

## **Introduction:**

I am thrilled to submit my reflective portfolio for the EUTOPIA Certificate of Internationalisation. Since childhood, I have always been a curious cat wanting to explore the world and beyond. My home country India is renowned for its diverse culture, many languages and traditions; and as an international student from India in the United Kingdom, my experience as a master's student at the esteemed University of Warwick has surely been an eye-opener and transformative. I believe that this experience has turned me into a global-minded individual, and in a way has touched upon all the aspects of EUTOPIA's Learning Outcomes.

Living in a common student dormitory at my university with roommates from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and participating in group activities with classmates from diverse backgrounds has enriched my multicultural experience and imparted me valuable lessons in building bridges across to people from hitherto unknown cultures and nationalities. Such personal experiences and my participation at EUTOPIA initiatives have helped me garner a deeper appreciation for intercultural communication and create a broader perspective towards the world.

My study year at Warwick included several projects which required me to work alongside people with varied thought processes, borne out of different cultural conditioning than mine. The several collaborative activities taken up with these multinational batchmates have equipped me with the skills essential to approach global issues from multitudinous perspectives, and preparing me for a global life culture.

This study year demanded I face new challenges every day - from staying alone in a new country away from my home and family, adapting to a new educational system, and navigating through a culture very different to my upbringing. I believe that these challenges and experiences gained, have honed my skills of critical thinking, problem solving and situational awareness - which are essential in today's globalised world.

I realise that in this study year, I shall not just be garnering a master's degree, but a resilient mindset to overcome life's obstacles - while learning to appreciate what good my life has to offer - in all given circumstances.

It is my sincere pleasure to share the details of my internationalisation journey via this initiative and exhibit how it aligns with the values of EUTOPIA.

Thank you for the consideration and the opportunity presented.

## **Internationalisation: A Transformative Journey at Warwick and Beyond**

My linguistic pursuits as a young student, trying to learn French, Spanish, and German as foreign languages can be viewed as my first steps towards internationalisation. 'Language' as a medium for communication and exchange of thoughts between individuals - has always

fascinated me, and since my early school days I have yearned to learn varied cultures via the study of languages.

However, it wasn't until I arrived at Warwick University in the United Kingdom that I got an in-person experience of the rich diversity in people, thoughts and lifestyles, and I found myself immersed in a truly international environment. My academic year at Warwick gave me a profound understanding of multiculturalism. This has shaped my thoughts and influenced my worldview.

Back home in India, I had been exposed to how various cultures co-exist within a nationality, and this helped me with understanding the cultural mosaic that I encountered at Warwick. However, the depth and breadth of my experience far exceeded my imagination, and has made me more receptive to newer perspectives, and increased acceptance of divergent viewpoints.

My journey out of my comfort zone to study in a foreign land taught me several new concepts such as Day-light savings! Similarly, I was taken aback to see that the streets were so empty compared to the bustling streets in Mumbai! These cultural shocks seem small, but when one experiences them daily, they have an effect on us. I grappled with homesickness, academic pressure, and the occasional cultural difference with a peer. There were moments of frustration when I felt misunderstood or when I struggled to grasp certain cultural nuances. However, each challenge became an opportunity for growth.

I learnt to adapt and get comfortable with small changes that not many of us really take into account.

This encounter with global diversity at my University complete with a life in a multicultural dormitory to being a part of an international academic cohort – has shaped my understanding of intercultural communication, far beyond what I had initially visualised.

### [The Microcosm of Global Diversity: Life in a Multicultural Dormitory](#)

The centre of my internationalisation lies in my student dormitory, where I had the privilege of sharing the hostel dorm space with incredible people from different corners of the world. This hostel dormitory became my home away from home, and staying here played a crucial role in my personal and intercultural development.

My dorm-mates included Alexia from Mexico, Alvin and Nelly from Taiwan, Renie and Juodi from China, Baris from Turkey, and Dmitri from Greece. Each one of us brought to the table unique cultural backgrounds, preferences, traits and habits and turned our living space really 'lively' - while we slowly but surely developed a familial bond amongst ourselves.

One aspect that I was captivated the most by was how together we navigated through our differences in cooking, cleaning, studying and sleeping habits - while being accommodative and mindful of not disrespecting each other. We discovered that each individual within our dorm had something new to offer to the others individually and as a group.

However, while discovering the difference in our living styles, I realised that there are several similarities too. To state a few, as an Indian, Tea is regarded as a 'soul-food' in life. Now I was astonished when Baris from Turkey shared the same emotion about Tea in their culture - in fact the humble drink is called 'chai' in both cultures !. Likewise I, Alvin and Renie as Asians realised that we shared common traditions of respecting and loving our elders and parents and culinary habits. Alexia from Mexico and I found common connects - firstly, our love of hot spices in food, and secondly that our belief systems were the same since our cultural fundamentals and values were similar !

Continual exchange of ideas and thoughts became a cornerstone of our bonding experience. We established a routine of weekly dinners, where each of us would share our personal views on current topics and recall past experiences, and through such collaborative acts we were able to appreciate and understand each other better. We made sincere attempts to adapt to each other's varied preferences - socialising, greeting etiquettes, table manners, dressing styles et al.

One memory that I hold close to my heart was when I received the news of my grandmother being diagnosed with third stage cancer. While tears welled up in my eyes on hearing this sad news, Alexia was immediately in my room offering me comfort, while Alvin and Renie consoled me - my dorm-mates were with me till I finally made peace with the harsh reality. It is in such overwhelming moments I realised that being family isn't just about having blood relations - rather it's about the bonds we as humans form and the support we offer each other, regardless of our origins and nationalities. The diverse backgrounds actually became the very foundation of our togetherness in the dormitory. We celebrated each other's cultural and national holidays, offered support during sickness, and heve wholeheartedly helped each in every aspect of student life over the past 1 year.

Every dorm-mate in our group added value and left an indelible impact on me. I shall always remember Renie for being my emotional support system, Alexia for always lending a patient ear, Alvin for his emotional quotient and stability in crises, Baris for being ever helpful and Dimitri for teaching me how to be ever-receptive to divergent views.

My hostel life at Warwick thus became my next step in Internationalisation, and enlightened me on aspects of cross-cultural communication, adaptability, and the universal human need for connection. These lessons have been invaluable, shaping my understanding of what it truly means to be a global citizen.

Here is a picture of my chosen family at Warwick:



## Diversity in the Classroom: A way towards of Global Perspectives

If Global connect amidst diversity was the mojo at my university dorm, then divergent Global Perspectives was the buzzword at the college. I was one of the only four Indians in the class of thirty international students, and this unique class composition offered me a great opportunity to daily engage with and learn from my peers. Our classroom was a microcosm of global perspectives, since each individual student had their own take on a particular subject matter, and the rest of us learnt a lot getting exposed to divergent approaches to any one single issue.

From the very first day in class, when our professor initiated the discussion about 'Globalisation', it was evident that every student held a unique view on what globalisation meant to them. Similarly, discussions on topics like climate change, gender equality, and political systems often revealed how deeply our individual and national backgrounds influenced our viewpoints.

With these daily interactions with my classmates, I realised that there rarely is a single 'correct' perspective on a complex global issue. Instead, I learned to appreciate the value of multiple viewpoints and the importance of considering the context when trying to understand different approaches to problem-solving.

In the class, I found myself explaining Indian society, culture and politics during several class discussions, and this deepened my appreciation of my own heritage while generating healthy respect for other's. I developed skills in cross-cultural communication, learned to navigate cultural and national sensitivities, and became adept at building bridges between different worldviews.

I along with several of my classmates also participated in an 'Intercultural Competence Workshop' which explored cultural influences, attitudes and behaviours. This workshop

concluded how culture shapes one's identity and beliefs and how, as a result, people of different cultures respond differently to the same situation.

As the academic year progressed, I saw how our diverse classroom became a powerful incubator for innovative ideas. When we combined our varied perspectives and experiences, we often arrived at solutions and insights that none of us could have reached individually. I learned that our individual stories and backgrounds are not just interesting anecdotes, but vital components that shape our understanding of the world.

This class-room interaction and experience has undoubtedly prepared me to be a more empathetic, adaptable, and globally-minded professional in my future career.

Here is a picture with my classmates that helped me broaden my perspective in many ways:



## What binds us all : Core Elements

Through celebrations, hardships, late-night study sessions, and weekend adventures, I came to understand that the fundamental human desires for connection, understanding, and support are universal. Regardless of whether my flatmates grew up eating with chopsticks, forks, or our hands, whether our first words were in Mandarin, Spanish, or Hindi, we all sought the same things: love, friendship, acceptance, and the chance to pursue our dreams.

The most profound realisation I have had in this year is : We are all fundamentally alike at our core no matter where we belong from.

## Conclusion:

As I prepare to conclude my time at Warwick, I realise that I have learnt much more than mere academic knowledge based on the college curriculum. Rather, this past year has been a transformative process for me, shaping me into a more open-minded, culturally aware, and globally conscious individual.

The friendships I've forged, spanning continents and cultures, have become an integral part of my personal and professional network. As I move forward, I carry with me not just memories, but a transformed worldview and a commitment to fostering international understanding and collaboration in whatever path I choose.

This internationalisation journey over the past year has equipped me with the intercultural competence, critical thinking skills, and global perspective necessary to be an effective leader and changemaker in our complex, multicultural world.

I am truly excited about the possibilities my Warwick experience has opened up for my future as a global citizen!



Here is my picture at my University Building:

