A Comparative Study of International Students’ Intercultural Experiences

Reference Number: RES-000-22-1943

End of Award Report Submitted to Economic and Social Research Council

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BACKGROUND

The Policy Context

Internationalisation is perceived as the most revolutionary development of higher education in the 21st century (Seddoh, 2001; also, Böhm et al., 2002; UNESCO, 2006). Although international students' contributions are perceived to be academic and cultural as well as financial (Burslem, 2004), the UK national economy also benefits from considerable earnings of £12.5 billion per year (British Council, 2008). The subject of this research is located in such policy contexts and grounded in the ethics of educational practices.

The Research Context

This two-year, mixed method study sought to investigate the nature of undergraduate international students’ intercultural experiences during their study in UK higher education. The research provided a comparative examination of similarities and differences in the ways in which a sample of students at four universities adapt (or did not adapt) over time in relation to a range of personal, pedagogical and situational factors (Schweisfuth and Gu, 2009; Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, forthcoming).

The study is contextualised in different research literatures concerning globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education (de Wit, 2008; Hyland et al., 2008; Knight, 1999, 2004; OECD, 2007, 2008; Rizvi, 2008; Turner and Robson, 2008), the nature of intercultural experience (Bennett and Bennett, 2004; Gudykunst, 2005; Koehne, 2006), the stresses of studying abroad (Ward, et al., 2001; Cushner and Karim, 2004), and the impact of culture on study preferences and habits (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2006; King and Baxter Magolda, 2005; Landreman, 2003).

OBJECTIVES

The research had three objectives:

1. To describe, compare and explain variations in the impact of personal, pedagogical and situational influences on international students’ intercultural competence and their adaptation over time;

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(2) To identify, analyse and explore the shared and/or unique patterns of change and
development that international students experience in the course of their studies;
(3) To draw out policy and practice implications for international education at UK
higher education.

METHODS

Data Collection
The research project combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The first stage, carried out in November 2006, was a questionnaire survey to all 1,288
first-year international undergraduates at four UK universities – two ‘old’ universities
(institutions which pre-date 1992) and two ‘new’ ones (former polytechnics). The
response rate was 19%. The survey provided a baseline description of the sample
students’ purposes for their overseas studies, expectations and their experiences of initial
personal, social and academic challenges.

In the second stage, from among those who volunteered, ten students from different
countries and studying different disciplines were chosen as case studies for a series of
interviews to explore their experiences over a fifteen-month period. The selection of the
students took into account their ethnicity, gender, and the contents of their responses to
the first round survey.

The qualitative data were gathered using:

i) four semi-structured interviews which investigated the histories of the students and
the key issues shaping their experiences over time;

ii) an instrument adapted from the VITAE study (Day et al., 2006) which required
students to recall peaks and troughs in their study and student lives (Appendix I:
Managing the Ups and Downs of Living and Studying);

iii) diaries and email exchanges;

iv) one focus group meeting among the case study students.

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1 International students are for the purpose of this study defined as all students from outside the
UK, including those from the EU who do not pay ‘international’ level fees.
The final data gathering took the form of a second survey designed to examine the extent to which the qualitative findings may be extrapolated to the larger population from which the case study samples were originally drawn (response rate: 10%).

Data Analysis and Integration

Analytical matrices  Interviews were transcribed and analysed shortly after they were conducted to ensure that emerging themes were fed into the research process in time. The interviews and other forms of qualitative data were coded, categorised and transferred into analytical matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994):

i) individual matrices were created for each case study student and developed throughout the case study period to record and analyse patterns of individual change at different points in time;

ii) a cross-case matrix was constructed alongside the individual matrices to provide a framework for comparing and contrasting similarities and differences.

Coding techniques were used to define, revise and specify influences and capture variations and emerging variables during the process of students’ adaptation. The interviews were first analysed by the interviewer and then verified by the others. Regular team meetings were held to facilitate this important peer verification process.

Cameos of individual students  Cameos of individual case study students were structured to present detailed accounts of their intercultural experiences. Each cameo was shown to the student it represented in the final round interview for clarification and validation, to ensure that potential misinterpretations of students’ experiences caused by language and cultural differences were minimised.

Surveys  Parametric and non-parametric tests of variance were employed to examine the differences between various groups, taking into account factors relating to their gender, cultural backgrounds, level of English proficiency, and other personal factors. Factor analysis, where appropriate, was used to explore the inter-correlations between a range of variables relating to aspects of intercultural adaptation.

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We selected 11 case study students initially, but one student returned home in June 2007.
Synthesis of data analysis  The quantitative analysis was conducted in parallel with the initial qualitative data collection. Findings from the qualitative analysis provided the basis for the second-round questionnaire survey. The comparison, integration and synthesis of findings of both analyses enabled emerging theories of intercultural adaptation to be developed over the research period.

Ethical issues
Survey and case study participants were informed and willing volunteers. Case study participants were presented with Participation Information Sheets and signed Participant Consent Forms before their involvement in the case studies.

RESULTS

The research revealed the complexities of international students’ transitional experiences in terms of i) their maturation and human development and ii) their intercultural and academic adaptation within a different educational environment, culture and society. These two experiences influenced students’ perceptions of their change over time.

Key findings\(^3\) will be presented under four related themes:

1. Change influences
2. Conditions for change
3. Change as achievement
4. Perceptions of self: identity

Theme 1: Change influences
The design enabled the research to take into account a wide range of influences upon international students’ experiences, including those embedded within their present study location, their personal and professional lives in their home countries, and the personal and academic qualities of the student themselves. The data positioned the students in a holistic, four-dimension framework (Figure 1). The extent of their change influences and is influenced by the relative strength of their personal histories, their interactions with others and the current educational and societal environments which they experience.
Figure 1: Four-dimension change influences on the nature of international students’ intercultural experiences

Initial ‘shock’: Student life and academic studies

For most respondents to the Wave 1 survey, the challenges of adapting to a different academic culture appeared to be more acute than adapting to a different cultural and social environment. As indicated by Figures 2 and 3 below which compare their expected adaptation issues with those that they perceived themselves to have experienced, students were surprised at the extent to which adaptation to the academic environment became the greater preoccupation.

Student Life

Prior to their departure for the UK, survey respondents were most worried about i) their financial situations (61%); ii) feeling lonely (44%) and iii) homesick (35%). Three months into their undergraduate study, financial worries remained as the dominant concern for the large majority of the students (59%), with food a distant second (32%) and loneliness third (30%) (Figure 2).

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3 Some key findings were reported in Schweisfurth and Gu (2009, in press) and Gu, Schweisfurth and Day...
Academic Studies

Worrying about failing exams and essays remained a constant concern for the large majority of the survey respondents – both before their arrival in the UK and in the first term of their undergraduate study (Figure 3).

Exposure to new pedagogies was reported as a challenge for over a third of the survey students. The most unexpected concern was “feeling embarrassed if unable to answer questions in class”: a marginal 7% before arrival in the UK, compared with 44% by the time of the first survey, reported such worries. Moreover, 18% worried about speaking up in class discussions before arrival, while 36% did after arrival.

In addition, more than one in five reported that establishing relationships with lecturers (3% pre-departure versus 23% after arrival) and understanding their expectations (10% pre-departure and 27% after arrival) were major unexpected challenges.
Figure 2: A comparison of ‘worries’ before and after students’ arrival in the UK: student life

![Bar chart showing comparison of worries before and after arrival.](chart1.png)

Figure 3: A comparison of ‘worries’ before and after students’ arrival in the UK: academic studies

![Bar chart showing comparison of worries before and after arrival.](chart2.png)
These reported ‘unexpected’ worries point to areas in which early university support is mostly required. Moreover, targeted university training on pre-departure preparations could help smooth international students’ initial transition into their new learning and living environments.

**Language Use and Understanding**

Most students (over 80%) in the first survey reported that they were confident about using the English language both inside and outside the classroom. The distribution of their views was positively skewed in relation to all five items on language use. Students were particularly happy with their command of English for understanding lectures (N=194, 91%) and for social and practical use outside of the classroom (N=171, 80%).

Evidence from the second survey and case studies indicates, as might be expected, a marked growth in students’ confidence in using the English language for academic purposes over the first two years of their studies.

*Teaching staff’s feedback on students’ work* was perceived as particularly important for those who needed an English language certificate for their studies (75% versus 56%). However, the research also suggests that academic concerns were broadly similar between those who needed an English language certificate (where English may not be their native language) and those who did not. For example, there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived level of academic confidence and adjustment between these two groups of students.

With regard to communication for social purposes, evidence suggests that a mastery of the form of the English language and an understanding of the ‘hidden’ societal and cultural values and norms attached to the language are equally important. For example, Tristan from Trinidad stated,

> I was sort of expecting … well coming from a background where I was being exposed to American culture and I thought that British culture and American culture were the same thing and I didn’t realise that they weren’t so similar. Just minor things like humour basically – I don’t get British humour that much. I sort of identify more with American humour.
Theme 2: Conditions for Change

(I) Academic conditions

Initial Uncertainties

The results of the first survey and case studies showed that finances were the biggest concern overall. Half of the case study students had to take paid work in order to ease their financial situations and this was true whether the students were on scholarships, or self-funded.

Initial perceptions of inequalities led four of the case study students – even those who went on to prove themselves to be extremely able and adaptable – to have ‘inferiority complexes’. However, while these were major issues early in their studies, placing them on a perceived unequal footing with other students, data from the case studies showed a marked growth in intercultural and academic confidence over time.

I’ve decided not to focus on the differences between the groups because that was what I think fed into my inferiority complex. And it sort of changed how I would act with one group as opposed to another. Not in a discriminatory way or anything like that but in who I was: would I be a bubbly person or would I be more serious? But I’ve met more people now and I’ve come to the realisation that they are generally the same. (Rina, Malaysia)

Once they had proved their intercultural communication abilities, both socially and in terms of their studies, almost all the case study students felt very much in control of their lives, and equal to others. After the initial challenges of adaptation, they became positive about these and the pedagogical approaches used which demanded more independent study and critical thinking than they were used to in their own countries.

University Support

The responses from the case study students about university support paint a mixed picture.
On the positive side, there were examples of university support that nurtured the intercultural experiences of international students. The induction and welcome week activities, for example, helped to introduce them to the system, to deal with practicalities like opening bank accounts, and to meet students from different backgrounds.

Mentor systems in which international students in their second year acted as support for newcomers were in place in some but not all cases. Opportunities, such as additional language support for non-native speakers, were also put to good use by some students, and courses in study skills helped to facilitate transitions to new modes of studying. Among the case studies, most mentioned one key individual – often a personal tutor – who was particularly supportive of them, regardless of wider institutional structures.

Four students who had experienced isolated incidents of racism outside the university environment felt that within the university such events were very unlikely and that there was evidence of active anti-racism at the institutional level.

**Academic support from tutors**

Eighty-two percent of the first survey students were positive about the approachability of their lecturers. Almost all case study students also portrayed a generally positive image about the support provided by university lecturers and tutors: ‘you can talk to them about anything, even personal problems. … they’re very, very encouraging and understanding’ (Raveena, India).

However, they also reported that a minority of tutors were not supportive of them as individuals, and did not encourage positive intercultural contact. In the focus group meeting, it was commented, ‘Our tutors are massively variable.’

> While university support was perceived as positive overall, then, it was clear that much depended on the commitment of particular individuals. This resulted in a rather ‘patchy’ set of experiences.

**Integration with UK students**

In both surveys, there were different views regarding integrating and working with UK students. Whilst half of the respondents found it difficult to *get to know and work with the UK students*, the other half reported otherwise. However, amongst those who required a
language certificate for their studies in the second survey (N=64), the majority felt that it was particularly difficult for them to mix with UK students (63% versus 37%), suggesting that language confidence may have been an issue for these students. Case study data also indicated gaps in cultural values and behaviours between home students and international students which posed challenges for academic and social integration.

(2) Social Conditions

In addition to the need to adjust academically to new teaching and learning cultures, international students also encountered challenges of adapting to the local society.

Multicultural society

Beyond the university, there was much appreciation among the students of the multicultural nature of the wider British society. Over 60% of the first survey respondents agreed that the UK was a tolerant society, with an additional 12% indicating strong agreement. From among the case study students, for example, Terry from Trinidad noted that:

I would honestly say that that has probably been the best thing about living in England: having that experience of many cultures and not just English culture.

One striking statistic from the first survey was the number of students who would like to have interacted more with people from outside the university: 55% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they would like more opportunities to experience UK culture. Similar findings were reported in a UKCOSA survey (2004). This was confirmed by comments from the case study students, who found Britain a welcoming place but felt that the opportunities to experience its culture were limited.

Feelings of ‘Powerless’ and ‘Lack of a Sense of Belonging’

In both surveys close to half of the respondents (49% and 48%) indicated that they were unhappy with their social life. In addition, almost a third (approx. 32% in both surveys) reported that they often felt lonely while studying in the UK. Some case study students provided a detailed account of their feelings of ‘lack of a sense of belonging’ while living in the UK:
Back home I had a career and a future. I was in control of my own life, but I’ve lost track of that now. Because I had authority [as a hotel manager]. Here I’m virtually powerless. … Sometimes I miss “home”. Sometimes I miss my parents. Sometimes I miss my mum. Sometimes I just miss being a manager in the hotel. I miss my workplace.

(Doris, Cameroon)

The observation of some international students’ sense of loss and detachment can be related to a range of social and cultural factors. The above accounts support Furnham’s (2004: 17) argument: ‘foreign students face several difficulties, some exclusive to them (as opposed to native students)’. As shown in this study, these particular difficulties may be caused by students’ loss of their social and professional identity (as in the case of Doris who had a professional career in her home country) and unfamiliarity with societal values, structures and systems and the associated feelings of ‘being rejected by, or rejecting, members of the new culture’ and the new environment (Oberg, 1960, cited in Furnham, 2004: 17) (as in the case of Jiayi from China). Lewthwaite (1986) observed in his study that “the differences in values, attitudes and beliefs between home and host cultures were seen as great and coupled with the sense of loss of the familiar (including food) put considerable pressure on the student.” Twenty years on it seems that his observation continues to apply.

Friendship Patterns

More than half (55%) of the first survey respondents reported that they preferred not to mix mainly with people from their own culture. Yet, in the second survey, half reported that their close friends had similar a cultural background to their own. It appears that cultural bonds had an important continuing role, despite students’ willingness and efforts to integrate with British and international students from countries other than their own. For example, both Alanna from Macau and Guzal from Kyrgyzstan chose to live with others from the same country in her second year, ‘… because we have a shared language we can be more diplomatic.’

Among the case study students who had formed a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend while in the UK, all were from their own culture. Raveena from India explained
the importance of sharing cultural roots in her relationship: ‘you miss talking to someone in your own language, you really do. … It’s nice to kind of catch up on the culture.’

The internet provided a way of escaping psychological isolation as a very significant tool of communication for almost all the case study students. However, it also facilitated physical and social isolation.

**Peer Culture**

Although within the university culture, students interact with people from other cultures, they are broadly like themselves: young people away from home for the first time; relatively high achievers academically; largely middle class. Arguably, what these students are experiencing is a youth subculture which is not broadly representative of the wider culture, but contextualised within the unique university environment. In this study in particular, the campus-based universities constituted a ‘bubble’ in which most students lived, studied, socialised, and in some cases worked: very convenient, but also potentially isolating.

Within this, the drinking and clubbing culture was criticised by almost all the case study students. This observation confirms findings of the UKCOSA survey in 2004. Case study students’ accounts in this research revealed deeply rooted social reasons. Raveena (from India) described it as a ‘social obligation’ because ‘that’s when people make friends’. For Rina, however, this was one of the biggest barriers to her making friends and social integration with her peers.

**Theme 3: Change as Achievement**

The research suggests that despite the challenges embedded in the academic and social conditions, most international students managed to change, adapt, develop and achieve.

**Academic Achievement**

The most prominent academic achievements were related to students’ perceived management of the ‘new’ pedagogy and learning styles.

Towards the end of their second academic year, the large majority of the second survey students reported that they had become more:
i) organised in managing their time for studies (73%)
ii) committed to their course of study (82%)
iii) confident about using a greater range of study skills (77%)
iv) comfortable in small group discussion (71% versus 29%)
v) confident about managing independent studies (72% versus 28%)

In addition, the large majority of the students had begun to appreciate the role of class discussion in their learning. In total, 85% agreed that student discussion in class was helpful for their learning, and within this, 16% strongly agreed.

**Perceptions of Cultures and Acceptance of Differences**

Over half (54%) of the second survey respondents reported that their understanding of the host (UK) culture had improved. In addition, 93% indicated that they had become more appreciative of their home cultural values.

The evidence suggests strongly that the consequences of the international students’ intercultural experiences transcend their improved perceptions of the host culture. They had become more accepting of people with different attitudes and values. This was confirmed by 70% of respondents in the second survey.

“It’s an interesting experience and you can see how different the countries in the world are and how different people behave and for them that is the natural way and that is how you should behave. … It’s a very valuable learning experience ...”

(Maxwell from Germany)

**Personal Achievement**

The three greatest personal achievements reported by students in the second survey were:

i) personal independence (67%)
ii) broadened life experiences and interests (56%)
iii) improved interpersonal and communication skills (41%)
All case study students shared these personal achievements and rated their ‘self-determination’ as the key factor in sustaining their achievements in the host country. For example,

I am planning to push myself to do things that I don’t really like to do…push myself outside this comfort area…at first you are not confident but then time will pass you feel yourself saying: yeah, I’ve done a good job, actually.

(Guzal, Kyrgyzstan)

Findings from the second survey confirmed the observation of the case studies. The top three highly rated factors which were perceived as having contributed to students’ academic and personal achievements included:

i) self-determination (64%)

ii) support from parents (21%)

iii) support from my friends here (12%)

Theme 4: Perceptions of Self: Identity

The research revealed that international students’ intercultural learning experiences are both transitional and transformational and necessitate identity change to a greater or lesser extent. There are two types of transition: one is related to students’ own maturation and the other is related to their improved intercultural understanding and competence. As they interact within different educational environments, cultures and society, they continue to experience improved knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes which enable them to function effectively within both their host and home countries. The process of identity change is, therefore, interwoven with the growth of their maturity and interculturality. For example,

‘I’ve got two sets of values: one is for here and one is for China. … think they are just natural. … I’m a grown-up here. When I went back to China, I just went back to being the same – who I was – before I came here.’

(Jiayi, China)
A Locus of Self: Agency and Resilience

For most students, going to university is a further step on a journey of self discovery in which they are able to assess themselves and hear themselves being assessed by others in a range of personal, social and academic settings. They must rely upon themselves to survive and flourish. New skills are learned and qualities developed which enable them to construct new identities where appropriate. For international students these processes are more complex and challenging, since they must also adapt to new and sometimes threatening norms of behaviour, languages and academic pedagogies on a number of personal, social and emotional levels. Establishing a stable “locus of self” in such circumstances is likely to require a different order of change competencies and resilience.

It’s [studying in England] opened up my thinking processes ... When you are born and brought up in a restrictive environment, everything is family and you only have a very limited view on things. But when you go to another country and study and you meet people from other countries, then it opens up your perspective and you realise that everything in the world is not the same. …

You are so torn between being yourself and what they want you to do – what others want you to do…

(Raveena, India)

Managing Transitions: Key Findings and Implications

The research findings challenge the notion that international students’ intercultural adaptation is linear and point to the presence of a complex set of shifting associations between language mastery, social interaction, personal development and academic outcomes. It is the management of this amalgam, as well as the availability of differentiated and timely support which results in intercultural adaptation, and the successful reconfiguration of ‘identity’. Moreover, this research suggests that personal, pedagogical and psychological factors are as important as organizational and social cultures in influencing students’ adaptation, and ultimate success.

Key Findings:

1. Students come to the UK for language and cultural experiences, but primarily, for academic accreditation.
2. Academic achievement and personal independence are the most important achievements for most students. Whilst some students may have fitted in better socially than others, most have managed to achieve in their academic studies.

3. The most profound change lies in their success (or otherwise) in managing the influences which challenge existing identities. There is an important relationship between students’ sense of belonging, identity and self-efficacy [the belief that they can achieve and succeed].

4. Three aspects of change:
   (1) Interculturality: Cross/Intercultural experiences
   (2) Maturity: Human growth and development
   (3) Intellectual development

Implications for Practices in Higher Education

- For higher education:
  - Higher education academic programmes themselves are unproblematic attractions.
  - Higher education support systems need to attend to students’ ‘sense of belonging’ and adaptation needs, especially in the first year of study.
  - Differentiated, targeted support is needed.
  - In the first year of study, inclusive classroom pedagogies need to be more responsive to the previous didactic learning experiences of students.

- For student support staff:
  - Pre-departure support is essential: accurate and responsive
  - Encourage the establishment of both multicultural and mono-cultural support mechanisms
  - Create opportunities for students to mix with UK culture outside the university
  - Create alternative social events to counter the clubbing culture
  - More personalised approach: create a sense of (academic and social) community.

A final note: Although some differences in students’ perceptions of their experiences by country of origin, subjects of study and length of stay were identified in both surveys, the limited number of questionnaire returns did not allow statistically robust conclusions. Nonetheless, evidence from both the surveys and the case studies suggests that there are
more common patterns of challenges, change and development amongst the students than differences.

ACTIVITIES

Academic Dissemination
(1) A series of papers have been produced for presentation at key national and international conferences in educational research, including BERA, BAICE, WCCES and UKFIET (Appendix II).

(2) Research papers will continue to be produced for publication in refereed journals. One academic paper will be included in the *Special Issue of Intercultural Education* (March 2009) and another is under revision for *Compare*.

Non-Academic User and Participant Dissemination
(1) An interim report on Wave 1 survey was distributed to the International Offices of participating universities. Key results were fed back via email to all survey students in the form a ‘Research Newsletter’.

(2) Final results were disseminated through a national invitation seminar in October 2008. *Continuum* has expressed interest in publishing an edited book on the basis of the seminar.

(3) Three short articles on the experiences of Chinese students involved in the project were published on the BBC China website: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/china/studyintheuk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/china/studyintheuk).

(4) A project website was created as a means of dissemination of findings where research outputs can be downloaded. The website address was sent to Directors of the International Offices and Staff Development Units of all UK universities in early 2008.

ESRC Seminar Series: Extending Networks
The research team led a successful ESRC seminar series award 2008-09 (PI: Dr Schweisfurth): *Rethinking the Needs of International Students.*
ESRC Society Today

Project working papers and conference presentations have been uploaded on the Society Today.

OUTPUTS

In-project outputs

In addition to the interim report and the Research Newsletter (see above), a research brief was published in the Learning and Teaching magazine at the University of Nottingham in 2008.

Publications

Two academic articles are in press/forthcoming. The team will produce at least two more journal articles focusing upon identity and cosmopolitanism, and plan to publish an edited book (Continuum) and a co-authored academic book (Routledge) on the internationalisation of higher education.

Datasets

Anonymised qualitative and quantitative databases, together with interview sound files, have been stored at the University of Nottingham. The team have catalogued and archived interview and documentary evidence which will be deposited in the University of Nottingham archiving facility. Moreover, the team have submitted Data Submission Form (with samples of data) to UK Data Archive.

IMPACTS

A national invitation seminar was held in late October 2008, which brought together leading academics and key stakeholders at participating and other UK universities. The seminar generated considerable interest in the implications of the findings for pedagogy in higher education and for the role of preparatory and support courses and resources for international students. The current ESRC seminar series will develop and disseminate examples of promising practice in this regard.
Future Research Priorities

- The nature of student identity and the positive and negative influences that higher education has upon their identity change and development.
- Practices within the transformative form of the internationalisation of higher education and how this benefits international students.
- The impact of UK educational experiences on returnees’ lives and careers:
  The team (PI: Dr Gu) are conducting a British Academy funded pilot research (2008-09) on this topic.

(Length: 5,000 words)
Project Timetable

**Initial Questionnaire Survey**
(800 students)
(November 2006)

**Case Study (10 Students)**

**First Round Interviews**
(February 2007)

**Two Follow-up Interviews**
(May & November 2007)

**Final Round Narrative Interviews**
(March 2008)

**Case study group meeting**
(May 2008)

**Second Round Questionnaire Survey**
(with the initial sample of 800 students)
(May 2008)
1st November 2006

Dear student,

**A Comparative Study of International Students’ Intercultural Experiences**

(a two-year research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council)

We would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill in the enclosed questionnaire which has been sent to all the first-year undergraduate international students at your university and three other UK universities. Your reply will help to improve understanding of the experiences that international students have in UK higher education, and smooth the path for future students. Your voices are important to us and will be greatly appreciated.

Taking part in this survey will also have some benefits for you. You will be able to access a project website about international students’ experiences and will be sent details by post. You will also receive a newsletter towards the end of the project highlighting key findings of the research project.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed freepost envelope to: Dr Qing Gu, School of Education, The Dearing Building, The University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus, FREEPOST NG4943, Nottingham, NG8 1BB by 1st December 2006. There is no need to use a postage stamp.

All responses will be kept confidential and all respondents’ names will be anonymised for reporting purposes.

Later on in the research we will be looking to talk to a small number of students to learn more about their experiences in the UK. If you would be interested in taking part in this part of the study please fill in the orange card and enclose it with the questionnaire.

Finally, we wish you great success in your studies! Thank you for helping us with this important research project.

All the best,

Qing, Michele and Chris

Dr Qing Gu, Research Fellow, University of Nottingham
Dr Michele Schweisfurth, Director, Centre for International Education and Research, University of Birmingham
Professor Christopher Day, School of Education, University of Nottingham
4th February 2008

Dear Student,

**A Comparative Study of International Students’ Intercultural Experiences**
(a two-year research project Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council)

Thank you for your ongoing participation in this research project which is designed to improve our understanding of international students’ experiences in the UK. We deeply appreciate your time and support and we hope that you enjoyed reading the results so far in the Project Newsletter which we sent to you.

Two of us were international students some years ago. We are pleased that we have learned so much more from you about the challenges, frustrations, happiness and achievements that international students have experienced while studying at the Universities of Birmingham, Brighton, Nottingham Trent and Sussex!

We are now conducting the **second and final** survey with the same group of international students as the first one. Please find enclosed a copy of the Second Year Undergraduate International Student Survey questionnaire. Whether or not you completed the survey last year, we would be grateful if you would take the time to complete it.

We will send you a summary of the overall results of the Project in our next Newsletter before Christmas 2008. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries or would like to talk about your success as well as worries.

**All responses will be kept confidential and all respondents’ names will be anonymised for reporting purposes.**

Finally, we wish you great success in your studies! Thank you for helping us with this important research project.

All the best,

Qing, Michele and Chris

Dr Qing Gu, Research Fellow, University of Nottingham  
Dr Michele Schweisfurth, Director, Centre for International Education and Research, University of Birmingham  
Professor Christopher Day, School of Education, University of Nottingham
Round 1 Interview Protocols

Purposes

- To investigate the key issues shaping international students’ initial adaptation in more detail and greater depth
- To obtain generic information about the histories of the students, conditions of their life and study and their expected trajectories in the following years
- To establish rapport with the students
- To set out plans for future contacts and follow up interviews

Notes for investigators

1. Important documents in interview packs:
   a. Student questionnaire
   b. Project Timetable¹
   c. Participant Information Sheet¹
   d. Participant Consent Form (two copies) – to be signed by the case study student²
   e. Student Diary Forms (ten copies)¹

¹ These forms should be retained by the case study student.
² One copy of the signed consent form should be retained by the student. The other copy should be stored securely by the investigator.

2. The investigator will clarify the following matters with the student prior to the interview, using the above documents:
   - **Purpose of the study** – Participant Information Sheet
   - **What will be required of the participants** – Project Timetable & Participant Information Sheet
   - **Research ethics**– Participant Information Sheet & Participant Consent Form
   - Confirming student’s personal details:
     - name, date of birth, place of birth (city/town/village & country);
     - contact details: e.g. home address in the UK; telephone number; email address

3. As we agreed in our last project meeting, we will not have specific interview questions for Round 1. The investigators should elicit information on the following areas:

   **Personal History**
   - The family background of the student
   - Academic/personal histories of the student
     - Prompt: Factors, as perceived by the student, that are significant in his/her backgrounds to their motivation for learning, attitudes towards learning English whilst in their home country, and the formation of their intercultural attitudes, aptitudes and dispositions

   **Generic Information about study and student life in the UK**
   - Main purpose(s) of study in the UK (Questionnaire: Q8)
   - Motivation: original decision to study in the UK (Questionnaire: Q22)
   - Length of stay in the UK (dates of first arrival)
   - Financial situations: e.g. what makes the largest contribution to his/her fees and living costs? (Questionnaire: Q17)
**Experiences and Aspects of Change**

- Initial shock experienced in study and student life in the first three months
  - **Elicit examples**
    - **Prompt:** food, accommodation, catering, language, friendship patterns
    - **Prompt:** education shock; learning shock; role shock

- Current conditions of his/her student life and study in the UK
  - Key positive and negative influences impacting on study and student life –
    - **Personal factors** (e.g. friendship patterns, health, family),
    - **Pedagogical factors** (e.g. different teaching styles; pressures of exams)
    - **Situational factors** (e.g. access to learning resources at university; problems with landlords/housemates)

  - Active and passive strategies used to manage negative influences
  - (Active) strategies used to sustain and promote the influences of positive factors

- Changes in study and student life since completion of questionnaire
  - Aspects of change: personal, pedagogical and situational
  - Strategies used to manage change/ lead to a greater extent of change

- The student’s expected trajectories in the following years:
  - plans for future study;
  - strategies to overcome problems/sustain success in study and student life

4. Arrangements of next interview (time and venue)
A Comparative Study of International Students’ Intercultural Experiences

Round 2 Interview Protocols (June 2007)

Purposes

- To identify key cultural, personal, pedagogical and situational influences that have impacted upon international students’ intercultural adaptation (or lack of adaptation) by the time of Round 2 interview; and cluster and rank these influences.
- To identify key cultural, personal, pedagogical and situational hindrances to their intercultural adaptation by the time of Round 2 interview; and cluster and rank these hindrances.
- To explore key areas of achievements and factors that have made major contributions to these achievements.
- To invite reflection on how the students’ own agency has contributed to their adaptation and achievements and how resilience has helped them in overcoming hindrances.
- To explore the extent of change in their identity and roles (as students, social being etc) over time.

Notes for investigators: Check whether students have completed any diary forms.

1. What events have significantly affected your study and student life since our last interview?
   - How did they impact on you at the time?
   - Are they still affecting you? If so, how and to what extent?
   - How have you dealt with them? To what extent are you content with your own responses? What have you learned here to help you to deal with them – and when and how did you learn it?
     [This is a very important question! Thanks Michele.]
     Prompt: Some students went home at Easter. Ask them how they felt when they were at home and when they first returned to England.

2. What significant changes in your study and/or student life have taken place since our last interview?

   Prompt: Aspects of change: personal, pedagogical and situational.
   - How have these changes affected you and/or your student life?
   - Who is responsible for the changes?
   - Do you feel that you yourself have changed, and if so, how and why?

3. What are the key positive influences on your study and/or student life since you arrived in England?

   Prompt: personal, pedagogical and situational factors:
   - **Personal factors** (e.g. friendship patterns, health, family, personal determination and character),
   - **Pedagogical factors** (e.g. different teaching styles; pressures of exams)
   - **Situational factors** (e.g. access to learning resources at university; problems with landlords/housemates)
If students find it difficult to name any influences, ask them to fill in the chart in Appendix I.

- Could you please cluster and rank them in order of importance and briefly explain why?

**Prompt:** distinguishing long-term and short-term impacts of these influences; actions that students have undertaken to sustain positive impacts of these influences

4. What are the key negative influences on your study and/or student life since you arrived in England?
   - Could you please cluster and rank them in order of importance and briefly explain why?

**Prompt:** personal, pedagogical and situational factors:

- **Personal factors** (e.g. friendship patterns, health, family, personal weaknesses),
- **Pedagogical factors** (e.g. different teaching styles; pressures of exams)
- **Situational factors** (e.g. access to learning resources at university; problems with landlords/housemates)

If students find it difficult to name any influences, ask them to fill in the chart in Appendix II.

- Did you do something at the time or later in order to overcome the difficulties caused by the negative influences?

**Prompt:** distinguishing long-term and short-term impacts of these influences

5. Could you tell me three happiest memories here in the UK?
   (It is important that students clarify when these happy moments happened in relation to the length of their stay in England.)

6. What are the key pressures and stress factors in your student life?
   What did you do about them? Is there any support available for you at your university, at home or from other sources (e.g. friends or landlords)? To what extent have you relied on this support, and why?

7. What are your biggest achievements so far? Who or what made the major contribution to these achievements?

8. What is the biggest change in you as a student and/or a person?
   - Why and how?
   - When did it occur, and when did you become aware of it?

9. Is there anything that you wish you had done better?
   - If so, what are they? Why didn’t you do as well as you would like to have done?

10. What are you plans for the summer? Any plans for the following year?
    What do you want to achieve most and how?

- Arrangements of next interview (time and venue)
Appendix I  Aspects of Positive Influences: Personal, Pedagogical and Situational

- At University
  (e.g. tutors/lecturers, ways of teaching, ways of learning, exams, learning resources etc.)

- At Home
  (e.g. parents’ support, family relationships, relationships with school friends etc.)

- Student Life
  (e.g. friendship patterns, accommodation, finance, relationships with housemates or landlords, food, happiness vs. loneliness/homesick etc.)

- In Yourself
  (e.g. positive attitude to life; internal states etc.)

June 2007
Appendix II  Aspects of Negative Influences: Personal, Pedagogical and Situational

- **At University**
  (e.g. tutors/lecturers, ways of teaching, ways of learning, exams, learning resources etc.)

- **At Home**
  (e.g. parents’ support, family relationships, relationships with school friends etc.)

- **In Yourself**
  (e.g. negative attitude to life; internal states etc.)

- **Student life**
  (e.g. friendship patterns, accommodation, finance, relationships with housemates or landlords, food, happiness vs. loneliness/homesick etc.)
Purposes

• To explore the development of intercultural competence amongst the case study students over time, focusing upon change in the four dimensions of intercultural competence – knowledge, (positive) attitudes, skills and awareness;
• To explore the extent of change in their identity and roles (as students, social being etc) over time
• To identify key cultural, personal, pedagogical and situational influences that have impacted upon international students’ intercultural adaptation (or lack of adaptation) since Round 2 interviews;
• To explore key areas of achievements in their study and their management of since Round 2 interviews and factors that have made major contributions to these achievements

Notes for investigators: Check whether students have completed any diary forms.

1. What events have significantly affected your study and student life since our last interview?
   o How did they impact on you at the time?
   o Are they still affecting you? If so, how and to what extent?
   o How have you dealt with them? To what extent are you content with your own responses? What have you learned here to help you to deal with them – and when and how did you learn it?

Prompt: Some students went home during the summer. Ask them how they felt when they were at home and when they first returned to England.

2. Since starting your current course, have you noticed any significant change in yourself in the following four aspects?
   a. If so, how and why?
   b. Who is responsible for the change?

Awareness (of self, ability and relationship with others)
   o Have you lost interest in things that you usually like to do or enjoy? Have you developed new interest in things to do?
   o Have you noticed any difference in how you see your fellow students (including home students; international students from your home country and other countries) and your tutors? What about people around you here in the UK (including at accommodation and in the society in general)?
   o Have you noticed any difference in how you see your friends and family back home?
   o Have you noticed any change in how your perceive yourself as a student and as a person in this society? What about in your home society?
A Comparative Study of International Students’ Intercultural Experiences

What are the differences and why you are seeing them differently (or not differently)? What did you do when you noticed the differences?

Knowledge
  o Do you feel that your knowledge of your own culture has improved or changed? Please give one or two examples.
  o Do you feel that you have gained some general knowledge about how things work here and this makes you feel comfortable and confident about managing your student life here?
  o Do you often compare and contrast people’s values and behaviour in your home country with those that you have experienced and observed here, for example, things in your study (teaching and learning) and in your student life?
  o Are you feeling comfortable and confident about managing your study here? Any new challenges? How have you dealt with them?
  o When you deal with new situations, do you have a mental checklist of how others may feel and respond differently so that you could avoid upsetting them?

Ability
  o Are you happy with your ability to achieve good communication with others? Are you making extra efforts to make sure that people understand you when you talk to them or work with them? Are there any differences when you communicate with different people? What are the differences?
  o Compared to when you first arrived here, do you feel more confident communicating with others here – both in your study and your student life? Why or why not? What are the key strategies that you have used to enable you to change?
  o Have you experienced any unpleasant situations caused by misunderstandings in your study or student life here? How did you perceive the situations/problems at the time? What did you do to remedy the situation? How did you feel afterwards?
  o Have you made conscious efforts to develop strategies that help you better understand people around you and better manage daily things in your study and life here?
  o Have you made any new friends? Who are they? Is it easier to make friends now? Have you maintained friendship with your old friends here? [What about back home?] Are you happy with your social life? Why and why not?
  o Who has made the major contribution to the above changes that you have mentioned?

Attitudes
  o Do you try to engage with others (e.g. students from your home country, home students, and other international students) and to
try to understand the similarities and differences in their behaviour, values and attitudes? Please give one or two examples.

- How do you feel when you find that people see things very differently from you? What do you do in such situations? Are you happy with what you have done?

3. Is there anything that you wish you had done better?
   - If so, what are they? Why didn’t you do as well as you would like to have done?

4. What are you plans for Christmas? Any plans for the following year? What do you want to achieve most and how?

- Arrangements of next interview (time and venue)
Round 4 Interview Protocols

Purposes

- To validate our interpretations of students’ experiences and change over time, using student cameos
- To conduct a narrative interview about the peaks and troughs in case study students’ intercultural adaptation over time, the key factors that have contributed to these fluctuations and the strategies that students have adopted to manage (or not manage) the fluctuations

Notes for investigators

1. Narrative interview using ‘Intercultural Adaptation Line’

   a. Explain that the purpose of the interview is to understand
      - Peaks and troughs in their experiences in England – 1) in their studies and 2) their student lives
      - Key factors (i.e. events and people\(^1\)) that have contributed to these fluctuations
      - Key strategies that they have used to manage (or not manage) the fluctuations

   b. Ask them to draw two lines on the attached sheet, indicating their levels of satisfaction with their management of their studies and their student lives: one solid line for their studies and one broken line for their student lives

   c. Ask them, then, to say to what extent the peaks and troughs in their student lives impacted on their academic study.

   d. What is their current state of mind:
      - Before you came, what did you think the experience of studying and living here would be like? How does your actual experience compare – i) when you first arrived and ii) now?
        - whether they are happy with their overall progress in their studies
        - whether they are happy with their overall management of their student lives
        - what has been the biggest change in them
        - what are their biggest achievements so far
        - what is the most painful lesson that they have learned
        - is there anything that they would have done differently

2. Student cameo

   a. Explain what the cameo is: a narrative story (summary) of their experiences in England

   b. Give students 10-15 minutes to read their cameos

   c. Ask them if there are any changes that they would like to make to the cameos

\(^1\) People: ‘significant others’
## Managing the Ups and Downs of Living and Studying (MUDLS)

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<td>Satisfied</td>
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<td>Not Managing Well (least satisfied)</td>
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First Year Undergraduate International Students Survey 2006

1. Are you …?
   □ 1 Male  □ 2 Female

2. Date of birth: ___________________  dd / mm / yy

3. Place of birth:     ___________________    ___________________
                      (City/Town/Village)    (Country, e.g. UK)

Please tell us something about your experiences of living in the UK

4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about living in the UK? (Please ☑ one box only for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About living in the UK</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I do not like most of the food that I find here.</td>
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<td>2) My life here does not meet my religious needs.</td>
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<td>3) I often feel homesick.</td>
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<td>4) I often feel lonely.</td>
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<td>5) I have problems keeping in touch with family back home.</td>
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<td>6) Most of the UK students that I have met are hard to get to know.</td>
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<td>7) It is difficult to mix with international students from other countries.</td>
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<td>8) It is difficult to mix with students from my home country.</td>
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<td>9) I have financial worries.</td>
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<td>10) I am worried about my health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11) I am worried about my personal safety living in the UK.</td>
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<td>12) Other worries that you have experienced (please specify):</td>
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</table>

Thinking back to what you were expecting to find before you arrived in the UK, which three of the above issues worried you MOST then? (Please put the number of your selected items.)

- Worries about living in the UK before your arrival: a) _________; b) _________; c) _________

5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about studying and living in the UK? (Please ☑ one box only for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About studying and living in the UK</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Staff here have shown an interest in my country and culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) I prefer to mix with people from my own culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) I would like more chances to experience UK culture.</td>
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<td>4) It is difficult to meet UK people from outside the university.</td>
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<td>5) The UK is a tolerant society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) I am happy with my social life here in the UK.</td>
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<td>7) I have become involved in clubs and Societies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8) I behave differently from UK and other international students because of my cultural roots.</td>
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</table>
6. Have you made any friend(s) here in the UK since starting your current course?
   - [ ] 1. None
   - [ ] 2. One or two
   - [ ] 3. Quite a Few

   If you have made friends here, are they…? (Please ☑ all that apply.)
   - [ ] 1. Students from my home country
   - [ ] 2. Other international students
   - [ ] 3. UK students
   - [ ] 4. A mixture of UK and international students
   - [ ] 5. A mixture of international students from my home country and other countries
   - [ ] 6. Other (please specify) _____________________

7. To what extent do you feel that you have adjusted to life in the UK?
   - [ ] 1. Not much
   - [ ] 2. To some extent
   - [ ] 3. A lot

Tell us something about your academic experience in the UK

8. What is the main purpose(s) of your study in the UK? (Please ☑ up to THREE choices.)
   - [ ] 1. To improve my English
   - [ ] 2. To learn about British culture
   - [ ] 3. To obtain a degree
   - [ ] 4. To improve my career prospects
   - [ ] 5. To pursue my interest in my subject area
   - [ ] 6. To gain personal independence
   - [ ] 7. To broaden my life experiences
   - [ ] 8. Other (please specify) ____________________

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the use of English in your study here? (Please ☑ one box only for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About the use of English in your study here</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Before I arrived here, I was worried about my English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) I am happy with my English for social &amp; practical use outside of the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) I understand lectures delivered in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) I feel confident about using English in class discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) I feel confident about completing written assignments in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) I am happy with my English for reading academic literature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) Other comments about using English in your study here (please specify)</td>
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</table>

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your study in the UK? (Please ☑ one box only for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About your undergraduate study in the UK</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I’m worried about understanding the content of my courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) I am not sure what is expected of students by our lecturers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) I feel uncomfortable speaking up in class discussions.</td>
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<td>4) I feel uncomfortable joining in small group discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) I feel embarrassed if I am not able to answer my lecturers’ questions in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) I am concerned about my relationships with my lecturer(s).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7) It is hard to work with UK students in class.
8) I am worried about failing my essays/assignments.
9) I am worried about failing my examinations/tests.
10) I am not sure how to access learning resources.
11) I am not sure how to manage independent study.
12) I am not sure where to get academic help and support.
13) Other worries about your study in the UK (please specify)

Thinking back to what you were expecting to find *before* you arrived in the UK, which three of the above issues worried you MOST then? (Please put the number of your selected items.)

- Worries about studying at your British university *before* your arrival: a) __________; b) __________; c) __________

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about teaching and learning in the UK? (Please □ one box only for each statement.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements about your academy study in the UK</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I initiate discussions about my study with my tutors.</td>
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<td>2) Students’ discussion in class is helpful for my learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) My lecturers are approachable.</td>
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<td>4) My lecturers should have all the answers to class discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) My fellow students often know more about my subject areas than me in group/class discussions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) I am happy with the academic support from my tutors outside class.</td>
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<td>7) I am happy with my tutors’ way of teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8) I get feedback from my tutors which helps me know how I am progressing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9) My lecturers give little guidance for students on how to learn best.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. To what extent do you feel that you have adjusted to academic study at your British university?
   □ 1  Not much     □ 2  To some extent     □ 3  A lot

13. What is your subject area at university? ________________________________________________

14. Do you speak English as a first, second or foreign language?
   □ 1  Speak English as my first language
   □ 2  Speak English as a second/additional language (officially used in my home country)
   □ 3  Speak English as a foreign language (not used officially in my home country)

15. Did you need to obtain an English language certificate for your study? □ 1  Yes □ 2  No
   If YES, please specify your score:
   IELTS _____________ TOEFL _____________ Other (please specify) ________________
16. Which of the following makes the largest contribution to your fees and living costs? (Tick one box only.)

☐ 1 My personal income/savings ☐ 2 Scholarship/ Sponsorship/Bursary
☐ 3 Loans ☐ 4 Parents/Relatives
☐ 5 Friend(s) ☐ 6 Other (Please specify) _________________

17. About your accommodation in the UK

A. Type of accommodation (Tick one box only.)

☐ 1 Halls of residence ☐ 2 A student house/flat controlled by my university
☐ 3 Private rented house ☐ 4 Homestay with a British family
☐ 5 A private rented flat/bed-sit on my own ☐ 6 Other (please specify) _________________

B. Catering

☐ 1 Self catering ☐ 2 Meals provided

C. People whom you are living with in your accommodation (Please tick all that apply.)

☐ 1 Mixed with students from my home country only ☐ 2 Mixed with other international students
☐ 3 Mixed with UK and international students ☐ 4 Parents/Relatives
☐ 5 Partner/boyfriend/girlfriend ☐ 6 None of these (please specify) _________________

18. How satisfied are you with your living accommodation?

☐ 1 Very dissatisfied ☐ 2 Dissatisfied ☐ 3 Satisfied ☐ 4 Very satisfied

19. Before the course you are now on, had you ever studied outside your home country?

☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No

If YES, where have you studied before (before your current course)? (Please tick all that apply.)

☐ 1 The UK (on another course) ☐ 2 USA/Canada/Australia/New Zealand
☐ 3 Somewhere else (please specify) _________________

20. Before your current UK trip, had you ever travelled outside your home country for purposes other than academic studies (e.g. on holiday)?

☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No

21. Which of the following influenced your decision to study in the UK? (Tick all that apply.)

☐ 1 Parents'/relatives’ decision ☐ 2 Advice from my school
☐ 3 Advice from sponsors/employers ☐ 4 Advice from friends who have studied abroad
☐ 5 I’d always wanted to. ☐ 6 Universities’ ranking
☐ 7 Value for money ☐ 8 Other (please specify) _________________

22. In general terms how happy you have been since you came here? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. Please use the space below to provide any further comments about your experience as an undergraduate at your university.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for helping us with this important research project. Please return it by using the freepost envelope provided to: Dr Qing Gu, School of Education, The Dearing Building, The University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus, FREEPOST NG4943, Nottingham, NG8 1BB
Second Year Undergraduate International Students Survey 2008

1. Are you ...?  
   □ 1 Male  □ 2 Female

2. Date of birth:  
   ____________________ (dd / mm / yy)

3. Place of birth:  
   (City/Town/Village), (Country, e.g. UK)

4. How long have you been in the UK?  
   ______________________

5. What is your subject area at university?  
   ______________________

6. Did you need to obtain an English language certificate (e.g. IELTS) for your study?  
   □ 1 Yes  □ 2 No

7. Have you noticed any change in you since starting your current course? (Please ☑ one box only for each statement.)

- Compared to when I first started my degree here, I feel that ...  
  | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree |
  | Strongly | Strongly |  |  |
  1. it is easier to make friends now.  
  2. I am more organised in managing my time for study.  
  3. I have learned to use a greater range of study skills.  
  4. I am more confident about managing my student life here.  
  5. I am more accepting of people who have different attitudes from me.  
  6. I have become more critical of some of my home cultural values.  
  7. I have become more appreciative of some of my home cultural values.  
  8. I make more efforts to understand people around me better.  
  9. I am more committed to my course of study.  
  10. I am in less regular contact with friends and family at home.

Please tell us something about your experiences of living in the UK

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about living in the UK? How has your perspective changed since you started your studies? (Please ☑)

- I am happy with my social life here in the UK.  
  i. Agree or disagree?  
  ii. How has your view changed?  
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
    |  |  |  |  |
  1. More true than before  
  2. Less true than before  
  3. About the same

- I behave differently from UK and other international students because of my cultural roots.  
  i. Agree or disagree?  
  ii. How has your view changed?  
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
    |  |  |  |  |
  1. More true than before  
  2. Less true than before  
  3. About the same

- I understand English culture well.  
  i. Agree or disagree?  
  ii. How has your view changed?  
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
    |  |  |  |  |
  1. More true than before  
  2. Less true than before  
  3. About the same

- I do not like most of the food that I find here.  
  i. Agree or disagree?  
  ii. How has your view changed?  
    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
    |  |  |  |  |
  1. More true than before  
  2. Less true than before  
  3. About the same
5. I have financial worries.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

6. I often feel homesick.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

7. It is difficult to mix with UK students.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

8. It is difficult to mix with international students from other countries.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

9. It is difficult to mix with students from my home country.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

10. I often feel lonely.
    i. Agree or disagree?  
    - Strongly Disagree  
    - Disagree  
    - Agree  
    - Strongly Agree  
    ii. How has your view changed?  
    - More true than before  
    - Less true than before  
    - About the same  

11. My close friend(s) have similar cultural backgrounds as my own.
    i. Agree or disagree?  
    - Strongly Disagree  
    - Disagree  
    - Agree  
    - Strongly Agree  
    ii. How has your view changed?  
    - More true than before  
    - Less true than before  
    - About the same  

9. To what extent do you feel that you have adjusted to life in the UK?
   - 1. Not much  
   - 2. To some extent  
   - 3. A lot  

Tell us something about your academic experience in the UK

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your study in the UK? How has your perspective changed since you started your studies? (Please ☐)

1. I am worried about understanding the content of my courses.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

2. I am not sure what is expected of students by my lecturers.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

3. I feel uncomfortable speaking up in class discussions.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

4. I feel uncomfortable joining in small group discussions.
   i. Agree or disagree?  
   - Strongly Disagree  
   - Disagree  
   - Agree  
   - Strongly Agree  
   ii. How has your view changed?  
   - More true than before  
   - Less true than before  
   - About the same  

2
5. I feel embarrassed if I am not able to answer my lecturers’ questions in class.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

6. I am worried about my relationships with my lecturer(s).
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

7. I am worried about failing my essays/assignments/exams.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

8. I am not sure how to manage independent study.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

9. I am not sure where to get academic help and support.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

10. I am worried about writing in academic English.
    i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
    ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about teaching and learning in the UK? How has your perspective changed since you started your studies? (Please ☑)

1. I initiate discussions about my study with my tutors.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

2. Students’ discussion in class is helpful for my learning.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

3. I am happy with the academic support from my tutors outside class.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

4. I get feedback from my tutors which helps me know how I am progressing.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

5. I am happy with my tutors’ way of teaching.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3

6. ‘Home’ students are less motivated to study hard than international students are.
   i. Agree or disagree? Strongly Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Agree 3 Strongly Agree 4
   ii. How has your view changed? More true than before 1 Less true than before 2 About the same 3
12. To what extent do you feel that you have adjusted to academic study at your British university?
☐ 1     Not much       ☐ 2     To some extent       ☐ 3     A lot

13. Please tick up to THREE key positive influences on your study and student life so far.
☐ 1     Support of my parents/relatives  ☐ 1     Support of my friends back home
☐ 2     Support of my friends here       ☐ 2     Support of my partner
☐ 3     Conditions of my accommodation  ☐ 3     Support of my university tutors/lecturers
☐ 4     My self-determination and hard work ☐ 4     Satisfying provision of my university course(s)
☐ 5     Social support and guidance from my university ☐ 5     Access to satisfying learning resources at university
☐ 6     Other (please specify) __________________________

14. Please tick up to THREE key negative influences on your study and student life so far.
☐ 1     Lack of close friends with whom I can talk about personal and study issues
☐ 2     Lack of a happy social life         ☐ 2     Worrying about family back home
☐ 3     My poor time management            ☐ 3     Lack of learning resources at my university
☐ 4     Lack of social support from my university ☐ 4     Unsatisfying conditions of my accommodation
☐ 5     Lack of helpful feedback from most of my tutors ☐ 5     Student drinking and clubbing culture
☐ 6     Other (please specify) __________________________

15. What are your biggest achievements since starting your degree here? (Please ☒ up to THREE choices.)
☐ 1     Improved interpersonal & communication skills ☐ 1     Personal independence
☐ 2     Successful progress of my study             ☐ 2     Broadened life experiences and interests
☐ 3     Improved English language skills           ☐ 3     Acquired more mature attitudes towards people
☐ 4     Improved time management                    ☐ 4     Other (please specify) __________________________

Taken together, who made the biggest contribution to your achievements here? (Please ☒ ONE choice only.)
☐ 1     My self-determination                      ☐ 2     Support of my parents
☐ 2     Support from my friends back home          ☐ 3     Support from my friends here
☐ 3     Support of my tutor(s)                     ☐ 4     Other (please specify) __________________________

16. In general terms how happy have you been since you came here? ☐ 1     ☒ ☐ 2     ☐ 3     ☐ 4     ☐ 5

17. Please tell us up to three happiest memories since you started your current course:

i) __________________________________________

ii) __________________________________________

iii) __________________________________________

18. Please use the space below to provide any further comments about your experience as an undergraduate at your university.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for helping us with this important research project. Please return it by using the freepost envelope provided (no stamps needed) to: Dr Qing Gu, School of Education, The Dearing Building, The University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus, FREEPOST NG4943, Nottingham, NG8 1BB