

MInf with International Studies

In my role as Director of Internationalisation I suggest that we introduce a variant on our MInf degree that is the same as our current MInf but requires one year abroad. With this short paper I hope to attract comments that I can take into account in a full proposal for a future Board of Studies meeting.

The title of the degree would be something like “International Master of Informatics” or “Master of Informatics with International Studies”. This is something that students can do now, but making it a requirement of the degree and indicating the requirement in the title makes the international aspect much more prominent and perhaps more attractive to students and employers. The hope is that this will lead a greater proportion of our students to participate in international exchanges.

This proposal is in line with the “Influencing Globally” theme of the university’s Strategic Plan, by increasing opportunities for our students to study abroad. When I visit good universities abroad, I hear that they are already providing some kind of international experience to a very large proportion of their students, sometimes with a target of 100% of students. We appear to be well behind the curve on this.

Probably the most straightforward way to modify the MInf is to require year 3 to be taken abroad. Allowing year 4 or 5 abroad introduces complications because a Master’s degree is required to include at least 60 points of project work. Current MInf students do 40 points of project work in each of years 4 and 5. Changing this arrangement would require care with arrangements for transfer into and out of the BSc, where students do 40 points of project work in year 4. Requiring students to do a project as part of year 4 or 5 abroad, instead of spending year 3 abroad, would be an attractive alternative but could be more complicated to organise.

Plenty of destinations for study abroad are already available. If this degree attracts substantial numbers of students, or if there is pressure to add destinations that are not already on the list, additional destinations might be required. We would then aim to set up exchange agreements with the best universities in various geographical regions. This would probably involve agreeing to a similar flow of incoming exchange students, which would ultimately increase the diversity and the average quality of our student body.

Some similar existing degree programmes are: MEng Computing (International Programme of Study) at Imperial College; MSci in Computer Science with International Year and MSci in Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence including International Year at Nottingham University; MEng in Computer and Electronic Systems with International Study at Strathclyde University; BSc in Computer Science (Study Abroad) at Lancaster University; MEng in Electronic Engineering and Computer Science with International Study at University of Exeter

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