The Essence of Student Life and the Challenges Facing Overseas Students in Athlone Institute Of Technology

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Declaration of Ownership

I declare that this dissertation and the research involved in it is entirely the work of the author.
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**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to examine overseas students’ attitudes with regard to their Irish counterparts and services offered in A.I.T., using the following objectives; exploring the different problems overseas students encounter when studying in A.I.T. and identifying overseas students level of awareness re services available and their input regarding new services which could be introduced.

In order to carry out this research, a quantitative method was employed with twenty questionnaires being distributed to twenty overseas students in the business department. The results indicated that the preponderance of students found their Irish counterparts very friendly and friendly, respondents agreed that overseas and native students would integrate more if Irish students did not return home at weekends, the problems which most commonly affect students were also determined. Nearly all students are aware of the services on offer, with the most commonly utilized services being medical services, clubs, societies and the International Office. Respondents also provided recommendations for future services which could be launched in A.I.T..

It was concluded by the author that the implementation of the services recommended could positively impinge on new and current overseas students in A.I.T..
Introduction
The author choose to carry out this dissertation due to a keen interest in overseas students’ experiences while studying abroad and in A.I.T. and a deep curiosity regarding the recommendations they would suggest to make their academic success more straightforward and amiable. This magnetism emerges from having a multi-racial background and a strong awareness of the separation which occurs between different races and cultures in the college.

The aim of the research is to examine the attitudes which overseas students possess towards Irish students and the services available in A.I.T.. The objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the different problems overseas students encounter when studying in A.I.T.

2. To identify overseas students level of awareness of the services available in A.I.T. and their input regarding new services which could be introduced.
2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction
This chapter delineates an overseas student and states the main functions of the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS).

Also highlighted are the origins of overseas students, details of the Erasmus Programme and the Bologna Process, illustrating both facilities’ provisions.

Further observed are the problems encountered by overseas students when studying abroad and in Ireland and the services established for overseas students according to the ICOS and subsequently A.I.T..

2.2 Who is an international student?
The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)\(^1\) "working definition of an international student follows the universities' own: one whose normal place of residence is outside the island of Ireland but who is resident in Ireland for the purpose of study over a shorter or longer period" (Egan, 1997; p.95). The author's perception of an international student, also known as an overseas student is an individual who travels to a country different from their own for the purpose of further study. The ICOS main aims include supplying advice, support and training services to international students and to its member institutions; controlling Irish government-funded and other official Study Fellowship Programmes and encouraging practice and policies in international education, using research, publications, conferences and meetings (Cox, 2001; p.80).

2.3 The Origins of Overseas Students
Research relating to overseas students was first identified after World War II (Brickman, 1965; Fraser and Brickman, 1968; cited in Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2008; p.143). Studies supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

\(^{1}\) The ICOS is an independent, non-profit organisation established to promote the welfare of international students and to promote the best policies and practice at national and institutional level.
Organisation (UNESCO)\textsuperscript{2}, stated that the main reason why students began studying in countries different to their own, was to assist in the restoration and economic development of their own countries as they had been impinged on by war and their education systems were at underdeveloped. Also, it was to develop receptive markets for the industrialised sponsor countries and to gain international good will and harmony (Ward et al., 2008; p.144).

For the academic year 1995/1996 the Higher Education Authority (HEA), who is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, found through researching students’ details that 73 percent of the 947 students studying at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland were from countries other than Ireland (MacLachlan, and O'Connell, 2000; p.273).

Caroline Kennedy, Communications Officer for Graduate Careers in Ireland, which is the representative body for careers services in higher education, found through researching overseas students and students working in Ireland that there were 12,000 full-time international third level students studying in Ireland in 2008 (Kennedy, 2010).

Statistics recently composed by Athlone Institution of Technology (A.I.T.), who is a member of the ICOS, found that currently 10 percent of it’s students, which is approximately six hundred are overseas students (Simpson, 2010).

### 2.4 Erasmus Programme

The Erasmus Programme is a European Union student exchange programme, it was first established in 1987. Their are presently 2199 higher education institutions in thirty-one countries participating in it, twenty-seven member states of the European Union and four non-EU countries; Norway, Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The programme guarantees that the period spent studying abroad is recognised by the participant’s

\textsuperscript{2} UNESCO encourages international peace and universal respect, by promoting collaboration among nations and the Social Science Research Council in the US.
university when they return home. Studies undertaken by the association responsible for implementing the Erasmus programme, the European Commission (Directorate-General Education and Culture) observed that over 1.2 million students have profited from an Erasmus study period abroad (International Relations Staff, 2010).

2.5 The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process (BP) is a series of agreements with other European countries regarding higher education, which was initiated with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The (BP) is not just restricted to European students but is open to students internationally and its main objective is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) relying on international collaboration and academic exchange that is appealing to both European and international students and staff (Rock, 2009; p.1-4).

2.6 Problems encountered by overseas students

Trina Vargo, president of the US-Ireland alliance, carried out a very recent survey of over 100 former Mitchell scholars. They are American students who receive scholarships to partake in a one year graduate study in Ireland and the figure accounts for 91 percent of the entire cohort of graduates from the Programme. The survey revealed some of the negatives in our higher education system, the major complaint received related to graduates who found their study material unchallenging, with repetition of material that they had previously studied as undergraduates. They also found the college library hours too restrictive and found a lack of university "community" on campus. They also claimed that most Irish students return home to their families and friends at the weekends. Vargo supplemented the previous assertion, stating that "the Irish are more likely to have the same friends from cradle to grave, they seem slower than Americans to take on new friends" (Holden, 2010; p.18).

Berry, who holds a doctorate in psychology from Genéve, discovered through studying the psychology of intercultural relations that the problems facing overseas students are threefold. To begin with, there are the "stressors" that challenge all individuals living in an unfamiliar culture, for instance racial discrimination, language problems,
accommodation difficulties, separation reactions, dietary restrictions, financial stress, misunderstandings and loneliness. The second point relates to the obstacles facing all late adolescents and young people whether studying in their native land or overseas. This is a time of considerable vulnerability, when young individuals are attempting emotional independence. Thirdly, are the academic stressors placed on students to work hard even under meagre conditions with complex material (Berry, 1987; cited in MacLachlan and O'Connell, 2000; p.263).

Salmons and Harrington, co-writers of the International Journal of Social Psychiatry discovered through a study of overseas students at St. George’s University of London, that overseas students experience considerably higher rates of suicidal thoughts than native students in the host countries. (Salmons and Harrington, 1984; cited in MacLachlan and O'Connell, 2000; p.263).

Research carried out by two general practitioners, Manderson and Sclare, in a study relating to mental health problems in a student population at the University of Glasgow, found that three out of four suicides involved overseas students (Manderson and Sclare, 1973; cited in MacLachlan and O'Connell, 2000; p.264).

2.7 **Intercultural contact between overseas and native students**

Sadowsky, an American university lecturer and respected author, reported through a survey of overseas students in an American university that 41 percent of overseas students reported that Americans students treated them well, 15 percent said the treatment was superficial, and a following 17 percent alleged the treatment was negative. Likewise, 41 percent of overseas students disclosed that they treated American students in a friendly fashion, 10 percent were reserved and cautious, 9 percent said the contact was superficial and 6 percent admitted they did not try to make friends with American students. It is not unusual for overseas students to perceive discrimination and prejudice, and these perceptions are often more common in students who are more culturally contrasting to members of the host population (Sadowsky, 1992; cited in Ward et al., 2008; p.152).

The (ICOS) published a report relating to racism in Ireland in 1997. The report entailed the ICOS conduct interviews with overseas students in three different Irish universities in
order to obtain opinions on the level of racism evident Ireland. The findings revealed that most overseas students have a positive outlook on studying in Ireland, as they found Ireland to be a homogeneous state and any racism towards non-Irish was due to this homogeneity (Boucher, 1998).

2.8 Student Services
Kelly, the International Student Services Officer at Dublin Business School (DBS) speaks of the foundation programme which was established in (DBS) in response to the large need for English language training for overseas students. Kelly, also found that overseas students need assistance in the areas of immigration, accommodation, and travel. (DBS) being one of the Irish market leaders in overseas student recruitment, has acquired a great deal of expertise regarding the service needs of overseas students from dealing with international student queries and various issues on a daily basis (Kelly, 2001; p.23-25).

The ICOS believe the following areas of service provision for overseas students needs tweaking to enable them to obtain maximum benefit from their period of study in Ireland. The primary step would be to develop a greater sensitivity and cultural awareness among all staff members, for example, lecturer’s language habits. The ICOS would like to see an anti-discriminatory code introduced into each college and a mechanism to deal with claims of racism. Adequate services in health care provision, for example, the availability of female doctors. The ICOS also see a need for improvement in services areas such as student accommodation, diet, religious requirements, English language tuition and financial matters. Finally, in the case of student unions, the ICOS believes they should ensure to welcome and facilitate overseas students to become part of the college community (Egan, 1997; p.101-103).

The following students services are available to both Irish and overseas students in A.I.T.; chaplaincy, where an atmosphere of personal growth is facilitated; counselling, counsellors help students cope or resolve difficulties; careers advice; health and medical services; disability support, involving access to specialised equipment or exam accommodation and financial support. The Institute also offers an array of clubs and societies (Athlone Institute of Technology, 2009).
2.9 Conclusion

Firstly, a general description of an overseas student was conveyed, their onset and the number of overseas students currently studying in A.I.T. were observed. Followed by the conditions and outcomes of both the Erasmus Programme and Bologna Process.

Subsequently reviewed were the various problems overseas students experience while studying abroad, relating predominately to intercultural contact between overseas and native students and educational based issues.

Lastly, student service recommendations from both the DBS International Student Services Officer and the ICOS were discussed with student services in A.I.T. also being considered.

The rationale for choosing this particular area to study relates to the fact that there is no pre-existing information compiled on the topics discussed. Due to this reasoning, the information compiled could benefit individuals looking to acquire guidance or suggestions and those participating in future studies of overseas students.
3. **Methodology**

3.1 **Introduction**
This section will outline and justify the research method chosen, the sample group involved, the procedure, ethical considerations, limitations, method of analysis and conclusion.

3.2 **Research Methods**
“Quantitative research collects numerical data and typically structured and predetermined research questions, conceptual frameworks and designs” (Punch, 2005;
“Techniques are likely to produce quantified and generalised conclusions” (Bell, 2010; p.5). Because all questions are fixed, the data is more quantifiable (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2005; p.64).

“Qualitative implies a direct concern with experience as it is ‘lived’ and ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Sherman and Tight; cited in Blaxter et al., 2005; p.64). This method may receive a better response rate, but because it is a face-to-face interview or survey, it is very time consuming to undertake (Blaxter et al., 2005; p.179). “Qualitative methods attempt to understand individuals’ perceptions of the world”. It uses non-numerical and unstructured data and has more general research questions at the beginning and becomes more focused as the interview progresses (Punch, 2005; p.28).

The research instrument chosen is a quantitative method, using questionnaires to obtain the necessary data. Questionnaires acquire information from a larger population without having to speak to each recipient individually, information gathered can be more in-depth and measured more or less exactly (Walliman, 2008; p.303). Questionnaires are easily administered, cost-effective, have a good response rate and offer a significant amount of data for analysis (Blaxter et al., 2005; p.179).

The method is aligned to receive information relating to objective 1 through questions 7-9; and objective 2 through questions 10-12.

3.3 Sample Group

The respondents consisted of twenty overseas students from countries such as France, Spain, Finland, Lithuania, Germany and Poland. The respondents are currently in third year of International Business of Management and were selected by the Head of the Business Department to partake in the questionnaire.

3.4 Procedure

A pilot questionnaire was distributed to 4 respondents to ensure the questions being asked were user friendly and the research instrument as a whole would gather the required information to satisfy the objectives of the study (Bryman, 2004; p.159).

The target group was identified with the help of the International Office in A.I.T.. Before
obtaining the participants’ and lecturer’s permission, the author met with the Head of the Business Department to attain his permission first, once granted the class lecturer was contacted to gain his permission to distribute questionnaires during his class. The author read an explanatory sheet to all participants which established the aim of the project. Before participating in the questionnaire respondents were asked to sign a consent form which allowed the author to use information provided for the purpose of the study. When the information was received from the participants, the author analysed the findings using Microsoft Excel (Bell, 2010).

3.5 Ethical Considerations
Informed consent was accomplished through the use of a consent form stating that all information provided would only be used for the purpose of this study. Respondents were also advised that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time (Bryman, 2004; p.516). Confidentiality and anonymity were achieved by informing respondents that answers provided would remain confidential and that their identities would not be uncovered as respondents did not have to sign their names on the questionnaires and all questionnaires would be destroyed after the findings were analysed (Blaxter et al., 2005; p.160).

3.6 Limitations
As the number of respondents was limited to 20 and were chosen by non-probability sampling, the data collected may not be fully representative of all overseas students. Time constraints and the language barrier caused word restrictions in the questionnaire wording and in the respondents' answers, this led to limited information for the researcher in question 12, as it was an open-ended question. The respondents' honesty in answering the questions could also be deemed as a potential limitation.

3.7 Method of Analysis
The findings of the questionnaire were calculated analytically and the answers were employed to find a correlation between the variables. Results are displayed in the research section of this project in the form of graphs.
3.8 Conclusion

The research instrument utilized in this project entailed the use of literature from the literature review section and a questionnaire undertaken by third year, male and female, overseas business students. The results from the above study are displayed in the results section of this project.
4. **Results**

This segment illustrates information acquired through the distribution of questionnaires as it relates to the overall objectives of the project. Questions 1-6 provide respondents general information. Questions 7-9 present findings relating to objective 1. Questions 10-12 offer information which correlates to objective 2.

Question 1 observes that 5 respondents (25%) are aged 17-20 years and the remaining 15 (75%) are aged 21-25 years. Question 2 establishes that 6 (30%) are male and 14 (70%) are female. Question 3 found that all 20 (100%) are in the same course, International Business of Management. Question 4 deciphered that all 20 respondents (100%) are currently in third year. Question 5 revealed that 10 (50%) have been studying in A.I.T. for two months, 6 (30%) have been studying in A.I.T. for three months and the following 4 (20%) have been studying in A.I.T. for one year.
Figure 1: Respondents’ Nationalities

![Nationalities Chart]

Figure 1 shows that 11 respondents (55%) are French, 5 (25%) are Spanish, 1 (5%) is Finnish, 1 (5%) is Lithuanian, 1 (5%) is German and 1 (5%) is Polish.

4.1 **Objective 1: To explore the different problems overseas students encounter when studying in A.I.T.**

Question 7 which asked respondents to rate Irish students’ friendliness towards them choosing from very friendly, friendly, neither friendly or unfriendly, unfriendly and very unfriendly was employed to identify attitudes towards this objective. Respondents were then asked to answer either yes or no to a series of problems which could have possibly caused them difficulty while studying in A.I.T. To establish answers to these questions, twenty overseas students were asked to convey their opinions in a questionnaire.

Figure 2: Overseas students’ viewpoint regarding Irish students’ friendliness
Figure 2 shows that 3 respondents (15%) said they find Irish students very friendly towards them, 11 (55%) said they were friendly, 3 (15%) said they were neither friendly or unfriendly, 2 (10%) said they were unfriendly and 1 (5%) said they were very unfriendly.

Figure 3: Problems which might cause overseas students difficulty
Figure 3 shows that 1 respondent (5%) said that he or she had been affected by racism, 15 (75%) said they had been affected by language difficulties, 4 (20%) said they had encountered accommodation difficulties, 14 (70%) said the choice of food in the canteen affected them, 10 (50%) said they were affected by financial stress and 4 (20%) said they were affected by feelings of homesickness.

Question 8 part (b), asked respondents who answered “yes” in part (a), whether or not this had lead to other feelings such as upset, loneliness, worry or suicide. 1 (5%) said he or she had feelings of upset, 2 (10%) said they had feelings of loneliness, 1 (5%) said that he or she felt worried and 0% said they had feelings of suicide.

4.2 Objective 2: To identify overseas students’ level of awareness of the services available in A.I.T. and their input regarding new services which could be introduced.
Figure 4: Overseas students’ level of awareness of the services available in A.I.T.

Figure 4 exhibits that 14 respondents (70%) were aware of the chaplaincy service, 7 (35%) were aware of the counselling service, 8 (40%) were aware of the careers advice service, 17 (85%) were aware of the medical service, 6 (30%) were aware of the disability support on offer, 2 (10%) were aware of the financial support service, 19 (95%) were aware of the clubs in the college, 20 (100%) were aware of the college societies and 20 (100%) were aware of the International Office.

Figure 5: Percentage of overseas students using the services available in A.I.T.
Figure 5 demonstrates that 3 (15%) have used the chaplaincy service, 0% have utilized the counselling service, 1 (5%) has availed of careers advice, 8 (40%) have used the medical service, 0% have availed of disability support, 2 (10%) acquired financial support, 13 (65%) are members of various clubs in the college, 15 (75%) take part in the different societies and 19 (95%) utilize the International Office services.
Figure 6 displays that 11 respondents (55%) made suggestions for the introduction of new services. 4 (20%) suggested that the canteen provide a range of international foods. 2 (10%) recommended the placement of multi-linguistic signs around the college to help reduce anxiety and additional stress for students entering the college. 1 (5%) proposed to supply each overseas student with a basic English language tutorial pack or disc prior to arrival. 1 (5%) suggested that it would be helpful to introduce a student tutoring service provided by other A.I.T. students. 1 (5%) suggested the establishment of a “Buddy System” which would provide help and support to current and new students. 2 (10%) said the services on offer should be publicized more efficiently in order to improve students knowledge of their existence and function.
Discussion
5.1 **Introduction**

This study examines the attitudes of overseas students to their Irish counterparts and the services available in A.I.T.. It focuses predominantly on the problems encountered by overseas students and their level of awareness pertaining to services available to them in the institute. Overseas students’ recommendations for new services were also examined.

5.2 **Objective 1: To explore the different problems overseas students encounter when studying in A.I.T.**

Firstly, respondents were asked to rate how friendly Irish students are towards them. Sadowsky, an American university lecturer who carried out a survey of overseas students in America, discovered that 41% said American students treated them well, 15% said the treatment was superficial, and a following 17% said the treatment was negative (Ward et al., 2008; p.152). In relation to the author’s study of overseas students in A.I.T., 15% said Irish students are very friendly towards them, 55% said they are friendly, 15% said they are neither friendly or unfriendly, 10% said they are unfriendly and 5% said they are very unfriendly. Both Sadowsky’s and the author’s findings concur quite well. Sadowsky, 1992, stated that it is not unusual for overseas students to perceive discrimination and prejudice and these perceptions are often more common in students who are more culturally contrasting to members of the host population (Ward et al., 2008; p.152). This may be true in Sadowsky’s study, but findings from question 9 in the author’s questionnaire provide that 5% of respondents said they have encountered racial discrimination while studying in A.I.T. In agreeing with Sadowsky’s statement, one could argue that the author’s respondents were from European countries which could therefore imply that the majority of respondents may not be culturally contrasting from native A.I.T. students.

Respondents were then asked if they thought overseas students and Irish students would integrate more if Irish students did not return home at the weekends. Trina Vargo,
president of the US-Ireland alliance surveyed American students studying in Ireland (Mitchell scholars) and established that respondents felt there was “a lack of university “community” on campus” and that most Irish students go home to their families and friends at the weekends (Holden, 2006; p.18). 80% of respondents from the author’s study said overseas students and Irish students would integrate more if students did not return home at weekends. Vargo stated that “the Irish are more likely to have the same friends from cradle to grave, they seem slower than Americans to take on new friends” (Holden, 2006; p.18).

Problems which overseas students encounter when studying in A.I.T. were then observed. Berry stated that the challenges which face all students living in an unfamiliar culture are as follows; racial discrimination, language problems, accommodation difficulties, dietary restrictions, financial stress and loneliness (Berry, 1987; cited in MacLachlan and O’Connell, 2000). The majority of the above challenges were evident in the author’s study with 5% answering yes to being affected by racial discrimination, 75% affected by language difficulties, 20% affected by accommodation difficulties, 70% affected by food choice in canteen, 50% affected by financial stress and 20% affected by feelings of homesickness. A report was undertaken by the ICOS in 1997 whereby overseas students in three different Irish universities were surveyed in order to obtain their views on the prevalence of racism in Ireland. Findings suggest that most respondents had a positive outlook on studying in Ireland, as they found Ireland to be a homogeneous state and any racism towards non-Irish was due to this homogeneity (Boucher, 1998). The ICOS also stated that they would like to see anti-racism policies and mechanisms to deal with claims of racism introduced into each college, improvements in lecturers’ language habits, service improvements regarding student accommodation, diet and religious requirements, English language tuition and financial matters (Egan, 1997; p.101-103).

Also highlighted are the sentiments felt by respondents who have experienced problems while studying in A.I.T.. Salmons and Harrington, 1984, found that overseas students have considerably higher rates of suicidal thoughts than native students in host countries through a study in St. George’s University of London (MacLachlan and O’Connell, 2000;
p.264). Contrastingly, the researcher found that 0% of respondents had suicidal thoughts, 5% had feelings of upset, 10% had feelings of loneliness and 5% had feelings of worry. In order to highlight the number of students who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts a larger network of respondents may be required.

5.3 **Objective 2: To identify overseas students’ level of awareness of the services available in A.I.T. and their input regarding new services which could be introduced.**

Under this objective, was the number of overseas students aware of the services available and the amount who make use of them was determined. 70% were aware of the chaplaincy service but only 15% have used it, 35% were aware of the counselling service but 0% have used it, 40% were aware of the careers advice service only 5% have used it, 85% knew of the medical service on offer and 40% have used it, 30% were aware of the disability support available, 0% have availed of it, 10% were aware of the financial service and 10% have used it, 95% were aware of the clubs and 65% have used them, 100% knew of the societies and 75% are members, finally, 100% were aware of the International Office and 95% have utilized it’s services.

Kelly, 2001, the International Student Officer in DBS found that students need assistance in the areas of immigration, accommodation and travel advice. The issue of accommodation concurs with the author’s findings in question 9, where 20% of respondents said “yes” to having experienced problems with accommodation while studying in A.I.T.

Respondents then offered their input regarding new services which could be introduced to A.I.T.. The ICOS aspire to introduce adequate health services in each college with the provision of female doctors and in the case of student unions, the ICOS recommends that they should ensure to welcome and facilitate overseas students to become part of the college community (Egan, 1997; p.101-103).
Conclusively, 55% of respondents made suggestions for the introduction of new services. 20% suggested that the canteen provide a range of international foods. 10% recommended that A.I.T. place multi-linguistic signs around the college to help reduce anxiety and additional stress for students entering the college. 5% proposed to supply each student with a basic English language tutorial pack or disc prior to arriving in A.I.T. 5% suggested that it would be helpful to have some kind of student tutoring service. 5% suggested the introduction of a “Buddy System”, this would provide help and support to current and new students attending A.I.T.. 10% said the services on offer should be advertised better to promote their existence and purpose. The respondents’ input regarding food choice in the canteen also corresponds with the ICOS recommendations for improvements in dietary provision (Egan, 1997; p.101-103).
6. **Conclusion**

The study aimed to examine the attitudes of overseas students regarding Irish students and services in A.I.T.. Research conducted explored the problems encountered by overseas students and uncovered their opinions relating to Irish students’ friendliness. Students’ awareness of the services available and their input pertaining to the introduction of new services were also highlighted.
Results established under objective one, indicate that the majority of respondents find Irish students very friendly and friendly. The largest part of respondents agreed that Irish students and overseas students would integrate more if their Irish counterparts did not return home at weekends. The preponderance has encountered problems with accommodation, canteen food and financial stress while studying in A.I.T..

The findings of objective two suggest that a great deal of students are aware of the services on offer, with the most commonly utilized services being medical services, clubs, societies and the International Office.

To conclude, several students proposed recommendations for the introduction of new services in A.I.T. which will optimistically enhance the experiences of new and existing overseas students.
7. **Recommendations**

This chapter highlights the author’s and participants’ recommendations for the introduction of new services in A.I.T. and techniques which could be employed to make overseas students time in A.I.T. less problematic.

- The provision of additional English language classes to overcome the language
barrier for overseas students.

- Placing multi-linguistic signs around the college to help reduce anxiety and additional stress for students entering the college.
- Supplying each student with a basic English language tutorial pack or disc prior to arriving in A.I.T..
- Introducing some kind of student tutoring service provided by other A.I.T. students.
- The establishment of a “Buddy System” in A.I.T. which would provide help and support to current and new students in A.I.T..
- The services available should be advertised better to enable students to become more aware of their existence and purpose.
- The provision of a range of international foods in the college canteen.
- Develop a better sense of cultural awareness among lecturers and native students.
- Student Unions could take charge of welcoming and facilitating students to enable them to become part of the college community and advise them of important matters.
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Appendices

*Figure 7: Statistical Breakdown of Overseas Students by Country in A.I.T. 2009/2010.*
Figure 8: Statistical Breakdown of European Students in A.I.T. 2009/2010.
Figure 9: Statistical Breakdown of Non-European students in A.I.T. 2009/2010.
10. **Appendix (B): Copy of Cover Letter for Questionnaire.**
Dear student,

My name is Amanda Hoover and I am a fourth year Social Care Practice student at Athlone Institute of Technology (A.I.T.). I am currently undertaking a thesis as part of my honours degree year. It is an exploration of the integration of overseas students in A.I.T.

I would greatly appreciate you taking the time to fill out this questionnaire, which seeks to explore the different problems overseas students encounter while studying at A.I.T. and to identify overseas students' level of awareness of the services available to aid integration in A.I.T. and to obtain your input regarding new services which could be introduced.

There is no obligation to answer any question you wish not to answer, as this questionnaire is voluntary. Please note that all questionnaires are completely confidential and will be used for my thesis only. It is also anonymous so your name is not required.

I greatly appreciate you taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Thank you

_____________________
Amanda Hoover
Fourth year student, B.A. Social Care Practice
11. **Appendix (C): Copy of Consent Form for Questionnaire.**

Consent Form of Questionnaire
This is to state that I agree to participate in this research about the integration of overseas students in Athlone Institute of Technology (A.I.T).

Conducted by: **Amanda Hoover**

On the: ________________

I acknowledge that I shall not be identified in any way as a result of completing this questionnaire.

_Signed:_ ________________________________

Participant

_Signed:_ ________________________________

Amanda Hoover
Researcher
12. **Appendix (D): Copy of Questionnaire.**

**Questionnaire-Overseas Students**

**Background Information**
1. What age bracket are you in? 17-20 [ ]  21-25 [ ]  26-30 [ ]  31+ [ ]

2. What gender are you?  
       Male [ ]  Female [ ]

3. Course Title: ____________________________________________________

4. Year of course:  1st [ ]  2nd [ ]  3rd [ ]  4th [ ]

5. How long have you been studying in A.I.T.? _____________

6. Nationality:  __________

Section (1)

7. How friendly are Irish students towards you?

       Very Friendly [ ]  Friendly [ ]  Neither Friendly or Unfriendly [ ]  Unfriendly [ ]

       Very Unfriendly [ ]

8. Do you think Overseas Students and Irish students would integrate more if Irish students did not return home at the weekends?  YES [ ]  NO [ ]

9. If any of the below problems have caused you any difficulty while studying in A.I.T., please tick YES, and NO if they have not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

51
Racial Discrimination
Language Problems
Accommodation Difficulties
Choice of Food in Canteen
Financial Stress
Homesickness

If you answered YES to any of the above problems, has this problem(s) ever lead you to experience feelings of:

- Upset []
- Loneliness []
- Worry[]
- Suicide []

**Section (2)**

10. Are you aware of the following services available in A.I.T. for Overseas Students? Tick either Yes or No for each service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers Advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Have you ever used them?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Societies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What new services would you introduce in A.I.T. for Overseas Students?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey…