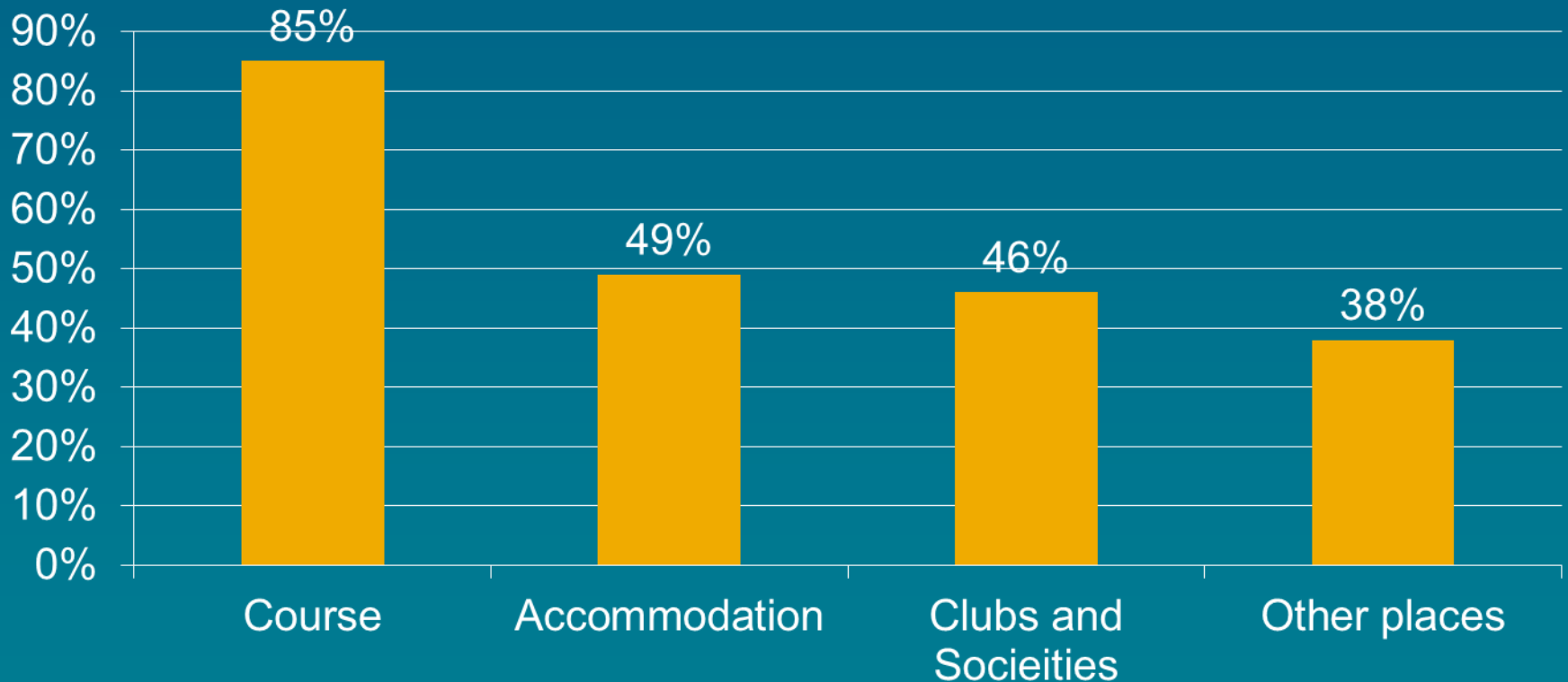2. Perceptions of an intercultural/global university

1. Student experience

- online survey with questions on:
  - ✓ basic demographic characteristics and faculty
  - ✓ where respondents came from
  - ✓ where and how often they met students from other cultures
  - ✓ involvement in university club and societies
  - ✓ their intercultural experience at the University of Southampton

- 459 usable responses

- online survey key findings:

  - ✓ two-thirds of students rate their intercultural experience while at Southampton as positive

  - ✓ UK students mix with students from other cultures less than non-UK students

  - ✓ Winchester School of Arts and the Health Sciences students appear to make the fewest intercultural connections
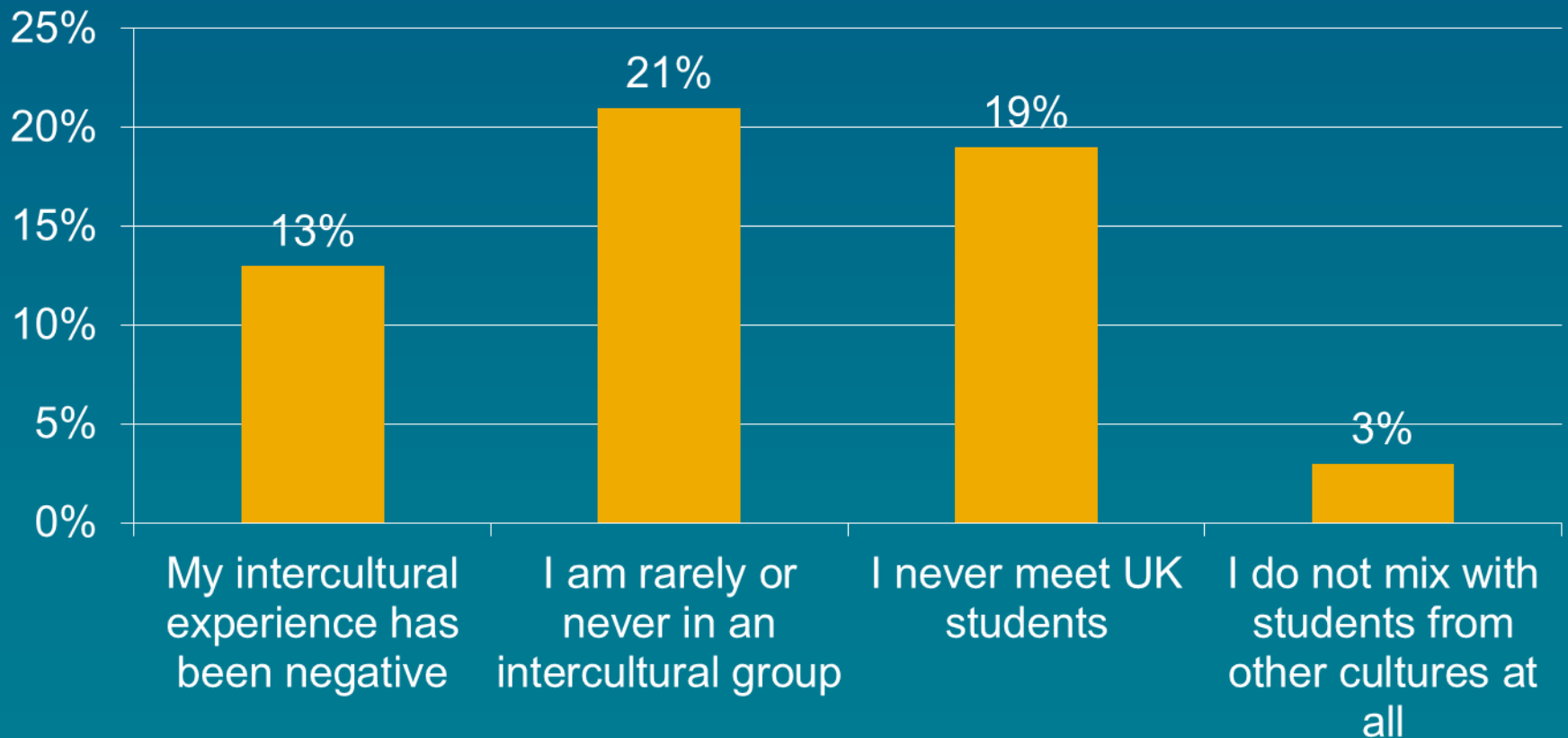
online survey key findings:

Percentage of respondents that meet students from other cultures in:

Chart showing: Course 85%, Accommodation 49%, Clubs and Socieities 46%, Other places 38%

- online survey key findings:

Percentage of students who responded:

Bar chart data:
- My intercultural experience has been negative: 13%
- I am rarely or never in an intercultural group: 21%
- I never meet UK students: 19%
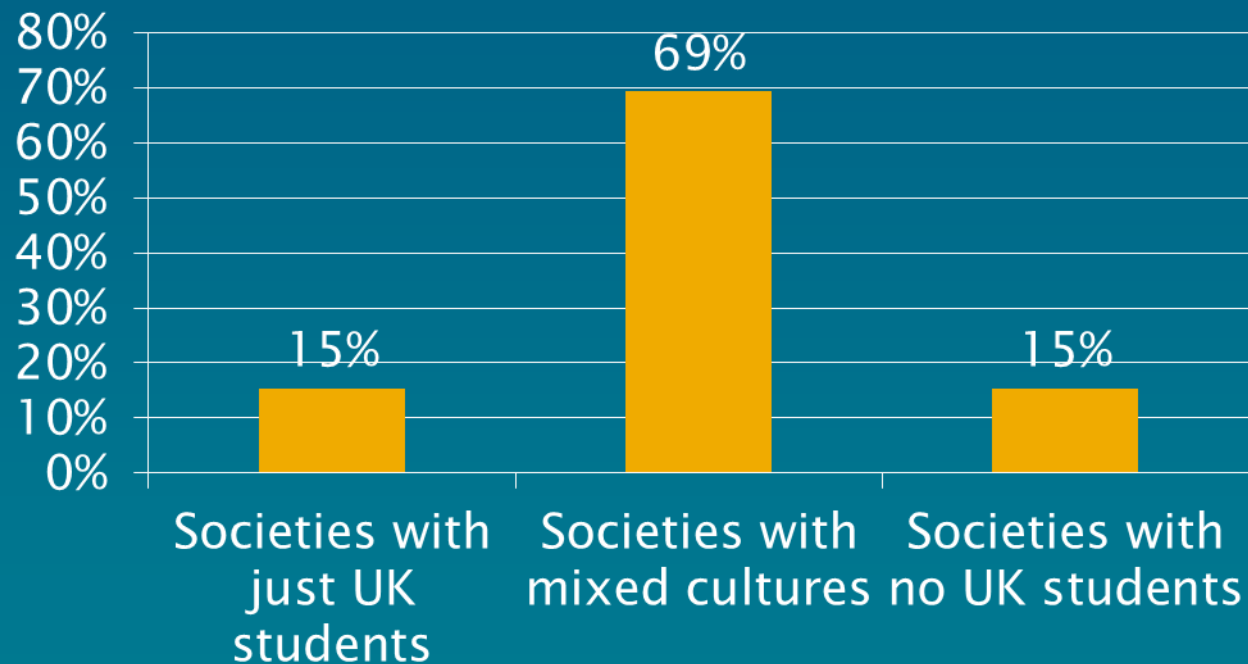- I do not mix with students from other cultures at all: 3%

(a) language:

- double-edged sword

- English as a lingua franca
  - ✓ integration vs segregation
  - ✓ intelligibility
  - ✓ confidence and comfort zone

- language and societies

(b) culture:

- University experience
  - ✓ societies
    - ❖ recruitment methods
    - ❖ mixing within societies
    - ❖ providing student support
  - ✓ sports
    - ❖ cultural preferences
  - ✓ socials
    - ❖ availability of regular activities

Intercultural connections within the 13 societies interviewed

80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

15% — Societies with just UK students

69% — Societies with mixed cultures

15% — Societies with no UK students

(b) culture:

- University experience
  - ✓ societies
    - ❖ recruitment methods
    - ❖ mixing within societies
    - ❖ providing student support
  - ✓ sports
    - ❖ cultural preferences
  - ✓ socials
    - ❖ availability of regular activities

(b) culture:

- cultural differences
  - ✓ role of food/alcohol
  - ✓ communication
  - ✓ social norms

Source:
http://publications.mcgill.ca/headway/maga
zine/five-steps-for-feeding-the-world/

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(c) courses:

- being a researcher vs teaching methods

- independent learning support/equipment

- administrative guidance

- awareness about language exchange

- examination support and preparation

- social divisions within the same course

(d) living in the UK:

- treatment at customs and visa process

- Uni-link buses

- accommodation

Source:
https://blogs.susu.org/blog/tag/october-freshers-ball/

2. Perceptions of an intercultural/global university:

- equal opportunities where no one is left out

- foster links between different cultures without losing specific identities

- individual efforts to connect

- recommendations:
    - ✓ optional module on studying at the UoS
    - ✓ optional module on raising cultural awareness
    - ✓ discussion groups during induction or Freshers week
    - ✓ publicity of societies during re-Freshers
    - ✓ having a study-buddy within your course
    - ✓ teachers to encourage more group work/student interaction
    - ✓ social activities within the faculty throughout the semester
    - ✓ better communication between faculties

Conclusion:

- limitations
  - ✓ communication and commitment
  - ✓ representative sample
  - ✓ no staff reflections (so far)

Source:
http://www.fredberinger.com/2009/09/qa-is-always-the-bottleneck-what-do-we-do-about-it/

Questions for the workshop:

- What is your experience of intercultural interactions at the University?

- How do you contribute to creating a sense of (international) community?

- Do you have reactions/comments on the reported student responses?

- What do you think the University (both as an institution and as groups of individuals) should do to be better connected?