

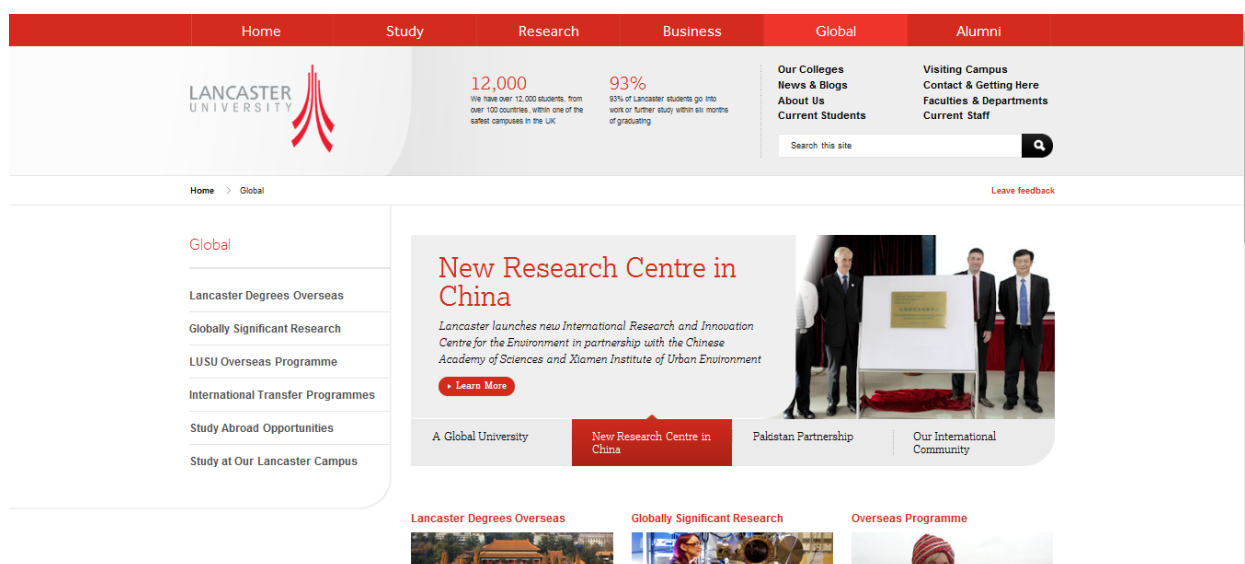
Comparing International Sections of Two British Universities

SUBJECT: Designs of International “Your Country” Section.

Comparative analysis of landing pages for overseas applicants has involved two British academic institutions (Lancaster University and Brunel University). It has made it apparent that we need to update our College’s website in order to align it with adoptable usability level for international visitors. Based on our observations managers should determine the proper balance of local vs. global characteristics, and outline which features promote and encumber International Section’s purpose – to provide sufficient country-based information for potential applicants. It is also necessary to “determine optimum minimum variations of visual and verbal attributes” (Aaron, 1999) and decide about the proper tools that effectively implement worldwide variations.

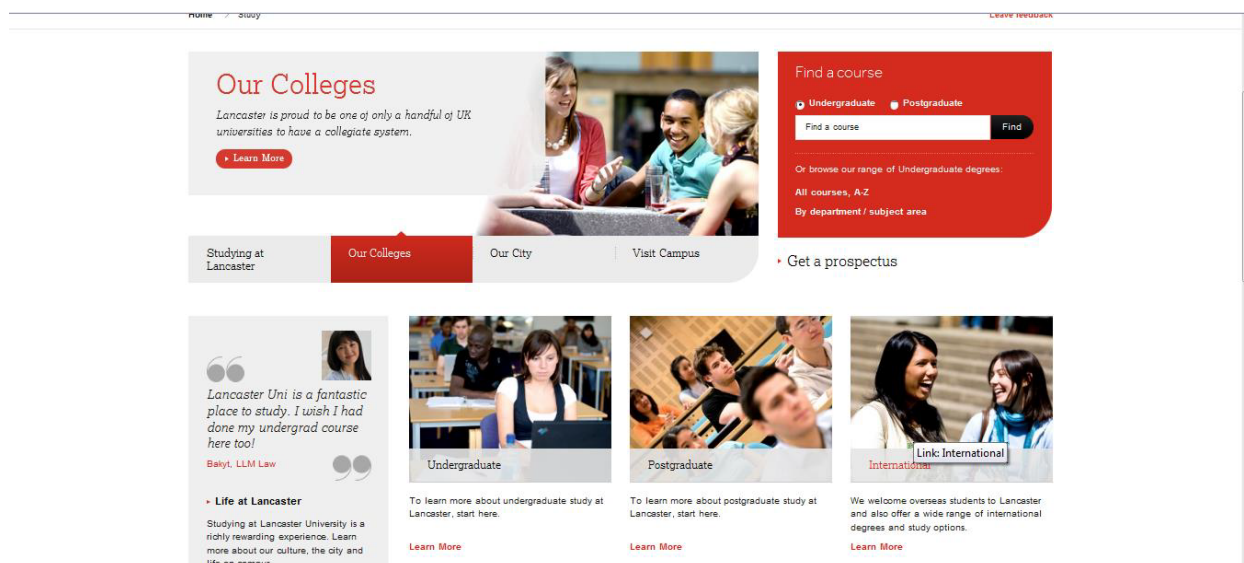
Information Architecture

Two websites have different position of “Your Country” section on the sitemaps, while Lancaster’s upper tabs contain Global Section, referring to overseas research, Study Abroad etc.



To enter International section, we need to enter “Study”, “International Students” section. Both title and “Learn more” links around visual banners

have the same address; this seems also not very rational.

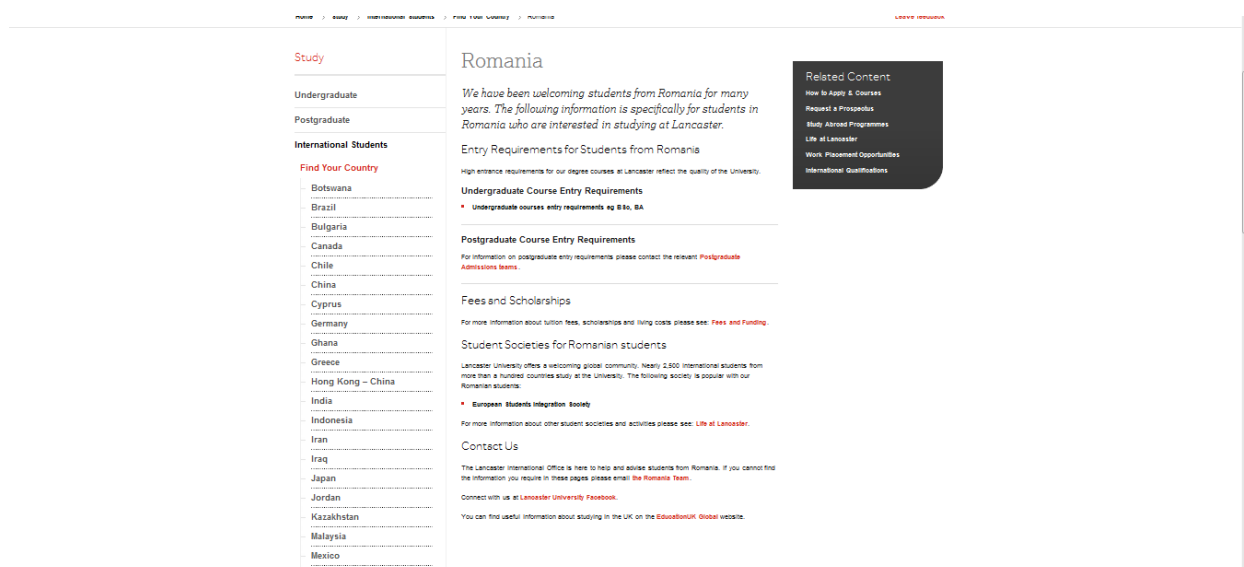


Surely, it's hard not to pay attention to bugged displaying of its bullet points.

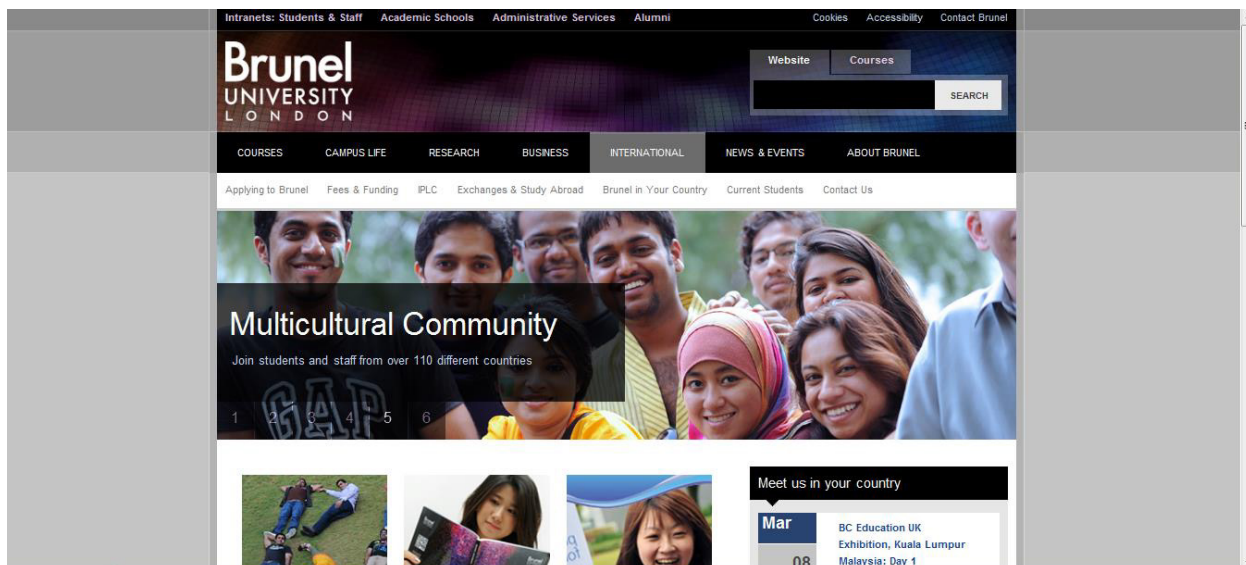


Each country's page on Lancaster website is represented by vertically scrolled flowed text with straightforward structure. There are two alternative views of countries list (Tidwell, 2010, p. 27): stacked, and in three columns. Meanwhile, Brunel route International Page offers multiple workspaces – “in case people want to see more than one place, state or document”. Both pages include links to international students-bloggers, photo-banners: Choose / Countdown to Brunel, Fees and funding, Foundations & Premasters, “Find us on” /

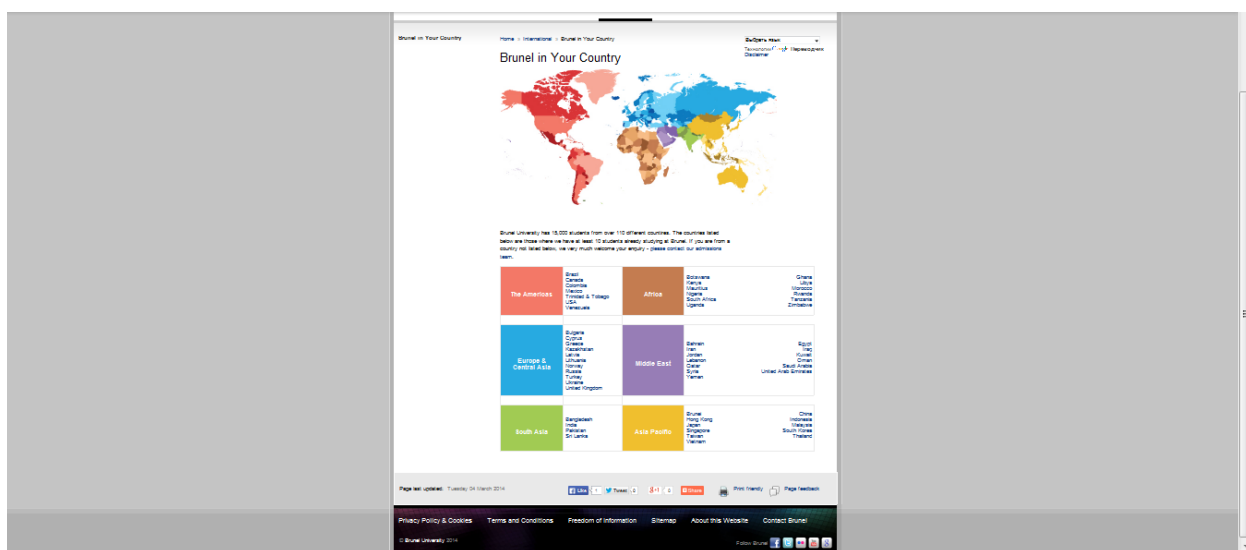
“Connect with us” Sections. Brunel University also has the Media Player Idiom. Yet, Lancaster University wins in visual unity in communication: colors are applied according to consistent pattern, identical styles are used throughout the headings, and all sub-pages have the same design at the top (Anderson, 2013, p. 350). Fonts solution looks very creatively smart at Lancaster “your country” section.



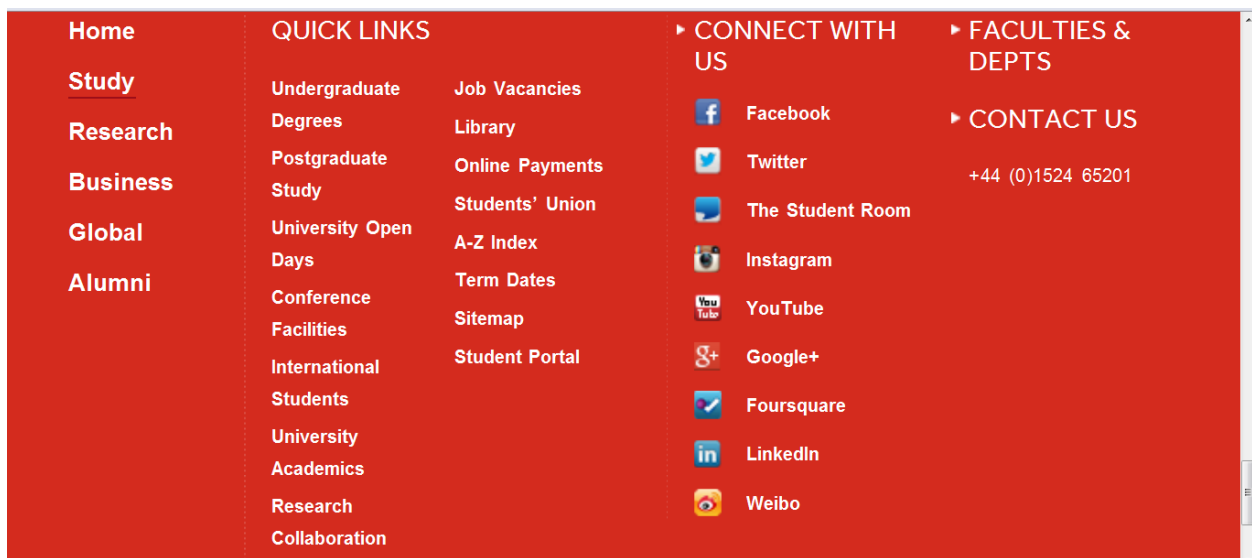
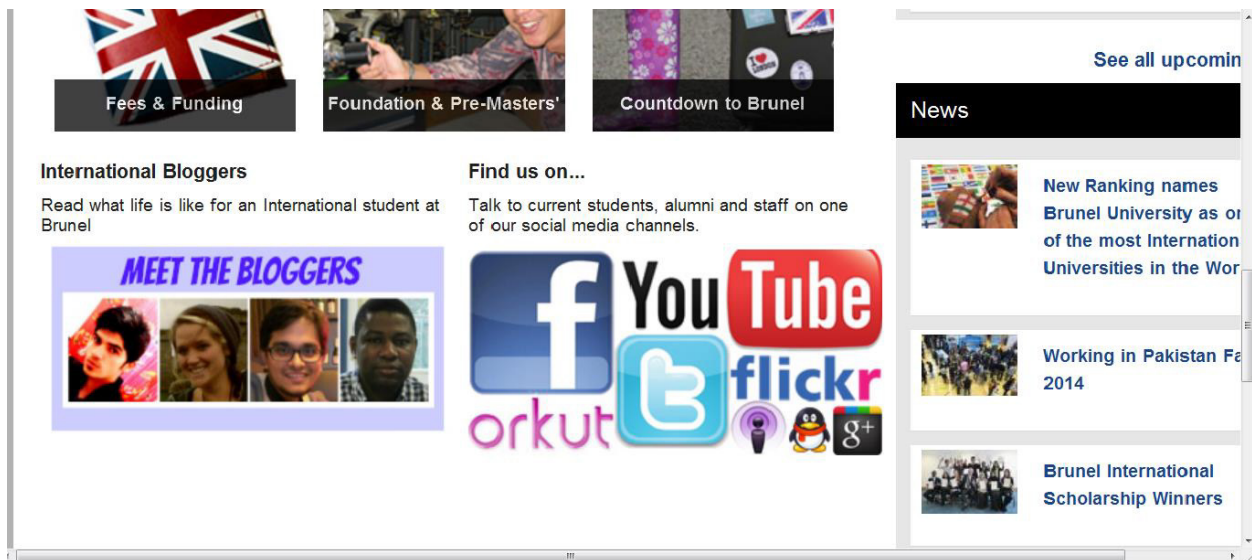
Brunel shows more elaborate access, providing International 1-st level tab and various enticing tab groups. As we can see below, its landing page, unlike Lancaster’s, contains featured section hooking globalize user, adjusting the appearance of students on photos for national or cultural differences (Aaron, 1999). Featured items are more attractive than category lists and search boxes, especially when we use such appealing images and headlines, so that international user can experiment with them without any additional clicks or hovering (Tidwell, 2010, p. 30–31).



Brunel applies 2-column design for its country section (p. 338 *ibid*). For the map interface is non-zoomable, map is non-clickable (Anderson, p. 27); there is only the color legend downwards.



Actual specific data values here are unambiguously connected to labels and located beside the points of interest (p. 293 *ibid*). Both sites contain search box and list of categories to browse (p.28 *ibid*), as well as “Contact us” dashboards: Brunel’s rendering resembles tag cloud, while Lancaster puts a mere list (p.47 *ibid*).



Conclusion

By continuously applying numerous design elements, International sections of both universities achieve comprehensive unity. However, “Brunel in Your Country” section has much better technical communication, completing its design purpose: to provide access for country-specific data for overseas applicants.

References

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<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/international/information-by-country>