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Challenges of university adjustment in the UK: a study of East Asian Masters degree students.

Wenli Wu and Michael Hammond

Abstract

This paper reports on the adjustment of East Asian Masters level students who came to study at a campus based university in the UK 2004-5. International students face challenges in respect to language proficiency, academic expectations and social participation. In this longitudinal study the experiences of a group of students from East Asian countries were surveyed, with a sample of eight students from five countries tracked through regular interviews. The paper describes the level of satisfaction which students experienced and the challenges they faced. It was found that students largely enjoyed their sojourn and achieved satisfactory levels of academic success. They encountered 'culture bumps' rather than culture shock. Adjustment was facilitated by adequate preparation; appropriate academic attainment; and satisfying levels of social participation with other international students. It is suggested that these students were experiencing an 'international post graduate student culture' rather than integration into local culture.

Key words: Masters degrees; international students; adjustment

Challenges of university adjustment in the UK: a study of East Asian Masters degree students.

Introduction

This paper reports on the adjustment of Masters level students from East Asian countries coming to study in a campus based university in the UK. There are increasing numbers of international students in higher education and their experience has become a growing topic for enquiry. It is often reported that international students face challenges in respect to language proficiency, academic expectations and social integration (eg Biggs, 1999; Brown, 2007; Heikinheimo and Shute, 1986).

For many international students, proficiency in the English language is a key concern as it is central to academic success and social integration (eg Badur 2003; Heikinheimo and Shute 1986). Zhou and Todman (2009) see language proficiency as influential in easing the transition of post graduate Chinese students studying in the UK. Language is clearly central to academic performance but there are other problems of academic adjustment. For example, Holmes (2005) saw Confucian culture as ascribing success to individual willpower rather than ability. Confucian education emphasises effort, often expressed in memorisation and rote learning. This contrasts with more dialogic western education in which students are encouraged to ask questions, challenge the ideas of teachers, and other students, and express their own ideas. Not surprisingly East Asian students can find the dialogic approach unsettling and they are reported as 'quiet' in the classroom, and are not seen as contributing to seminars or group discussions, let alone challenging their teachers or peers. In addition, many East Asian students expect to take a timed examination and may find more holistic methods of assessment unfamiliar (Badur, 2003). Simpson and Tan (2009), further,

argue that many of the challenges which East Asian students face concern interpersonal relationships at administration, academic and support service levels.

Some of the above assumptions of East Asian culture have become challenged in more recent research. Durkin (2008), for example, in examining East Asian students in the UK, does indeed report a divide between more 'conciliatory' approaches to study followed by East Asian students and the 'wrestling' orientation to study in the western academic tradition. However, students were seeking, and could find, a middle way between these approaches in which they could meet academic demands while not seeking full acculturation. Campbell and Li (2008) suggest something similar in reporting on Chinese students in New Zealand. Bamford (2008) extends the discussion by suggesting the problem may be one of teaching strategy, rather than learning strategy, in that many tutors may fail to provide contexts familiar to East Asian students when explaining concepts and ideas. The role of the tutor is considered more widely by Brown (2007) who questions whether it is reasonable to expect tutors to be able to meet all demands in mediating language and cultural expectation made on them.

International students face further challenges in relation to social contact and friendship with local or 'home' students, though, again, these cannot be divorced from language and academic concerns. Zeng (1997), in a survey of Chinese students in UK, found that cultural perceptions and language barriers limited students to leisure activities which were less socially interactive.

Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002), in a study in the USA, found that international students had greater difficulties during their initial transition to higher education than home students. Campbell and Li (2008) reported that it was difficult for Asian students to make friends with local students in New Zealand and Chen (2006) suggested that East Asian students, from high context collectivist cultures, found self-disclosure a troubling area in developing friendships with home students. Meanwhile, Ward (2006) found that home students held relatively favourable perceptions of

international students, but they were largely uninterested in initiating contact; indeed international students often felt that it fell to them to make the effort to form friendships.

Notwithstanding these and other difficulties, studies often report that international students experience quite high levels of satisfaction from study abroad (Campbell and Li, 2008; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; UKCOSA, 2004). Perhaps the cultural difficulties faced by international students are not as severe as reported, or, to put it another way, overseas students are more proactive in meeting challenges than imagined. Peer support, often from those with the same nationality, is seen as important for well-being and Montgomery and McDowell (2009) discuss the importance of communities of practice created by overseas students themselves. However, Sawir et al. (2008) did not see same nationality support as a panacea for addressing the loneliness of overseas students in Australia, and Zhang and Brunton (2007) saw constraints on social participation as difficulties for Chinese students in New Zealand. Nonetheless, the challenge of transition is not confined to overseas students, as Zhou and Todman (2009) point out, and indeed non-traditional learners studying in local institutions may encounter equally severe challenges and a more troubling transition of identity (Christie et al. 2008).

The concept of adjustment

Adjustment carries different connotations including psychological comfort (Black and Gregersen, 1991) and degree of 'fit' Ramsay et al (1999). French et al (1974) saw adjustment as involving a working towards an accommodation between person and environment. Searle and Ward (1990) saw two dimensions of adjustment: psychological and sociocultural and these have been widely accepted by many researchers (eg Yang et al, 2006; Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006). Two of the most influential theories of adjustment concern the culture shock and the U-curve hypothesis. A shock implies an unpleasant and unexpected realisation of the extent of the differences between

cultures, often leading to an unsettling re-evaluation of one's own culture. According to Pedersen (1995), a culture shock is caused by loss of cues on how to behave and an awareness of different local values resulting in anxiety, even depression and anger. Culture shock may, however, be better understood as 'adjustment stress' (Anderson, 1994), and Chen (2007) helpfully introduces the idea of 'culture bump' rather than full blown culture shock. Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis has been influential in understanding adjustment to a local culture over time. Four distinct stages are often identified: the first is the 'honeymoon stage' when the sojourner is fascinated about everything in the new place. The second is the 'culture shock stage' (or 'disillusionment') as the individual meets problems but has to deal with them. The third is the 'adjustment stage' during which the individual has become more familiar with the new culture and has learned how to behave appropriately. The fourth is the 'mastery stage' when one becomes more integrated into the new culture (Black and Mendenhall, 1991). However this representation is seen as too schematic by most writers (see Brown and Holloway, 2008) and, as seen earlier, some feel that the degree of shock which the sojourner experiences is over-stated. Most writers do, however, see a process of integration over time, or at least a growing familiarity with expectations between a sojourner and the environment, even if this is not straightforward or linear (eg Brown and Holloway, 2008; Hechanova-Alampay et al, 2002).

Several suggestions have been put forward to assist overseas sojourners. First, they should have realistic expectations of the experience from the start (Zhou and Todman, 2009) and here both Brown (2007) and Simpson and Tan (2009) express concern over the marketing of the international student experience. Students should have an intrinsic motivation to study, and a curiosity about their new surroundings – those that feel pressurised will often have a less satisfying and less successful experiences (Chirkov et al. 2008). On arrival pre-session courses can assist in supporting language and academic adjustment. However, these should be more attuned to the

specific courses and departments which students will attend rather than the provision of a generic course as is routinely offered (Chen 2007). In this context Peelo and Luxon (2007) argue for an extended notion of 'study skills' and see literacy as concerned with social practices not confined to the decoding of text. Teachers should acquire a greater understanding of overseas students' orientation to study and of their home context (Bamford, 2008). Institutions cannot generate friendships between international and home students but teachers can engineer contact through teaching strategies, such as group work, and can support peer mentoring programmes (Sawir et al. 2008). Finally, students themselves can generate national or overseas groups to support each other (Montgomery and McDowell, 2009). Such groupings should not be seen as displacement from the process of integration but an easing of that process.

Taken together, the literature confirms that moving across cultures creates challenges and difficulties but there is less agreement, in the context of higher education, on the level of satisfaction experienced by the sojourner; how adjustment can be described and what seems to enable adjustment. These are issues explored in the following study.

The study

The aim of this study was to explore international East Asian Masters students' experience in the UK. It was conducted at a campus-based university in the middle of England with international students from as many as 120 countries. The study focused on Masters level students with English as a foreign language who had not reached the required entry-level score on a recognised English proficiency test. These students were invited to attend a five or a ten-week pre-session course with attendance a condition of entry onto their chosen programme which ran during the following academic year September – July. A small number of other international students volunteered to join the pre-session, for example to make friends, improve their English, or undertake an

orientation to study. The study sought to investigate the experiences of the East Asian students (n=40) who had taken the pre-session course. This was a study concerning students who had needed extra language support; were going to study in the host institution for a relatively short time; and could be expected to have the clear goal of getting a Masters degree.

Methodology and methods

This was a longitudinal case study using mixed methods: survey, interviews and observation to explore the nature of transition over 15 months. A questionnaire survey was carried out with all 40 students at three points during the year: November, March and June. The first two rounds covered themes including language learning, learning strategies, settling down, pre-departure preparation, self-evaluation, ICT and learning. In the final round additional questions covered level of satisfaction with assignments or examinations and students were asked to look back and give a retrospective view of their stay in the UK. The data were collated and entered onto SPSS software and a descriptive reports were generated. The level of questionnaire response differed over the three rounds with 35, 33 and 24 returns respectively. The lower response rate in June return was the result of many students being off campus during the month as they were writing dissertations and not required to attend classes though comparing responses to repeated questions the smaller sample did not appear to be skewed in a particular direction. These surveys provided the backdrop for the interview data.

Eight students (four male and four female) from five regions (mainland China, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea and Japan) were selected as interview participants over the year (Table 1). Ethical issues were discussed with students and consent forms for participation were obtained. The interviews were in English, though Mandarin Chinese was used occasionally with participants from China. Interviews lasted from 45 to 70 minutes. They were conducted at the end of each term

(November, April and July) and were semi structured covering topics related to language skills, academic issues and socio-cultural adaptation. One of the authors (WW) of this article was an international (doctoral) student at the time of the study. She worked as a mentor of students during the pre-session programme. She provided advice on adjustment but was not involved in the teaching or assessment of students.

Interviews were transcribed and coded, facilitated by using Nvivo software. Initially 42 separate codes were generated but these were later condensed into 22 themes all of which fitted under the three major categories (language skills, academic culture and sociocultural environment) which had emerged during the literature review. The coded text from each interview was organised into tables and this enabled patterns to become clear, for example how, as reported later, understanding everyday language, in particular spoken language, was a shared concern for all eight students during term 1 but much less of an issue by term 3. It further enabled the features of adjustment and non-adjustment to be identified (Table 3) and constantly checked against the interview data. The interview data matched closely to the survey data though of course the interviews were much more extensive and enabled more in depth understanding. For example seven out of the eight interviewed students had largely positive experiences and had adjusted to the academic and language demands they encountered. This was in similar proportion to the 22 out of 24 students who reported themselves satisfied or very satisfied with their sojourn.

Findings

This section provides a brief overview of the main findings in the study. It is important to state at the outset that the overwhelming majority of students were satisfied with their stay (as reported by 36 out of a possible 40 respondents during one or more of the three surveys) and in the in-depth strand of the study, seven of the eight students successfully achieved their academic goals. There

was a clear process of adjustment for most students in respect to language use and academic expectations; same nationality peer support seemed to provide a central focus of social participation. Adjustment is described over the three terms of these students' stay.

Stage One: Encounter (pre-arrival and pre-sessional)

Survey and interviews both suggest that students were motivated to come to the university to gain a mastery of English, especially spoken English; to enhance their career prospects by gaining subject knowledge in their field and achieving a Masters level qualification; and take advantage of the social and cultural opportunities which full time study would give to them. Most of the students were self-financing and had what they felt were realistic expectations of costs. They organised books and appropriate clothes and some had attended extra English classes in advance of leaving their home country. Later, when looking back on their stay, they felt their expectations were realistic except that they had been over-ambitious in predicting their development in using English.

Shortly after they arrived in the UK, all the students attended a pre-sessional English course where they met other international students. Most (in the survey and in the interviews) had enjoyed the pre-sessional periods, and had a good orientation to the university. Almost all the students made close friends during this time, with whom they kept in touch for the whole year. However, two out of eight students interviewed said they were dissatisfied with aspects of tutoring and the course programme as a whole while several found the food provided unfamiliar and unappetizing.

Stage Two: Challenge (Term One)

The first (autumn) term contained the greatest challenge with language difficulties clearly highlighted (Table 2). Everyday use of language was much more varied than within the pre-sessional course. First language users spoke more quickly, sometimes using colloquialisms and non-standard accents. Many students struggled to follow lectures particularly when the unfamiliar

contexts were used to illustrate teaching points. The productive skills, reading and writing, posed the greater challenge. Most had not written an assignment in English before. Most had very little experience of speaking English in their home country. They reported that they had received a traditional grammar translation teaching method in their high schools. This enabled them to receive high scores at school and in international tests and it helped them build a foundation of vocabulary and grammar; but it had not prepared them for speaking and essay writing. At the same time students struggled with subject knowledge – a struggle which they had not faced during the pre-session courses. All the interview participants in the sample felt confident of their academic ability but they were aware that they were meeting new concepts and new terminology. Some failed their first assignments (two out of the eight), or received what they saw as disappointing marks. Nonetheless, students remained motivated to study and keen to meet the new challenges. They were willing to explore a wider range of strategies to improve their English, for example, learning from peer and tutor feedback. At the same time, they described more traditional independent study, such as memorising lists of words and completing text book exercises, and disciplined self-study habits.

Out of the eight interviewed, seven students felt they had enough money for their study and daily expenses. However they were conscious of how much the stay was costing and of the financial support of their families which made them feel under financial pressure. The eighth worked part time throughout his sojourn in order to cover living costs. All the students were cautious in how they spent their money. The main focus for social activity was student accommodation. For most this was on campus though some had gone for cheaper shared houses off campus. Residences were generally shared with other international students, sometimes with others from the same national group, and at times with local or ‘home’ students. English was generally used to communicate in shared accommodation except with students from the same nationality. Some

established close links with flat mates and the residential unit acted as a focus for social activity and for academic and language support.

Most students had some involvement with campus societies, for example participating in ones for national groupings and for overseas students in general. They found this important not just for social activity but for sharing understanding of academic expectations and for language support. Overall few students made close links with home students; one reason for this was that going to pubs, or campus bars, was a challenge even for those used to drinking. Many said they did not know how to talk appropriately in pubs and could not, in any case, follow the conversation. In general they felt they had to be proactive if they wanted to make English friends, and they questioned why they needed to be the initiator. They felt that they had emotional and academic support from other international students so they did not feel compelled to mix with local students. At the same time nearly all felt connected to events at home. They used the internet to get the latest news and to hold on to existing networks of friends and relatives in their home country and indeed all over the world. The term 'culture shock' could not be applied to describe the experience of any of the students tracked in the sub group. However, they encountered 'cultural bumps' and one student in particular did miss home and felt quite lonely during this term and beyond.

Stage Three: Varying levels of integration into international student culture (latter part of term one onwards)

By the end of the first term students had become familiar with the new environment and they were more comfortable with meeting everyday language demands. In the second term the intensity of challenges reduced. Their worries focused much more on academic related aspects, such as completing assignments and improving their academic writing. Subject work load had become more intensive: there were more lectures; tutorials; group work tasks; presentations and assignments or examinations.

Most reported getting improved marks in assignments or examinations. Again participation in places of residence was important and it was noticeable that students who felt most satisfied with their English development were using the language extensively, often as a lingua franca between students of different backgrounds, as they shared cooking, went to parties or simply chatted with flat mates. Social activity was often organized around campus societies which organised trips, parties and other events. Again there were few encounters with communities outside of the campus, instead they tended to mix with other international students. They continued to use the internet to get the latest news and to stay in touch with friends and relatives. While such exchanges did not necessarily develop their English it did give them a continuing sense of connection and motivated them to study.

In the third term most of the departments had few or no formal lectures, though there were some seminars and tutorials. Students had more free time during the break between terms and could, in any case be more flexible in how they used their time. Some made short trips around the UK or to nearby countries in Europe. Out of the eight, two went back to their home country for a period of job hunting or for family commitments. Study was less intense though all prepared dissertations and for examinations. There was less assignment writing and fewer 'natural' opportunities to learn from their course peers and tutors. There was less interest in learning English and instead a focus on planning for the future became increasingly a concern (Table 3). Looking back most felt satisfied with what they had achieved but thought they would have made more progress in their English proficiency, with productive skills the greater concern. For example 15 out of 24 students were satisfied or very satisfied with their progress in reading English in the June survey while only five were satisfied or very satisfied with progress in speaking.

Cameos of student experience

During the research cameos of each of the eight interview participants were constructed and, in most cases, discussed with students themselves. Five of these cameos were best characterised as exemplifying a more 'adjusted' experience; two exemplified more mixed experiences, one presented an example of non-adjustment. These were best-fit judgements and, as might be expected, most students tended to switch between periods of proactive and more reactive, or passive, forms of adjustment. The examples below contrast adjustment and non-adjustment.

'Emily' provided an example of adjustment. She had worked as a high school English teacher for eight years in Japan before coming to study in the UK. In all three interviews she described herself as 'comfortable' in her surroundings and, on leaving, looked back fondly on her experience. She developed friendships with other students from Japan, with other international students, and with a few home students. By the third term of the year she was able to use English fluently in social and academic settings even if she felt writing took too long. She still found it difficult to keep up with conversations in noisy or large group settings and could not easily follow programmes on UK television. She had hoped to do more travelling but keeping up with the course was intensive and she did not have the time. In the break between the second and third terms, she went back to Japan for two weeks to research future job prospects. She needed a short extension to complete her dissertation and received a distinction for her academic work.

She was satisfied with her year abroad. She had realised her goals: she had improved her English, acquired relevant academic knowledge and discovered something about the UK as a country. She had developed study skills, to a greater extent than she had expected. Her biggest challenges had been in the writing of assignments and taking part in group course work. She worked diligently and independently throughout the year but had been supported by other international students and

with feedback from her tutors. She felt 'lucky' because she made good friends in her accommodation, in which she felt part of a 'big family'. She returned to Japan after her graduation and found a new post as a course designer.

'Janet' provided a contrasting example, that of non-adjustment. Janet was a quiet South Korean woman whose motivation to come to the UK was to carry out further study. She had hopes of going on to study for a PhD. However, she encountered difficulties in her courses, and failed some of the modules. She was told that she could receive credit for the courses she had passed but would not get a Masters level qualification and was not able to go on to complete her dissertation. She believed very much that study 'was a student's own business'. She was reluctant to ask for help from her tutors or peers. To do so would be a 'disturbance'. This belief was deeply rooted from her past experience of study. She was friends with international students she had met on the pre-session course, and with other students from Korea she had met later on campus. However, she did not have much contact with other international students or with home students. She did not establish friendships with her flatmates and preferred to stay in her room, to write, study or read. She identified herself as an introverted person. She had always been so and felt that 'she was born to be quiet'. She stayed in contact with family and friends in Korea through the Internet, however, the degree of contact was limited. When she had problems, she felt she was responsible for solving them for herself. She said she did not feel lonely or unhappy on campus but she was very upset with her academic performance and believed that she deserved higher grades.

These cameos offer two different types of experience in which participation, language and orientation to study all play a defining part (Table 4).

Discussion

This study set out to report on three questions: How satisfying is the international student experience?; How can adjustment be described?; and What seems to enable adjustment? These are discussed below.

How satisfying is the international student experience? Most sojourners in this study perceived their stay as largely enjoyable and academically successful and this is in line with other findings (eg Campbell and Li, 2008; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; UKCOSA, 2004). Students may have felt disappointed by lack of interaction with host nation students but most did not feel a deep sense of disorientation or experience a consistently heightened state of excitement followed by consequent disillusionment, as might be predicted by Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve hypothesis. In later contact with these students, it was seen that they encountered little 're-entry' culture shock as described by Gaw (2000) and discussed more recently by Chen (2001).

How can adjustment be described? If adjustment is a feeling of well-being and satisfaction, and the ability to 'fit in' and negotiate the interactive aspects of a new culture (Searle and Ward, 1990), then most of the students in the study successfully adjusted. However this was not adjustment to a host culture in the sense in which this is normally understood but adjustment to what might be called an 'international student culture'. Such a culture is defined by its widespread use of English; participation of students from a range of national backgrounds; and a focus on achieving academic success. Within this culture there is a particular, but not exclusive, connection with students from the same or culturally similar backgrounds and a continuing interest in events in one's home country through the use of ICT (see also Xue, 2005). This international student culture has elements of the hybrid experience described by Durkin (2008) but it is not a marginalized experience as described by Wang (2004) in a study of Chinese students in USA. The idea of an

‘international postgraduate culture’ was one that these students could accept or ‘buy into’ (see also Yeh, 2001) and indeed some of the criticism which they made of teaching and learning was that the content was not international enough, it was too parochial and UK or USA based. However, it needs to be added that if adjustment is regarded as acceptance of the host culture and host environment (Brislin, 1981), then most international students in this and in many other studies are not well-adjusted. In keeping with other findings (eg Chen, 2006), most students had limited participation in the host culture as normally understood. They might at times work with host nation students on academic tasks and they might visit local places of interest, go shopping and, in some cases, live off campus but they rarely socialized beyond that. This exposes a tension and a limitation and a potential for loneliness and marginalization. Not surprisingly perhaps some writers have argued here for a focus on developing the international university rather than the international sojourn (Jiang, 2008).

What seems to enable adjustment? Students were able to adjust to this international culture because of a mix of appropriate preparation; academic achievement; social participation; and successful strategies for language development (Wu, Hammond and Barnes, 2009). At the same time factors which are largely seen as contributing to a negative experience, such as inflated expectations (Zhou and Todman, 2009) and lack of pre-sessional preparation (Chen, 2007) were largely absent. It might be added that students were oriented to manageable, short term academic goals which differed from those of long term sojourners, or immigrants. It was also found, and less commented on in the literature, that technology eased the networking of students on campus and facilitated a sense of connection with family and friends back home and indeed across the world. Nonetheless barriers including language and cultural differences were encountered and it seemed to students that it was their responsibility to be pro-active in meeting host nation students. Unless contact was facilitated through shared accommodation or structured encounters in social or

academic settings then interaction with host students rarely took place. Adjustment is seen as a playing out of environment and agency and nowhere was this more obvious than in the case of student accommodation. Students very much saw their accommodation as a matter of chance. Some found themselves in an environment which supported them emotionally, linguistically and academically; in contrast, one in particular, found none of these things. No doubt each story would have been different if they had been placed in alternative residences but, as Gao (2008) points out in a study of Chinese students in Hong Kong, context is not fixed, it is created and internalized; one makes one's own environment to some extent.

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“Name”	Nationality	Area of study	Age (2004)	Gender	Key experiences of language learning in the past	Academic background	Key motivation for study
Paul	Thai	Economics and Finance	24	Male	Studied English formally at school, one month summer course in UK as a teenager	Academically successful in home country, felt he had effective strategies to pass examinations	Language proficiency
Shirley	Thai	English teaching	22	Female	Studied English formally at school, did degree in French	Recently finished first degree, felt she was a successful learner	Improve career opportunities
James	Chinese	Financial Mathematics	22	Male	Studied English formally at school	Recently finished first degree, felt he was a successful learner	Gain greater discipline knowledge
Max	Chinese	Chemistry	26	Male	Studied English formally at school	In previous three years worked in non-chemistry related area; felt able to meet academic demands	Geographically wider career opportunities
Emily	Japanese	English teaching	31	Female	Studied English formally at school, and studied in UK language school for one month 10 years ago	Taught English at high school for 7 years in home country, felt able to meet academic demands	Intrinsic long term desire to study in the UK
Alice	Japanese	English teaching	23	Female	Studied English formally at school; lived in USA as child, later attended summer schools	Recently finished first degree, felt able to meet academic demands	Language proficiency
Simon	Taiwanese	Engineering	26	Male	Studied English formally at school; studied Japanese in Japan for 9 months	Already completed Master degree at a Taiwanese university, felt able to meet academic demands	Language proficiency and discipline knowledge
Janet	South Korean	Economics	28	Female	Studied English formally at school	Felt able to meet academic demands	Greater discipline knowledge

Table 1: the participants within the interviews

Challenges	number of students mentioning this as a challenge
Following spoken English	7
Writing assignments in English	6
Communicating with people from a different cultural background	6
Making international friends	6
Following lectures	5
Speaking appropriate English for the context	5
Understanding subject matter including specialist English vocabulary	4
Dealing with problems in residences	3
Dealing with 'down' periods	3
Preparing for examinations in English	2
Taking part in group discussions	2
Food related problems	2
Finding paid part time jobs	1

Table 2: Challenges mentioned by participants within the first set of in-depth interviews in Term 1
(total > 8 as more than one item mentioned by some students)

Challenges	Number of students citing this
Future plans	4
Managing study and free time effectively	2
Missing home	2
Passing exams	1

Table 3: Answers to the question ‘what are your key challenges in this (third) term?’ (total > 8 as more than one item mentioned).

non-adjustment	sphere	adjustment
Frequent interaction with a small set of people from familiar backgrounds	← Participation →	Frequent interaction with others in different contexts; interaction with people from a wide variety of backgrounds;
Frequent use of first language rather than English in a social context; difficulties using English in both written and oral academic contexts	← Language →	Confident use of English language with a wide variety of people in a social context; using English language appropriately in both written and oral academic contexts
Holding on to academic beliefs and expectations of the home country; performing like home country's students academically.	← Academic orientation →	Understanding of the academic belief and expectation of the host nation; performing like the host nation's students academically

Table 4: features of adjustment and non-adjustment