A UNIVERSITY ADVERTISES ITSELF ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

"A case study about the meaning of images based on the International section from the website of the University of Hull"

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Summary

The World Wide Web is a growing resource of information and communication. Inspired by this and forms of visual communication a research about the role of images on the web has been set up. More specific, this research examines the meaning of three images that are portrayed on the website of the University of Hull. The three chosen images are based on the international pages of the University's website and concentrate on students from the regions Africa, Arab/Gulf regions and North America. (University of Hull, 2008)

Central through this enquiry has been the theory of semiotics and iconography. With regards to semiotics the research specialises itself into the field of visual social semiotics. (Chandler, 2007; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The study of visual social semiotics focuses on signs and meanings, and the way people understand images (Lester et al. 2006: 50-62; Tietze et al., 2003: 20). Iconography considers contextual factors that influence what people see (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 102-117). To explore this topic, qualitative methods of research have been used by interviewing 14 international students and 1 employee of the University's Web Team, about the way they conceive the concerned images.

This research has shown that there are elements of visual social semiotic theory and iconography that comply with results of this research. The way images are presented influence how people interpret them. As explained by Harrison (2005) an 'Action' image can create a story, this element became visible during the research. The interviewees also gave symbolic meaning to 'Action' images. The research also contained a 'Conceptional' image, which created symbolic and classificatory meanings.

Another aspect that becomes clear is that the interviewed students base their meaning and interpretation, not only on the way they are presented ('Action' or 'Conceptional' image), but also use other contextual factors such as the title of the page, verbal descriptions and personal experiences, to form a meaning about the shown image.

The research considered different cultural groups (North America, Africa and the Arab/Gulf region). The results do not show a significant difference to the way these students interpret the images. To research this further, a broader range of topics should be applied in the future.

Preface

This research has been a great opportunity for me to come into contact with students from different parts of the world. It has been an ideal learning process about visual communication and semiotics, which has made me aware of different and new perceptions, together with common characteristics that international students share towards images.

For this learning process, I wish to thank my tutor Eugène Loos at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He has been of great assistance for the preparation and guiding arrangements for my research period outside the Netherlands. His advice and trust have been of great importance for me, for which I am most thankful. I also want to thank the Web Team from the University of Hull for their cooperation and participating in this research. And most importantly, my thanks go to all the international students from North America, Africa and the Arab/Gulf regions, who were willing to be interviewed. Without their participation, I would not have been able to conduct this research.

Also special thanks to Mr Steve Easthill, who as a native English speaker for supporting me with the English grammar contained within this report.

1.   Introduction

"Every message is made of signs"

(Robert Jacobson cited in Hutamo, 2003: 3)

People communicate through signs. In semiotic studies, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Signs are seen as a part of a signs system, which presents how meanings are made and how reality is represented (Chandler 2005: 2). This report presents a research that is inspired by the theory of semiotics. Semiotics, also called the study of signs and meanings, focuses on the way people understand images (Lester et al. 2006: 50-62; Tietze et al., 2003: 20). This research examines the meaning of three images that are portrayed on the website of the University of Hull. The three chosen images are based on the international pages of the University's website and concentrate on students from the regions Africa, Arab/Gulf regions and North America.

Fourteen international students and the content editor of the Web Team of the University of Hull were interviewed, with the aim to study and research as to how these different respondents interpret the images on the website and give meaning to them. To accomplish this goal, elements of semiotics are applied in this research. Two semiotic terms will be discussed shortly to introduce the central research questions that involve aspects of 'denotation' and 'connotation'.

Denotation describes something about what someone literally sees, the material aspect of a sign (Tietze et al., 2003: 17-22).
Connotation refers to how someone interprets a sign, in terms of feelings and symbolic conceptions (Chandler, 2007).

Further explanation about theory of semiotics and visual social semiotics are discussed in chapter 3 of this report.

Inspired through semiotics the following central questions are formulated: -

1a.   How do international students from Africa, the Middle East and North America denote the pictures at the international welcome pages?

1b.   How do international students from these countries connote the pictures at the international welcome pages?

1c.   Is there a difference between how international students from these countries denote and connote the images on the welcome pages?

1d.   How does the connotation of the images on the welcome pages of Africa, Middle East or North America, affect the opinion of the international students, about the University of Hull?

2.   How does the Web Team denote and connote the images on the international welcome pages?

3.   Is there a difference between how International Students and the Web Team of the University of Hull, denote and connote the images on the welcome pages?

This subject is relevant for several actors. First of all for the University of Hull itself. Because this research says something about the way international students perceive certain images on the website. The University is currently rebuilding the web content. Consequently this research can be used as a tool of feedback to suggest improvements to new website. Secondly, this research is also relevant to students themselves, because it can give an insight into the way images perceive their interpretation of the meanings. I also believe that this research project can be used by companies as to how they advertise and promote their products globally. In comparison, universities can use these techniques on their own websites for their own promotional benefits.

Reading guide
Chapter 2 discusses the methods used during the research process and reflects on the role of the researcher. Chapter 3 Describes basic theories of signs and specifies into semiotics and visual social semiotics. Chapter 4 Presents the findings and is followed by the conclusion and discussion in which the central questions will be answered and new issues are proposed for further research on this topic.

2.   Reflecting on social science perspective and methods

As a researcher, you have to be aware of your research position. All the choices you make can influence the outcomes of the research (Iverson, 2003: 24-26). That is why this chapter discusses the social science perspective and methods that are used for this research.

2.1   Social science perspective

The social science perspective says something about the perspective through which a researcher acts. For this research, I apply an interpretative perspective. Wester et al., (2000) describes the interpretive perspective as follows; when you research a subject, you enquire into the 'Inner world' of the people you are interviewing. The goal of this research is to describe the way interviewees interpret their meanings. This comes back to my enquiry by researching the connotation responses by the actors to the images shown.

From a more philosophical point of view by a scientific approach, Hollis (2007) explains a researcher distinct its position in terms of modes, these are presented in figure 2.1.

	Explanation	Understanding
Holism	Systems	Games
Individualism	Agents	Actors

Figure 2.1   Matrix (Hollis, 2008: 19)

The **Explanation** side of the matrix tends to have a positivist approach. According to this approach, human activities are seen as a "mirror image of nature". When holding this position as a researcher, you believe there is a certain problem and you are able to capture its definition appropriately and correctly, creating a solution from that point of view. You focus yourself on universal laws or generalised principles and causal relations to explain and predict situations (Yanow, 1996: 3-4; De Graaf, 2008 Gastelaars; 2008).

The **Understanding** side of the matrix is also called the interpretive approach. The interpretive approach means it is already focused. It pays attention to meanings, values, feelings and beliefs that are being expressed (Yanow, 1996: 8-9; Hollis, 1984: 16).

From this point of view, I apply an interpretive approach, because the aim of the enquiry is to research how different actors interpret the images on the website, in terms of feelings and how they give meaning to them. Consequently, I do not look for generalised principles and universal laws to explain or predict causal relations. By believing that the findings of this research will not represent truth as it actually is or was, it aspires to a standard of objectivity, but will give the truth of our experiences (Riessman, 1993: 22). The researchers' position can also be viewed from a Holism or Individualism angle. The Holism is about the individual agent (this can be human or otherwise) by appealing to some larger 'whole'. In this case the 'whole' shapes an individual's behaviour (Hollis, 1984: 15). In contrast to this, Individualism refers to the structures of individuals agents, here the 'whole' is nothing more than the sum of individuals (Holis, 1984:15 ; De Graaf, 2008).

During my research, I have enquired as to what meaning the respondents have according to the images being shown, while looking at the 'whole' context in which the images are presented. From this point of view, I believe the 'whole' context of the Universities' website, the setting in which the website is viewed, persons cultural background and so on, shape individual behaviour. Coming together, this means my perspective is on the understanding and holism side of the matrix.

2.2   Methods of qualitative research

To answer the central questions, my research relies on qualitative research methods. This has been a conscious choice, because this type of research focuses on processes of meanings, experiences and feelings (Boeije, 2005). I chose not to use quantitative methods because this type of research only works with standardised measurement instruments, with numbers and statistics to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses. This method can give a lot of information, but is less focused on meanings which extend beneath their surface. For example, when using a simple questionnaire, an individual can fill a tick box with an X by one of several response options, but this particular answer does not tell anything about the way a person feels or thinks about their choice (Boeije, .; Alvesson 1996). Because of this, my research uses qualitative methods, consisting of collecting data, semiotic analysis and interviewing.

2.3   Collecting data

To analyse the images, I collected data from the University of Hull (circa. 2008). This data contains the images themselves and the information on the web pages. The data forms the broader context of the images.

Through the website, I also collected data about the University's policies on codes and practices for presentation and advertising – the Web Team for which as responsible to adhere to.

To create more insight into the research subject, my research is also supported by a collection of data in the form of a literature study.

2.4   Scientific background

Because the research aspires to enquire the meaning of images it uses theory of semiotics. Within semiotics there are different methods and perceptions of performing such research. My research applies a combination of several semiotic thoughts. The theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), which focuses on the representation of a sign. This will be explained further in the following chapter. Concepts of denotation and connotation, described by Chandler (2007) and Tietze et al., (2003). Also elements of iconography are applied; this type of study sees signs in their broader context by making use of data such as: titles, identification, other pictures and verbal descriptions (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 102-107). This is implemented into my research by showing the images to the respondents in the natural context of the website, while interviewing them.

2.5   Interviewing

Two types of groups have been interviewed, international students and an employee of the Web Team of the University of Hull.

The first group consisted of 14 international students from, Africa, Arab/Gulf regions and North America. For each region, I aimed to interview five students. This has been successful with the exception for respondents from the Arab/Gulf regions. From this group, four students have been interviewed. Difficulties appeared in finding respondents coming from this region. From the 10 students approached, only four wished to participate into my enquiry.

The division between areas are based on the categorisation of micro web pages of University of Hull's international website. For each home region of international students, the website has a dedicated web page. The images shown portray the students cultural background, in preparation to life in the United Kingdom. These web pages are specifically aimed at students from continents such as Africa, North America, Arab/Gulf regions and so on (University of Hull,. 2009).

The second target group is the University of Hull's Web Team by interviewing the content editor. The Web Team is responsible for the University of Hull's website (2009). This group is chosen because it is responsible for the content and images on the website, together with particular images that has chosen for this research.

All the respondents were selected by the researcher throughout the social contacts that arose during my period of study at the University of Hull. They have been selected personally, through Internet connections such as Facebook, E-mail and through the network of social contacts.

As an interview technique, semi-structured interviews were held with the use of a topic list. Hereby the themes discussed during the interview could be influenced with semiotic language, topic lists are listed in appendices 4 and 5. To prepare myself for the official interviews, a rehearsal interview was held and transcribed to reflect and improve interviewing techniques.

2.6   Content analysis

The acquired data are analysed through a content analysis. A content analysis points out several important topics that appeared during the interview(s). For this the researcher studies the entire interview, first by reading the interview and afterwards categorizing important topics of the interview. (Field and Morse, 1996). This method was selected because it categorises the various findings and perspectives, as to how the students interpret the images on the websites.

3.   "What do I see?"

"What is it that we see in signs?". Signs can be described as 'graphics' that found there appearance way back in history. In the Western culture, the first systematic conventions of graphic communication of words were developed some 3,000 years BC. They can be seen as tools for transmitting and communicating information, forming an indispensable tool for social and cultural evolution (Massironi, 2002). Some make a distinction between words and pictures in communications practise (Lester et al., 2006). In semiotic studies, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Signs are seen as a part of a signs system, which presents how meanings are made and how reality is represented (Chandler, 2005: 2).

3.1   Studies of signs: an overview of different studies of signs

There are different studies about the way we see and process signs. Lester (2006) divides them into two groups, the sensual theories and the perceptual theories. Sensual theories are more technically focused as they see signs as objects of light that attract or repel us. While perceptual theories are interested in the meaning humans associate with signs (Lester et al., 2006).

Sensual theories

The gestalt theory and constructivism are examples of studies who advocate sensual theories. The basic idea of the gestalt theory is that perception of a sign is a combination of sensations that are linked by the brain. They focus on individual forms that make up a picture's content (Lester et al., 2006: 50-53).

Constructivism theories concentrate on explaining how perceptions give meaning to an image. Here the eye is a central element in the process of meaning making. "The viewer constructs the scene with short-lived eye fixations that the mind combines into a whole picture" (Lester et al., 2006: 53).

Perceptual theories

The cognitive and semiotic studies fall under the perceptual theories of signs. Cognitive theories maintain mental activities that can affect visual perception. Several mental activities such as the memory, projection, expectation, selectivity, habituation, salience, dissonance, culture and words, influence our perceptions of signs accordance to the cognitive theory (Lester et al., 2006: 59-64).

The second study is semiotics, also explained as "The study of signs and meanings". This study focuses on the way people understand images (Lester et al., 2006: 50-62; Tietze et al., 2003: 20). Among semioticians, there are considerable variations according to what semiotic involves. This will be examined further in the following paragraph.

3.2   Semiotics

As mentioned earlier, semiotics can be explained as the 'study of signs and meaning'. Here the idea is that signs appear within sign systems. For example, that can be the red light in a traffic signal that means 'Stop', within the semiotic system of 'Traffic control'. There are many sign systems, words are signs in the language sign systems, gestures are signs in the non verbal systems and so on. Some say that semiotics provides us with a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signs practices, including language, gesture, paintings and so on. (Harrison, 2003; Chandler, 2007). But also within the semiotics field, there can be made a distinction between different branches, for example the social semiotics and visual social semiotics.

Social semiotics and visual social semiotics

Chandler describes social semiotics as the following: "Contemporary 'social semiotics' has moved beyond the structualist focus on signifying systems as languages, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situation" (Chandler, 2007: 8). More concrete social semiotics are presented through the following principles (Harrison, 2003: 48) : -

1.   Semioticians believe all people see the world through signs.

2.   The meaning of signs are created by people and do not exist separately from them and within the lives of their social/cultural community.

3.   Semiotic systems provide people with a variety of resources for making meanings.

The invention of the television, computer and the World Wide Web changed the role of visual communication because nowadays nobody can avoid being confronted with visual messages in their daily life. Visual social semiotics concentrates on this new development.

It distinguishes itself from social semiotics because it specifies as to what can be said and done with images and to how people interpret such images (Harrison, 2003). The following sections focus on the basic ideas of images itself throughout the theory of (visual social) semiotics.

3.3   The image

Charles Sanders Peirce, widely regarded as one of the co-founders of what is now generally known as semiotics, made a distinction between three modes of signs namely: the icon, index and symbolic mode. Today many semioticians use them in their analysis (Chandler, 2007: 36). The distinction between different modes does not mean that an image can just have one of these characters. A picture can also have all three of the categories represented (Harrison, 2003: 47; Lester et al., 2001; Chandler, 2007: 44).

First of all an image can be typed as an **icon,** this is when the sign represents an object. Most of the time, because of an icon's similarity or resemblance to the real object being illustrated, compared to what we already know or conceive about the object or person. The icon has no dynamical relation with the object it represents (Chandler, 2007: 40). An example of an icon is the recycle bin on the desktop of a computer (fig. 3.1). This image represents the place where somebody can dump its documents. It has similarities to what we know as a 'bin' but it does not have a dynamical relation with a 'real' bin because it is not a 'real' bin.

Figure 3.1   Iconic mode

The second mode is typed as an **index.** An index represents something. But in contrast to an icon, with the index mode there is a 'genuine relation' between the image and the object that is represented, which does not solely depends on interpretation. This is an image that is recognised, not because of any similarity to an object or person, but because we understand the relationship between the image and the concept where it stands for (Chandler, 2007; Harrison, 2003: 47). "We learn indexical signs through everyday life experiences" (Lester et al., 2001: 58).

A photograph can be typed as indexical image because it is not only a resemblance of what it represents, but also a real connection because the RPs (Represented Participants) in the photograph are part of the real object they represent.

The third is the **symbolic** mode. This one is most abstract and does not have a logical resemblance with the things it represents. We only know the meaning of the image because of conventional associations in daily life, which can be influenced by culture (Chandler, 2007; Lester et al., 2001). Figure 3.2 illustrates a symbolic image which in the western culture stands for 'Peace'.

Figure 3.2   Symbolic mode

3.4   Denotation and connotation

Another way of looking at images is through the concepts of denotation and connotation. Denotation says something about what somebody sees, the literal meaning of an image, referring to the material aspect. Connotation focuses on how somebody interprets a sign. Here the accent is on the 'meaning' that is given to it (Tietze et al., 2003: 17-22). Connotation can also be explained as a concept in mind, a 'Socio-cultural and personal associations produced as a reader decodes a text' (Chandler, 2007: 246). This means that it is not a thing, but a notion of a thing, some authors refer to the word 'symbol' to explain it. Because when you refer to connotation, you talk about things you have got conceptions of, not the things themselves (Chandler, 2007: 13-17).

An example of denotation and connotation can be made more clear through the following example of the sign h-o-u-s-e shown in figure 3.3

Denotation: literal meaning of the sign **h-o-u-s-e**
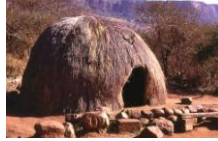
Connotation:

Figure 3.3   Denotation and Connotation of the sign h-o-u-s-e

Here the denotation is the literal meaning of the sign **h-o-u-s-e**, while the connotation refers to what this sign conjures up to the individual. People can have different conceptions of a sign, as this example illustrates.

3.5   Three metafunctions

Kress and van Leeuwen (1999) describe three metafunctions to analyse images: the representational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction and the compositional metafunction.   The representational metafunction it is about the people, places and objects within the images, also called represented participants (RPs).

The interpersonal metafunction is about the question "How does the picture engage the viewer?" Here the focus is at the actions among all the participants involved in the production and viewing of images.   The compositional answers the question "How do the representational and interpersonal metafunctions relate to each other and integrate into meaningful 'whole'"? (Harrison, 2003: 50; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996)

My study focuses on the representational metafunction because it is about the people, places and objects within the images, while the research pays attention to how the respondents interpret the way they are represented through the images on the international web sites.

3.6   Focussing on the representational metafunction

As mentioned before the representational metafunction refers to the people, places and objects which are represented within an image; the represented participants (RPs). Here distinctions can be made between an 'Action image' and a 'Conceptional image' (Harrison, 2005).

In an action image, the represented participants are connected by a vector, a line that connects the RPs. For instance outstretched arms or an arrow connecting boxes. 'The represented participants are shown as doing something for each other' (Harrison, 2005: 51).   When an image includes these vectors of motion, it has a narrative structure because the image allows viewers to create a story about the RPs (Harrison, 2005).

The conceptual image does not include vectors. In this type of image, RP's are grouped together. In this case Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) describes that RP's are shown as: "Participants in terms of their more generalised and more/less stable and timeless essence, in term of class, or structure, or meaning" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 79; Harrison, 2005). A well known conceptual pattern is the classification. This type of image brings different people, places or objects together into one picture, distributing them symmetrically over the picture space to show that they have something in common, they belong to some class (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001).

 Harrison uses terms as 'Action', 'Reactional', 'Classificatory', 'Analytical' and 'Symbolic' to analyse the representation of visual images. These terms are related to the type of structure of the image, narrative or conceptual and are explained in table 1 (Harrison, 2005: 51).

Structure	Processes
An **Action Image** allows viewers to create a story about the RPs because the images include vectors of motion	• **Action**: The narrative is created by vectors, which can be bodies, limbs, tools, weapons, roads and so on. • **Reactional**: The narrative is created by eye lines.
A **Conceptional Image** does not include vectors. RPs tend to be grouped together to present viewers with a "concept" of who or what they present.	• **Classificatory**: RPs as "kind of" something or some group. • **Analytical**: RPs are displayed in terms of a "part-whole" structure. The whole is called the Carrier, which possesses "parts" called Attributes. • **Symbolic**: RPs are important for what they "mean".

Table 3.1 The representational metafunction: structure and processes (Harrison, 2001: 51).

3.7   Iconography

Some elements of the iconographic theory also answer the question "How do you know what is represented"? But instead of only focussing of the structure or patterns of an image, as in the representational metafunction, this study uses other contextual factors to answer the question (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 102-117). Aspects that can be studied to explore what is represented are categorised as: -

- The title that indicates who or what is represented.

- Identification of what is represented on the basis of personal experience.

- Identification based on background research. This can be a broad contextual research.

- Identification through references to other pictures.

- Verbal descriptions.

4. Research results

During a period of two months, with myself participating as a student at the University of Hull, I was able to interview 15 respondents, consisting of 14 international students and 1 employee from the University's Web Team. This chapter discusses the results that came out of this process.

4.1 Images and representational metafunction in practice

As shown in the previous chapter, according to Harrison (2005), images can be divided into reactional or conceptional images. Figures 4.1 to 4.3 demonstrate the images used in this research. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 can be interpreted as reactional images. The RPs are connected by a diagonal vector, created by the eye lines. The girl in figure 4.1 is looking up to something next to the boy. This connection between the RPs makes it possible to create a story about them. For example, the subjects concerned are having a pleasant conversation. In figure 4.2, the two girls in the background create a vector with their eyes which makes the observer believe there is something going on in front of them.

Figure 4.1   Image Arab/Gulf page   Figure 4.2   Image North America page

The third image in figure 4.3, can be understood as an example of a conceptional image. This is because the RPs are grouped together to present the viewer as to who or what they represent. The process of the image can be described as classificatory because the RPs are portrayed as if they are part of a group. In this case, the RPs can be interpreted as a sports team, with RPs that represent students with an African background. This image can carry a symbolic meaning.

Figure 4.3 Image from the African page

4.2   Images and different perceptions coming together

'How do the respondents see and experience the images?' This is interpreted by looking at the aspects of denotation and connotation. Here the results directed towards each image will be laid out starting with the aspects of denotation, in other words what the respondents literally notice when they view the image. This is followed up by the way people interpret the image in terms of connotation.

4.2.1 Denotation

Figure 4.4   *Image from the micro page for students from North America*

Figure 4.4   Image from the North America page

Students from North America denote this image as seeing students in a lecture hall. The student in front receives the main attention and is often called a 'White' or 'Caucasian' girl. Also, the two students at the back are mentioned. One of the respondents describes it as following; "I see a white student between two African students, two black students". Another says: "a white girl and in the back I guess there are two black students" (North American student, 2009: interview 2).

Students from Africa see a 'North American/Caucasian girl' and black students in the background who are assumed to be 'African' students in a lecture hall. One mentions the vector that is created by the eyes of the students in the background: "They look like they are listening to the lecturer, the eyes you can see that they are pointing towards this direction or whatever is like lecturing them" (African student, 2009: interview 5). Another element that comes forward is 'culture'; "I can see a mixed cultural environment" (African student, 2009: interview 5).

Students from the Arab/Gulf region give a brief description of what they see. They notice a 'blond' girl at the front and two students in the background in a lecture hall. The mixed culture aspect also comes up in one of the interviews, a respondent says: "She is just sitting with all the students from different backgrounds around her" (Arab students, 2009: interview 4).

Less detailed is the description given by the content editor of the Web Team. She describes the image as "a couple of students in class, studying" (Content Editor, 2009).

Image from the micro page for students from North America

Figure 4.5   Image Africa page

The main elements that students from North America denote when they see this image on the website is that they see a football team. This is described by the following words; "An African soccer team, a woman soccer team" and "an athletic team of students from Africa". Two of the students also mention the 'white guys' in the image; "There are like those white guys, they are like in the crowd they are not separated together, they are kind of spread out"! (North American student, 2009: interview 2).

Students from Africa describe what they see in the words of a "football team"; "I see a group of African, that is black people", "these are all girls, they are all black girls" (African student, 2009: interviews 4 and 3). Some refer to the text and explain it is a team from Ghana.

Students from the Middle East/Gulf region see; 'a football team, a girls team'. One of the students also recognises people on the side who seem to have a different nationality, wear different clothes (Arab student, 2009: interview 4).

Interviewing the Content Editor, she sees what she believes is the Ghana football team and Mattiuw, the international officer who represents Africa, he is displayed in the picture (Content Editor, 2009).

Image from the micro page for students from North America

Figure 4.6   Image Arab/Gulf page

Students from North America see a girl, all referring to her Middle Eastern origin; "Well there is this girl who looks like she is from, who is Middle Eastern". (North American student, 2009: interview 4). A few respondents also notice a guy in the image: "There is this guy who has his back towards the camera, in front of her there is a picture of man with the back of his head" (North American student, 2009: interview 2 and 4).

The African respondents describe the girl in the picture as a 'Middle Eastern girl', but not all are sure about his particular origin; "I think the picture you can not really tell when you look at her for the first time that she is Arab. Is this an Arab girl? What I can see is a beautiful North African student" (African student, 2009: interview 2,3,5). Also mentioned in this picture is the back of a guys head and one of the respondents says he sees: "probably they are all students" (African student, 2009: interview 4).

Respondents from the Arab region describe that they see a 'girl' a 'lady', who is smiling. One of them thinks she is Middle Eastern. They also denote a guys head.

The Content Editor of the website gives a brief description; "It is a Middle Eastern student, having a conversation with a Tutor" (Content Editor, 2009).

4.2.2 Connotation

Image from the micro page for students from North America

Figure 4.7   Image from the North American page

There are two main observations that come up when this image is shown to students from North America. First of all, the image gives the impression of a student that seems to be bored. Secondly the image symbolises a of variety of people at the school. All interviewed respondents think the girl in front is bored, is not interested or enjoying the lecture. One of them describes this feeling in following words: "They do not really look interested, by the look at their faces. Where one of them is not even looking at the professor, while others look like 'I wish I wasn't here"! Another respondents explain: "It is just a picture of a girl and she doesn't seem to have a lot of fun in class" (North American student, 2009: interview 4, 1). Despite this interpretation, they also mention that this image shows 'variety' and 'diversity in people'. This gives them a positive feeling, a feeling that it represents variety of people from the United States, that there is the possibility to meet a diversity of people and it shows diversity of ethnic groups at the school here.

Although the Africans agree with the way North Americans connote the aspect of diversity in this picture, 'which shows different international students, different types of races', the Africans have stronger feelings about the images. A student from Nigeria says: "It portraits an international environment at University, we have got Americans but black people as well". Another respondent explains: "It makes me feel like here at University we have like the cultural diversity a lots of people from different backgrounds" (African student, 2009: Interview 1, 4).

Some of the respondents also mention that they think the girl in front of the lecture is bored, a student describes this in clear words: "Like someone is like bored, not happy, I thought 'I don't want to be here' something like that" (African student, 2009: interview 3).

All respondents from the Arab/Gulf region connote the feeling that the girl in front of the image is bored. One describes its feeling as following: "This tells me that from judging this picture that I come to University and I am going to sit in a lecture and I am going to be bored until that point that I want to pull my hair out and I can not wait to get out of here. So it does not really appeal to me much in that sense" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: interview 3).

The Content Editor explains that she thinks the girl in front looks bored. "She looks like she is maybe interested in what she is reading but not really taking part in the class" (Content Editor, 2009).

Image from the micro page for students from Africa

Figure 4.8   Image Africa page

North American respondents connote this image in a positive way, feeling it promotes a 'team spirit, meeting new people, it brings a sense of community, tidiness and even progress': "I think it represents progress, like the work that the school is doing with them because they are a underdeveloped country so I guess it is just progress" (North American student, 2009: Interview 2).

A good feeling is also created through the meaning of interaction as one describes it: "It does feel good to me because you just want interaction or any other peoples culture is an important thing. And doing that to school it helps opening up other people's mind" (North American student, 2009: Interview 4). Another meaning given to this image is that it creates the feeling that the school has good ties with Africa. (North American student, 2009: Interview 5).

Respondents from Africa feel that this picture portrays a sense of relationship which the University has with Africa, one of effort and a welcoming feeling. One student from Nigeria describes his feelings as following: "It makes me feel happy, it makes me feel proud that I am the person that I am wanted. That the University appreciates Africans in the school, I mostly feel like I am an outsider you know. And I am wanted in this school and that makes me feel really happy" (African student, 2009: Interview 4).

The feeling of ties and relationships between the University and Africa also appears with respondents from the Arab/Gulf region. The image gives a sense of 'Community spirit, coming together, unity and achievement': "Because they are all smiling they are happy, they are proud of themselves. I think it is regardless of they are playing football or not but the actual principle of them being together. And it feels kind of like this unity so the picture portrays that very well" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: Interview 3). Here one of them also makes the comparison with the image on the page for the Arab/Gulf region: "It makes you feel more like at home, feel more comfortable, like as if it would make me feel like Hull University has more in common with Africa there is more relationships. Whereas the on of the Gulf Middle East one is a short page and one picture…" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: Interview 4).

The Content Editor, refers to the thought behind the picture while describing what she feels when she sees it: "It is more a feeling of, he wanted to make his potential and students feel like they had a relationship with the University" (Content Editor, 2009).

Image from the micro page for students from Africa the Arab/Gulf regions

Figure 4.9   Image for the Arab/Gulf regions

Respondents from North America mainly describe that they see a girl in the context of a group, there is an interaction and she is talking: "She looks happy to be here like she is socialising, you know she is in the middle and socialising with other people maybe sitting on the side walk or something" (North American student, 2009: Interview 2). She is described as an 'Exotic looking' girl. The respondents do not have an outstanding feeling towards this image.

Also respondents from African connote this image as a girl having a conversation, talking to someone. Thinking about the image one says it is really stereotyped: "Obviously they try to put on someone with a little bit of colour to show that they are from Middle East. Yeah it is just a girl, it is very stereotyped, she can be from anywhere" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: Interview 2). Another respondent experiences the feeling that there are not a lot of Middle Eastern students at the University, she says; "Do they not have like more Middle Easterner's living here? Would I be able to see someone like that? It looks like you are not able to see anybody and it is not like that the school, so it is discouraging." Apart from these, there are also two respondents who experience 'happy' and 'welcoming' feelings towards the image.

'Confusing' and 'not clear' are words that come up when this image is presented to respondents from the Arab/Gulf region. They mention they see a scene where a girl is having a conversation, but the meaning of the image is not clear; "She has a smile on her face but it doesn't really say much about what is going on, perhaps she is enjoying herself in a student environment and that she is enjoying her time with different people, or perhaps with people in the same time of one culture?" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: Interview 3).

It is not clear who this person is and where he is from. Some think she is not Arabic, but others recognise Arab roots in the girl's face: "Pakistani girl', 'She is Arabic" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: Interview 3, 4)

The Content Editor says she sees a student and a tutor having a conversation and describes her feelings with the following words: "Well she is obviously happy, so it gives me a sort of positive feeling of what I am going to read" (Content Editor, 2009).

4.2.3 The Web Team and visual communication on the website

The Web Team of the University of Hull consists of four people. Together they control the public website and the micro pages that fall under it. The Web Team has a strong vision towards the website and the images shown, this came apparent during the interview. Currently, the team is working to build a new website, which will be launched in August 2009. It's image will have an important role in portraying it's new web content, for which the Content Editor gives the following reasons: "It is because they convey almost subliminal messages that words cannot convey. Sometimes you can say more in a picture that you can't say in words. Especially when you do have students of tens of thousands of students from other countries that don't you know their English isn't great". (Content Editor, 2009).

Another argument to make images of key importance, is to use them as a 'selling tool', to first attract attention when someone visits the website.

The images that are central in this research are portrayed on three of the 600 micro pages, that fall under the public website. Each department is responsible for delivering information on the micro pages. By creating a website template, the Web Team tries to support each department with regards to the types of images and text they put online (Content Editor, 2009).

For the images on the pages for North America, Africa and Arab/Gulf pages, the following explanation is given towards the question: "'Why did you chose to put this picture on the website"?

Image from the North America page

Figure 4.10   Image from the North American page

 "I had a very very very small selection of images that I could choose for each region and that was the only one that suited America. I think the idea of this image was to portray a mix variety of students. Because from North America you do get, you know, a lot of different cultural back grounds but the main ones that get here are the white Americans and the dark Americans" (Content Editor, 2009).

Fig 4.11 Image from the African page

Referring to the representative of Africa who chooses this picture, she says: "He puts, the changes the information regularly, and he changes the images regularly. So then if you are from Ghana, Kenya or Nigeria or anywhere else, it does make you feel at home, a little bit more at home, quicker because you can instantly relate to what you are looking at. It is not just a head show of some student, some random student, you know exactly who they are. And they have been affiliated with the University, they came here and did the training and worked with soccer team here as well. So there is more of that bonding. And it is very in the picture" (Content Editor, 2009).

Figure. 4.12   Image from the Arab/Gulf page

"If you go to this page, she looks Middle Eastern so we put a Middle Eastern picture on a Middle Eastern page. I don't think that is necessary to be obvious, Middle Eastern students go to that page because it is about them, they don't need to know what they look like because they already now what they look like.

I would prefer to convey a message of multiculturalism or the University as a whole. But sometimes we can't get that in all the images that are supplied. So that is probably the closest I could get with that image". The current web content has appeared to be very complex to work with. For the new website, a simpler format is to be used, so the departments can easily change text and images" (Content Editor, 2009).

4.3   Expectations based on signs

"In what way do the signs influence the opinion of the international students about the University of Hull"?

With regards to this question, none of the students refer to any particular image to explain the thoughts they had about the University of Hull, before entering the school.   Most of the international students from Africa and the Gulf/Middle East, built their expectations on different types of resources before they applied to the University, or even visited the website after they had been accepted. "The module was my focus and I was not bothered about the website" (Africa student, 2009: interview 1).

Other resources which are mentioned, and shape their expectations are: -

- friends that are currently studying there

- those that have had previous experience at the University

- a representative that had visited the country and informed them of the Universities opportunities

- brochures available through the multimedia network, or by conventional methods

The last resource, i.e. the brochure, contained images from white persons which created the following feeling with one of the respondents: "I did not see any black person at all, maybe there was one or two. It was just like many white people at the accommodation. It looked like that it was only white people that were there and I was scared that just the one to be ….." (African student, 2009: interview 3).

Some students from North America refer to the web page itself which created the following thought: "Actually like the website, I mean it is really organised, so I expected like a like of organisation in the school, because of everything is so easy to find and very easy to amend like aide and stuff from the website" (North American student, 2009: interview 2).

Another student mentions she did not expect to experience the sense of community. "I did not really expect to meet so many people from different places. Because on the website you do not see a whole lot of interaction of things you can get involved in" (North American student, 2009: interview 1).

4.4   Influence of contextual factors

All the respondents were interviewed while they were looking at the images on the University of Hull's website. Some interviews took place in the library, in the café of the Business School and most of them at the homes of the students themselves (student accommodation). Within this environment, the respondents could interpret what they see as if they were visiting the website for their own 'private' purpose. So far, this way of how they interpreted the images has been outlined in terms of denotation and connotation. Iconographic theories suggests that other contextual factors determine what one sees (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001: 102-117). On several occasions (12 interviews), the respondents refer to other contextual factors, to explain what they think is represented through the images.

 The three main elements that are mentioned are: -

- the title of the web page

- verbal descriptions

- their own personal experience

Because the images are portrayed on an international page, several respondents think it represents a specific focus group. As one respondent said: "Well since it is the Middle East page, the Gulf and Middle East page, I just assume ahm you know she is from the Middle East" (North American student, 2009: interview 2).

Six respondents highlight the text to explain that the image on the Africa page is a ladies football team from Ghana: "Because it looks like it is England and I don't know I am guessing because I read the page and it says that like they are partners with the Ghana Football association" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: interview 1).

The last factor, personal experience comes up in thirteen of the fifteen interviews. Here the respondents point to their personal experience to explain what they think is represented. With the image on the African site, one of the respondents recognises a professor: "But I do recognise that one of our professors is also an American, who coached the woman football team. Ghana woman football team and the world cup or something in China" (North American student, 2009: interview 5).

Figure 4.13   Image from the African page

For the image on the Arab Gulf page, one mentions she recognises the origin of the girl that is represented: "She obviously looks Middle Eastern and in Jordan, like I would say she is an Arabic, so it looks, it looks familiar and she looks happy" (Arab/Gulf student, 2009: interview 4).

Figure 4.14   Image from the Arab/Gulf page

The last image, many respondents explain they have experienced this moment that is displayed on the picture in the following words: "Can you imagine how many funny pictures you can make if you go snapping pictures in the lectures halls, because some lectures are really boring. Some are really boring and then you are like o god can we have a pause?" (African student, 2009: interview 1).

Figure 4.15   Image from the North American page

5.   Conclusion

The World Wide Web is a growing resource of information and communication, which is used by many companies to advertise themselves. In this context this research focuses on the role of the image and visual communication on the web, which led me to the theory of semiotics. A study specialising in signs and meanings, together with the way people understand them (Lester et al., 2006: 50-62; Tietze et al., 2003: 20). During my study period in England at the University of Hull, 15 people were interviewed about three particular images.   The people interviewed consisted of fourteen International students from the regions of Africa, Arab/Gulf and North America, together with one employee from the Web Team of the University of Hull. The images were taken from the International web pages of the University of Hull, as shown in figures 5.1 to 5.3

Figure 5.1   Image Arab/Gulf page

Figure 5.2   Image North America page

Figure 5.3   Image from the African page

The theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2005) directs itself towards three different perspectives in the way someone sees or analyses a sign, the interactive, representative and compositional metafunction. The representative metafunction has been used in this research, to explore how different respondents interpret what they think is represented through the image.

Also terms as **denotation** and **connotation,** that are often used by semioticians, have been applied to the images concerned (Chandler, 2005; Tietze, 2003). In order to shape a broader context of not only the images itself, the interviews take place while they look at the pictures on the website, referring to the thought of iconography. This study not only pays attention to the structure and patterns of a picture, but also to contextual factors such as the title, text, personal experiences, identification and verbal descriptions (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 102-117). Based on this theory, the results that came forth from the fifteen interviews allowed the following central research questions to be answered: -

1a   **How do international students from Africa, the Middle East and North America denote the pictures at the international welcome pages?**

Starting with the image on the Arab/Gulf page (fig. 5.1), the students see two RP's, a girl and the back of a young man's head. Opinions differ towards the origin of the girl, some of the respondents think the girl is from the Middle East others are not sure about where the girl is from.

The students describe the image that is displayed on the North America page (fig. 5.2) by mentioning a 'White Caucasian' girl in the front and two students often mentioned as 'Black' or 'African' at the back in a lecture hall.

In figure 5.3, the image on the Africa page, is described as a 'football team' or 'a woman's soccer team' which represents African students. Some refer to the fact the team comes from Ghana.

Almost all the respondents (thirteen out of fifteen) use other contextual factors than only the image itself to explain what is represented through the images. Elements of Iconography that come back are: 'the title of the page', 'the text that supports the picture' and most of the time students point towards personal experiences.

1b.   **How do international students from these countries connote the pictures at the international welcome pages?**

According to the representational metafunction, the images on the Arab page and North America page (fig's 5.1 and 5.2) comply with the characteristics of an 'Action' image. This is because the RP's are connected by a diagonal vector, which makes people able to create a story about the RP's

(Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Harrison, 2003). In practice the students often tell a story when they connote what they see and feel, while they are looking at these images. The story that comes up with the image of the Arab page (fig. 5.1) is that the RP's are having a conversation, a form of interaction. There are mixed feelings towards this picture, some students are confused about who are represented. It is not clear what the girl's origin is, while the back of the young man's head does not tell anything. But there are also students who feel welcome and familiar with this image because they recognise their cultural background.

The main thing that is mentioned by almost all of the students, except for one, is that the image on the North America page (fig. 5.2) shows a girl that is attending a lecture and symbolises a situation that expresses boredom. Beside making up a story by seeing this 'Action' image, some students also experience a symbolic meaning, they feel a sense of diversity because the images shows different nationalities.

The image on the Africa page (Fig. 5.3) can be recognised as a 'Conceptual' image as it shows RP's grouped together. (Harrison, 2003) Two elements of Harrison's (2003) theory come forth because students give a classificatory and symbolic meaning to this image. There are different connotations towards this image, all showing a positive feeling. From symbolic point of view the main elements that are mentioned are a strong relationship between University of Hull and Africa, a sense of community, team spirit, a welcoming feeling, appreciation, progress and a sense of achievement. Also From the classificatory angle many students connote the RP's in the image as African students.

1c.   **Is there a difference between how international students from these countries denote and connote the images on the welcome pages?**

All the students formulate what they see and feel in their own words but in general they experienced the images almost in the same way. Especially if it comes to denotation and connotation, for figure. 5.2 everyone denoted three RP's in a lecture hall and connote that the image shows characteristics of boredom.

No significant difference can be concluded between the ways students connote the images. The possible reason for this is that the number of respondents is too small to set forgone a conclusion.

1d. **How does the connotation of the images on the welcome pages of Africa, Middle East or North America, affect the opinion of the international students, about the University of Hull?**

The research shows that students do not only rely on the images that are shown on the web page, to create their opinion and expectation of the University. None of the students refers to the images themselves when it comes to this topic. Instead they refer to other resources available such as brochures, friends and University's representatives abroad.

2. **How does the Web Team denote and connote the images on the international welcome pages?**

The Web Team denotes the image on the Arab/Gulf page (fig. 5.1) as a Middle Eastern student who is having a conversation with her tutor. The picture creates a happy feeling about what the respondent is going to read. The image on the North America page (fig. 5.2) presents a couple of students in a class studying. The editor thinks the girl in front of the image is bored, maybe interested in what she is doing, but not in the class. The last image (fig. 5.3) presents the Ghana Football team and an international officer in the picture who represents Africa at the University. This picture shapes a sense of relationship that exists between the University and Africa.

3. **Is there a difference between how International Students and the Web Team of the University of Hull, denote and connote the images on the welcome pages?**

There appears to be a difference between how the students denote and connote the image on the Arab/Gulf page (fig.5.1). The Web Team wants to portray a student having a conversation with her tutor. What is actually seen by the students is a girl having a conversation with a (random) young man. The picture does not give a positive feeling to the majority of students, instead it brings about feelings of confusion, while the web editor connotes the image to give a happy feeling.

Another difference becomes visible between the way the respondents connote the image on the Africa page (fig. 5.3). The Web Team connotes to the feeling of relationship between Africa and Hull. This is also recognized by the students, but they also refer to a broader symbolic meanings, such as a sense of community, team spirit, welcoming, appreciation, progress and achievement.

With the three central questions as a guide, this research has shown that certain elements of the semiotic and iconographic theory are applicable towards the way people experience images.

For future research this can be examined further, especially if it comes to the way different cultures interpret images. More elements can be considered than the ones already used in this research, to get an even broader picture and by involving more respondents.

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Appendix 1.   Image of the web page for Africa

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL   Search   go

University of Hull home page » International Students » Where are you from? » Africa

International Home
Application and Courses
Download Resources
Exchange & Study Abroad
International College
Living and Studying
Money & Scholarships
Where are you from?
  Africa
  China/East Asia
  Europe/EU
  Gulf/Middle East
  North America
  South Asia
  South East Asia
  Visits and Exhibitions

Useful Links
Admissions Advice and How to Apply
Order a Prospectus
Download Course Information
Open Days
Frequently Asked Questions
Directions to The University
Contact Us

Africa Menu
Ghana
Kenya
Nigeria

Visits & Exhibitions
Please check your country for upcoming University of Hull events.

Welcome to the Africa pages!

Here, you'll find information specific to students from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and other associated countries. We currently have approximately 250 students from this area on campus.

Interesting Facts
The ties between the University and Africa are well established, with African students among our earliest graduates nearly 50 years ago. We've forged relationships with academic and private partners, working with universities, colleges, governments and national institutions.

Presently, the University is the official educational partner of the Ghana Football Association, with national teams using the University's cutting-edge Sports Science department and extensive football facilities, and GFA staff members undertaking academic programmes of study. Ghana's national ladies team, The Black Queens, visited the University of Hull in 2007 (see photo).

The University of Hull is intent on working in partnership with Africa to help provide a secure future for its diverse people and culture. We are knowledge-rich, in terms of research and development, and we gain from sharing that knowledge with others. Most of our academic departments have excellent research ratings and we also rank highly in teaching and learning.

Also, did you know that the University of Hull Law School count at least 20 Nigerian High Court judges among their Alumni?

Official Events

Opening of WISE
His Excellency, Mr John Agyekum Kufour, President of the Republic of Ghana, opened the Wilberforce Institute for Slavery & Emancipation, while the Vice Chancellor of Copperbelt University, Zambia, visited, accompanied by the Zambian High Commissioner to the UK. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is also an Honorary Graduate.

The International Office also played host to the King of Lagos, Oba Akiolu, when he and his family attended his daughter's graduation in 2007 (pictured).

If you're interested in attending the University of Hull as a none-degree seeking Study Abroad or Exchange Applicant, please go to Exchange and Study Abroad and see the Outgoing Students section for further information.

ICONS 2008 Conference
The University of Hull played host to the 2nd Annual International Conference of Nigerian Students in the UK during 2008. Over 100 Nigerian students attended the prestigious event that was opened by Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bill Bruce, and Leader of Hull City Council, Councillor Carl Minns. It provided an opportunity for Nigerian students to discuss the issues that they find relevant while studying in the UK, and what they can take from their time in the UK to assist Nigeria upon their return. The weekend included high profile speakers who flew in directly from Nigeria, such as Mr Jason Ivory, Head of Visas (Nigeria) British High Commission, and Dr Alimi Abdul Razaq, Federal Commissioner in charge of Legal, Licensing and Enforcement at the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

The event, organised in conjunction with the Xn Foundation, was led by Mr Matthew Hornshaw of the University of Hull International Office. Matthew has been working extensively in West Africa for over 4 years and he confirmed that this was arguably the highest profile event of its kind ever in the UK. Matthew also presented a rare signed Jay Jay Okocha shirt to a lucky prize winner! Please see link to photos of the event.

The highlight of the weekend was an appearance by the Acting Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK, His Excellency, Ambassador Dozie Nwanna OON, who spoke intensively about the way forward for Nigeria and its young people. Other contributors were the British Council Nigeria, BCIE Nigeria, University of Benin, Finding Jobs in Africa and Dr Mark Abani, Chairman Central Association of Nigerians in the UK. The relationship between Mr Akanimo Odon, Chair of Xn Foundation and the University of Hull continues with the launch of Book Aid, a project to provide academic text books to Nigerian schools and colleges.

Student Contact in Hull: The Hull University Afro-Caribbean Society

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Money Matters

Are there any scholarships/bursaries available?
Please see the Money & Scholarships section for more details. It is suggested that you also download the Bursaries and Scholarships leaflet.

You may also wish to visit the British Council for details of their scholarship schemes. The Department for International Development also helps students from ex-Commonwealth countries who wish to study in the UK. A range of DfID documents are also available from the Download Resources section.

For more indepth information please visit the main University Money page.

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Appendix 2.   Image of the web page for Gulf and Middle East

Appendix 3.   Image of the web page for North America

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL   Search [   ] go

University of Hull home page » International Students » Where are you from? » North America

International Home
Application and Courses
Download Resources
Exchange & Study Abroad
International College
Living and Studying
Money & Scholarships
Where are you from?
  Africa
  China/East Asia
  Europe/EU
  Gulf/Middle East
  North America
  South Asia
  South East Asia

Visits and Exhibitions

Useful Links
Admissions Advice and How to Apply
Order a Prospectus
Download Course Information
Open Days
Frequently Asked Questions
Directions to The University
Contact Us

Welcome to the North American pages!

Here, you'll find information specific to students from the United States and other associated countries. We're happy to welcome over 100 students from the USA on campus every year!

If you're interested in attending the University of Hull as a none-degree seeking Study Abroad or Exchange Applicant, please go to Exchange and Study Abroad and see the Outgoing Students section for further information.

Money Matters

Are there any Scholarships available?
There are 4 Half-Tuition Scholarships available for students from North America awarded (for year one only) by the International Office.

Tell me more about USA Financial Aid...
You can apply for financial aid in the USA to study here in the UK. You should note that the system is slightly different from that at home and you need to follow the steps below, keeping us informed at every stage.

North America Menu

More Details

Annual Loan Limits for Federal Family Education Stafford Loans:

	Subsidised	Unsubsidised	Total
Dependent Undergraduates			
First Year	$2,625	$0	$2,625
Second Year	$3,500	$0	$3,500
Third Year +	$5,500	$0	$5,500
Independent Undergraduates			
First Year	$2,625	$4,000	$6,625
Second Year	$3,500	$4,000	$7,500
Third Year +	$5,500	$5,000	$10,500
Graduate and Professional Students			
All Years of Study	$8,500	$10,000	$18,500

Whether you're eligible for a FAFSA loan or not, you can also apply for a Plus or Private Loan to make up any shortfall. You can apply for a maximum of $35,000 per annum, but the amount will depend on your estimated contribution and other information outlined on your SARS form.

Accessing the Federal Stafford Student Loans

1. Complete the FAFSA: Do this online and list the Hull school code 00089100 (Hull University cannot receive this electronically):

● To enable processing, obtain and submit the Eight-Page SARS, available after you complete the FAFSA - the normal SARS receipt mailed by the Department of Education is not sufficient
● By mail - complete your FAFSA online but don't list your email
● List your email and call +1-800-4FEDAID to request the Eight-Page SARS after the FAFSA has been processed

2. Obtaining a lender: Choose your own or let us recommend a group of lenders or alternative application process (if choosing your own, contact them at once so as not to delay your aid):

● The International Education Finance Corporation specializes in students studying in the UK (provides Stafford, Parent PLUS and private credit-based loans through Bank of America, Citizen's Bank and Wachovia)
● Another popular loan lender is Sallie Mae

Appendix 4.   Interview topics for International students

- Description of the image - "Can you describe in exact terms what you see?

- Narrative – "What do you think when you look at this image? If you could tell it to me in a story what would it be?

- Conceptual – "Who do you see? What do they stand for? How does this picture make you feel? What is your first thought or impression"?

- Stereotyping – "Do the represented images make you think of a certain group?"

- The University of Hull

Appendix 5.   Interview topics for Web Team University of Hull

- Functions and tasks Web Team.

- Experience working with the website.

- Strategy concerning advertising images.

- Denotation.

- Connotation.

- Why the choice for certain images?