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BNU Academic Conference 2026: 30 June – 1 July

Day One – Research and Knowledge Exchange

Title - Enhancing Wellbeing and Belonging for International Postgraduate Students: Insights from a Multifaceted Support Initiative

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Abstract

Recent Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data show that international students now represent more than half of all postgraduate enrolments in UK universities. Their distinct academic, social and cultural adjustment needs underscore the importance of targeted approaches that strengthen wellbeing, belonging and mental health. This paper seeks to presenting the findings of a study implemented within a postgraduate-taught programme at Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) in which international students constitute over 95% of the cohort.

The project employed a multifaceted model combining staff–student partnerships, tailored engagement activities, and collaboration with industry and community organisations. Two contemporary frameworks, the Integrative Framework for Belonging and the Flourish HE Programme served as guides for the design of interventions. Insights from focus groups with 42 international students informed the development of activities that promote personal growth, social connectedness and community integration. A concluding survey captured students' perceptions of the project's relevance and effectiveness.

Planned outputs include an activity-based training programme and a wellbeing and belonging workbook tailored specifically for international postgraduate students. The project amplifies international student voices and demonstrates the value of co-creating support strategies with those directly affected. Emerging recommendations are expected to inform future institutional initiatives at BNU, including the development of the university's internationalisation strategy. It is anticipated that the project's outcomes will also contribute to sector-wide evidence-based policymaking, promoting more inclusive and supportive environments for international postgraduate students.

Author Bios

Uchenna Nweke is the Programme Lead for MSc International Business Management at BNU. A certified management and business educator and senior fellow of Advance HE, Uchenna also brings into his role his experience as a chartered manager and fellow of the Chartered

Management Institute. His research engagements include leading the International Students Wellbeing and Belonging Project.

Hardeep Singh is an Associate Lecturer in Business and Management at Buckinghamshire New University. He holds an MBA with First-Class Honours and is due to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice programme in June 2026. His interests include leadership, student belonging, wellbeing, and inclusive teaching practices in higher education.