Global Student Satisfaction Awards

Student Satisfaction

A 2021 Global Overview

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BRITISH COUNCIL IELTS™

UNIBUDDY

Global Student Satisfaction Awards

The Global Student Satisfaction Awards empower students across the globe to determine the best universities based on reviews focused on student experiences. It is an open call to both students and universities to contribute to the transparency of study choice, and to the quality of education worldwide. In this way, we aim to give recognition to the best educators and award those universities which have achieved the highest student satisfaction ratings.

Real stories have never been more important for prospective students. That is why we wanted to create the only student-powered global university overview, no matter the size or history of your institution. Our research has shown that students want to know how other students experienced studying a specific programme. This helps them make a more informed choice based on their personal needs.

For universities, reviews can be a valuable opportunity to show and share more aspects of their institution and programmes, as well as receive direct, constructive feedback on their curricula and campus offers.

The Global Student Satisfaction Report 2021 represents an in-depth analysis of student experiences, exploring what students are content with, and describing a compelling picture of how students feel towards their universities. The report slices the results by regions, allowing higher education professionals and industry experts to discover where students report having more satisfactory study experiences. During this report we try to explore whether student experiences differ around the world based on key study experience factors, as well as other characteristics.

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**Global
Student
Satisfaction
Awards**

Executive summary

This report examines the results of a global survey on levels of student satisfaction across different countries. The analysis describes the data collected from more than 108 thousand reviews coming from both domestic and international students, covering more than 200 different nationalities and reviewing higher education institutions in 121 countries.

Overall, students around the world report being very satisfied with their study experience, with an average reported student satisfaction score of 4.06 on a scale from 1 to 5. Master's and PhD students reported higher levels of satisfaction than Bachelor or Short courses students.

In addition to overall satisfaction with their study experience, students also rated their experience high in terms of admission process (4.22), teacher-student interactions (4.18), Covid-19 crisis management (4.15), student diversity (4.17) and quality of student life (4.07), with a few points of improvement with regards to online classroom experience (3.60) and career development (3.86).

Students' satisfaction with their study experience is inherently subjective and dependent on the students' own reference frames and expectations, but also on the promises made by national education systems and universities.

Universities can actively improve student satisfaction by:
- ✓ Improving online classroom experience;
- ✓ Providing support for students' career development;
- ✓ Communicating effectively with students during crises such as Covid-19.

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Summary

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Part One

Student satisfaction in 2021

Why does student satisfaction matter?

Understanding students' needs enables institutions to react, adapt and help students create a fulfilling experience in collaboration. Therefore, measuring and understanding student satisfaction can play a pivotal role in improving service provision and offering a better education experience.

Measuring student satisfaction can help universities understand which areas are exceeding expectations and can be used to promote the institution, and which areas are otherwise falling behind and need improvements.

Student satisfaction can similarly rate university performances based on the study experience, excluding aspects related to publications, prestige, or academic outreach. While highly important, these aspects seldom influence the average student experience: student overall satisfaction is a more significant indicator of the ability of a university to serve its student body.

Satisfaction score can be used to understand the ability of an institution to achieve students' well-being and keep them motivated and engaged during and after their studies. This can help informing new students and correcting expectations so that is easier for them to find their most fitting course of study.

Last but surely not least, a measure of student satisfaction is also relevant for prospective students, seeking to make the best decision for them personally. This measure can be used to make study choices easier and education more transparent. Understanding students' perceptions allows universities to provide service improvements and align their strategy with their mission and objectives.

Student satisfaction and Covid

The Covid-19 outbreak caught the world largely by surprise. The pandemic brought new challenges to education including the necessity of delivering education online, ensuring continuity of service, and engaging with student populations on different terms. For its impact and necessary disruption, the pandemic stood out as the main collective experience for educators and students alike. Most universities were quick to act, switching to online classrooms and activating crisis management.

Students everywhere were engaged by remote learning and took part in this momentous change. The experience of studying online was rated poorly by students (average score of 3.60). The lowest average grade was given by Bachelor's students (3.48) and the highest satisfaction was among Master's (3.84) and PhD students (3.82).

Furthermore, students' perceptions of the Covid-19 crisis management by their universities varied depending on the academic level. Again, Bachelor's students rated their university's ability to manage the crisis the lowest (4.11), while PhD students rated it with an average score of 4.22 and Master's students - with an average score of 4.32. The overall score for this category is 4.15, on a scale from 1 to 5.

The online classroom experience and the Covid-19 crisis management, among other things, have an impact on students' overall satisfaction, which has decreased since the previous edition of the Global Students Satisfaction Awards in 2019. While in 2019, the average overall satisfaction was 4.21, it dropped to 4.06 in 2021. This decrease (-3.56 %) indicates that students are less satisfied with their studies after a year of distance learning.

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Students are satisfied with their overall study experience
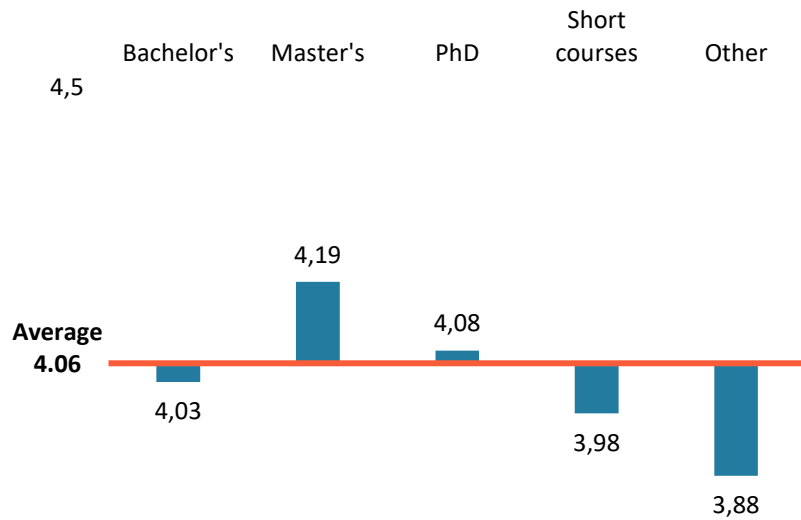
4.06

average student satisfaction score

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▼3.56% decrease in comparison to 2019

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Differences in satisfaction by study level

	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Short courses	Other
4,5					

Average 4.06

4,19

4,08

4,03

3,98

3,88

3,5

	Average	Median	Reviews
Bachelor	4.03	4	73,989
Master	4.19	4	27,353
PhD	4.08	5	2,033
Short courses	3.98	4	2,272
Other	3.88	4	2,934
Total	**4.06**	**4**	**108,581**

On average, regardless of their study level, students seem to be satisfied with their study experience. Master's students report the highest satisfaction score of 4.19 (n=27,353), followed by PhD students with 4.08 (n=2,033), Bachelor's students with 4.03 (n=73,989) and last, short courses students with 3.98 (n=2,272). Other types of studies score the lowest in terms of the overall satisfaction of students, the average score is 3.88 (n=2,934).

What emerges from scores across different study levels is a more positive outlook associated with more mature students. Students pursuing postgraduate programmes are generally more engaged with their institutions and more likely to feel part of a value-creating process, which can partly explain their positive views.

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Dimensions of student satisfaction

"Student experience is shaped by life inside and outside the classroom. Focusing on student centricity and on the development of the student in a social context, drives transformational learning experiences."

Andrew Mackenzie

Head of IELTS at British Council

> "My experience has been very smooth because each information required, whether it is regarding the admission process or regarding the exams, everything was provided to us in a very disciplined manner. They made sure that the students never missed any updates."

Student from India

4.22

average programme score on admission process

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▲4.20% increase in comparison to 2019

Students were asked how easy it was to apply for their study programme, whether the information provided on the university website was clear enough, and whether they received assistance from university staff.

A higher-than-average score in this indicator points to institutions with an excellent admission process, exceeding students' expectations. This is awarded by students thinking the process was streamlined, the information complete and the support outstanding.

Out of the 59,775 reviews collected on this topic, 53% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews. In comparison to the results from 2019, students rated admission process 4.20% higher, showing that universities are making progress in this regard.

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Admission process

Updated information

Keeping all information on your website about admissions up-to-date is a must! Students and parents need to be able to trust the information and easily act on it.

Respond quickly

The institutions that reply the fastest to student applications have a competitive edge. Students and their parents will be delighted if the waiting time to know if the student qualifies for admission is short.

Manage expectations

Are you being forthcoming about the estimated time to process applications, do students know when they will hear back from you? The more details you give, the more informed your students will be.

Make the process easy

Can students upload all documents digitally? Is there a centralised place they can go to? Is it easy for them to fill in the information they need or is the application buggy? Are all fields on application forms suitable for students from all countries, e.g. enough space to enter an overseas phone number?

Be transparent

Share all the details about what goes into the admission process in order to make it clear what type of students you're looking for.

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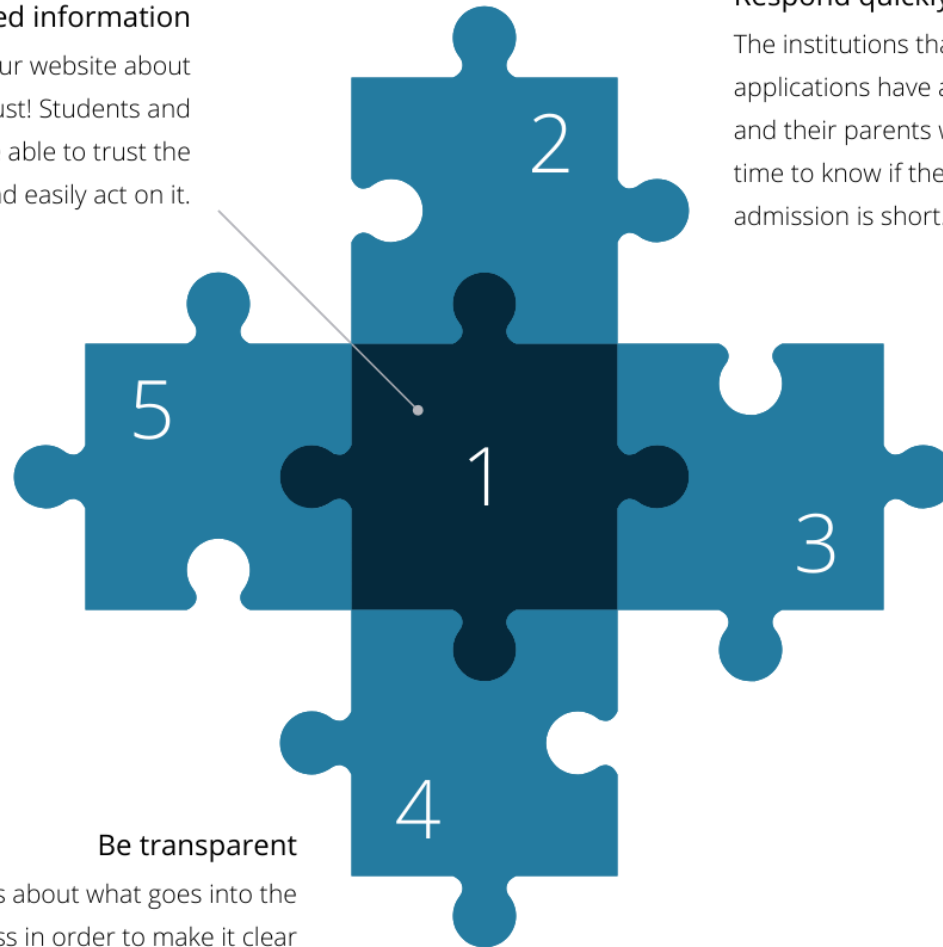
"The admissions process can be both confusing and stressful for prospects. It's vital that we continue to prioritise student satisfaction in the admissions process, and this award recognises those who are doing this to an outstanding level."

Diego Fanara

CEO & Co-Founder at Unibuddy

"The studies are very nice, there is always people wishing to help, it's the professors, co-students, students from other years and students across the fields of study. The study groups are small, about 30 people, everyone knows everyone. There are learning zones, where a student can always meet other students from his/her own and from other fields."

Student from Uzbekistan

4.18

average programme score on teacher-student interactions

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▲4.50% increase in comparison to 2019

Teacher-student relationships are crucial in shaping students' experiences. Students were asked how helpful, engaged and interested were their teachers and how easy it was for students to interact with teachers, during or after class.

Of the 55,417 reviews collected on this topic, 51% of students gave the maximum score, (5 out of 5 possible points). This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews. In comparison to the results from 2019, students rated student-teacher interactions 4.5% higher, showing slight improvements in this regard over time.

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Teacher-student interactions

Offer 1-on-1 support
Having at least a few one-to-one interactions will make students feel heard, seen and will allow them to find personalised solutions to their problems.

Be helpful and available
Support and help students in their learning journey by providing access to educational resources, and most importantly, to their professors and counsellors.

Be authentic
Are your teachers also sharing personal anecdotes, stories of their student times, experience in the field? All these are critical to building rapport and improving classroom interactions.

Be empathetic
Knowing your students as well as their passions, interests, backgrounds will help you personalise the classroom interactions and make them feel appreciated and included.

Encourage and motivate
Some students require more encouragement and positive reinforcement. Acknowledging their effort and progress makes them feel valued and motivates them to study even harder.

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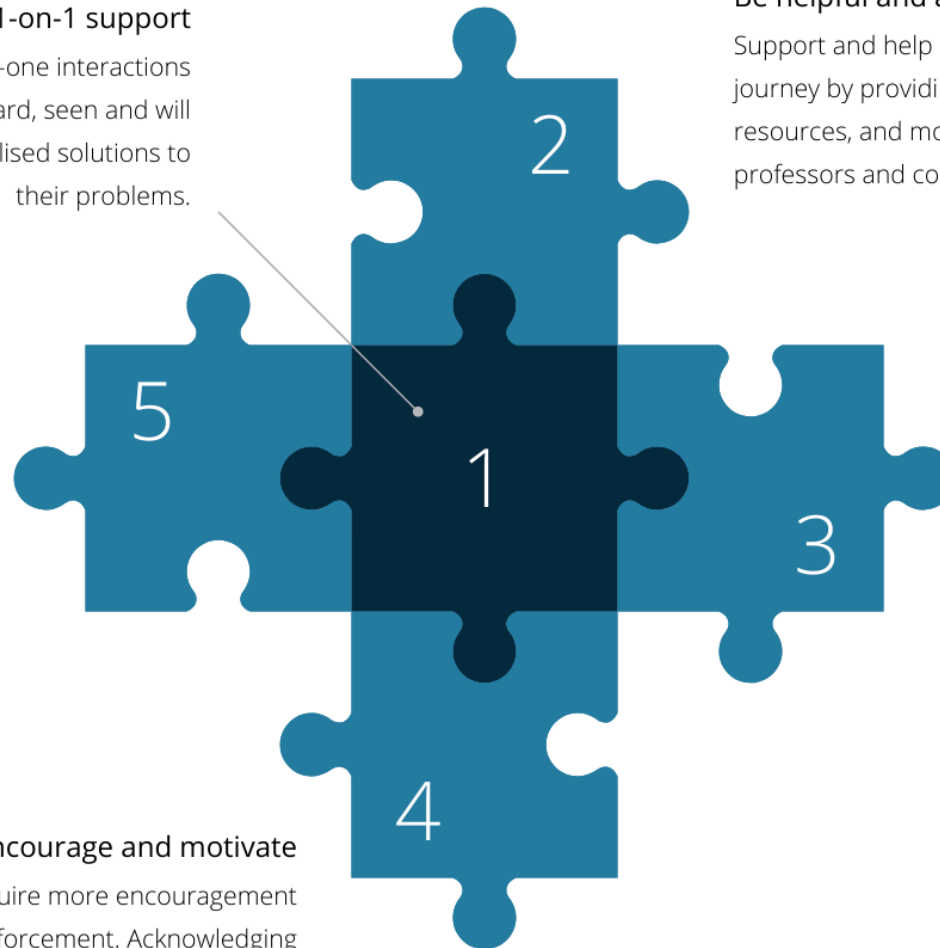
"When international students reflect on the benefits of study in a foreign country, they often mention a professor who was especially effective as a teacher and mentor. The best instructors bring out the best in all their students, often in ways that are very different from classroom practices in the students' home country. Many years after graduation, one enduring memory of international study is usually a professor who made a difference."

Brad Farnsworth

Principal at Fox Hollow Advisory and Former Vice President for Global Engagement at the American Council of Education

Online classroom experience

"Due to covid, I took classes online through zoom sessions. It was easy to be attentive, and the lectures were very informative. In addition to [that] the students were able to ask questions after each lecture."

Student from Norway

3.60

average programme score on online classroom experience

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

Universities had to switch from on-campus teaching to providing all lectures and tutorials online due to safety concerns. Students were asked to evaluate their university's ability to teach online.

Out of all dimensions covered in this report, the online classroom experience received the lowest score, indicating that universities are not yet fully prepared to provide online classes that would satisfy students' expectations.

Out of the 10,166 reviews collected on this topic, 32% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews.

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Educate your instructors

Being able to teach online requires completely different skills. Making sure your instructors are knowledgeable and have the right skills is critical for a great online classroom experience.

Check in frequently

Check in with your students during online courses, as well as after to ask for feedback, check understanding, learning and evaluate if students are engaged.

Break it down

Keeping your focus online is challenging, so breaking down the content into small, manageable blocks is a great way to keep student engagement high.

Keep it engaging and fun

Adding interactive elements to online courses, breaks, discussions and group assignments is a great way of engaging students.

Support struggling students

Identify the students that are having a difficult time with online processes, and check in to see how to support them, either with additional discussions, or personalised support.

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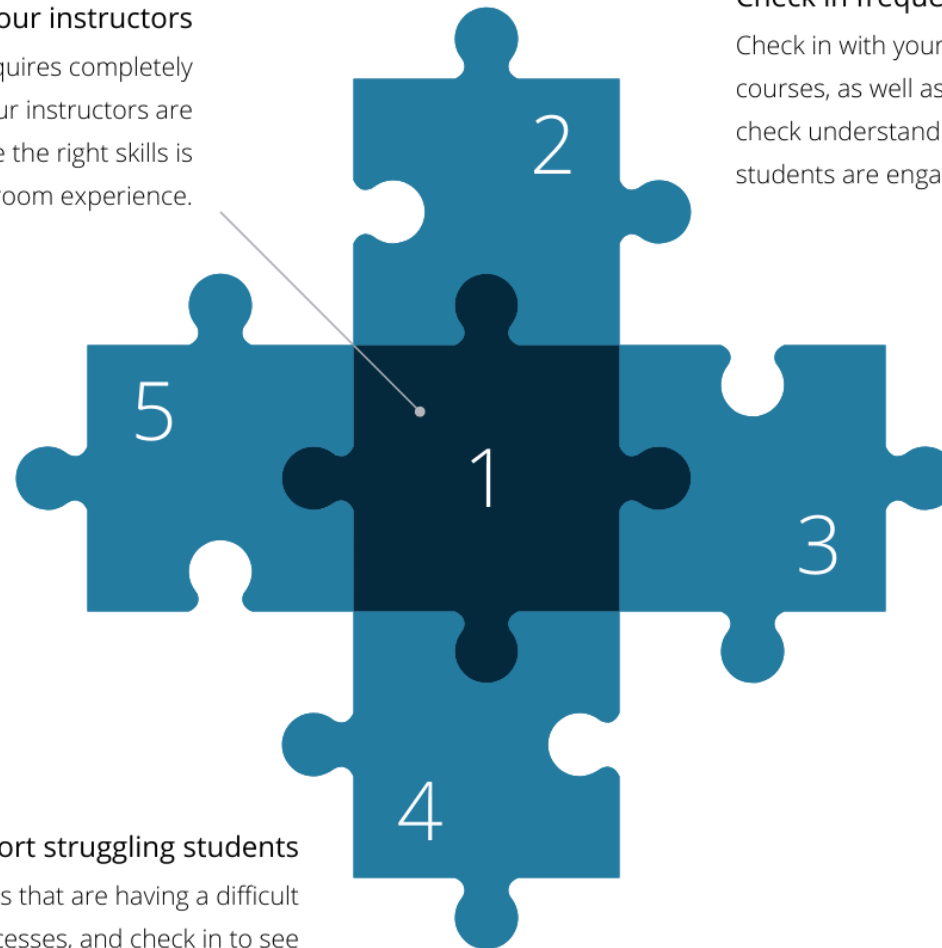
"The pandemic provided real-time, real-life feedback on what students wanted online and what they wanted face to face. The pandemic showed we can shift our delivery online quickly, now we need to shift it to be world-class and be humble enough to both listen to students and embrace the things that we know will make a difference to them."

Dr David Pilsbury

Chief Development Officer at Oxford International Education Group

"It was an amazing experience. The university was supportive in every aspect, particularly where mental health is concerned. I was offered help and support while studied there, particularly with the Coronavirus impacting my anxiety."

Student from Ireland

4.15

average programme score on

Covid-19 crisis management

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

Since the start of 2020, universities have had to adapt to the changing Covid-19 measures. This entails not only altering the way of teaching, but also communicating the new situation to the students and attempting to support them during these uncertain times.

Students were asked to rate their university's response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Out of the 24,478 reviews collected on this topic, 54% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews.
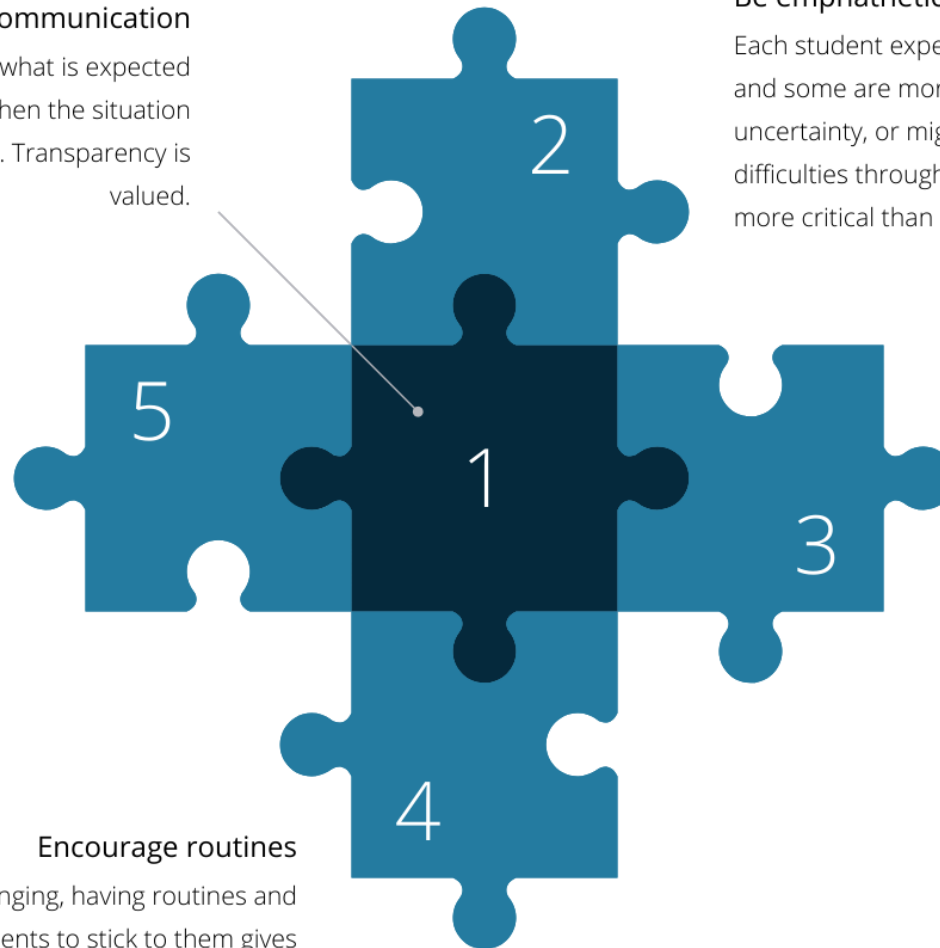
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Covid-19 crisis management

Proactive communication

Ensuring that students know what is expected of them and informing them when the situation changes, is critical in any crisis. Transparency is valued.

Be emphathetic

Each student experiences the crisis differently, and some are more sensitive to stress, uncertainty, or might have had family difficulties throughout the year. Empathy is more critical than ever.

Provide additional support

Develop online sessions on mental well-being, provide designated study spaces for students experiencing academic challenges and ensure special tuition fee payment terms for students who have lost their jobs.

Remind students of resources

Telling students where they can find resources to help with their struggles, how to ask for help or whom to contact is a good way of ensuring they feel supported.

Encourage routines

With everything changing, having routines and encouraging students to stick to them gives them a sense of normality, rhythm and safety as it creates predictability.

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"*Students, like the rest of the world, were put in a very uncertain place by COVID. It shook the foundations of their relationships with universities and with each other. This situation created an opportunity for universities to respond to the crisis by implementing alternative solutions and by allying with students against the circumstances. If this was handled well, it could result in the increased satisfaction of students.*"

Ágnes Tóth

CEO of Budapest Metropolitan University

"The overall experience was startling, a two-year program where, for the first time in my school/university studies, I faced an entire international classroom, with colleagues from all over the globe, sharing diverse cultures, skills, traditions, as well as different business mindset."

Student from Italy

4.17

average programme score on student diversity

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▲5.57% increase in comparison to 2019

Students were asked to rate the diversity and friendliness of their university's atmosphere.

This dimension aims to measure the capacity to foster an atmosphere where minorities and different perspectives feel valued and encouraged. This includes engaging and welcoming people from different countries, cultures, religions, age cohorts, genders and backgrounds, including people with special needs.

Out of the 55,332 reviews collected on this topic, 54% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews. In comparison to the results from 2019, students rated student diversity 5.57% higher.

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Practice what you preach

Diversity doesn't stop in the classroom. Is it also visible in your hiring processes, promotion processes, internal guidelines, student services? How do you plan to make it tangible?

Plan for problems to occur

While a diverse classroom is a great goal, it can also lead to misunderstandings, frustrations, challenges and having a plan for when they occur is key.

Promote a diverse syllabus

Diversity should also be part of the teaching materials, giving students the chance to explore content from multiple angles, historic perspectives and diverse voices.
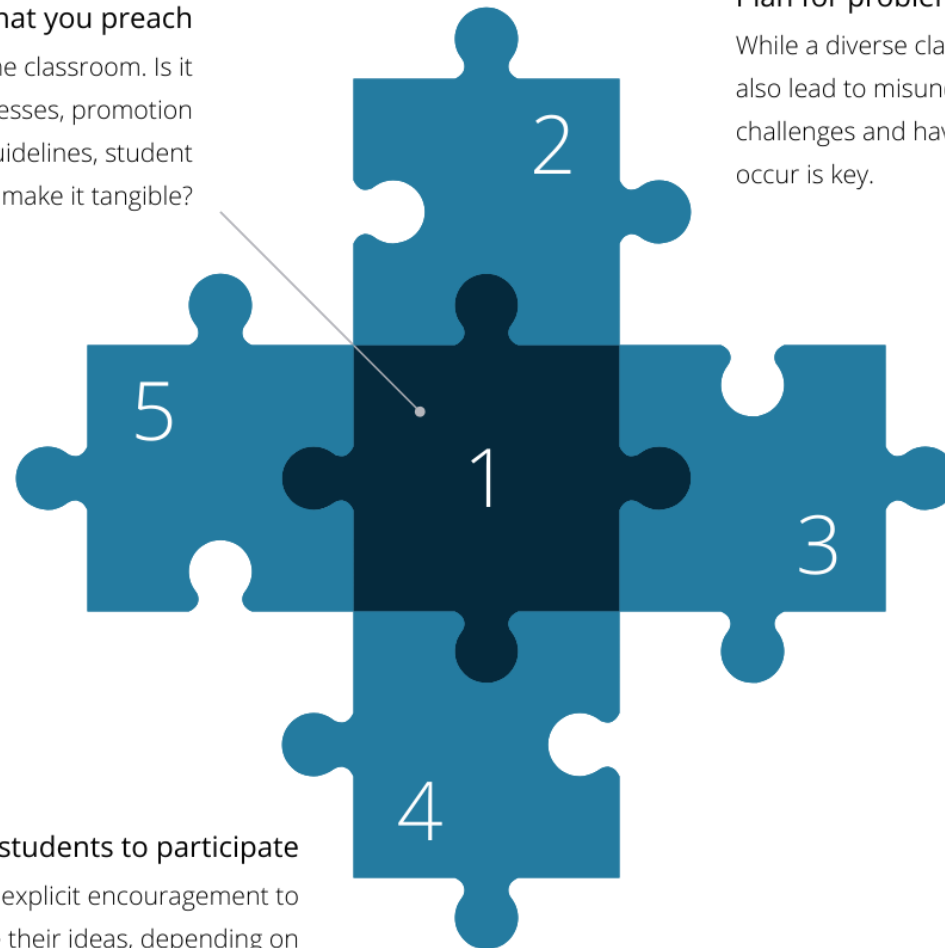
Set ground rules

Creating an atmosphere of inclusion and respect should be made explicit through agreed-on guidelines and agreements that students accept to follow throughout their academic life.

Encourage all students to participate

Giving students explicit encouragement to participate and voice their ideas, depending on their cultural background, can ensure that all voices, even those of less outspoken students, are heard.

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" Not all of our differences can be seen. Embracing and celebrating these differences is what builds a better world of tolerance and respect. In the campuses of our universities, we should feel safe, secure and able to be who we are without fear or favour. We have an individual and collective responsibility to make sure that each person is treated fairly whatever their background."

Ken Gill

Director, Policy Connect

"*As an international student, the university gave me great exposure academically and socially. The lecturers and tutors were always ready to assist and there were plenty resources to use for studying. I was involved in a varsity society, and this helped me give back to the community and take on a more hands on approach in my discipline.*"

Student from Zimbabwe

4.07

average programme score on quality of student life

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▲3.56% increase in comparison to 2019

Expectations of student life often extend beyond the campus space. Students expressed their satisfaction with the life outside the university. The city they lived in, and its potential to meet their needs and expectations, is a recurring theme linked to the study experience.

Out of the 59,587 reviews collected on this topic, 46% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews. In comparison to the results of 2019, students rated the quality of student life 3.56% higher.

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Seek out feedback

In order to improve, you need to ask your students what it is they would like to see work better or would make a difference to their lives and experience.

Outside campus opportunities

Students do not just learn within classrooms but also grow and develop by engaging in campus societies, clubs, activities, and appreciate personal development opportunities.

Services, services, services

Are you offering services beyond learning? Students are also interested in career services, networking opportunities, counselling services and accommodation services.

Track student activity

You can't improve if you don't measure your current status quo. Are students happy on campus, or are they disengaging? Are there any patterns of dissatisfaction you can address?

Match your students' values

The new generation of students is more interested in sustainability, healthy living, being engaged with local communities and volunteering. Are you offering them opportunities to express these values?

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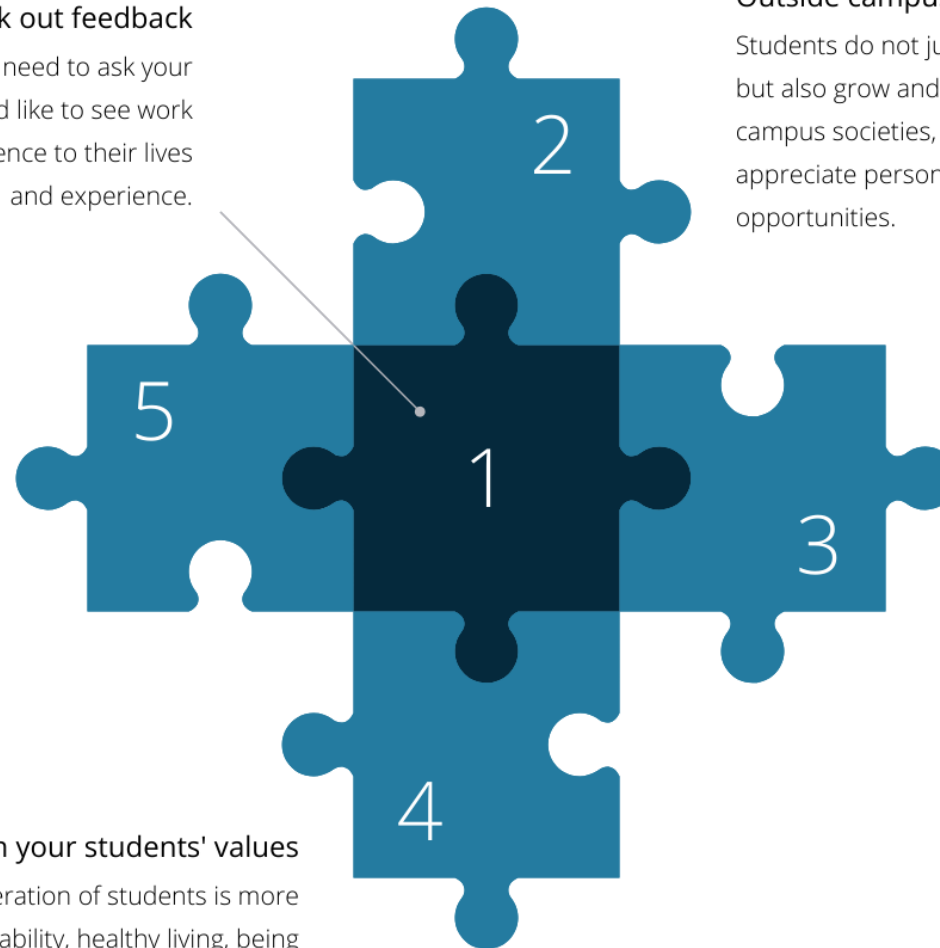
"What students experience outside the classroom is a key part of their learning journey....and great schools will pay as much attention to that as they do to the learning inside the classroom. Life quality builds invaluable skills and leads to a more successful and satisfied student."

Anne Sado

President Emeritus, George Brown College

"*The university offers fantastic courses, seminars and workshops to help its students to be well-prepared with theories and practices for the future career world. Besides, all professors are always seeking out innovative initiatives to make their lectures interesting and thought-provoking, which lays a solid foundation to achieve greater success.*"

Student from Malaysia

3.86

average programme score on

career development

(on a scale of 1 – 5)

▼1.78% decrease in comparison to 2019

While career development cannot comprise the whole set of personal benefits linked to higher education, it points at one of the main functions of pursuing a degree. Students expressed the extent to which their study programme contributed to enhancing their employability.

They rated their universities based on the provided support for their career development such as extracurricular courses, workshops and conferences, help in finding internships, etc.

Out of the 50,267 reviews collected on this topic, 39% of them gave a score of 5 out of 5 possible points. This score is based on both domestic and international student reviews. In comparison to the results from 2019, students assessed the career development topic 1.78% lower.

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Career development

Engage with employers

Invite top employers to discuss what skills they are looking for in their future employees, and ensure your students can develop those much-required skills to ensure they can easily access the labour market.

Think outside the box

Not every student wants a typical career, and having counsellors who can give personalised advice tailored to each student will make a big impact on the student's career path.

Inspire

Having professionals at the top of their careers come and share their stories and personal journeys can inspire your students to become passionate about their career path and take action earlier.
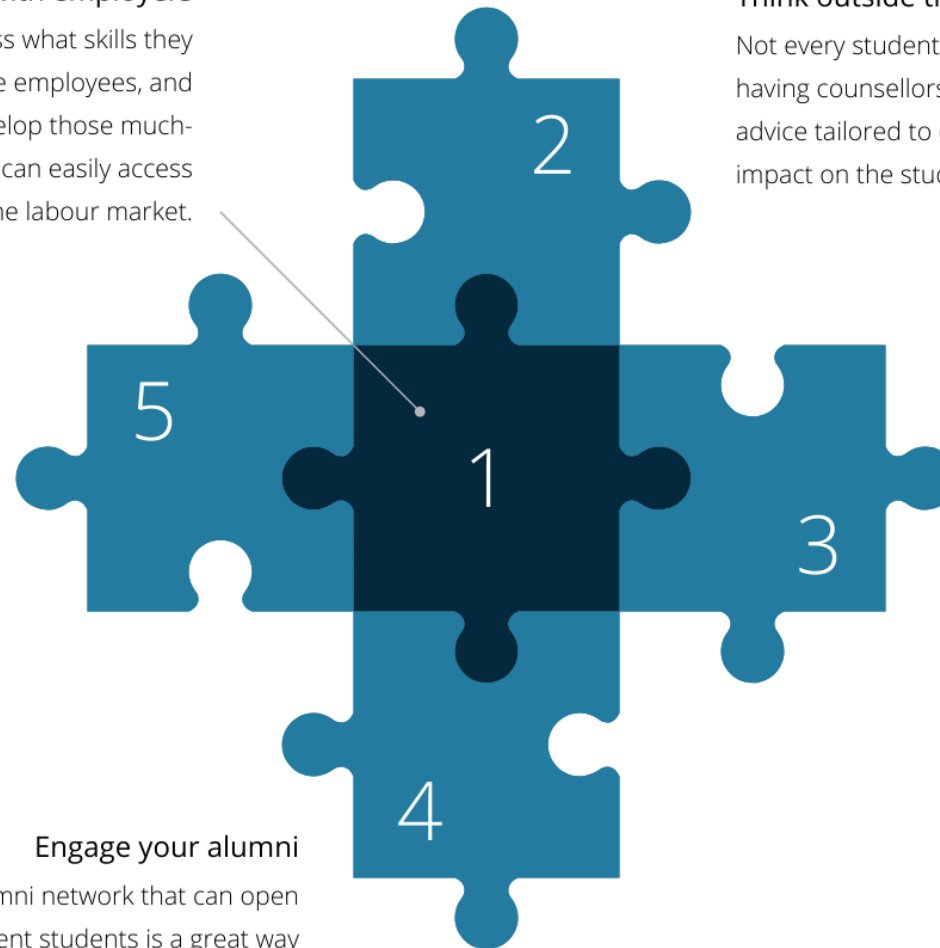
Organise workshops

Giving students the opportunity to learn how to design a resume, develop a personal brand, interview, or network is essential to their future career success - and employability is key to student satisfaction.

Engage your alumni

Having an active alumni network that can open doors for your current students is a great way to lend a hand to your cohort and kickstart their careers.

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"At ASML, we greatly value the development of our employees. We also believe that this development journey should start at university. Not only should the university develop students into great engineers or scientists, but also into self-aware professionals who are well-prepared to make meaningful choices when it comes to shaping their professional paths."
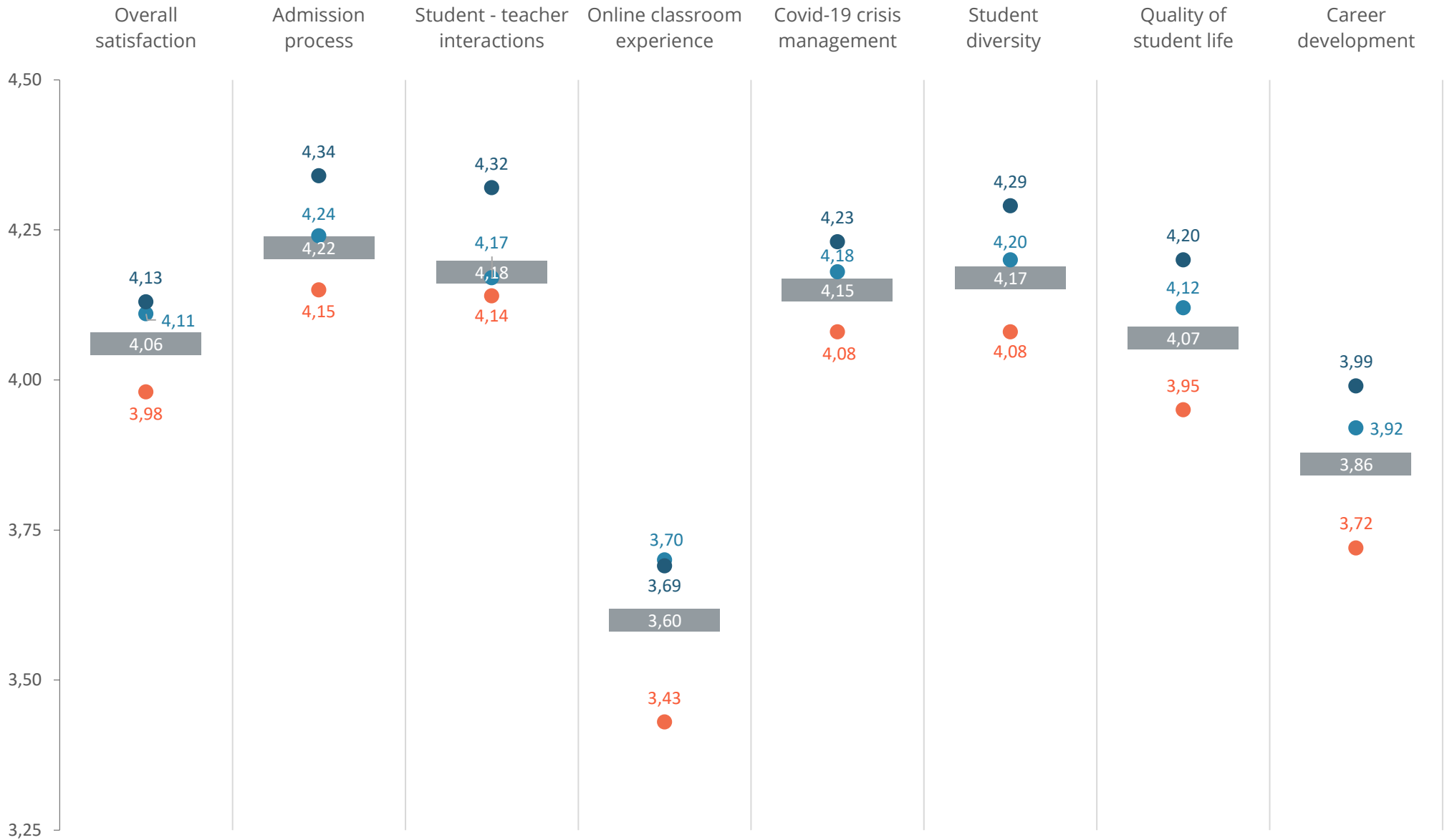
Julie Brown

ASML's Global Recruitment Business Partner R&D

Part Three

Conclusions

Global score — EMEA ● APAC ● Americas ●

	Overall satisfaction	Admission process	Student - teacher interactions	Online classroom experience	Covid-19 crisis management	Student diversity	Quality of student life	Career development
APAC	4,13	4,34	4,32	3,69	4,23	4,29	4,20	3,99
EMEA	4,11	4,24	4,17	3,70	4,18	4,20	4,12	3,92
Global score	4,06	4,22	4,18	3,60	4,15	4,17	4,07	3,86
Americas	3,98	4,15	4,14	3,43	4,08	4,08	3,95	3,72

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Student stories differ by their background and the country they are studying in. Different education systems, tuition fees, and strength of regional academic infrastructure change individual study experiences.

The regional overview shows that students studying in APAC (Asia-Pacific countries) show generally higher satisfaction than students studying in EMEA (Europe, the Middle East and Africa countries) and Americas.

In terms of the overall satisfaction, APAC received a score of 4.13 (n=10,064), EMEA received a score of 4.11 (n=60,596) and Americas received the lowest score of 3.98 (n=37,921). The global average is 4.06.

The differences between student perceptions across the world are open to multiple explanations. Even more importantly, student ratings are often connected to student expectations: the gap between what a student expected from her study experience and the everyday academic learning is in many cases the substance of student reviews.

Comparing education systems with different tuition fees, degrees of internationalisation, and principles (whether they focus on diversity or on accessibility) is beyond the scope of this survey.

What emerges, however, is the measurable difference in student perceptions across different countries. Such diversity in the way universities are experienced, calls for an even greater cultural awareness from higher education institutions.

This is even more important as the number of students going to study abroad is growing year on year, and more and more institutions are prioritising student diversity in their internationalisation strategy.

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Afterword

As more institutions globally are placing a higher focus on their internationalization strategy, ensuring that students who choose to study abroad have a great experience has never been more critical.

What is always interesting about the topic of student satisfaction, is that perceptions are always subjective, influenced by student expectations and previous study experience. Therefore, students who have a great education system within their home country to begin with, tend to be more critical of their experience abroad. The number of HEIs teaching in English has been growing steadily over the past years.

That also means that students no longer need to leave their home countries to be able to study in English and get an international degree, and even if they choose to do so, they now have an unprecedented variety of options when choosing where and what to study.

Focusing on just one aspect of the student experience, is not enough for HEIs that want to stand out and provide a great overall study experience to their students. From the ease of the admission process, to the quality of teacher student interactions in the classroom, the quality of student life, the diversity of the student body and teaching faculty, and even how institutions are handling crisis, each aspect of the university experience is critical for how the students of the future will be choosing their institution.

With the pandemic making students more critical about the value of a (classroom) education, pushing them to apply to an increasingly higher number of institutions and being more critical in their choice than ever, institutions globally are being urged to show that they do value their students, and are invested in ensuring that they have a great study experience, both within the classroom as well as beyond it.

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Supporting data

1. United Kingdom & Ireland

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the United Kingdom & Ireland
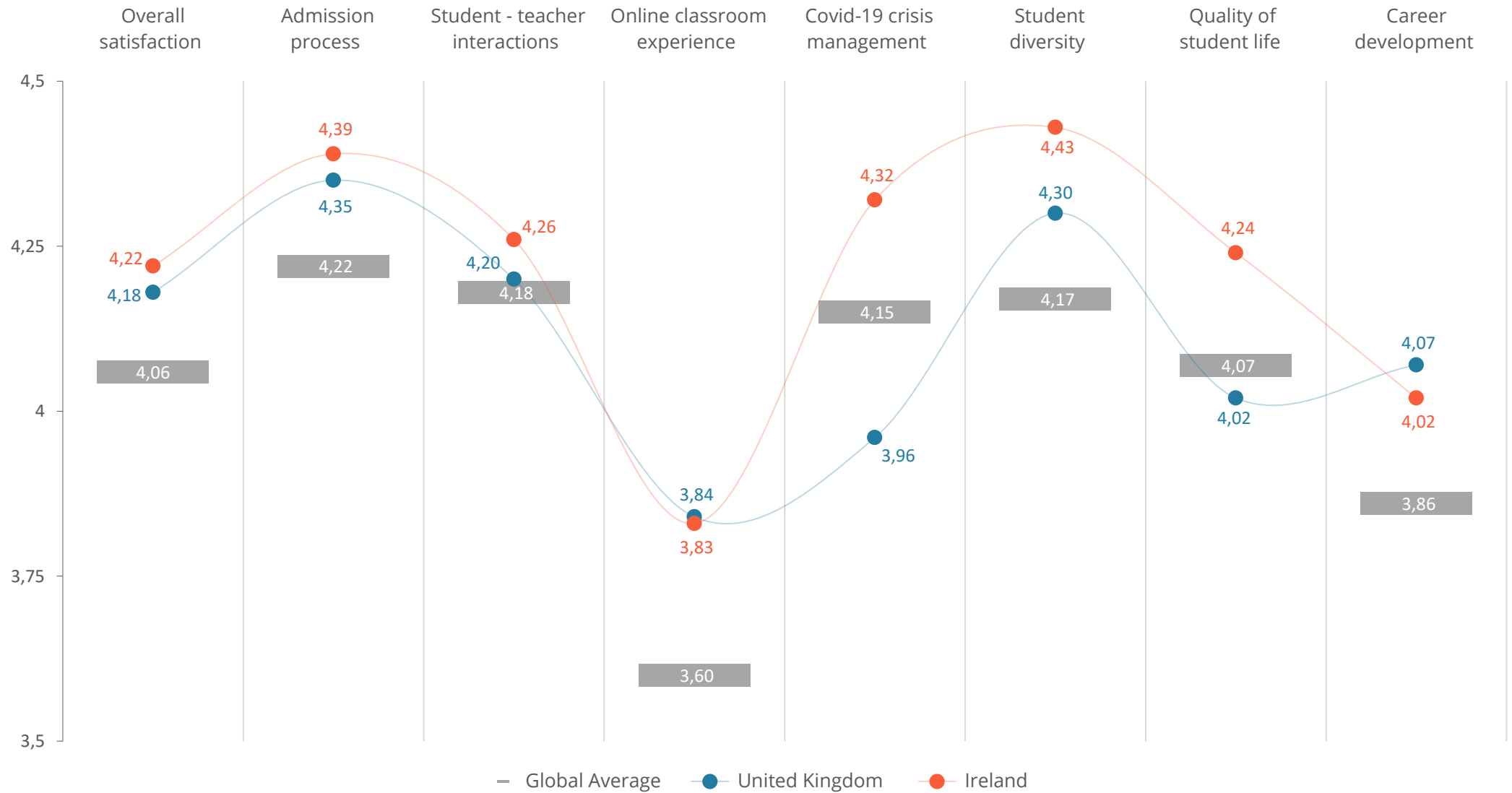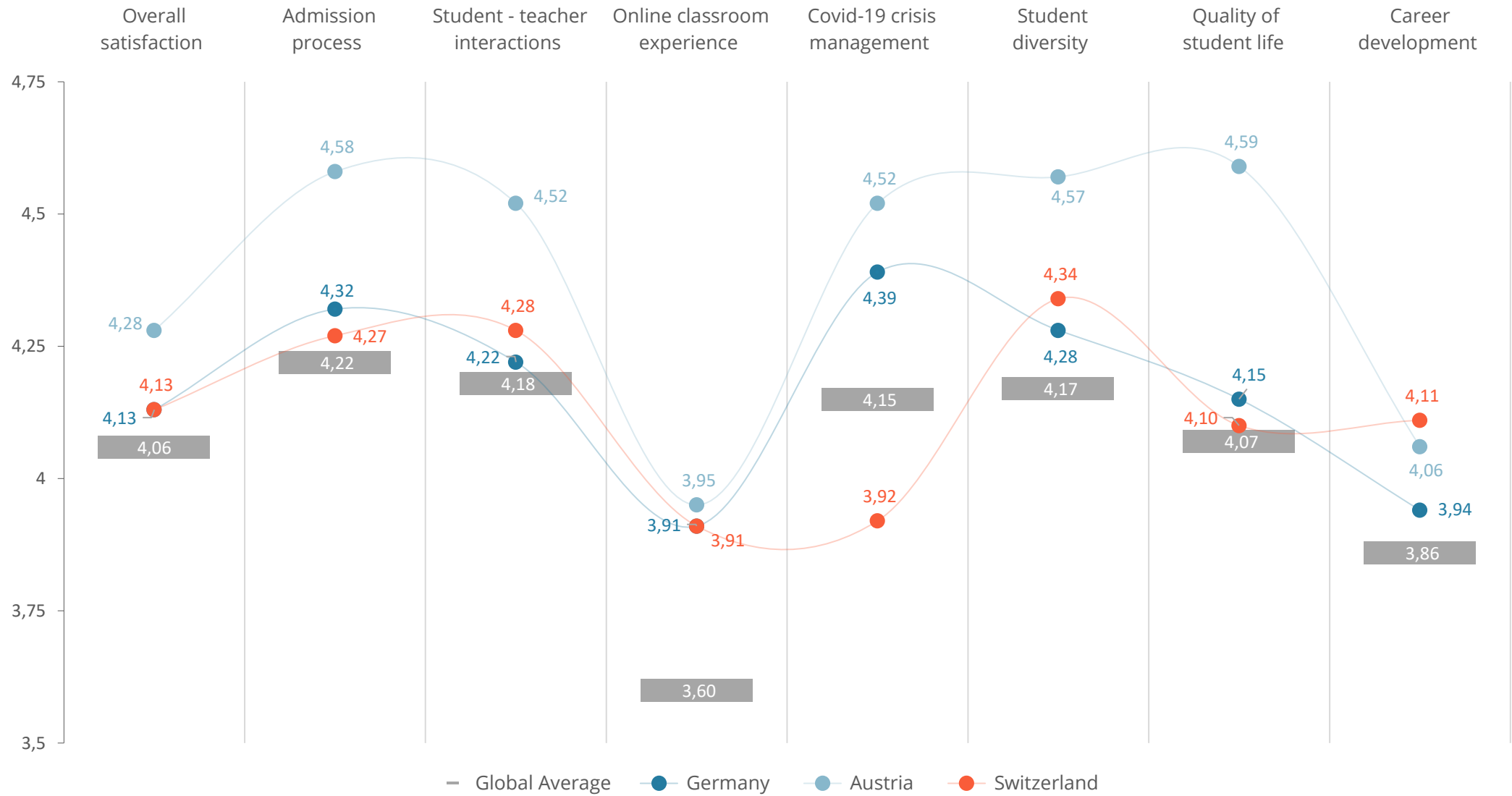
2. Benelux countries

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the Benelux region
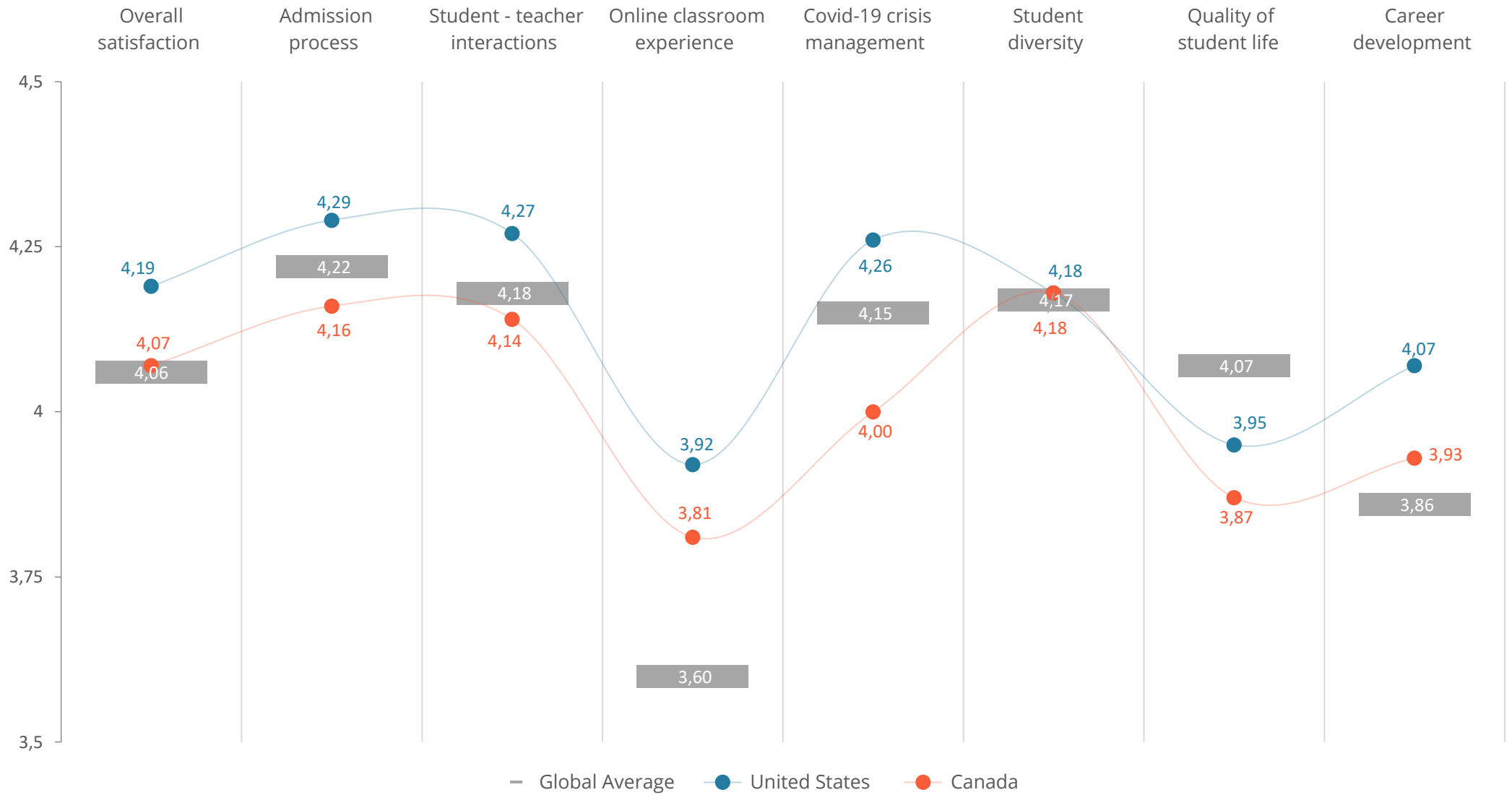
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3. German speaking countries

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the German speaking countries


	Overall satisfaction	Admission process	Student - teacher interactions	Online classroom experience	Covid-19 crisis management	Student diversity	Quality of student life	Career development
Austria	4,28	4,58	4,52	3,95	4,52	4,57	4,59	4,06
Germany	4,13	4,32	4,22	3,91	4,39	4,28	4,15	3,94
Switzerland	4,13	4,27	4,28	3,91	3,92	4,34	4,10	4,11
Global Average	4,06	4,22	4,18	3,60	4,15	4,17	4,07	3,86

Global Average — Germany ● Austria ● Switzerland ●

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4. USA & Canada

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the USA & Canada
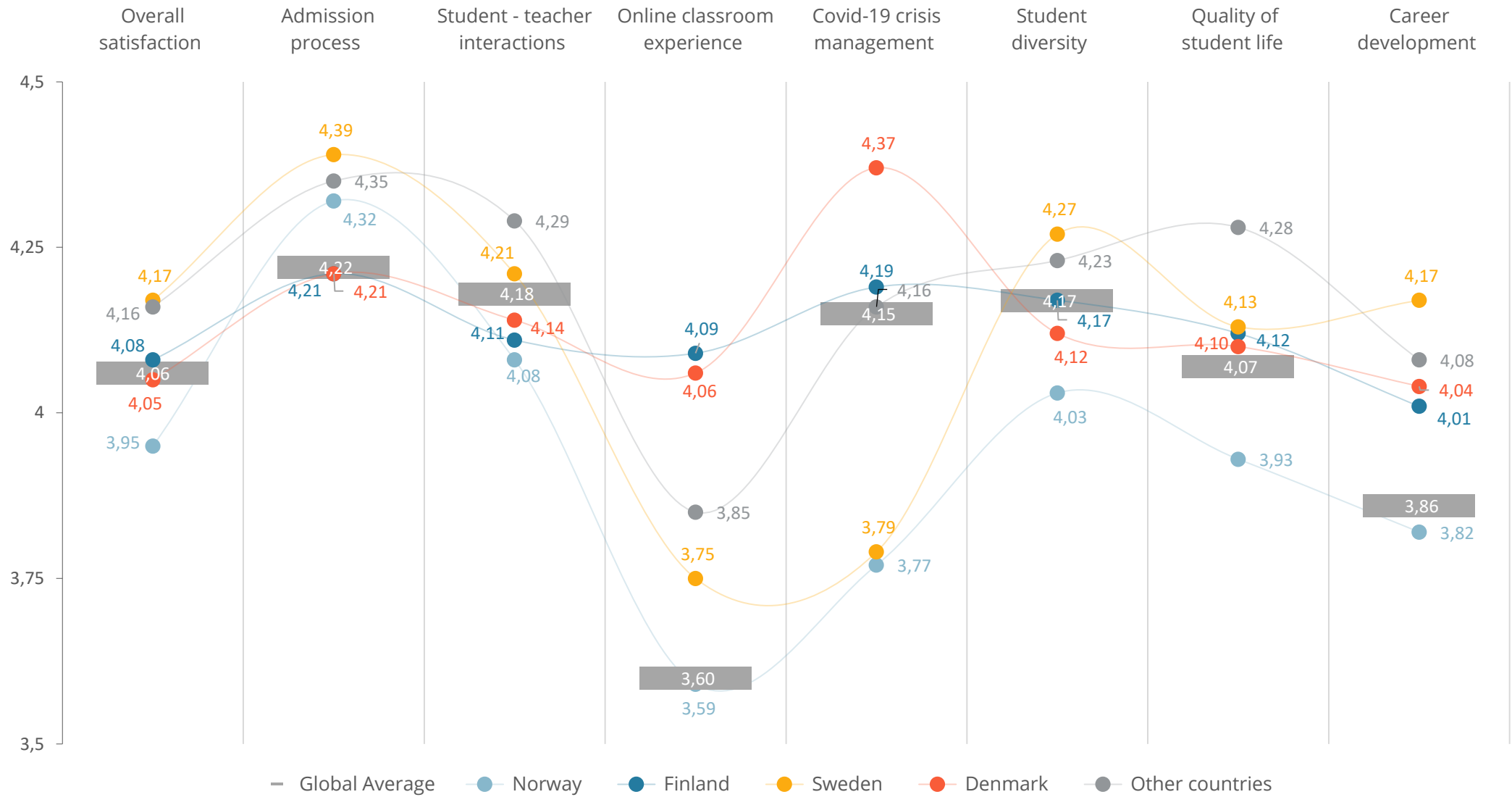
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5. Near East

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the Near East
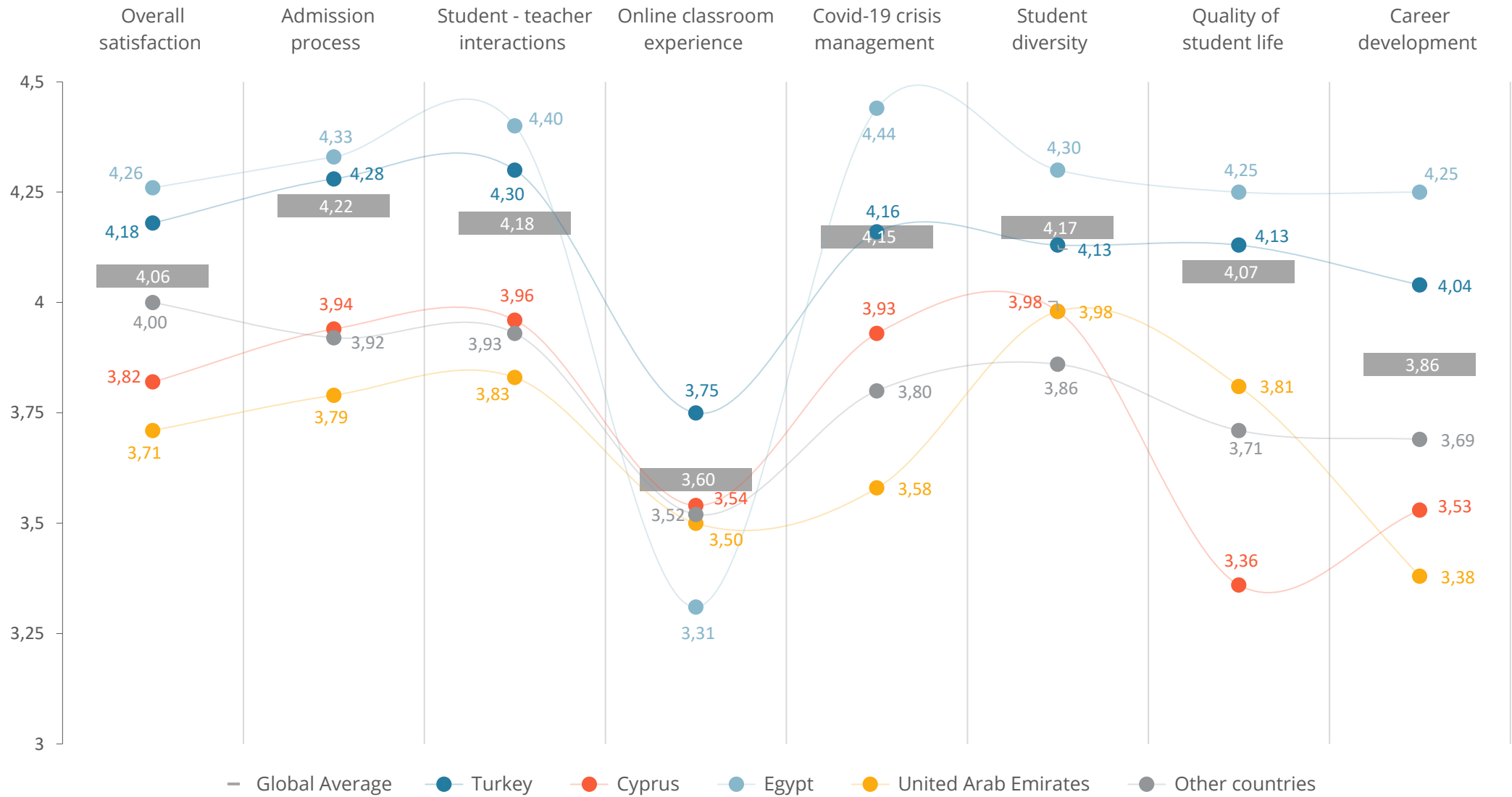
Other countries include Bahrain, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria

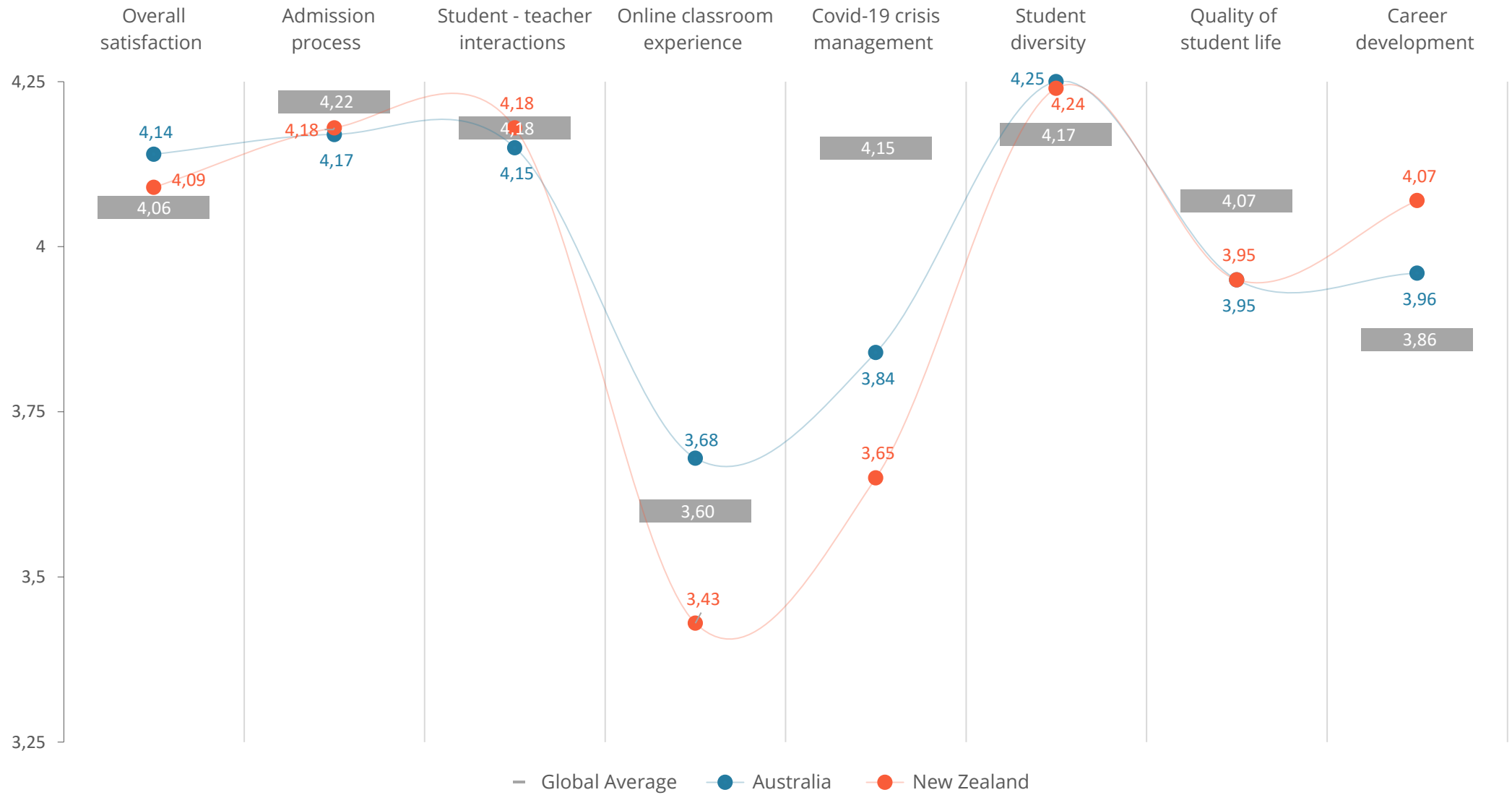studyportals

6. Northern Europe

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the Northern Europe

Other countries include Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Iceland
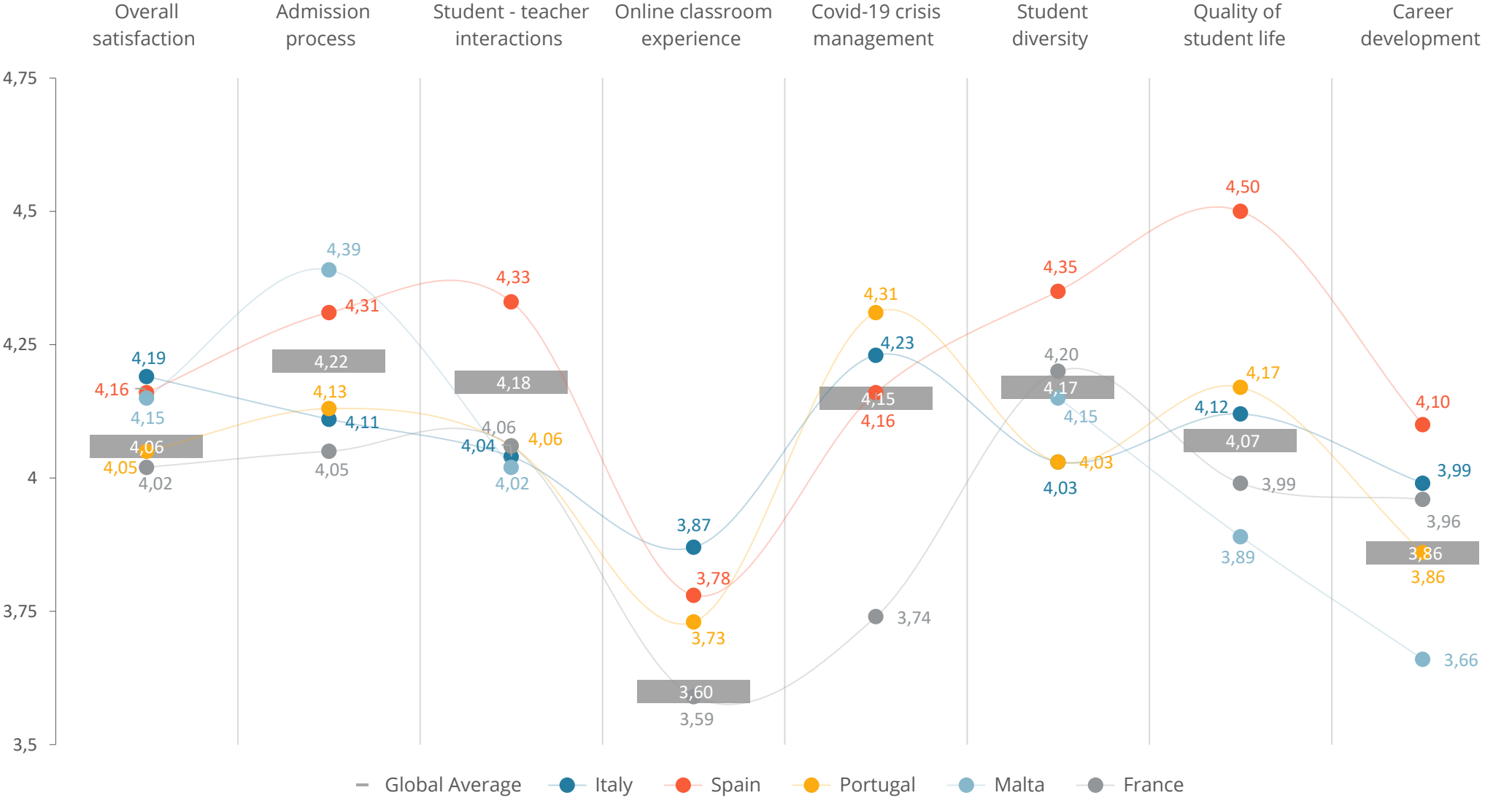
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7. Australia and New Zealand

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in Australia and New Zealand

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8. Latin Europe
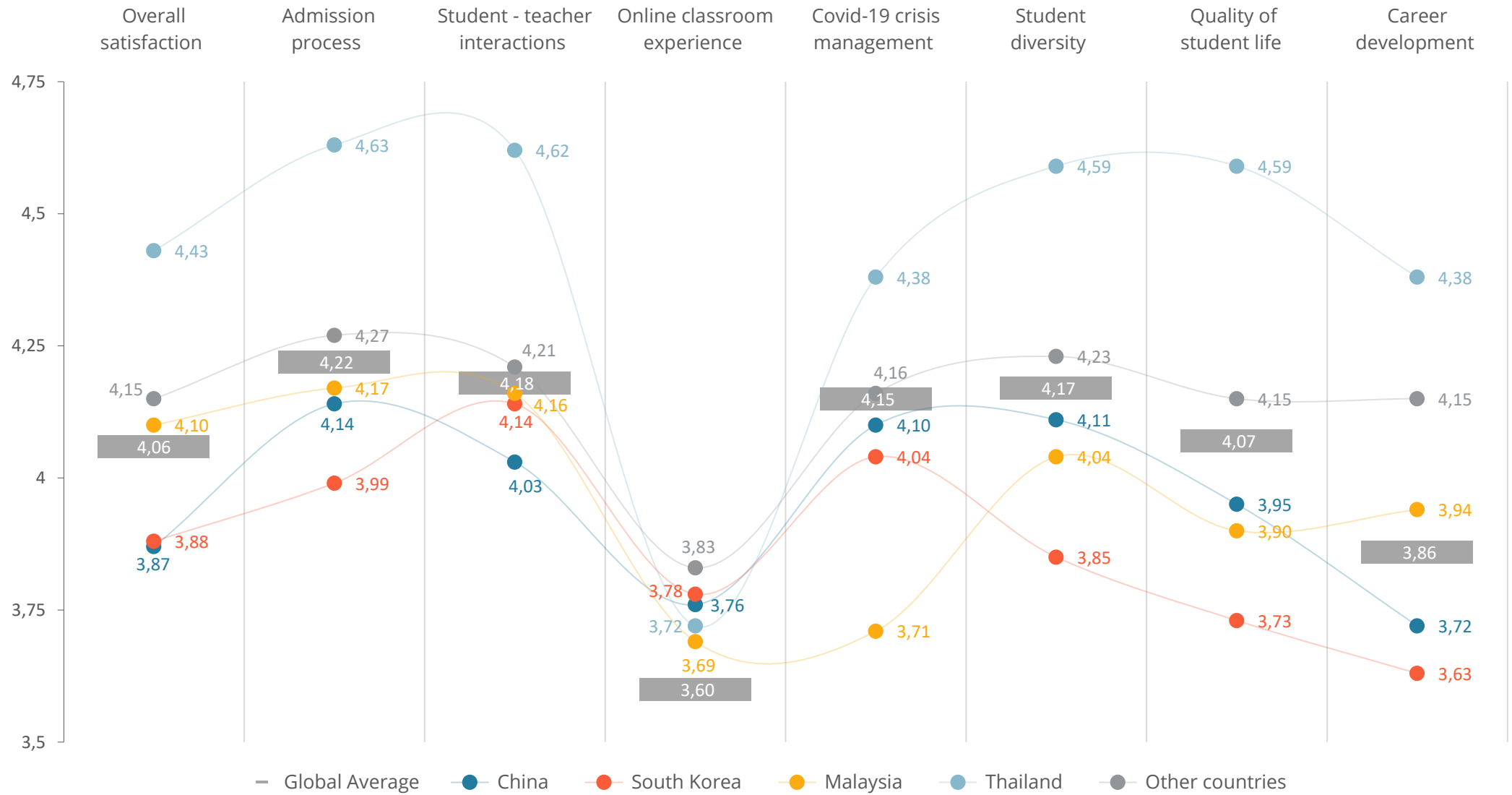
The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the Latin Europe
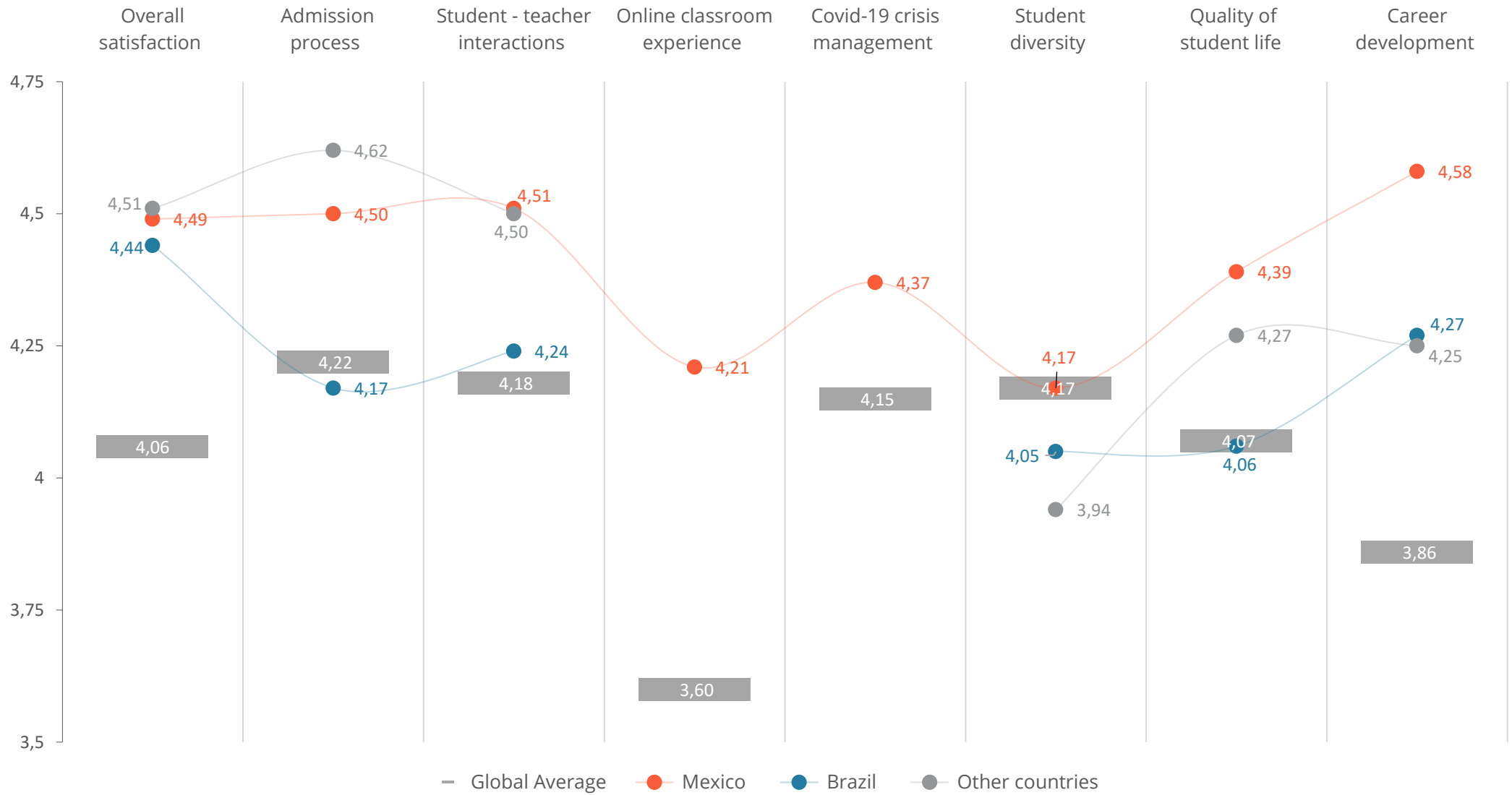
9. East & Southeast Asia

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the East & Southeast Asia

Other countries include Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Macao, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam

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10. Latin America

The average scores per eight dimensions of students' satisfaction for the universities based in the Latin America

Overall satisfaction | Admission process | Student - teacher interactions | Online classroom experience | Covid-19 crisis management | Student diversity | Quality of student life | Career development

4,75

4,62

4,51 · 4,49 · 4,50 · 4,51 · 4,58

4,44 · 4,50

4,5

4,39

4,37

4,27 · 4,25

4,24

4,22 · 4,21 · 4,17 · 4,17

4,25 · 4,18 · 4,17

4,15

4,07 · 4,06

4,06 · 4,05

4

3,94

3,86

3,75

3,60

3,5

— Global Average   ● Mexico   ● Brazil   ● Other countries

Other countries include Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Guatemala and Nicaragua

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Part Five

Methodology

Review collection

The Student Satisfaction Awards are based on reviews written by students. In the reviews, students can rate their study experience on a scale from 1 to 5 by assessing their satisfaction in six areas: overall satisfaction, student-teacher interactions, admission process, student diversity, quality of student life, and career development. As the Covid-19 pandemic caught higher education by surprise, Studyportals added two extra categories: online classroom experience, and Covid-19 crisis management.

With campus life disrupted by the virus, universities reacted fast by introducing online learning to otherwise residential learning experiences, and spurred universities into creating a safer and more resilient environment for their students and staff. Studyportals moved fast to capture students' attitude towards these matters.

Both domestic and international students were invited to contribute reviews in order to provide a rich and varied overview of student experiences globally. Studyportals allows students to give their study experience a score through its specialised review collection service.

Reviews are a combination of ratings and text descriptions. The reviews published on Mastersportal.com are personal assessments that students and alumni can leave regarding their student experience at a certain higher education institution.

Through these reviews, we are addressing actual experiences from current students or alumni; We strive for high-quality reviews that help other student in their choice. This means comprehensive, relevant, and informative evaluations.

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Review collection

Studyportals manages a network of platforms listing English-taught programmes worldwide. On one hand this has the advantage of offering a global coverage and capturing the interest of highly mobile international students; on the other hand, listing English-taught programmes cannot be representative of all studies taught in a different language. This aspect brings a more comprehensive representation of universities – and countries hosting them – where English is the most widely spoken language. The reviews in this edition of the GSSA were written by students from January 2019 to August 2021.

**How are reviews collected?**

We ask students and alumni that we're in contact with to rate their experience in several areas. The way we get in touch with students is via multiple channels, such as institutions, via our ambassadors and directly through our portals.

Studyportals administered a rating survey to international and domestic students asking both introductory (country of origin, dates of the study experience, and the institution of their studies), quantitative (i.e. ratings), and qualitative (i.e. text of the review) information.

Studyportals distributed the survey to its users and partnered with UMultiRank and with the Erasmus Student Network to further increase the outreach and representativity of its sample.

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Coverage

The students who shared their study experience through their reviews represent a global audience of students from nearly any country. The sample represents best countries with young, large, and mobile student populations which can autonomously browse for their study options. South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and – to a lesser extent – North America and Western Europe are particularly well represented. While China is still represented, falling in the highest quartile of countries by number of reviews, this number is not proportionate to the very large number of Chinese students abroad.
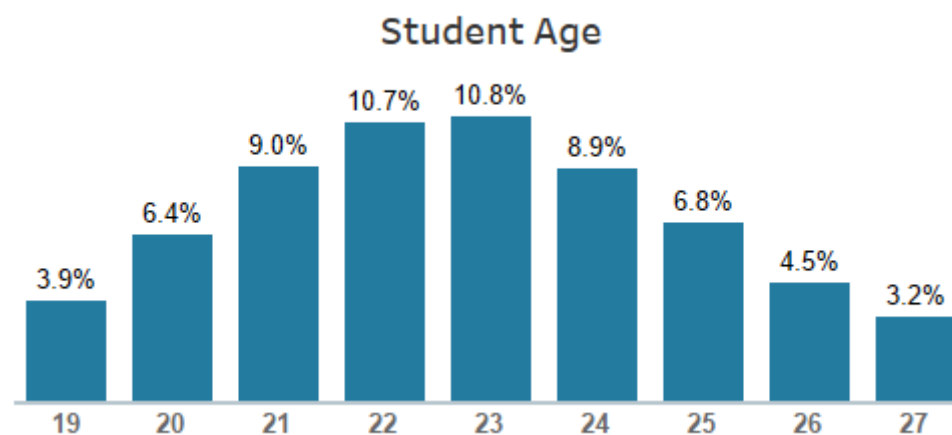
Student Age

The student age is well connected with their level of education: the most numerous group reviewed their Bachelor's experience. Such group reflects a large global pool of students that are actively engaging with universities after their undergraduate studies, allowing this project to tap into a cross section of the global student population..

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Why the star rating?

Used by major services like Amazon and Netflix, the Star Rating system has the benefit of being familiar to customers and has become an integral part of the digital review options. This makes simple visual feedback very easy to produce, as seen in Amazon product listings.

Moreover, the star rating allows for a quick and intuitive understanding for most users and smoothens cultural differences (e.g., using a scale from 1 to 5 in numbers might mislead students from Germany where 1 represents the highest grade). Star ratings are more comprehensive when covering many different aspects.

The star rating was used against several aspects of student life. While user-friendly, it also has limitations. For instance, respondents cannot express total dissatisfaction with a negative score, driving the average on the higher scale of the spectrum: this phenomenon is commonly referred at as 'range compression'. The satisfaction scores cannot be understood as a global ranking but best highlight the difference across similar groups.

Data cleaning

Reviews usually contain a lot of spurious data. The selection applied to this dataset has been applied filtering the reviews with unrealistic or unverifiable information: graduation dates not in a feasible range (e.g., '2045', etc.), or from students rating 'zeros' without descriptions. Similarly, bogus reviews, random text, offensive and unjustified, and duplicates have been amended.

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Regional coverage

Out of the 4,019 institutions that received reviews, 86 collected more than 200 reviews, 43 between 151 and 200, 102 between 101 and 150, 280 between 51 and 100. The large number of universities, scope, and comprehensiveness of the sample is completed by 3,508 universities with less than 50 reviews. On average, each university collected 27 reviews.

	Group	Universities	Average reviews
1	USA & Canada	918	7.4
2	Latin Europe	424	32.0
3	DACH	359	16.0
4	UK & Ireland	293	32.1
5	East Asia	216	13.3
6	Northern Europe	171	24.6
7	Near East	123	51.5
8	Benelux	121	23.2
9	Australia & New Zealand	69	16.8
10	Other	1,325	42.0
	Grand Total	4,019	27.0

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Measures

Overall student satisfaction
How would you rate your overall study experience?

Teacher-student interactions
How helpful, engaged and interested were your teachers with you? How easy was it for you to interact with them, during or after class?

Admission process
How simple was it to apply to your programme? Was the information that you found on the website clear enough? Did you get support from the university staff?

Career Development
Did the university provide support for your career development? (E.g. extracurricular courses, workshops and conferences, help in finding internships, etc.)

Student Diversity
How diverse/friendly was the atmosphere at your university? (E.g. different countries, cultures, religions, age, gender, special needs, etc.)

Quality of life
How was your everyday life? Especially when thinking about the city where you lived, did it satisfy your needs and expectations?

Online classroom experience
How would you rate the ability of your university to teach online classes?

Covid-19 crisis management
How do you rate your university's response to the Covid-19 crisis?

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Global Student Satisfaction Awards

This report is brought to you by:

Studyportals

We are the international study choice platform, hosting over 3,750 universities across 120 countries and reaching 45 million prospective students from all around the world in 2020 alone.

Founded as a project subsidised by the European Commission and supported by many international student associations, Studyportals only grew stronger and more determined year to year.

Our mission is to make the world understand the power of learning, and we do this by making education choices transparent and accessible to students worldwide. With our platforms, we enable students to search for programmes and connect with the right universities.

We are dreamers, doers, and former international students ourselves, who have come together from over 35 countries, determined to make one dream happen: empower the world to choose education.

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This report is brought to you by:

British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. Find out more about British Council here: www.britishcouncil.org/

IELTS

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the world's most popular English language proficiency test for higher education and global migration. Over 11,000 organisations globally trust IELTS. These organisations include educational institutions, employers, governments and professional bodies. IELTS is jointly owned by British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English. Find out more about IELTS here: https://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/

Unibuddy

Unibuddy empowers universities to recruit, engage and enrol prospective students through authentic peer-to-peer connections. Our student and staff chat, live events, and top-tier partnerships facilitate guidance through each stage of the student lifecycle. We purpose-built a digital platform for higher ed because better accessibility means that more students are getting the answers they need.

Community engagement leads to more informed decisions for students and better yield for universities, and it helps each school elevate their recruitment strategy. People are most influenced by their peers, so prospective students want to speak to someone who has actually lived the experience they're about to embark on.

We keep students at the heart of all we do because human connection is the key to generating a sense of belonging. That's why 450+ global partners trust Unibuddy to help them help students find a place at their institution.

Global Student Satisfaction Awards

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