



**MARKETING CENTRE**  
**FOR SMALL BUSINESS**

**International Education  
Division  
University of Limerick**

**Primary Research Report  
2013**



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## Executive Summary

The International Educational Division (IED) commissioned the Marketing Centre for Small Business, University of Limerick to conduct primary research with international students (undergraduate and taught postgraduate) to obtain relevant information in relation to a number of areas of interest. A key objective of the research was to acquire information so that the Education Division could ensure their services continue to meet the needs of international students. The research sought to identify some general information on international students registered at UL as well as the sources used by students to obtain information on the University of Limerick. It also examined the use of the UL website and students experience both prior to arriving at UL as well as their experience whilst studying here. It was hoped that the research findings would allow the IED to continue to enhance their service offering and elicit information on the how existing services both within the IED and throughout the University can be enhanced to make the experience of international students who come to UL to study, a positive one.

The research was conducted through the use of an online survey with international students. The survey was distributed by email to 842 students. The final response count at the survey close amounted to a total of 254 responses representing a response rate of 30.2%. The main findings of the research are set out below:

### Section One – General Information

- A total of 34.6% of respondents were undergraduate students with 15% of respondents enrolled in a taught masters programme.
- A total of 25.2% were Study Abroad and 24% were Erasmus
- The majority (71.7%) of respondents were Non-EU students.
- The highest percentage of respondents were American students (40.3%) followed by Canadian (9.3%) and French (7.7%) students.
- The majority of students (87.4%) have been studying in Ireland for less than 1 year followed by 4.3% who had been studying in Ireland for less than 2 years.
- A total of 82.3% of respondents indicated that UL was their first choice of International Education programmes.

### Section Two – Sources of Information

- The most popular sources of information included faculty recommendations (39.8%) and use of the internet (27.2%).

### **Section Three – Factors influencing decision to choose UL**

- The main factors which influenced student's decision to choose UL included the fact that UL offered a programme of interest (60.5%) language of instruction (51.4%) followed by 38.3% citing the location of the university.

### **Section Four – Use of Website**

- A total of 84.5% of respondents were able to find application forms, 94.9% were able to find information about accommodation, 76.6% could find visa/immigration requirements and finally 77.8% could obtain information on living expenses.

### **Section Five – Pre-Arrival**

- Respondents indicated that they felt they had received sufficient specific information in relation to accommodation (92.4%), visa/immigration requirements (78.4%), living expenses (80.5%) and medical insurance (83.3%). The only area they didn't feel was sufficiently covered was information about working in Ireland (39.8%).
- A total of 91.7% of respondents indicated that they attended the International Education orientation. A similar number (92.1%) of respondents indicated that they received an explanation of the support services available to students and 7.2% of respondents indicated that they had difficulty registering/obtaining a student identity card.
- The majority of respondents rated the orientation programme as either being excellent or very good (20.1% and 47.1% respectively), with feedback mainly relating to having more breaks during orientation day, providing more advance information on modules and timetables as well as living in Ireland and more specifically essential information on the locality such as the location of shops and services.

### **Section Six – Studying at UL**

- A total of 83.3% of respondents were satisfied with the academic programme they registered for.
- Respondents indicated that overall, lecturers were aware of international students in their class (82.6%).
- A total of 56.4% said they were comfortable asking lecturers questions 'all of the time', 40.7% 'some of the time' and 2.9% 'none of the time'.
- A total of 44.5% said they received sufficient support from lecturers 'all of the time', 51.7% 'some of the time' and 3.8% 'none of the time'.
- A total of 32.9% said they felt integrated within the class 'all of the time', 60.5% 'some of the time' and 6.6% 'none of the time'.

- A total of 69% said they could access their notes online 'all of the time', 30.6% 'some of the time' and 0.4% 'none of the time'.
- Respondents were asked to comment on what they felt was the biggest obstacle for them to overcome in their first 6 months of being in Ireland. The responses referred to – general challenges associated with living in a different country such as language/lifestyle/culture as well as missing family and friends. Another main obstacle was the area of module selection and timetables.
- Respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness and usage of a number of services available to them in UL. The areas with the highest levels of awareness included the Student Counselling Service (96.7%), the Mathematics Learning Centre (96.6%), and the Chaplaincy programme (94.7%). The lowest levels of awareness related to the Students Union (80.8%), free English language courses (83.3%), the language centre (85.7%) and the Connect Programme (87.9%). The highest usage levels related to Students Union (61.5%), the Medical Centre (28.3%) and free English language courses (27.8%). The lowest usage levels were evident in terms of the Mathematics Learning Centre (4.7%), the Student Counselling Service (6%) and the Study Skills Programme (13.4%).
- A total of 81.1% of respondents indicated that they were members of a UL club or society.
- Almost one-third (30.3%) of respondents felt that they came away from this experience with at least 1-3 Irish friends, 22.7% stated they had 10+.
- Respondents were asked to rate the services provided by the International Education Division. The highest rating services in terms of mean scores included the application process, orientation service and pre-arrival information.
- A total of 49.6% of students stated they were very satisfied with their international education experience in UL, with a further 44.9% stating they were satisfied.
- When asked whether they would consider embarking on further study, 59.9% of respondents indicated that they would consider such a possibility.
- A total of 92.8% of respondents stated that they would recommend UL to a friend or family member.
- When asked what other services could be provided to International students – respondents referred to better communication and a regular 'check in' with students, better explanation of systems and structures in UL, clear information on module selection pre-arrival and finally more opportunities to meet Irish students.