Providing the right experience for International Students

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SOAS – the context

- Student population of approx 4000 students
- 2,300 undergraduates and1,700 postgraduates
- 45% doing social sciences, 28% Arts & Humanities, and 27% Languages and related disciplines
- A high percentage of non-UK nationals in the student body (35% of undergraduates, 57% of taught postgraduates and 71% of research postgraduates)

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What *is* the right environment?

- Is there one right environment for international students? *No, though there are common elements*
- However, concerns of international and home students are broadly the same (at SOAS, at least)
- But - international students are not homogenous

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Concerns are the same

Comparing international and home students based on what students find important and are dissatisfied with shows that there is not a great deal of difference between the two.

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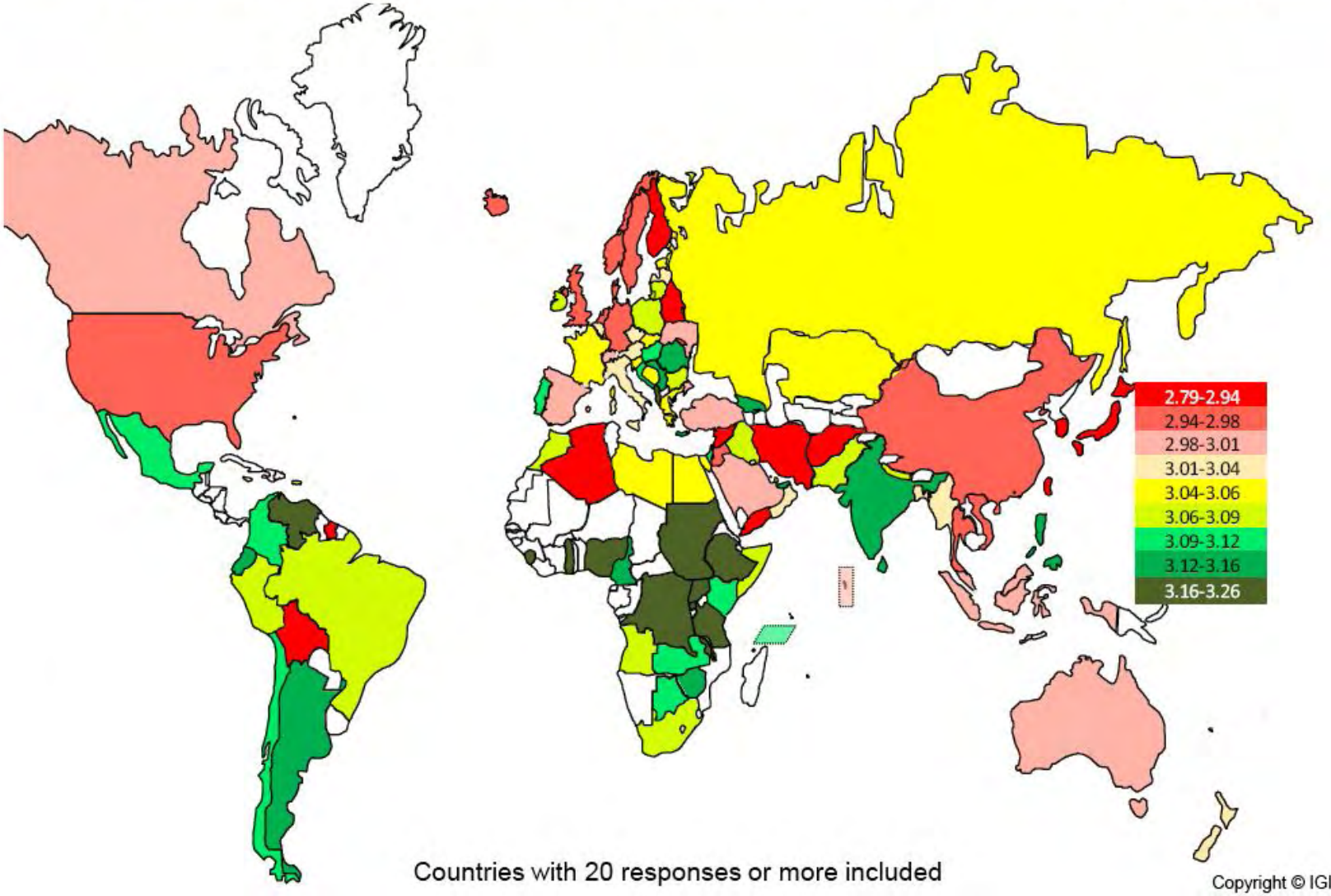
i-graduate
INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT

Learning

Overall learning satisfaction: mean score – by nationality (All ISB)



Countries with 20 responses or more included

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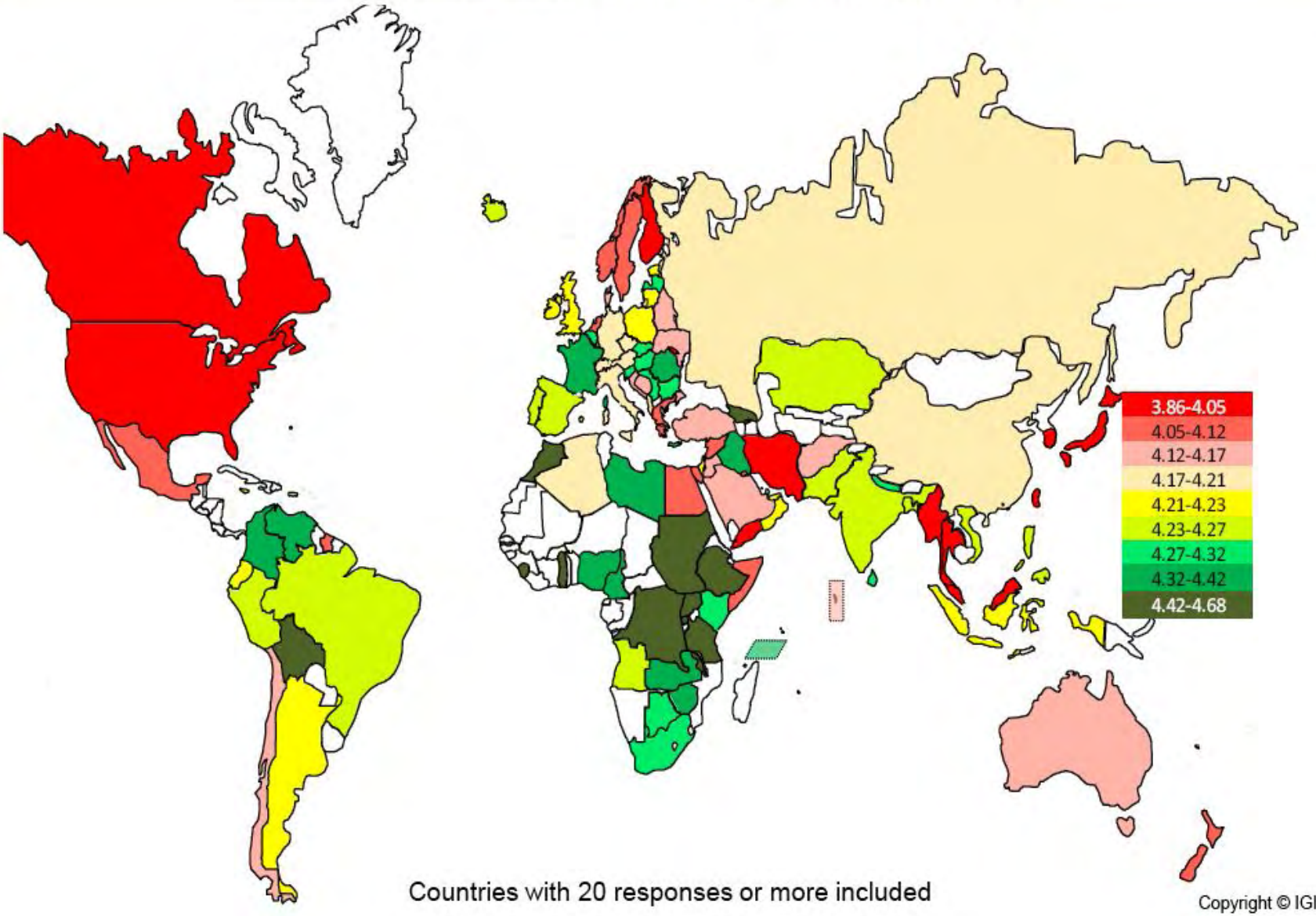
ecommendation

Recommendation score - by country (All ISB)



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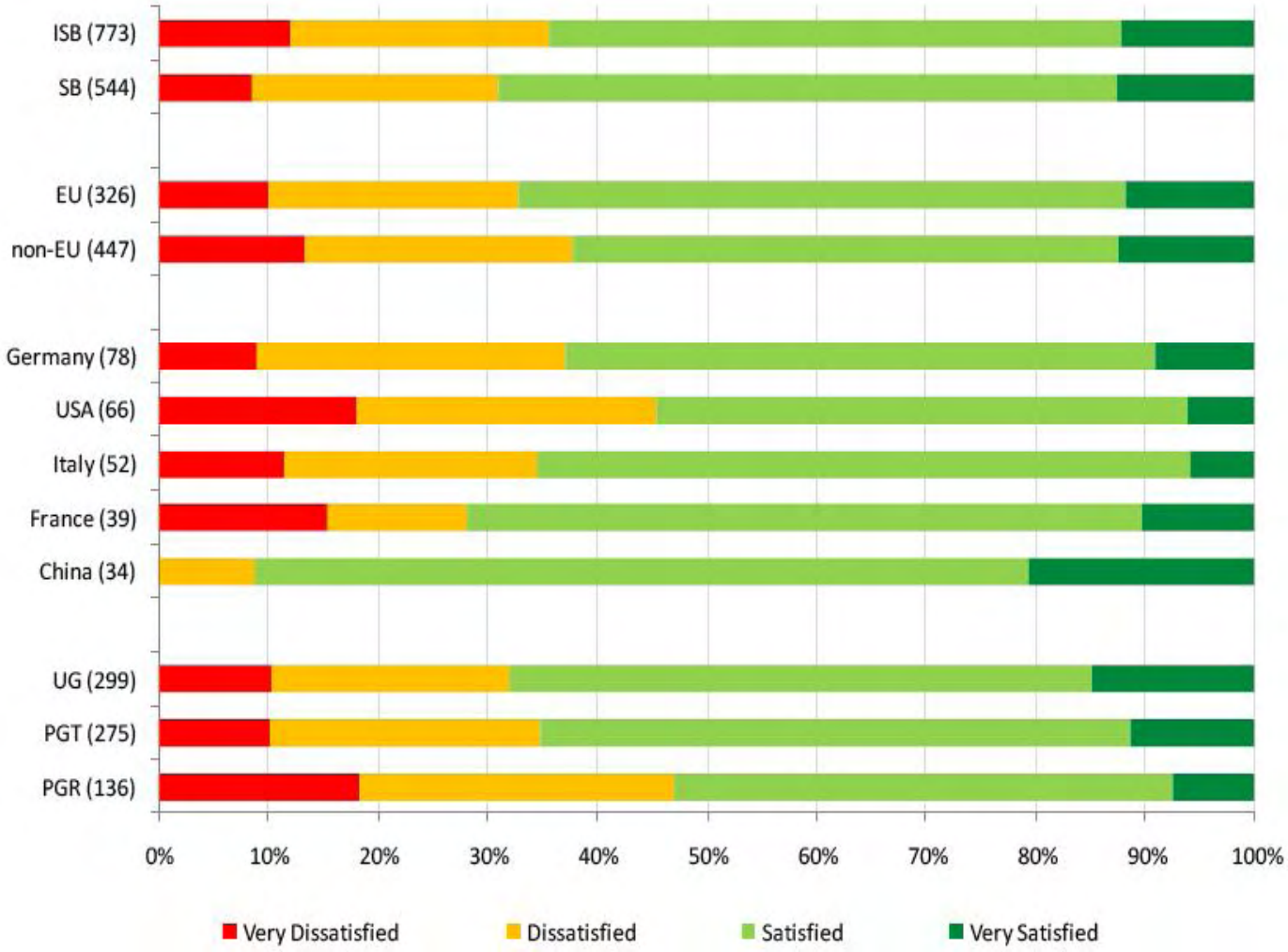
Support



What environment are we aiming for?

- Our aim is to provide a very multi-cultural environment where all students feel at home, there is a strong sense of community, and students are given good facilities – but where people are intellectually tested, have their preconceptions challenged and are encouraged to be critical.

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What does this mean in practice I?

- Pre-entry

  It is important to keep to timescales and good *communication* is vital in this process
- Orientation/Induction

  Integrating international students with home students

  Orientation is run by the School's Learning and Teaching Unit which is responsible for academic skills support –provides a parity of support for both home and international students by supporting both from the same source
- Careers guidance

  Providing careers advisors with an international focus to provide specialised careers advice

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What does this mean in practice II?

- Study Skills support: Personalisation is important and technology can facilitate this- One to one support for international students provided by trained PhD students [see next slide]
- Provision of English language support both before start of programme but continuously and “just in time” during it. An integrated service is provided which prevents international students feeling “ghettoised”.
- An energetic & committed Students Union that through its activities generates a good atmosphere

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Learning & Teaching Unit
News
Study Support
Help Yourself Study Resources
Workshops
One-to-One Tutorials
Research Student Support
Dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties
Language Learning and Dyslexia Symposium
Where to go for help
Information for Staff
School Timetable
BLE Support
Widening Participation
Contact
Who We Are
Events

One-to-One Tutorials

UG and PG taught masters students:
Need help writing your essay or dissertation? Come along for a one-to-one tutorial and have your questions answered. Topics covered include:

- planning your essay
- answering essay questions
- organising your essay
- using sources correctly

Each tutorial lasts 30 minutes and can be booked by coming into the LTU (room G12, opposite the main lifts) in person with a £5 returnable deposit.

If you have an essay plan or part of an essay/dissertation that you would like a tutor to look at, please email it to ltu@soas.ac.uk two working days before your tutorial. It is not possible for tutors to read whole essays during the 30 minute tutorial and give feedback.

Please note: It is not possible for students to use this service on a regular basis, although some follow-up sessions may be possible. If you need to cancel a tutorial for any reason, this must be done 2 working days in advance otherwise you will lose your deposit.

What does this mean in practice III?

- Our radio station - Open Air Radio – sometimes described as an alternative world service.
- Our multi-lingual Library provides access to books, journals, magazines and newspapers in a wide range of languages
- Cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, public lectures) all very international and multi-cultural.
- Importance of academic contact [this is a major strength of the UK HE Sector and valued by international students as a unique feature of the UK]

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Unresolved issues

- How far do we adapt? (religious holidays and timetabling, dress codes)
- International students are not homogenous – in expectations, academic background etc. What expectations should we meet, which should we try to change?
- Parity of treatment with home students (e.g. in support services, bursaries etc)
- Increasing student numbers (and deteriorating SSR) leads to reduction in academic contact

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