International Student Experience Report

Prepared for Jo Midgley

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Executive Summary

The underlying information that was collected as evidence to support the recommendations of this report stemmed from a notion that was evident both in secondary research (the literature review) and in anecdotal evidence at UWE, that our overseas students perform less well than their domestic and European peers. This research project was embarked upon, therefore, with a view to investigating this claim and further to understand better the challenges faced both by international students and by staff teaching mixed cohorts. The aim is to improve the total student experience and to better support staff when working with an increasingly diverse student body.

The findings below are based on stage one of a longitudinal qualitative research study which was carried out in November and December 2014 in the students' first semester at UWE. Interviews for Stage 2 took place in May 2015 and these results are in the process of being transcribed and analysed. Also included are the findings from the literature review, questionnaires, performance data analysis and staff surveys.

For the purpose of this study, recruitment terminology i.e. Home, EU and Overseas students is used for clarity.   The researcher, however, acknowledges that none of these groups are homogenous. Furthermore, the key focus of the study is second and third year undergraduate direct entrant students although many of the recommendations made would also be valid for postgraduate students who face many similar issues to the international direct entrant students.

The paragraphs below summarise the key findings of the research to date and from this, key recommendations are drawn out.

Key findings.

Stage 1 Qualitative research interviews: Key challenges faced by international students are listed below in order of the most significant challenge shortly after joining the university.

1. Language: this is broken down further into: academic discourse; subject specific vocabulary; speaking in mixed groups; listening skills; and unfamiliarity with the context. I.e. European business cases or UK banking rules etc.
2. Prior academic culture: which is broken down further into: expectations; grading system; referencing; teaching and learning styles; and taking part in seminars.
3. Integration: which breaks down further into: friendships (already cemented by time DE's arrive); grades matter at level 2 and 3; racism; and stereotypes.

Questionnaires: Induction questionnaires (100) and pre-sessional questionnaires (118) further back up these findings. Of note was the fact that it was not just Asian students who faced these challenges but also Brazilian and European students.

Staff Research: The key issue that staff believe that international students face match the students' perception of challenges: Language; academic culture (both ways); and integration. Across the board there are particular concerns about Level 3 Direct Entrant International students and their ability to get up to speed sufficiently quickly with effectively nine months to familiarize themselves with a different academic culture. The learning curve is very steep indeed.

Staff were asked to identify core areas where they wanted support and these discussions with staff lead to the request for a toolkit designed to meet specific staff needs in order to support them in the challenge of working with mixed cohorts. Figure 1 below shows the key areas where staff requested support.
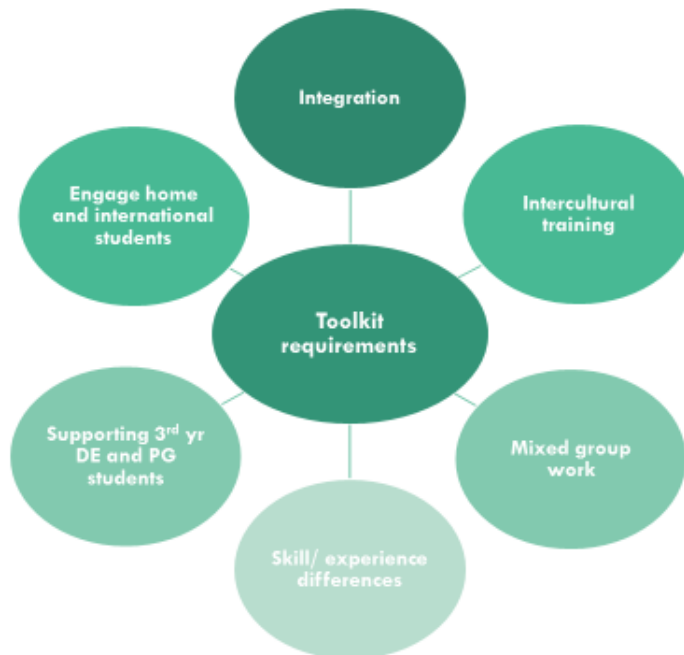

Figure 1: FBL Staff toolkit requirements

Performance Analysis: Performance of home, EU and overseas students was analysed from 09/10 to 13/14 using information supplied by Business Intelligence. Performance was analysed by degree classification with good honours meaning 2:1 and above. The overall summary shows that home and EU students do in fact perform better on the whole than overseas students with more home students achieving a 2:1 and above whereas overseas students tended to sit in the 2:2 and 3rd classification bracket. There were, however, notable exceptions in Accounting and Finance where overseas students outperform home students and Law (LLB). Overall, Malaysian students from Taylors and HELP achieve better results than students coming from Vietnam and China.

Recommendations:

Staff:

The following to be developed to aid staff in teaching mixed cohorts:

1. Good Practice Toolkit: to support staff interaction with overseas students
2. Signposting document: Detailing where to signpost students to find the support that they might need. There is currently a considerable amount of help available, however, many members of staff are not aware of it. It is essential that academic staff know what is available to support students in order to fulfil their duty of care and also in their role as Academic Personal Tutors.
3. Intercultural training: in the form of an away day and ongoing training but also part of the staff good practice toolkit.

4. Staff Mobility: Encourage staff mobility to increase understanding of different education systems.

International students:

The recommendation is that the student experience should be considered in its entirety from pre-arrival through to students becoming alumni. These students could be our core advocates as word of mouth is very important in our recruitment countries. With competition increasing in the UK, in other key competitor countries such as Australia and the USA and with countries such as China increasing the quality of their education and offering incentives for students to stay it is imperative that both home and international students at UWE have an excellent student experience.

The key challenge areas of language, academic culture and integration are considered at each stage of the student journey: recruitment; pre-arrival; induction; ongoing; and alumni. This ensures that support is timely and relevant and acknowledges that students' needs are likely to be different at different stages.

Home Students:

Finally, it is evident from secondary research and from the stage 1 qualitative research that home students in many cases fail to recognise the increasing importance of having strong intercultural skills in order to be successful in business. Recommendations are made as to how to raise their awareness of the importance of these skills.

Contents Page

1. Introduction and context to the project.

The start of this project revolved around two areas:

1. Improving the international student experience
2. To either prove or disprove the deficit model.

Improving the international student experience focused primarily although not exclusively on academic issues and generated research to better understand what international students found particularly challenging. As this is likely to change throughout their journey at UWE, the core research is a longitudinal qualitative study following a group of students through their studies at UWE.

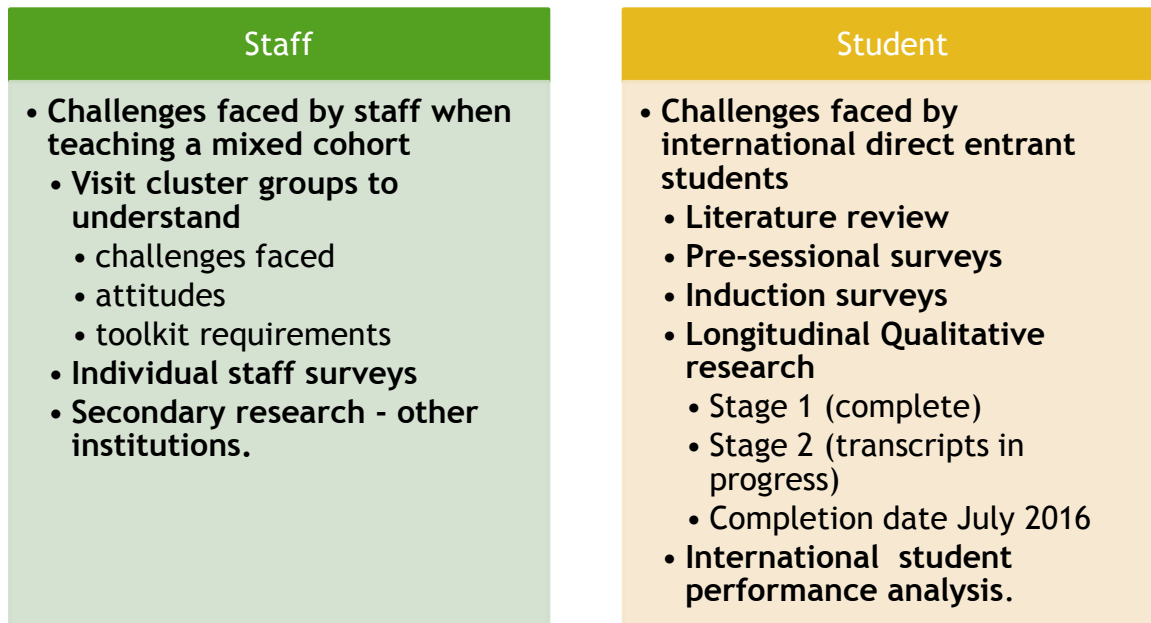A summary of all research in this study is shown in figure 2 below

Staff	Student

• **Challenges faced by staff when teaching a mixed cohort**
• **Visit cluster groups to understand**
  • **challenges faced**
  • **attitudes**
  • **toolkit requirements**
• **Individual staff surveys**
• **Secondary research – other institutions.**
	• **Challenges faced by international direct entrant students**
	  • **Literature review**
	  • **Pre-sessional surveys**
	  • **Induction surveys**
	  • **Longitudinal Qualitative research**
	    • Stage 1 (complete)
	    • Stage 2 (transcripts in progress)
	    • Completion date July 2016
	  • **International student performance analysis.**

Figure 2 – Summary of Research.

The research focused on second and third year international direct entrant students but also included some first year and postgraduate students. The students were primarily based in FBL as the highest number of international students are to be found within this faculty and although this report has wider reaching implications, the report is primarily intended for FBL. Three Brazilian students from HAS were also included in order to consider whether the needs of Brazilian students and the challenges they faced were different or similar to the predominantly Asian research group.

Other research was carried out prior to the start of the longitudinal study and this informed the discussion guide used for the main study. This prior research included a full literature review of current thought in the area; and pre-sessional and induction surveys to measure student concerns prior to formal studies commencing; and an analysis of student performance over the last 5 years.

The deficit model mentioned in research refers to the attitude of staff and home students to international students. It includes stereotypes such as: *"All international students struggle;"* *"All Asian students learn by rote;"* *"All Asian students are passive;"* and *"All international students plagiarise."*   International students are aware of these stereotyping attitudes, (which are not restricted to UWE) and state. *"They think we are Chinese;"* *"The home students do not want to work with us;"* and *"They look at me strangely because I wear a headscarf."*

In order to evaluate this view, the performance figures of Overseas, EU and Home students are analysed with a view to decoding areas of strengths and weaknesses and to see to what extent the claims are true. Furthermore, staff are surveyed to gain an insight into their views on teaching international students in order to better understand how to support them in teaching a mixed cohort.

2. Summary of literature review findings

The literature review discusses the benefits of welcoming an international cohort and highlights the importance of not just recruitment but also of considering the cultural and educational experience that overseas students will have on arrival. It also acknowledges the challenges in providing a curriculum that suits the needs of both home and international students. With numbers of international students coming to the UK to study increasing, this becomes ever more essential. The UK faces competition from the USA and Australia and so it is important to have satisfied alumni in order to compete effectively.

The increasing concern regarding the performance of international students is also discussed within the literature showing that Chinese students in particular are underperforming against home students. A deficit model is discussed within the context of uncritically lumping together international students attributing problems of language, cultural adaptation and study skills to them.

The literature draws out the challenges resulting from the impact of poor language skills and core differences in culture and academic culture. Poor language skills are shown to have an impact on the speed of transition and on student performance. Again Chinese students are seen to be those that struggle most. Language skills are broken down further into spoken English, listening skills, reading skills, written English and academic discourse. The impact of poor skills in these areas is discussed.

Academic culture is also shown to have a large impact on the successful transition and levels of performance of international students. The crux of the academic culture debate is divided down into didactic versus participative teaching styles (Confucian versus Socratic). The debate stresses the fact that for overseas students who have spent their formative years learning in a certain education system, adapting to a different style in a very short time frame can be very tough. It should, however, be noted that with Western Universities, setting up university campuses overseas and with partner institutions growing in numbers, teaching styles are likely to become more similar.

Finally, culture was seen to be less important in impacting international students and the message was that the oversimplification of any cultural issues should be avoided. The literature warns against perceiving Asian students as a homogeneous group highlighting the fact that different cultures even within the same area have differences and should not be stereotyped. The role of staff in avoiding stereotypical generalisations is stressed.

The full literature review is available in Appendix 1.

3. Pre-sessional student surveys

3.1: Background

As part of the pre-sessional programme for international students, several lecturers are asked to deliver a lecture to illustrate what a typical lecture is like at UWE. During one of these lectures, a group of pre-sessional students from different faculties across UWE were surveyed in order to ascertain their rationale for studying in the UK and to discover any worries they might have prior to commencing formal subject studies. The benefit of surveying such a mixed cohort studying across different faculties at different levels from year 1 to Postgraduate and from different nations was that any trends or commonalities could be identified together with any core differences.

3.2: Respondents:

118 questionnaires were completed in total comprising 45 males and 73 females. Figure 3 below shows the breakdown by nationality and with each nationality by gender.

The most frequently occurring nationalities were Chinese (41) Brazilians (34) and Vietnamese (27)
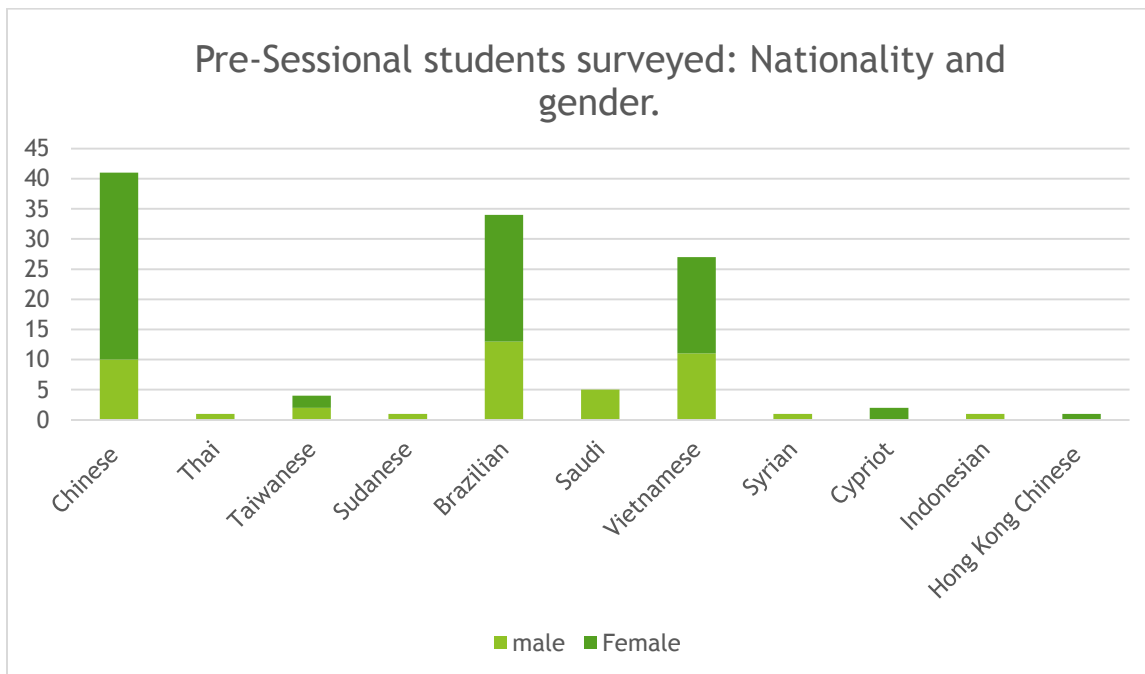

Figure 3 – Pre-sessional students surveyed: Nationality and gender.

Table 1 below documents the key concerns of the pre-sessional students. Language was without a doubt the area that all students were most worried about. Just looking at Chinese, Brazilian and Vietnamese students representing 102 of the total surveys, 90 of them i.e. 88% mentioned that they were concerned about language. Some mentioned specific language concerns of which listening skills were the most mentioned which is understandable at their pre-sessional stage as they are new to the UK and as such listening to English rather than US accents often used can be problematic.

Academic culture and new teaching and learning styles was the second most mentioned concern. The pre-sessional survey showed limited differences between different nationalities.

The other two main concerns mentioned were culture shock and knowing what the expectations would be.

Concerns	Subsection concerns	Chinese Students: Number of mentions	Brazilian students Number of mentions.	Vietnamese students number of mentions	Total cohort number of mentions.
Academic culture		7	7	5	25
Language		36	22	20	90
	Spoken	5	3		
	Listening	10	9	4	
	Written	3	1	4	
	Reading	3	0		
	Academic	2	3		
Culture shock		3	7	4	14
Expectations		5	8		13
Homesick		1	1		2
Making Friends			4	1	5
The weather			1	4	5
Employability					2
Finance					3
Visa					2

Table 1 – Pre-sessional student concerns

Figure 4 below represents graphically the key concerns of all pre-sessional students surveyed. As they have not yet started their studies, it is hardly surprising that the most prominent concern overshadowing the others is language. This is because the students were at the beginning of their time in the UK and furthermore they are primarily students who need to improve their English in order to take up their studies at UWE.
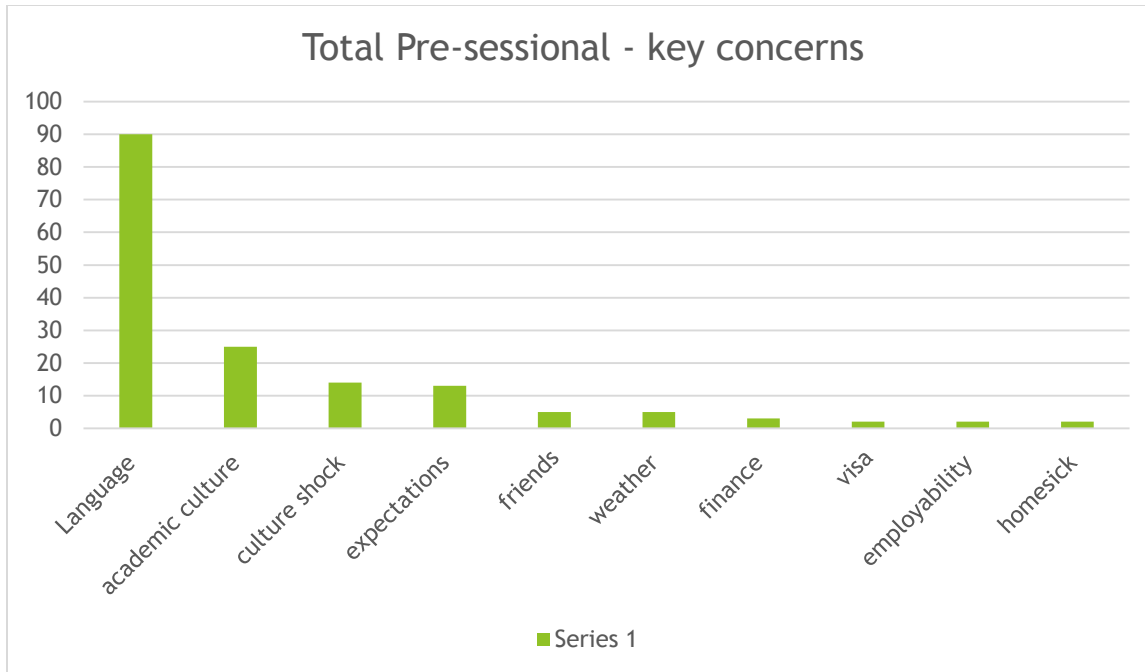
Total Pre-sessional - key concerns

Categories (left to right): Language (90), academic culture (25), culture shock (14), expectations (13), friends (5), weather (5), finance (3), visa (2), employability (2), homesick (2)

Series 1

Figure 4: Total pre-sessional key concerns – unprompted.

The pre-sessional students were also asked what their impressions of UWE were and what help they might like.

It appears that the Brazilian *science without borders* students have had a bad start at UWE. There were some key areas that they were unsatisfied with and where they felt they needed more help:

- The university is a lot more expensive than they had imagined and they feel that items such as bus passes and gym membership should be included in the accommodation costs.
- They were particularly unhappy with admin and the length of time it took to return their passports.
- They would like help with the transcripts for their visa application.
- The general feeling was that the pre-sessional English courses were inflexible and did not change things when the students complained that the course was not suitable for them. They felt they had not been listened to.

It seems that there are some teething problems with these students and that their expectations need to be better managed pre-arrival.

4. FBL Induction session questionnaires

4.1 Background

A similar exercise was carried during FBL direct entrant induction sessions (10 tutorials) designed to introduce students to the way of studying in the UK. The forms were completed prior to the session taking place to avoid any bias. Questionnaires were handed out during induction sessions about studying in the UK to capture the key worries that students have at the beginning of their studies. These students were direct entrants into the second and third years and were solely from the Faculty of Business and Law.

The number of surveys completed was 100 with 53 from year 2 and 47 from year three. Of these 43% were male and 57% female.
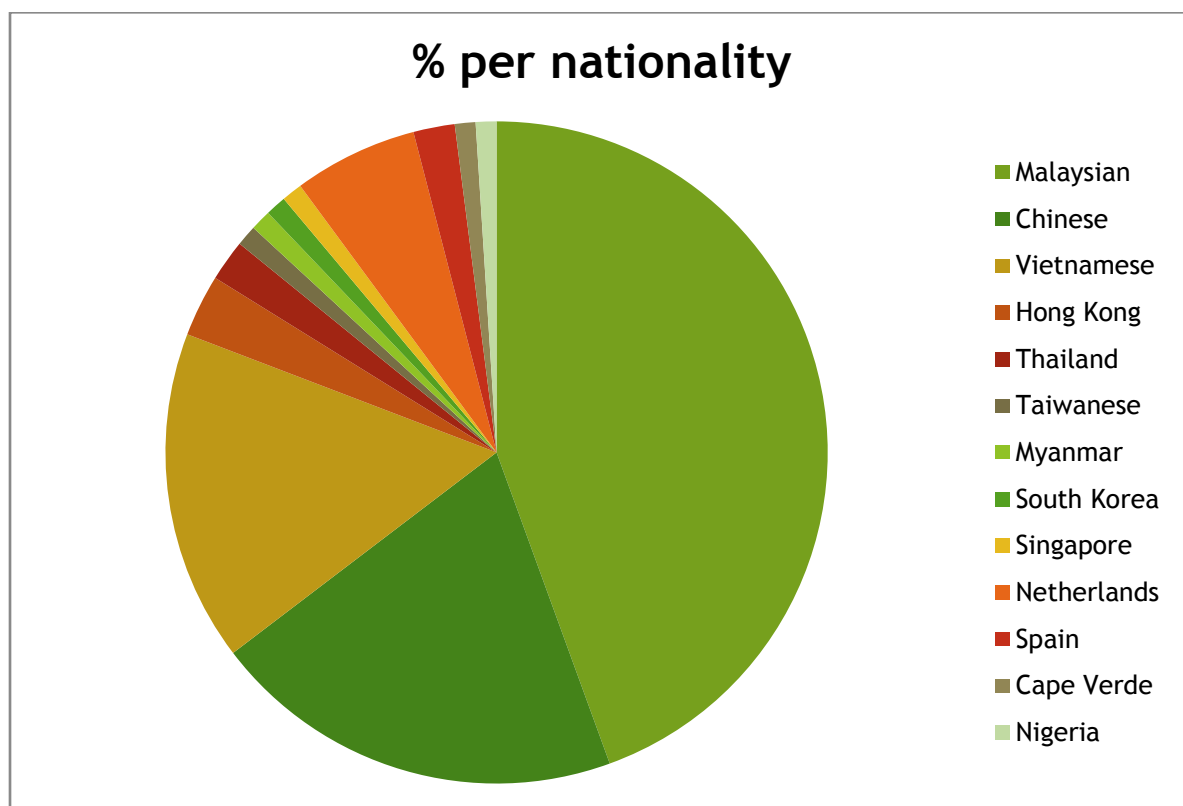

Figure 5

Figure 5 above shows that the majority of the students (44%) were Malaysian followed by Chinese students (20%) and Vietnamese students (16%). The nationality split differs from the pre-sessional nationality split as Malaysian students are generally not required to show an IELTS score because of the partnership arrangement with UWE and their generally stronger level of English .

Table 2 below shows the number of students surveyed by programme with 29% studying Accountancy and Finance and 18% each studying Business and Management and Business and Management with Marketing.

Programme	%
Accountancy and Finance	29
Business and Management	18
Economics	7
Banking and Finance	6
Business and Management with Marketing	18
Human resource management	1
Marketing	8
International Business	10
Marketing communications	3

Table 2: Induction students by programme

The induction surveys also revealed that the biggest concern was language with 49% of the students mentioning it and when this was broken down further, understanding was the most prominent concern. This is again not surprising as the students were fairly new to the UK and as such writing would not yet be an issue and neither would speaking as they would not have been exposed to tutorials with home students. Academic culture was also a large concern with 43% of students mentioning it. Key concerns here were: Expectations; the education system; grading; assessment; and fear of failing.

5. International Student Performance analysis 09/10 → 13/14

This section looks at an analysis of student performance between 09/10 and 13/14. This analysis was carried out using data provided by Business Intelligence in order to either prove or disprove the deficit model mentioned in the introduction. The deficit model is often applied to overseas students by some members of academic staff and home students who perceive the performance of overseas students to be lower than that of home students. Figures 5, 6 and 7 and tables 3 and 4 below consider FBL students only and cover a five year period to avoid blips and to look for trends.
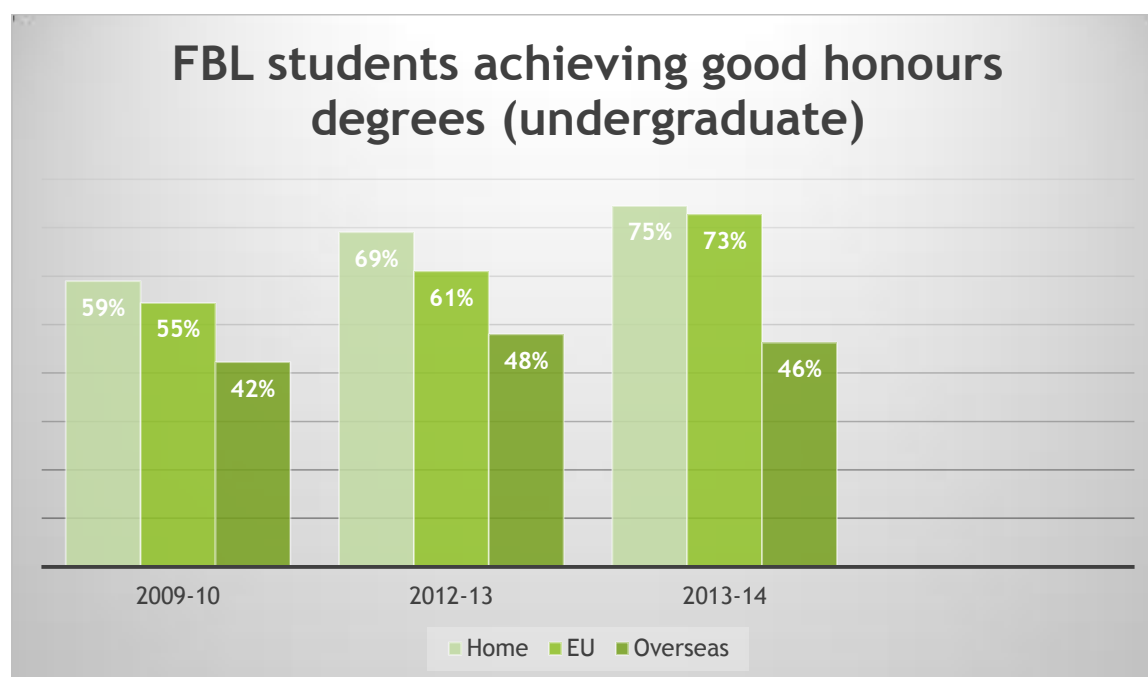
5.1 Students attaining a Good Honours degree (2:1 +)

Figure 5 – FBL students achieving good honours degrees (undergraduate)

Figure 5 above shows the numbers of students broken down by home, EU and overseas to look for any differences in numbers of students achieving good honours. The 2013-14 average for FBL good honours was 66%.

5.1. i: Home student performance:
In 2009/10, 59% of home students achieved a 2:1 or higher and this has grown rapidly year on year showing a figure of 75% achieving good honours in 2013/14.

5.1. ii: EU student performance.
In 2009/10, 55% of EU students achieved a 2:1 or higher and this also showed a steep increase growing to 73% of students achieving good honours in 2013/14. These results show that the EU student performance is very close to that of home students.

5.1. iii: Overseas student performance:
In the case of overseas students however, just under half of them achieve good honours and the highest percentage was in 2011/12 with 48% of overseas students achieving a 2:1 or higher. The growth has been a good deal slower than that of home students moving approximately 5 percentage points. This shows that in terms of good honours overseas students are achieving less well than their European and home student peers

5.1. iv: Summary
These figures show that across the faculty students achieving good honours is increasing. For home and EU students, the increase is considerable whereas the growth rate for overseas students is much lower and overall less than 50% of FBL overseas students achieve good honours.

The analysis shows that similar levels of UK and EU students (nearly ¾) achieve good honours but that overseas students fall short of this with less than 50% achieving good honours. This initial figure suggests that international students are considerably outperformed by their home and EU peers.

These results were then split down further to show the difference between BBS and Law students achieving good honours.

5.1. v: BBS student performance
In BBS the percentage of overseas students getting a good honours degree was just over 1/3 at 36%. This is lower than the faculty average results.   As with the overall faculty performance, home and EU students were very similar in their performance with approximately 70% of them achieving good honours. Thus it can be seen that overall and in BBS, overseas students perform less well than their EU or home peers in terms of achieving a 2:1 or higher.

It is also of note that the home students have moved up from 58% in 2009/10 to 71% in 2013/14 showing a considerable improvement in results.

5.1. vi: Law
The difference between overseas student performance and home student performance was not significant in the Law department partially due to the fact that the students have to have studied the same modules in their home country prior to arriving in the UK.   In fact in 2013/14 the overseas students outperformed the home students.

The results are very impressive in the Law department with 81% of home students achieving a 2:1 or higher and 84% of overseas students achieving the same. The figures for EU students are not included here as there are only small numbers of EU students in the department and as such the results fluctuate wildly.

The average percentage of students achieving good honours in 2013/14 is 81% and in the case of Law during this particular year, the overseas students score higher than the home students.

This analysis shows that overseas students perform less well in BBS than they do in Law, primarily due to the fact that law students are following the identical programme in their home country as they are in the UK.

5.2: Degree classification by programme and income status:
The percentage of students achieving good honours is also considered from a programme point of view to look for any differences here. Figure 6 below shows this visually.
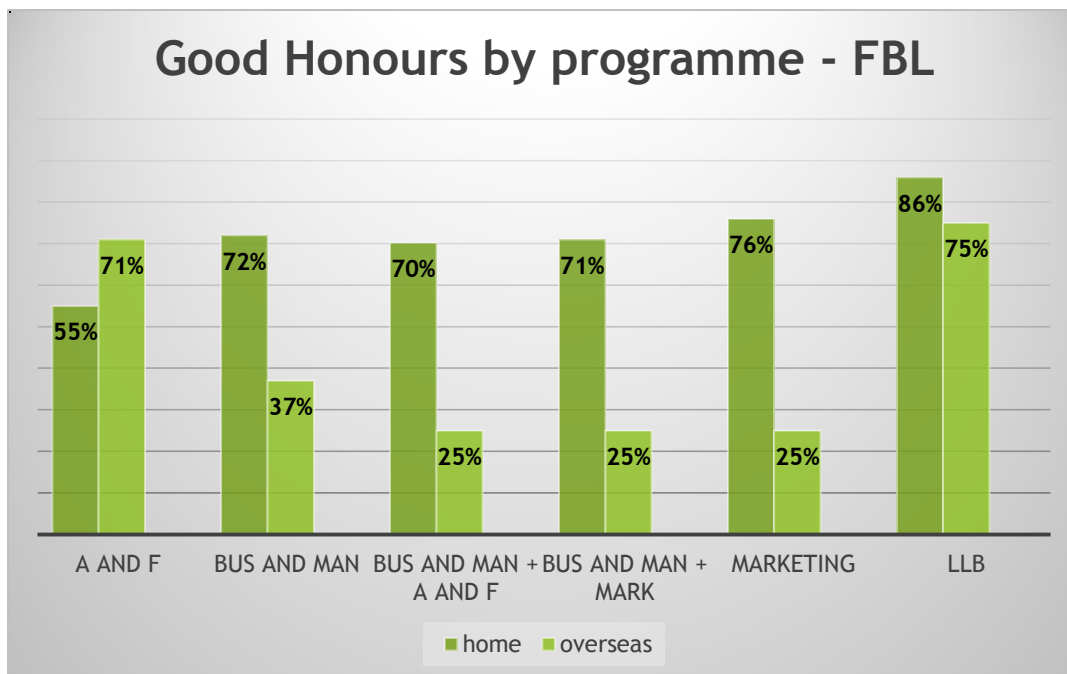
Figure 6 – good honours by programme

5.2. i: Accounting and Finance

The average good honours in 2013/14 was 61% with EU and overseas students exceeding this average. The numbers of EU students (8 in 2012-13 and 2 in 2013-14) are too small to be significant and so have not been included in figure 6 above. Of the overseas students however, 63% achieved good honours in 2012/13 and 71% in 2013/14.   58% of Home students (2012/13) or 55% in 13/14 achieved good honours showing that overseas students perform better than home students on this programme. This could be explained by the mathematical rather than the discursive nature of this programme.

5.2. ii: BA Hons Business and Management

On this programme, overseas students perform at a level considerably lower than the average for good honours. The average number of students achieving good honours on this programme is 60%

The figures range from 7 % in 2009/10 to highest in 2013/14 where 32% of overseas students gained good honours. Numbers of EU students are very small and so are not included here as they fluctuate considerably. Home students achieve at between about 58% and 72% (2013/14) achieving good honours.

5.2. iii: BA Business Management with Accounting and Finance.

The percentage of home students achieving good honours has increased significantly in the last two years to 70% of students achieving good honours. Prior to that 2009/10- and 2010/11 students achieved good honours at 34% and 46% respectively.

EU numbers are insignificant and not included.

Only about a ¼ of overseas students achieve good honours. This is interesting as whereas international students perform well with Accounting and Finance, once you add Business Management, they do less well. It could be assumed that in this subject, students have more essay type work to do and more analytical thinking rather than number crunching?

5.2. iv: Business management with marketing

Until 2012/13 there were not significant numbers of international students studying this programme. In 2012/13, however, the numbers of students achieving good honours is 57% for home students and 34% for international students. Again the assumption being that the essay writing for overseas students may well be impeded by a different academic style and language problems.

The results for 2013/14 showed a marked improvement for home students with 71% of home students achieving good honours but the numbers of overseas students achieving good honours decreased to 25%.

Again, home students significantly outperform overseas students in terms of achieving good honours.

5.2. v: BA hons marketing.

There are very few students from overseas doing this award. 8 students in 2012/13 and 41 home students. 56% of home students achieved good honours and 25% of international students achieved good honours. This is not reliable data, however, given the small numbers.

In 2013/14, 69% of home students achieved a 2:1 or above but the overseas students good honours rate remained at 25%. There were however, only 4 overseas students on this module and as such, these results should be viewed with caution.

5.2. vi: LLB

Results here appear to be consistently high. For the last two years, 81% of home students have achieved good honours a 10% or so increase over the previous two years.   Numbers of EU students are small and so fluctuate. Over the last two years about 60% of overseas students have achieved good honours and so they are performing considerably less well than their home peers.

The results for 2013/14 show a considerable improvement for international students with 75% achieving good honours and for home students 86%

The home students do perform better than the international students but both cohorts achieve very well in this programme.

5.2. vii: Summary

Results by programme show that overall home students perform better than overseas students. The exceptions are however Accounting and Finance where overseas students outperform the home students and Law where overseas students perform at only a slightly lower level than home students.

It can be assumed that overseas students perform well in mathematical rather than discursive and analytical subjects. Furthermore, in Law, due to the fact that students follow the identical programme prior to arrival in the UK and as a result the transition is less severe.

5.3: Performance by Income Status

Table 3 below shows performance by income status, only countries with reasonable numbers of students i.e. 25 students or over have been accounted for and the UK students have been included in order to give a sense of perspective:

Country	09/10		10/11		11/12		12/13		13/14		Total
China	31.5	15.87%	34	17.65%	66	28.79%	109.5	25.57%	80	29%	25%
Malaysia	135	47.41%	98	44.90%	142	62.68%	146	60.96%	221	56%	55%
United Kingdom	740.9	59.85%	823.9	61.73%	819.2	70.18%	731.2	70.31%	907.2	76%	68%
Vietnam	4	50%	9	22.22%	15	70.18%	46	23.91%	60	38%	30%

Table 3 – Performance by income status FBL students only.

China is the weakest followed by Vietnam. Malaysian students are not far off the home students in terms of their results. This is shown visually in figure 7 below.

Figure 7 - Good honours by income status

International Partner Performance FBL – 2009 /10 to 2012/13

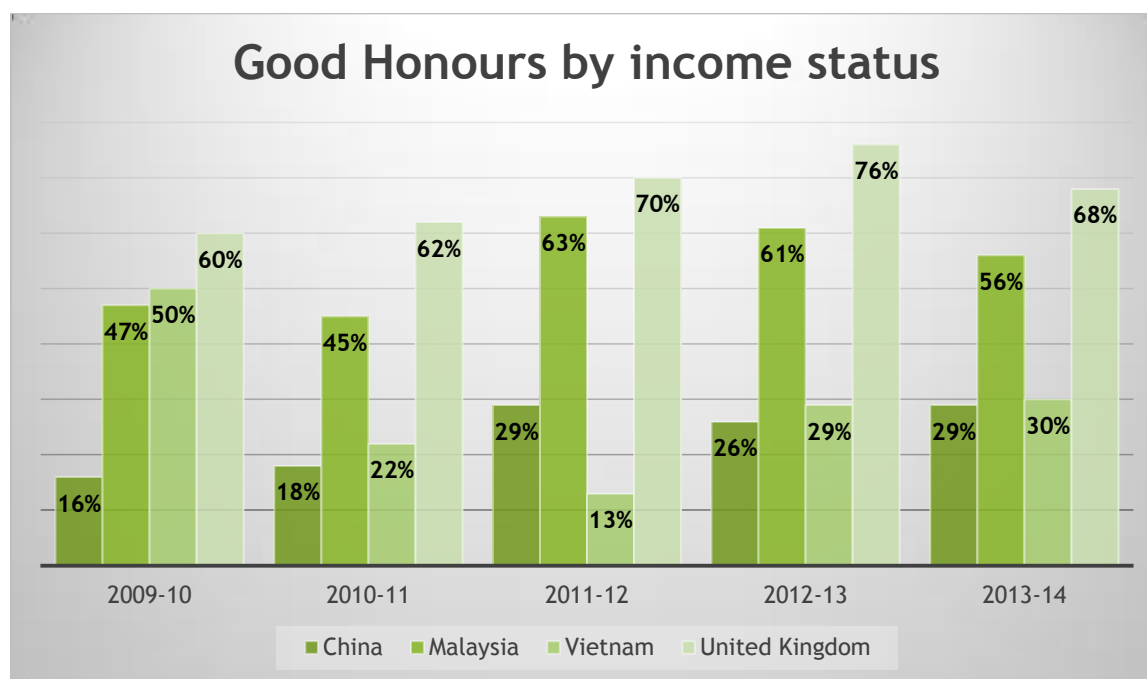| Partner College	Number of classified awards	Number of good honour degrees	% Good degrees
HELP Institute (Mal)	173	116	67%
Taylors College(Mal)	141	85	60%
INTI College (Mal)	44	13	30%
Renmin University of china (CHI)	29	8	28%
Xiamen University (CHI)	27	5	19%
International University HCM city (VIE)	17	4	24%
Beijing Normal University (CHI)	14	3	21%
Macro System Consultancy ATC (Mal)	14	9	64%
Shanghai University of Finance and economics (CHI)	12	1	8%
BIT Beijing inst of Tech (CHI)	10	5	50%

Table 4 – performance by partner college:

Table 4 above includes colleges with more than 10 classified awards sending students to the UK. It is notable that the students from HELP institute and Taylors do considerably better than the other key recruitment universities of China and Vietnam. It could be assumed that this is partly to do with the stronger English skills of Malaysian students but also due to the fact that the courses certainly at Taylors are more closely aligned to the courses here at UWE and so the academic culture shock is not so great.

Having looked specifically and in detail at results for students in FBL, an overview is now given of total results across the university in figure 8 below. It can be seen that approximately 20% of home students attain a first class degree as compared with 10% of overseas students. For the failure rate, both home and overseas students are the same at 3%

The key difference seems to be that more international students are grouped in the 2:2 to 3rd area (51%) compared with home students (24%) where more home students are in the good honours area (73%) compared with overseas students (48%)
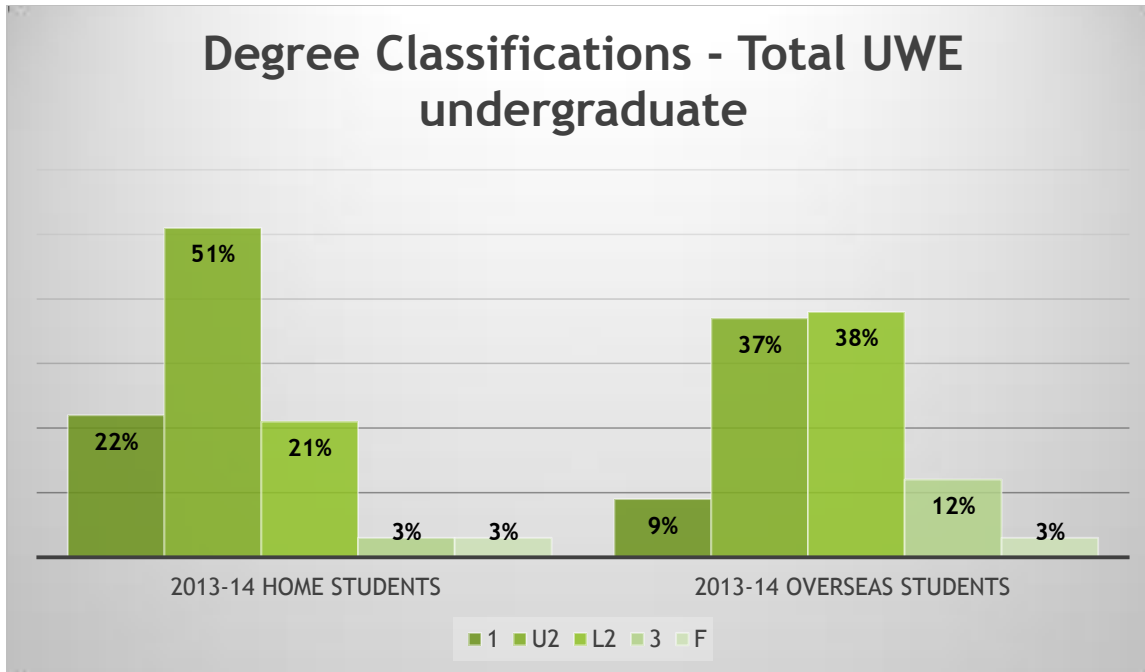
Figure 8 – Degree classifications – Total UWE undergraduate.

Tables 5 and 6 below look at the same split by degree classification for FBL students and the key findings within FBL replicate the trend shown across the whole university with approx. 20% of home students gaining a first class degree compared with approx. 10% of overseas students and a similar failure rate of around 3 %. The numbers of home students gaining a good degree is 72% compared with 43% for overseas students and the lower second and third class honours is 52% for overseas students and 24% for home students.

FBL - HOME

Ac Year	1		U2		L2		3		FA	
11/12	180	20%	424	48%	236	27%	25	3%	24	3%
12/13	162	20%	382	47%	218	27%	24	3%	33	4%
13/14	239	24%	488	48%	222	22%	24	2%	34	3%

Table 5

FBL - OVERSEAS

Ac Year	1		U2		L2		3		FA	
11/12	27	10%	101	36%	116	41%	23	8%	15	5%
12/13	25	7%	121	34%	157	44%	45	13%	8	2%
13/14	33	7%	159	36%	174	39%	59	13%	18	4%

Table 6

Summary of analysis of results.

From the analysis of results above, it can be seen that it is an oversimplification to state that international students do less well than home students. From a general point of view as shown in the tables above, home students do perform better than international students, there are however exceptions such as Law and in particular Accounting and Finance where it can be seen that international students actually outperform home students. When considering income status, Malaysian students perform considerably better than Vietnamese and Chinese students.   This shows that it is dangerous to make assumptions.   Whereas Home students tend to achieve good honours, the international students tend to be more in the 2:2 or lower bracket. Failure rates are, however, the same.

Pre-sessional students:

Of the International Direct Entrants coming to UWE to study, only 16% came to UWE for the Pre-sessional programme.   This is quite a small number which unfortunately is going to decrease this year due to the new UK visa regulations. As Taylors have a credit recognition agreement with UWE and are following a UWE degree in English, they are usually exempt from the IELTS requirement. All students coming from China on the other hand require an IELTS score for both Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies. The new UK visa changes require students to have a specific IELTS qualification which they take in their home country prior to arrival and as such, numbers registered on the pre-sessional courses for the summer period 2015 are likely to be much lower than normal.

6.0 : Summary of Stage 1 Qualitative Research.

Full findings of the qualitative research stage 1 are available in Appendix 2. Stage 2 findings have been collected and will be transcribed and analysed over the next couple of months. This section forms a summary of the stage 1 research.

Firstly it should be remembered that this research took place approximately 2 months after the students had started their studies at UWE whereas the surveys took place either during the pre-sessional period or during induction week prior to the commencement of academic studies.

Secondly it should be noted that this is the first stage of the qualitative research. The second stage took place during May 2015 and then two more stages are planned in November 2015 and May 2016. The rationale for the longitudinal study is to understand whether the challenges faced by international students change at different stages in their student journey.

In stage 1 only, students were asked why they chose to study in the UK, why they chose UWE and what means they had used to help with their choice.

The key reasons for wanting to study in the UK were:

- High and recognized quality of education;
- Improve English as it is a world language;
- The two factors above → enhance future career prospects.

The UK was attractive to students because of its proximity to Europe which provides extensive travel options and also because it is further away from home and therefore more of a challenge than a country such as Australia which is a key competitor for international education. The challenge of coping with a very different culture a long way from home was attractive to these respondents and Malaysian students interviewed felt negative towards Australia as it is the education destination of many Asian students.

Word of mouth from direct family members, relatives, agents, local college and returning students have also ensured that the UK is seen as an attractive education destination. Word of Mouth is very important for decisions such as this education decision due to the levels of financial and personal risk involved.   The reassurance of hearing from someone who has been through the process is very important.   This is a good reason for considering the importance of our alumni in promoting UWE overseas. The option to be able to study in the UK for just one year, makes this an affordable and desirable option for many students. By comparison US universities often require students to study for longer than in the UK.

UWE was a chosen destination for direct entrant international students in the main owing to the fact that the partnership arrangements reduce the risk for students due to the fact that previous cohorts had already travelled to UWE and that as such UWE had a good reputation with the partner college. The type of courses available was also a frequently mentioned reason for choice and the wide range of courses available made the university attractive. Most of the students interviewed had considered the ranking of UWE amongst universities and were guided by their friends/ alumni who spoke highly of the university. Word of mouth, the ranking of UWE and the information on the website, from the agent or from the regional office was influential in guiding choice.

6.1 Challenges Faced

The core challenges that students mentioned during these early stages of their time at UWE were consistently: language; academic culture; and integration.

6.1. i: Language:

Students are keen to do well and often understand the expectations but not how to get there. The IELTS test does not prepare the students for the language challenges they face in the classroom environment. When quizzed about their silence in tutorials, the two most common answers were that it was not the norm in their education system to speak up in class and also that they worried that their language skills were not sufficient to have a detailed discussion. When asked a question, these students translate it back into their own language, think of an answer and then have to translate that answer back into English. By the time they have done this, the conversation has usually moved on.

When asked why they had not gone to sessions either with ELAS-U to help their language or to the Academic Success Centre, lack of time was the reason given. There was also a sense that unless activities are timetabled, they are not seen to be necessary and therefore something which takes up valuable time.

At the outset several of the students interviewed mentioned that they understood less than 50% of the lectures but that the understanding was improving. The more active use of language was the real barrier whether this was spoken or written English. Timetabling issues (international students often tip into ISIS rather late) and accommodation – both of which lump international students together - exacerbate the problem as the students fail to make local friends who could help their levels of English to improve.

When it was suggested that joining clubs and societies was a good way of picking up more language and integrating into the University body, again time or rather lack of it was given as a reason for not joining the social activities.

6.1. ii Academic Culture:

The difference between academic culture in the UK and the home countries of international students was mentioned in every interview undertaken whether these were European students, Brazilian students or Asian students. The expectation for independent learning was a shock initially as overseas students are used to having full timetables and in some cases the students found that they were lacking the skills to organize their time effectively.

Furthermore, across the board, students were unused to the more interactive approach to teaching in the UK as the norm in their home countries is a more didactic lecture style with limited discussion and rote learning rather than evaluative and analytical thinking is expected. It has already been mentioned that the learning style of international students tends to be passive with a desire to be spoon-fed and they are not used to working independently. Text books are generally not required as the lecture slides are so detailed that no extra reading is required. There was very much a sense that the lecturers provide everything and all sources. Many students were unused to using libraries also. This was not confined to Asian students but was evident across the board. Learning styles are engrained since primary years and to unlearn these preconceptions of education is difficult in one year. This all shows the importance of setting expectations of learning and of what the lecturer will provide.

As part of the discussion about academic culture, students were asked about silence in class / not wanting to speak up in class. Some said this was personality rather than culture, others gave combined reasons of language, fear of wrong answer but the main reason appeared to be cultural norms of listening rather than speaking. The idea that empty vessels make the most noise was expressed by several students. Most are aware of the support available but until the first assignment was delivered back to them they were not clear as to what help they needed.

6.1. iii Integration:

In these early stages, integration was a key issue expressed by the international students researched. This is partially due to: the timetabling (late confirmation leading to international students being grouped together in international tutorials); accommodation ("high" costs of UWE accommodation drives groups of international students to moving into a "Chinese" or "Brazilian" house for example where more students can be accommodated hence bringing the price down).   This inhibits integration and importantly the development of key skills which would lead to better integration. More worrying were the comments that implied that home students were less than welcoming to international students.

Some international students mentioned that they felt more accepted by students who had travelled to Asia, maybe in a gap year and that they were more willing to engage. Language appears, however, to be an inhibitor in international students having the courage to initiate discussions with home students. Conversely, international students with good language skills were more proactive in joining clubs and societies and generally felt more integrated. Both groups of students, however, appear to be guilty of sticking with those whom they know and interestingly although the assumption is that UK students do not want to take the risk of working with international students, the irony is that international students equally know who they work with well and do not want to risk their grades by working with home students whom they perceive to be lazy and to leave everything to the last minute. The workload, particularly for International third year direct entrant students tends to be the issue that prevents them from joining clubs. Having invested so much in their education, they prioritise this and as such, miss out on other opportunities the university offers.

6.2 The Best and Worst thing about studying in the UK:

When asked about the best things about studying in the UK, a sense of independence, the opportunity to experience new things and learning English were the most commonly mentioned factors.

The most commonly mentioned worst thing was the difficulty in integrating.

6.3 Advice to future students:

In terms of advice offered, the most commonly given advice was to work to improve language skills prior to departure and on arrival to embrace the new culture and benefit from the wealth of opportunities available.

7.0 Summary of staff research

The staff research was devised to gain an insight into what staff considered to be the key issues faced by international students with a view to seeing whether this matches what students felt their challenges were. An understanding was also sought of key areas that staff find challenging in order to understand what type of help staff need when working with international students.

The research took the form of observations of guided discussions within the cluster meetings to get a general feeling for what staff felt en masse. Individual forms were also handed out in order to collect feedback about how individuals felt about working with international students.

Guided discussions were held at all cluster groups with the exception of Economics and Law and 31 individual forms were completed.

The key issues by cluster group and the resultant tool kit requirements are detailed in Appendix 3. This has been broken down by cluster group as there are subtle differences by group dependent on the nature of the subject taught and the pre-entry requirements.

It was interesting to note that challenges differed by department. Accounting and Finance is a popular course for our international students as: it leads to a good career; our courses are ACCA accredited; and is very number based. As such international students tend to outnumber home students which leads to a very different dynamic for teaching staff as the home students feel uncomfortable. For Economics on the other hand it was stated that mapping could be an issue as international students tend to choose Economics thinking it is about numeracy and are quite shocked when faced with essays in which they are expected to be critical and analytical.

Timetabling was also noted across the board as a problem. As international students, including students who come on our pre-sessional courses often do not tip into ISIS until the very last minute, staff frequently end up with a couple of tutorial groups which are exclusively direct entrant international students which is not ideal for staff or indeed the international students who come to the UK to benefit from a UK education with British students.

Finally, staff were concerned about the recruitment process for international students and were concerned that as the targets for those recruiting were numbers based, then sometimes we were not getting sufficient levels of quality. Academic staff felt that the recruitment process was "opaque" and there was a feeling that agents do not understand the programmes and that possibly courses were mis-sold. There was a sense of irritation that an agents conference was organized in the UK and that there was no academic involvement in it. Staff were also concerned that international recruitment targets were different from home recruitment targets and that this prevented effective programme planning. The example given was that home student targets are set by programme allowing planning whereas international student targets are set by region which means that effective planning cannot take place which leads to some of the timetabling issues mentioned.

Some staff were also concerned about the recruitment of January starters as the feedback from these students has not been very positive. The recruitment numbers are very small and students tend to be isolated from the main cohort and as such do not get the UK education experience that they expected.

Overall, staff correctly identified the core challenges that they felt that international students faced and were keen to have guidance as to how to effectively support international students within the time constraints of their workload. Staff were also keen to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the challenges faced by students by undergoing intercultural training.

8.0 Conclusions:

It is evident from the research and the literature review that there are three key issues faced by international students: Language; academic culture; integration. These are the elements that need to be tackled in order to raise the performance of international students that come to the UK. The focus needs to be on the entire student journey.

It is also evident that what benefits international students quite often benefits home students too. So by rethinking our assessments, our communication methods and our lectures, we have the opportunity to provide a better experience for all of our students. Admittedly, the learning curve and the challenges faced by third year direct entrant students from overseas is likely to be steeper and the challenges fiercer than those faced by home students.

It should also be clearly remembered that international students cannot be lumped together in one homogeneous group. Some students perform extremely well, others really struggle. The performance analysis showed that although overseas students on the whole performed less well than homes students, that there were areas of excellence.

The international element of the student body is here to stay and growing and in order to maintain these numbers, UWE needs to make sure that the students have an excellent experience so that they encourage others to come to UWE. They are our advocates.

9.0: Recommendations:

Staff

Intercultural training:

Staff have requested intercultural training and yet attendance at such lunchtime sessions tends to be somewhat patchy. It is therefore suggested that we run a compulsory away day in order to reach the maximum numbers of staff.   A popular suggestion was to book the conference rooms at the Bristol Zoological Gardens. It would make sense to time this just before the start of the September 2015 term when staff are likely to be back from their holidays and before the teaching timetable commences.

It is recommended that the programme could cover the following:

a.   International student challenges - Top line research findings (Christine Comrie)
b.   Three short sessions about different education systems followed by Q and A.
1.   Malaysia – Azley Abdrazak
2.   Vietnam - Quyhn Tran
3.   China – Jenny Chen
c.   Launch staff signposting document and staff tool kit (Sophie Bishop)
d.   Professional services – Visa update, international office activities.
e.   Session on Partnerships?

Intercultural soundbites will also be produced and would be situated in the relevant part of the Staff Tool Kit.

Staff mobility was mentioned by various members of staff as an ideal way of increasing intercultural learning. By running sessions in an overseas college, staff get the opportunity to experience first-hand different learning cultures.

Tool Kit

The staff tool kit will be developed focusing on the key areas requested by FBL academic staff. This would be an organic tool kit which will be added to over time as new resources become available. The toolkit will need to be intuitive to use and housed somewhere where staff are likely to use it. (There have been several requests for this not to be a SharePoint site). The format is likely to be a landing page with a series of buttons with an embedded link which takes the user through to materials to do with the topic on the button i.e. student integration; intercultural awareness; academic culture etc. The materials will be a variety of media: short video clips; podcasts; staff Kaltura clips of good practice; PowerPoint with voiceover; articles; top tips etc.

Staff Signposting Document

As mentioned previously, there is a significant amount of support available and a signposting document is recommended both so that academic staff can fulfil their duty of care and signpost students to relevant and timely support and also to support the Academic Personal Tutors in their role. This will be a document with links through to more detailed information. The work in progress version of this is available in Appendix 4.

ADP sessions.

These were set up last year and two have run to date. The international session comprises one session running in the second semester of the Academic Development Programme and this provides new staff from across the university with some tools for working with international students and also informs them as to the challenges international students (and staff) face. The overarching message they are left with is that good practice for international students is also good practice for home students.

Where do students come from?

Currently tutors have no idea when faced with a tutorial group where they come from and at what stage they enter the university. Staff would like to have this information for all of their module lists. The recommendation is that we find a way of making this information easily available to module tutors so that they better understand the make-up of their tutorial groups.

International students.

The international students studying at UWE do not form a homogenous group and even those from the same geographical region are very diverse. Some international students face many issues and struggle with language primarily which then inhibits social interaction and also the ability to perform to the best of their ability. Others, usually those with good language skills, are better able to integrate (if they choose to) and are more likely to be able to adapt to a new set of academic expectations and to perform well.   It was clear from the performance analysis and from an overall feeling having interviewed a range of different nationalities that Malaysian students adapt more easily and perform better than students from Vietnam and China. As such, it is important not to force fit solutions onto students that do not need help but rather to identify at an early stage those students who would benefit from early intervention and those students could be signposted towards the relevant support. It is strongly recommended that a form of diagnostic testing takes place pre-arrival in order to identify students who are likely to struggle. Furthermore it is clear that if activities are not timetabled, then international students are less likely to attend due to workload pressures.

This section will be broken down to follow the student journey and at each stage the identified challenges of language, integration and academic culture will be addressed. Currently, the most consistent application of support is during induction week which can lead to information overload for students as they are learning about things that they do know that they need yet for example how to reference and library skills. We need to consider what support is timely and relevant at different stages and to timetable it at that time.   This will be discussed in the student journey approach below.

STUDENT JOURNEY – TIMELY AND RELEVANT SUPPORT

A holistic and coordinated approach to supporting international students across the various sections of a university provides the best opportunities for international students to be successful in their studies. HEA 2014
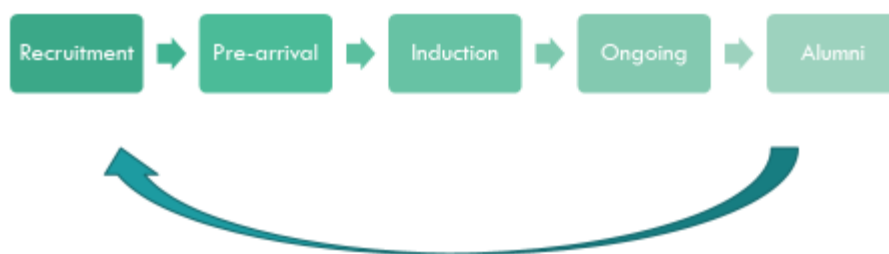
Recruitment → Pre-arrival → Induction → Ongoing → Alumni

Figure 9 – The student journey – timely and relevant support.

Figure 9 above breaks down the student journey into the stages that will be considered below. The arrow indicates the importance of satisfied alumni in influencing the recruitment of new students.

A suggested time scale is given for each recommendation excluding those with a more strategic element that will need further consideration.

Recruitment:

As discussed in section 7.0 above, academic staff have concerns about the recruitment process. Clearly this is a very complex area but recommendations giving an ideal position are given below with a view to professional services considering how the UWE systems might enable this.

Expectations management is important to ensure that the students recruited know what to expect when they come to UWE. To this end, academic staff and professional services staff need to work together to ensure that all gatekeepers i.e. agents, regional offices and partner institutions understand the make-up of our programmes and are able to advise the students correctly when they are making their university choice.

RECOMMENDATION 1:
Produce programme information packs for the Gatekeepers.

2016 academic year.

In order to manage the expectations of new students and to ensure that the Gatekeepers understand our programmes, to produce programme information packs which could include the following:

   a.   Programme green screen

b. Core module green screens
c. Optional module green screens
d. Studying in the UK green screen (in progress)
e. Student talking heads (in progress)

The marketing field already uses green screen technology to introduce the programme and modules to students in order to aid module choice and the module green screen is also available on each module blackboard site. These have been well received by students in terms of giving clarity to what each module entails and what the requirements are for studying on this module.

Examples are embedded below:

Programme information green screen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYfMVtfQc48

Module information green screens:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH5FtMZ8-qE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwQE-zPpQ-E&app=desktop

The format of these could be changed to allow for recruitment markets where technology is insufficiently advanced.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
Programme specific targets by geography.

2016 academic year.

It is also recommended that the geographical targets are made more programme specific to allow for staff allocation planning and room planning and to avoid big groups of international students being put together at the last minute thus detracting from their UK education experience and inhibiting intercultural interaction. UWE needs to develop an understanding using past experience of likely programme choices by market and to set targets according to this.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
January starters.

If January starters are to be recruited in greater numbers in future, careful consideration will be need to be made as to how best to integrate them into the programmes so that the UWE experience meets or preferably exceeds their expectations. Should numbers increase dramatically then resource implications must be considered both in terms of designing a package suitable for these students and in terms of availability of staff to deliver this package.

Pre-Arrival

Prior to the student arriving at UWE to commence their studies, there is the opportunity to prepare the students better for their academic programme. For example via joining instructions, social media avenues and using informal networks such as the Malaysian or the Vietnamese society to prepare students and to give them the opportunity to ask questions. A big issue for academic staff is the fact

that international students appear not to engage with the OMC – Optional Module Choice – prior to arrival/ whilst on a pre-sessional course. It would be worth investigating this by interviewing new arrivals to understand why they do not engage with the OMC and what we can do to ensure that they do.

For the sake of this document, pre-arrival is interpreted as meaning prior to induction week and as such includes students on a pre-sessional English course. This stage deserves closer attention as it is currently underutilised as an opportunity to engage with our international students.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Academic culture: Programme specific joining instructions:

2016 Academic Year

Programme managers and professional services could work together to produce a package similar to the gatekeeper package and which is programme specific and designed to give the student the academic and practical information they need. This could include the elements mentioned previously for the gatekeepers' package and also include stop start animation videos about life on the campus.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
OMC research

To find out what it is that is preventing our international students from engaging with the OMC, qualitative interviews could be held by field shortly after international students arrive in the UK. This could possibly be run by the ASL's (Assistant support Lecturers) for each subject field.

RECOMMENDATION 6:
Integration – Pre-sessional opportunity:

August 2015

The pre-sessional period could be used more effectively in order to engage with our future students. Currently faculty /pre-sessional student interaction is minimal yet it would be useful for pre-sessional students to meet programme managers in order to discuss their concerns and iron out any issues prior to starting their courses. A small scale event where they meet programme managers, module tutors, academic support centre staff would give them a sense of belonging and the opportunity to share any worries early in the day.

RECOMMENDATION 7:
Language- Diagnostic testing/ new student portfolio.

2016 Academic Year

Language has been shown to be a clear inhibitor of progression, achievement and integration. Most students would benefit from a scoping or diagnostic activity to determine any possible issues. If these issues are picked up sufficiently early, then students can be signposted to the relevant support. The recommendation is to have some form of diagnostic test to ascertain the student's language in terms of clarity and fluency of speaking English and in written English and in listening skills. There may be existing tests that ELAS-U could recommend and run (although this would be a resource issue with only 4 permanent members of staff for the whole university) or another suggestion would be a pre-arrival submission as part of the entry requirements / joining instructions which could be linked into the APT (Academic Personal Tutor) scheme. This could take the form of a new student portfolio.

Programme managers could devise something relevant to their programme. For example, a student could submit a short written piece. "What I hope to achieve by studying in the UK", and a short video

clip of themselves where they introduce themselves and answer 5 questions. This package could then be given to the allocated APT who can:

a. Get to know their tutee prior to arrival.
b. Consider any weaknesses and formally signpost the student to relevant support in the first APT session thus addressing any possible issues promptly. This information should be documented on the student APT profile so that it can be followed up at the second APT meeting to ensure that students are accessing the support that they need.

This student portfolio could also be used for home students on arrival as it provides a useful introduction to students and their aspirations for the APTs.

RECOMMENDATION 8:
Academic culture/ integration – use of informal networks.

2016 Academic Year

More effective use of informal networks such as the country societies to allow incoming students the opportunity to ask questions of their peers. There is a social media opportunity here for the nation societies to reach out to students coming from overseas and to encourage them to ask questions.

RECOMMENDATION 9:
Academic culture and language – progression courses.

Some universities offer pathway courses or progression courses which give students the necessary tools with which to approach their studies and succeed. A rebrand or a sub-brand of the pre-sessional courses could be introduced to focus more on study skills to give students some of the tools they need prior to starting at UWE rather than trying to pick these up whilst juggling with a heavy workload. Faculty specific packages could be developed to introduce the students to academic discourse, critical writing, reflective writing and dissertation skills etc. Clearly this raises a resource issue again.

Alternatively or in addition an online version could be produced with students being expected to complete it prior to arrival at UWE. The Southampton University Prepare for Success website gives an idea of how a UWE branded approach might look: http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/

This could also be used for home students prior to arrival as home students face some of the issues faced by international students when they first arrive at university themselves.

Induction

The HEA point out the importance of a good induction programme in terms of student retention. Care must be taken, however, not to overload the students with too much information at once. As stated in the pre-arrival section, it is beneficial to have information available prior to induction and then continuing induction activities for a few weeks after starting and making that information accessible later when the student is more able to absorb it or when it is actually needed.

RECOMMENDATION 10:
Academic culture- effective use of PALs.

September 2016

The PALS could be used in a more structured way to work as learning advisers and to support groups of students, signposting them to help and raising any concerns about specific learning or language difficulties with the student's APT so that prompt action can be taken to support them appropriately.

Dr Fay Short of Bangor University in an article on the HEA website suggests weekly timetabled meetings in the first semester to work through a booklet of activities designed to pre-empt any potential problems such as academic conduct, expectations the grading system etc. Dr Short's booklet is in the link below.

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/TDG_Fay_Short_Work_Book_0.pdf

A UWE version could be developed to focus on areas such as academic conduct, (forms of address; tutorial behaviour; time keeping), expectation setting, self-directed learning skills and plagiarism.

These sessions could be a resource and cost effective means of supporting students through their first few weeks at UWE. It is recommended that these sessions are timetabled.

RECOMMENDATION 11:
International direct entrant student signposting document.

September 2015

A signposting document is been developed to point international students to support. This has been logically arranged under different heading: integration; Bristol; academic culture; welfare; language; and key contacts. This will have the same format as the staff signposting document in appendix 4 but will be more informal. The signposting document will be emailed to all new international students on arrival.

Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION 12:
Academic culture – Academic Success Centre:

Make more of a formal link between the Academic Success Centre and modules that students (international or otherwise) find tricky. A module frequently cited for example as a module that students find difficult is Strategic Management. Academic staff to consider how the support available at the Academic Success Centre could be integrated into supporting students on their modules. I.e. at pinch points such as assessment time. Some modules are already doing this but others are not and their students might benefit from this support.

RECOMMENDATION 13:
Academic Culture – Academic Success Centre:

The Academic Success Centre is proving to be a very well used resource by students. Online resources could be developed – recorded presentations etc. covering some of the more frequently requested sessions to free up staff time to support students in other ways.

RECOMMENDATION 14:
Academic Culture – Academic Personal Tutors:

The second meeting between APT and their tutees could take into account the PAL sessions set up to run beyond induction and use this as a basis for discussion regarding student progress and challenges and check for engagement with the programme and progression against agreed targets.

RECOMMENDATION 15:
Academic culture – effective use of Blackboard.

2015 academic year

Blackboard can be used more effectively in order to support student learning. This has been tested in the Marketing field and has been well received by home and international students alike as an aid to their learning. It has also reduced the numbers of queries received at assessment time by using online methods to reinforce the requirements of the brief.

Examples of good practice: Revision lectures: PowerPoint with voiceover (play as slideshow); Glossary of terms; Assessment brief – green screen / PowerPoint with voiceover / Kaltura to support and clarify the written brief; FAQs; specific slides with voiceover to cover threshold concepts; in the news…

More information on these and other examples will be sited within the staff toolkit.

RECOMMENDATION 16:
Integration – home student attitudes

Home students' attitudes towards international students tend to preclude integration. Developing the importance of intercultural understanding could be introduced by collaborative assignments with partner colleges. Suitable modules for this would need to be identified at a strategic level, however, a second year 30 credit module – Engaging in Critical Business Enquiry - has been suggested as a possible candidate.

RECOMMENDATION 17:
Integration – intercultural module

With three out of four UK business leaders in a British Council report suggesting that UK graduates are insufficiently global in their outlook, there is an opportunity to give our students competitive advantage in the job market by emphasizing the importance of intercultural understanding and networking with international students. Introducing a module on intercultural understanding in the first year might help to change this view.

RECOMMENDATION 18:
Integration – Events students

2016 academic year

With a growing events programme in the faculty, there is potential to harness the skills of our events students and to task them with organising events aimed at integrating home and international students.

RECOMMENDATION 19:
Language- home students.

The emphasis on language is very much in the direction of international students improving their English language skills. A foreign language element for home business students would raise their awareness of the intricacies of language learning, increase their intercultural understanding, broaden their horizons and give them a skill which may help in their future career. Could this be introduced as a credit bearing module or as part of a bigger module? Or alternatively, could it be part of a Futures

Award accreditation? Again a strategic view is needed as to where this might fit within the existing programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 20:
Language – home and international students

As there is no formal language provision at UWE, a language lab where international students can practice their speaking and listening skills and where home students can practice a foreign language would be a way of encouraging intercultural awareness and the value of knowing different languages.

Some universities such as the University of Southampton use these labs very effectively for both student and staff language learning.

http://library.soton.ac.uk/lrc

RECOMMENDATION 21:
Integration – international fair

2015 academic year

The faculty has run a successful event at the ECC for the last couple of years with first year undergraduate students displaying their posters for the engaging in critical business enquiry module and third year undergraduate contemporary issues in Marketing students running stands promoting their work. The recommendation is to introduce a second year module to this which takes a more international flavour to raise awareness of intercultural communication and utilising multi-cultural groups to provide a piece of assessed work which is then judged at the event. A strategic view would be needed as to a suitable second year module but the second year marketing communications module has been suggested as a possible contender. Building an international element into the coursework encourages cross –cultural discussion.

The event includes an award ceremony and speeches in the afternoon. An external speaker on the importance of Global networks and employability and a returning ERASMUS student would be useful speakers for the international and intercultural element to the day.

RECOMMENDATION 22:
Integration- student reps

2015 academic year

To ensure that the international student voice is heard it would be advisable to have at least one international student rep alongside home student reps on a programme basis to ensure that all views are catered for.

RECOMMENDATION 23:
Integration/ language – Utilise local links.

Many international students are keen to have work experience and with small businesses in Bristol looking to expand overseas there might be an opportunity for students to provide their local knowledge, intercultural skills and language skills to small local businesses hoping to expand overseas. In return, they would gain work experience. This wold be beneficial both for students and businesses but hours worked would need to limited due to visa regulations.

Something similar has run successfully as part of a scheme between Aston University and UKTI where undergraduate and postgraduate students have been working with local clients to help them to trade

internationally. The graduates gain experience both of customer service and working in international trade. In return they provide language and cultural skills that help create a firmer bond with clients and potential clients overseas.

Alumni

When students leave the university they become our advocates for future generations of students. The university is working hard to make sure alumni networks are maintained. As students tend to remember the last part of their time in the UK rather than the first part, having a good "send-off" may help encourage this goodwill towards the university.

RECOMMENDATION 24:
Welcoming international parents:

When students come from France on the Bristol–Bordeaux Exchange there is a reception held to welcome them to Bristol at the Lord Mayors House, an impressive mansion house.

International students bring a great deal to the local economy and it would be welcoming to the international student parents coming to their son or daughter's graduation ceremony to be invited to a reception at the Lord Mayor's House. The Bristol Chamber of Commerce may be interested in attending as there is the opportunity to network with on the whole moneyed parents who may provide some trade links for Bristol businesses. The parents and students would benefit as the setting is very grand and entertaining guests is an important part of Asian culture and such an event would make them feel very welcome and valued.

Appendix 1 – Literature Review

Introduction:

International Students Nationwide.

Definition of international students:

1. **International students**

For the purpose of this research project an international student is defined as a student enrolled in an UK HEI who is neither a UK citizen nor an EU citizen and does not have permanent residence in the United Kingdom.

It is important to state that the researcher does not believe that international students as defined above form a homogenous group but that the term is used to categorize the boundaries of the study. As this term is in general use in the literature, the researcher will employ the term international students whilst acknowledging the diversity and variety of international students included in this descriptor.

2. **Direct Entrant students**

This research focuses on direct entrant international students at undergraduate level with a view to understanding the particular issues that they face. The definition of international direct entrant students refers to those whose credits for an award are partly completed at an overseas institution and are recognized by a home institution and as a result, students are able to transfer from one institution to another at the second or final year of a bachelor degree.

Quan et al., (2008) state that numbers of international direct entrants are increasing year on year as a result of articulation agreements between universities but that direct entrants are understood to have various difficulties including the difficulties in settling into and integrating with an already developed group. The learning curve for these students stepping directly into an academic programme at a later stage is extremely steep

Challenges:

Chen (2012) proposes that international students have become very important to universities, not just for the income that comes with them but also for the diversity which they bring to the student population. Zhou et al., (2008) speak of the importance of intercultural education and understanding in a world which is increasingly reflecting the impact of globalization.

Bamford (2008) speaks of the challenges for international students studying overseas and Lannelli and Huang (2014) agree stating that the growing influx of international students also brings challenges to HE establishments in terms of teaching a diverse student population and providing a curriculum which meets the learning requirements of both the home and international students.

Zhou et al., (2008) agree that it is not just a matter of attracting international students but also of considering the cultural and educational experience that they will have on arrival. Zhou et al., (2008) cite Peterson et al., (1999) who warned nearly two decades ago that universities that see international students as cash cows do so at their peril.

Lee and Wesche (2000) cited in Zhou et al., (2008) speak of how critical it is to ensure that international students have a positive experience, achieve their educational goals and return home satisfied with their experience and Zhou et al., (2008) add to this stressing the importance of encouraging the interaction between domestic and international students in order to maximize the possibilities for intercultural learning.

Tram (2011) points out that although making the curriculum suitable for both international and home students is essential, in reality this is difficult to achieve. Tram (2011) cites Webb (2005) who claims that internationalising the curriculum is difficult with the ratio of staff to students decreasing and with that larger workloads and larger groups mean that academics have less time to respond to new and different needs and in fact many are ill equipped to do so.

Having considered the challenges, it is important to understand the expectations that international students have when coming to a UK HEI to study in order to ensure that either the expectations are realistic or that the expectations are met.

Expectations:

Liu (2013) looks at the expectations of parents and students from China and suggests that they have high expectations of university education in the UK, believing that as well as benefitting from an educational system which is very different that they will also improve their English skills and learn more about the host nation culture.

Lillyman and Bennett (2014) consider earlier research and list various reasons that students choose to study overseas. They mention the quality of provision as a major reason followed by an opportunity to improve English skills and as a result to improve career prospects.

Number and Trends.

Lannelli and Huang (2014) cite figures from UNESCO, estimating that worldwide more than 2.5 million students are studying abroad and that these figures are likely to reach 7 million by 2020. Crawford and Wang (2014) cite higher figures from OECD (2012) looking at 2010 in which the estimate is that 4.1 million students are studying outside of their country of citizenship. UK HEI's have an excellent academic reputation and this in addition to the prevalence of English as a language worldwide has made them the preferred destination of many international students.

Overall the growth in International students has been substantial for those studying in the UK and Bartram and Bailey 2009 and the British Council suggest that this global flow of students will continue and will be dominated by Asian students (Li et al, 2010)
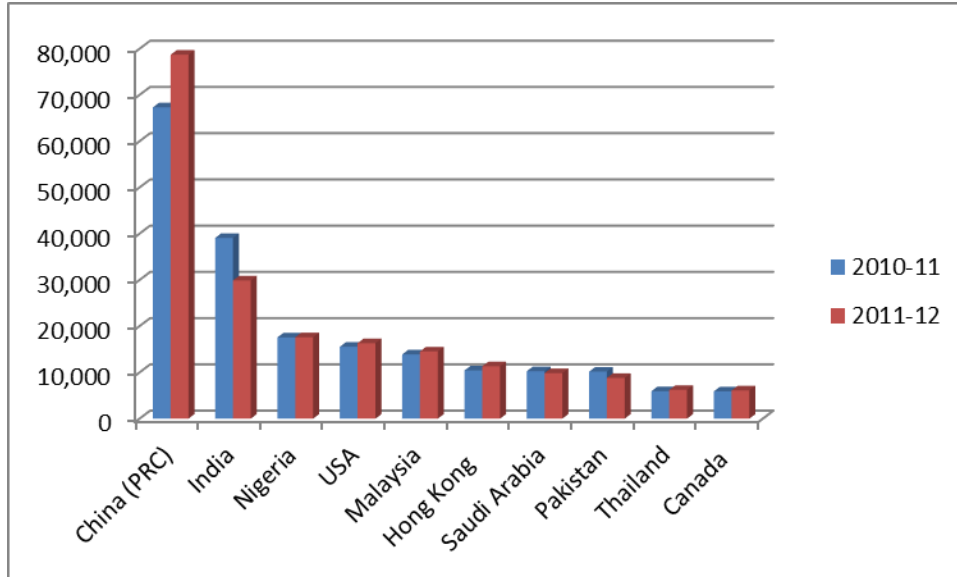
Top non EU senders are shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: ukcisa org.uk/Infor-for-universities-colleges-schools/Policy-research-statistics
accessed 27/3/14

UKCISA figures also show that 30% of all international students studying in the UK are studying Business and administrative studies

Lillyman and Bennett (2014) state that after the USA, the UK is the most popular destination country for international students to study. Figures from UKCISA (2014) show that in the academic year 2013-14 there were an estimated 428,265 international students enrolled in HEI's in the UK. Shaw (2014) states that in 2012-13 international students including those from the EU represented 18% of the total student population. At Postgraduate level this figure is significantly higher with 74% of International students on taught Master's courses.

Kingston and Foreland (2008) state that the growth of students enrolling at HEI's in the UK is dominated by East Asian students. Swan (2014) and Everdeen and Kann (2014) concur adding that Chinese students represent the biggest group and are responsible for a large proportion of the more than £10 billion a year brought in by international students in contributing to the British Economy.

Lannelli and Huang (2014) consider patterns of attainment of Chinese Graduates over the last decade and their findings indicate that increasing numbers of international students graduate from Russell group universities and that alongside the subjects traditionally favoured by international students (science, engineering and business), the popularity of social sciences subjects is growing. Furthermore, their findings reveal that Chinese first degree graduates consistently achieve lower than home students.

Findlay (2010) cited by Lillyman and Bennett (2014) expresses the concern that international students are invisible and flow through the Education system unnoticed. He warns of the danger of lower recruitment in the future due to the establishment of more western style HEI's globally. This would damage both the economy but also the opportunity for intercultural learning.

Tran (2011) agrees stating that the number of options open to international students for H.E. apart from the English speaking options are increasing, and also campuses in countries such as Singapore are internationalising their HE provision and becoming competitive. Tran (2011) further states that countries such as South Korea and China have invested heavily in their own HE sector with a view to retaining students who might otherwise have travelled overseas.

Arkoudis and Tran (2010) warn that the sustainability of international student numbers coming to the UK is dependent on the extent to which universities are able to sufficiently address the needs of international students.

Benefits of an international cohort:
Nicola Dandridge, the chief executive of universities UK has stated that UK HE institutions rely on international staff and students for their academic talent , cultural richness and the financial income brought about by international student fees.

Lebeir et al., (2008) agree that international students are an important part of university life in the UK and that many UK HEIs have a considerable percentage of overseas students. Lillyman and Bennet (2014) cite Brown and Holloway (2008) in stating the financial importance of international students as they contribute about one third of total income from UK universities via their fees. Li et al., (2010) concur stating that the increasing reliance on international students is inevitable and that they are not an optional extra for UK HEIs anymore. As such, ensuring a good student experience is a strategic matter faced by most universities in the light of growing competition to attract their students.

But the contribution is more than merely financial. Andrade (2006) states the need for intercultural understanding in this increasingly global world and suggest that these students create international trade connections and become political allies.

Furthermore, home students and staff alike, benefit from an enriched educational experience. Li (2010). Andrade (2006), Lillyman and Bennett (2014) and Bartram and Bailey (2009) agree that international students broaden the perspectives of home students and staff. Lebeir et al., (2008) add that the presence of international students gives a vibrant atmosphere and can heighten understanding between students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. De Vita (2010) concurs stating that the opportunity prepares students to operate effectively in our multi-cultural and internationally connected world.

Performance

Perceptions of international student performance.

Crawford and Wang (2014a) discuss the fact that an increasing number of international students in higher education worldwide has led to pedagogic questions concerning the suitability of current teaching and learning approaches for such a diverse student population.

Crawford and Wang (2014) note that there is an increasing concern in UK HEIs as to whether Chinese students perform as well as home students. Lannelli and Huang (2014) reveal in their research that Chinese students substantially underperform in terms of their final degree classification vis a vis home students. Crawford and Wang (2014) further suggest that although previous research has highlighted that Chinese students attain lower classifications than their UK peers, that there is limited literature considering the reasons for this underperformance.

A deficit model which uncritically lumps international students together as a group problematises international students and attributes to them problems in language, cultural adaptation and study skills. Morrison et al., (2005) state that an implicit assumption exists that international students perform less well or require considerably more institutional support to perform as well. He continues however, that data are rarely given to support these assumptions.

Actual performance

Llanelli and Huang (2014) carried out a study analysing HESA data at three different periods of time 1999, 2005 and 2009, with a view to looking at any changes in degree classifications achieved across these time periods. They noted that over that time, the percentage of students achieving 3rd class degrees increased from 14 – 21% whilst the lower second decreased from 50 to 43%.

Attainment of first degree graduates (percentages)

	1998/2001	2004/2005	2008/2009
First class	5	7	7
Upper-second	24	26	25
Lower second	50	44	43
Third	14	18	21
Unclassified	8	6	5
Total no of cases	1002	5171	6851

Some columns do not sum to 100 because the percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole figures (Lannelli and Huang 2014)

Swain (2014) also points out that although the number of Chinese Students attending UK HEIs is increasing, that in terms of academic achievement, the story is less good. Morrison et al., (2005) also analysed snapshots from HESA data and learned that international students gain fewer firsts or upper second class degrees than UK domiciled students. They do however point out that the performance varies by region with students from the EU, Asia, Africa and the Middle East performing less well than home students whereas with students from North and South America, Non EU Europe and Australasia, the performance did not vary significantly compared to UK students.

Factors influencing academic performance

In terms of the overall weaker performance of Chinese students over time, Lannelli and Huang (2014) surmise that with the increase of Chinese students studying overseas, a more diversified range of academic abilities is likely to follow. They further debate the different value that Chinese students place on a good degree. In China 60% is the pass mark and all students receiving a mark of 60 or above gain the same bachelor's degree. Only those wanting to study at Post Graduate level need a really high mark. Lannelli and Huang (2014) also find that Chinese students underperform UK domiciled students and also other international students.

Morrison et al., (2005) state that the limited literature concerning international student academic achievement levels gives a very mixed picture. Given the diversity of international students, this is hardly surprising. The results suggest that UK students perform significantly better than international students although certain disciplines yielded better results from international students than others. Lannelli and Huang (2014) concur that Chinese students are more likely to gain a good degree if they major in computer science, engineering, social science, humanities and science.

More recently, research is moving towards an identification of the reasons for difference in performance rather than simple comparisons. Shaw (2014) states that English language proficiency has a large impact on students' ability to learn. A recent Panorama BBC1 programme gave evidence of systematic cheating at a number of English language test centres for international students in Britain.

De Vita's (2000) study revealed that different types of assessment will impact on international student performance and as such, assessment by exam (essay type questions) penalizes international students beyond different ability levels.

Crawford and Wang (2014) and (2014a) propose that individual differences such as age, gender, ethnicity, prior academic achievement, discipline of study and mode of study are also significant factors in influencing learning outcomes which highlight the danger of categorizing all international students as a homogenous mass. His research therefore seeks to understand how one could explain differences in degree classification.

Transition

In order for international students to continue to make a valuable educational and economic contribution to universities, universities need to become more informed about any adjustment issues faced by international students and once these are understood to implement appropriate measures and to consider the educational and cultural experiences of the students that they have recruited. (Andrade, 2006)

Transition challenges.

Rientes et al., (2011) cite a common belief amongst educators that international students are insufficiently adjusted to HE in the host country. Key areas where support is needed are suggested by Andrade (2006) as English language proficiency; academic skills; and integration. Khawaja and Stallman (2001) build on this adding challenges such as social isolation, academic difficulties, unmet expectations, culture shock and psychological stress to the endeavor to adjust to new surroundings.

Neri and Ville (2007) state that as most international students come from Asia, that there are significant cultural and linguistic differences as well as substantial differences in educational philosophies, practices and systems. They cite a recent longitudinal study of first year domestic and international students in Australia and found that international students had greater difficulty in understanding course material and in participating in classroom discussions. Coming to terms with receiving lower marks that they expect is also an adjustment problem for international students. Furthermore, in their view, having orientation sessions when students are still trying to settle in can cause further confusion.

University obligations.

Expecting foreign students to adjust to a new culture and academic culture without appropriate support is short sighted as in order to attract future students, these international students need to have an experience that meets or exceeds their expectations so that they become advocates for the university. A smooth acculturation process is vital to international students' feeling of inclusion as is their ability to interact with host students and academics. Failure to have smooth transition can impact on their academic performance. Kawaja and Stallmann (2001) and Quan et al., (2013).

2.1 Language

2.1. i. Impact of poor language skills.

Transition.
Much has been written about the language barriers faced by international students coming to study in the UK. Liu's (2012) research found that language problems were ranked by staff respondents as the main issue for foreign students. Chinese students were singled out as finding the language particularly difficult. Quan et. al., (2013) agree and add that low language proficiency will impact on the successful transition of international students and the speed of their adaptation. Saravanamuthu and Yapp (2014) add to this stating that language affects both the psychological adaptation in terms of the stress of moving away from home and beginning a new university life and also the socio cultural adaptation in terms of managing the changes in everyday life, adapting to a new academic culture and getting to know home students. Quan et al., (2013) further suggest that lack of proficiency in English can result in an inability to form friendships in particular with home students which leads to anxiety and loneliness both of which will have an impact on academic performance.

Performance
Wang and Crawford (2012) state that there is limited research looking at the relationship between language skills and academic performance, their research, however found that being a native or non-native speaker of English had no impact at all on first year accounting students at a UK university.

Other academics, however, such as Wu and Hammond (2011) and Zhou and Todman (2008) cited in Quan et al., (2013) suggest that the level of English proficiency of international students was likely to have a big impact on academic performance and as such believe that there is likely to be a high positive correlation between good English proficiency and good academic performance.

Lillyman and Bennett (2014) believe that a lack of language ability causes confusion, anxiety, and stress which in turn can cause difficulties understanding the course and programme content.

Relevance or not of IELTS:
Most Asian students applying to study in Western universities have to take a TOEFL, GRE, IELTS or another equivalent English test in order to test their overall English proficiency. Yen and Kuzma (2009) considered the relationship between test scores and their subsequent performance at a UK university and discovered that this relationship was particularly relevant in the case of the first semester. Cheng (2000), however, points out that a high test score is not necessarily an indication that the level of English is sufficient to cope with the demands of an undergraduate or postgraduate course. He suggests that many Chinese students spend long hours practising the TOEFL tests and developing strategies

rather than improving their real language skills. In particular, these tests give no indication as to the oral communication skills of the students.

Arkoudis and Tran (2010) concur, stating that despite the use of language entry requirements of universities, international students who have English as a second language need to develop their language skills further when studying in the UK or another English speaking country. They continue that although many universities provide extra support for the international students, the fact that these sit outside of the main teaching within the discipline that they are largely unused by the majority of international students.

Levels of English proficiency can be seen in different ways of expression such as spoken English: written English; listening skills; academic discourse and subject specific vocabulary. These are now considered below.

2.1.   ii Spoken English

Length of time to respond.

Turner and Robson (2008) suggest that a lack of familiarity with spoken English results in students needing longer to respond to lecturers when asked a question or during discussions. Jackson's (2003) research reveals that international students complain about not being given sufficient time to reflect about a response and to find the correct vocabulary to articulate that response.

a. **Participation in class discussion**
   i.   **Confidence and Face:**
Turner and Robson (2008) and Wray (2008) suggest that a lack of confidence can also reduce the participation levels of international student in in class discussion.

Jackson's (2003) research supports this and concludes that international students are concerned about making mistakes in front of others or that their contribution may not be valued. There was a concern that they might *"lose face"* in front of their lecturers and peers.

Cheng (2000) infers that if Asian students struggled less with language in terms of perception of their ability and fluency, then they would have no issue participating actively in class. Stephens (1997) cited in Cheng 2000 reports that his observation of Chinese students reveals a high degree of participation in discussion in their native language and where the ground rules for discussion and participation are clear.

   ii.   **Lack of practice speaking English**
A further language based issue is that international students often live together with people of the same nationality and consequently have no home student friends or friends of other nationalities and as such use their home language with each other in class discussions The less they use their English, the less able they are to contribute (Liu 2012). This lack of proficiency in English consequently leads to reticence (Cheng 2000)

Cheng (2000) cites Tsui (1996) who reports that when students pay too much attention to developing receptive rather than productive language skills such as oral communication   they are more likely to be quiet as a result of lack of practice in this area.

Khawaja and Stallman (2001) further suggest that international students feel that their accents are not understood and this limits their confidence to speak out. Furthermore they suggest that their perception of their weak English skills is an obstacle to integration and interaction with domestic

students which further compounds these language proficiency issues and the possible perceptions of international students by home students.

a. Discussion Skills.

Andrade (2005) suggests that international students lack discussion skills. Lee (2009) exemplifies this citing the experience of Korean students applying to study in the USA and needing to demonstrate their proficiency in English by taking TOEFL. Lee (2009) reveals that critics of this type of testing believe that the ability to gain adequate scores in these tests does not translate well to the level of English required to succeed at undergraduate or postgraduate level in particular for the ability to synthesise and share ideas in a dynamic seminar environment.

b. Vocabulary

Lack of subject specific vocabulary or lack of familiarity with technical terms can also lead to students' reticence to express their ideas in class discussion. Jackson (2003) believes that international students are happier to express their thoughts and opinions in smaller group discussion rather than in front of the entire class.

c. Speaking Block

Liu (2012) discusses the idea of speaking block, borrowing the term "block" from writers' block, a condition where an author has nothing of any value to write and subsequently is unable to write for an extended period of time. Lui compares the problems faced by international students when having to communicate in a group discussion as being comparable to writers' block. When asked the reason for their reticence, respondents answered that lack of confidence in their English proficiency, time taken to think and translate compared with home students led to this speaking block.

The challenges that are faced by international students in being active in seminars are complex and can arise as a result of psychological; linguistic; pedagogical; cognitive; cultural; and/or situational elements. International students struggle to acquire participation competence in classrooms and want to gain *membership* into the class community. Xia (2009) lists the challenges as follows:

1. Self-pressure: forcing oneself to contribute to discussions despite the fact that reticence is natural.
2. Native speaker peer pressure: comparing themselves to native speakers in terms of fluency. They do not want to be judged by native speakers
3. Conceptual fluency: knowing how the target language reflects or encodes concepts and how fast a learner can make sense of and integrate the concepts he or she hears and reads. Processing time is slower in a second language.
4. Discourse level cohesion: the ability to synthesize and to organise thoughts in a logical and coherent manner.
5. Context free thinking skills. Participants do not want instructors and peers to think they lack intelligence and as such they worry about the correctness of their answers.

2.1. iii Lectures / listening skills

Liu (2012) suggests that even the international students with the highest level of proficiency in English struggle to adapt to listening in the first few months as they are used to listening to Standard English such as the BBC or the Voice of America. Andrade (2005) agrees stating that often the listening proficiency of international students is insufficient for listening comprehension in extended lectures.

Khwaja and Stallman (2001) purport that difficulties understanding different accents can affect studies. Andrade (2006) agrees that accents together with idiomatic styles, humour and speed of speaking and choice of examples also led to difficulties for international students.

According to Lebier et al., (2008), poor listening skills can be alleviated to a certain extent by a lecturer's ability to structure the lecture material and to explain difficult concepts. Web-based support and learning materials are also most beneficial to international students. Lebeir et al., (2008) advocate that the selection of lecture content and the structure of the lectures should take into account the mixture of students and their ability to digest that information.   Lui (2012) adds that what some lecturers see as lack of engagement when international students appear to be texting is in fact Chinese students checking the dictionary on their mobile phones in order to ensure their understanding.

2.2.   iv. Reading skills

De Vita (2000) highlights the importance of understanding the time taken by international students to read. Liu's (2012) research evidences this as respondents explain how difficult and time consuming it is for them to read. Whereas home students read quickly and scan pages, international students have to spend more time reading. Andrade (2006) agrees citing the evidence that international students read more slowly than the home student classmates and have to read multiple times to ensure understanding.

Khawaja and Stallman (2001) support this view suggesting that the process of reading with the help of dictionaries is very slow and as such, more time is used to accomplish academic tasks. Liu (2012) states that not only do subject specific words need to be checked in a dictionary but also it often takes time to grasp the focus of a sentence.

2.1.   v. Written English

Wardlow (1999) believes that writing skills are a significant predictor of the academic success of international students. Arkoudis and Tran (2010) agree that the skill in academic writing is widely recognised and a core skill for success in tertiary education. They add that the percpetions and practices of those lecturers directly involved in teaching the discipline are important and that they should have close links with the support tutors.   Li (2010) discovered that the written English of Chinese students was considerably lower than that for other international students.   Li's (2010) research used regression analysis to illustrate that writing ability in English is a key predictor of academic success. In addition to this, the Chinese have different writing styles and patterns of logical thinking which may give the impression that Chinese students write in an illogical and non-critical way

a.   Expectations/ writing style

Stapleton (2002) discussed the findings of Hinds (1987) who examined Japanese and English writing styles and whose findings contrast English where the writer is responsible for conveying meaning, with the Japanese preference for inductive writing styles in which the reader is tasked with deriving meaning.

Ramathan and Kaplan (1996) agree with this view that Asian cultures emphasize interpretation on the reader's part in contrast with the Western notion of a strong voice of the writer. Andrade (2006) cites Fox's (1994) research which demonstrates that the perception of western academics of the inability of international students to analyse and develop written arguments in a logical fashion is more to do with cultural communication styles than English proficiency. A student's world view, identity and culture is likely to impact on their written styles.

Tran (2012) suggests that understanding international students' issues with the way of writing is critical as good academic writing is central to a student's academic success.

Kaplan's (1972) work observes the English writing style which tends towards a linear argument and compares this with writing styles from other cultures.
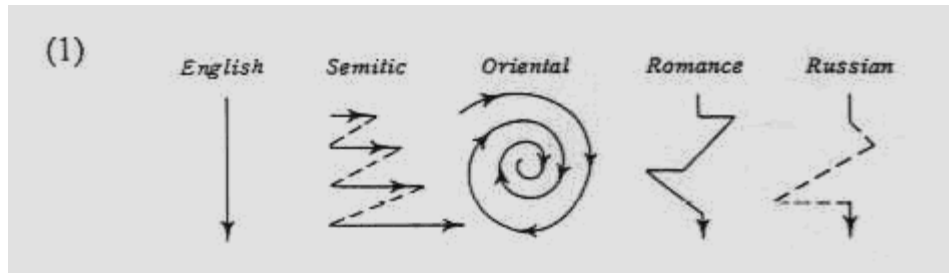
Kaplan (1972)

These patterns show at a superficial but easily digestible level how five different cultural types approach the task of writing an essay and suggests that oriental writing will be circular in formation and will consider several angles. Asians would consider the linear style of writing favourite in England as coming from a hurried society which is at odds with the Chinese style of *"slowly savouring a topic"*. Page no.

De Vita (2000) agrees that not all languages follow the English linear structure for writing essays and adds that this leads to a perception by lecturers that international students are unstructured, disorganised and unfocused in their academic writing whereas in fact they are writing according to the discourse style of their home language.

De Vita (2000) continues that it is the responsibility of the university to recognise that the rules of essay writing do have cultural boundaries and to help international students to develop essay writing skills by teaching the local expectations for presentation and structure of material.

b. Plagiarism
De Vita (2000) also advocates the need to clearly explain the boundaries for references as many international students (and home students for that matter) are confused as to what plagiarism really means and how it can undermine assessment. De Vita (2000) further suggests that plagiarism is also a result of cultural misunderstanding due to different standards regarding ownership, citations and referencing rules.

c. Written exam papers
De Vita (2000) expresses concern as to the cultural fairness of closed-book examinations as a means of assessment for international students. Having to organise, synthesise and express their knowledge within a limited time scale is likely to be assessing their written English skills rather than their academic knowledge.

2.2. vi. Academic discourse

Bamford (2008) supports views stated earlier in the literature review suggesting that English proficiency entry tests are unlikely to relate to difficulties international students may have when faced by subject specific vocabulary. Bamford (2008) further suggests the importance of gauging the correct level of English support to proffer to students with different levels of proficiency in English. Basic English lessons may be too generic whereas work on specialised vocabulary would be of more potential use for some students.

Finally, the literature suggests that academic establishments cannot assume that non-native English speakers who learn English in their home countries are sufficiently proficient to undertake higher level academic studies in an English speaking countries. Major (2005) states that this is because in addition to linguistic English proficiency, international students face other challenges in the form of socioculturally constructed norms.

2.2. Culture

2.2. i Culture Defined

A universally accepted definition of culture has proved elusive with many attempts to define it. Kennedy (2010) cites the definition of Geertz (1973 p 42) as *"fabrics of meaning with which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions."* Li et al., (2009) cite Webb and Reed (2000) who build on this definition to include elements such as "Acquired knowledge and learned patterns of behaviour, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals and rules, a sense of identity and of history.", suggesting that culture might impact on learning styles. Kennedy (2010) refers to a considerable amount of research supporting the idea that Confucian cultural values influence Asian learning styles and Socratic cultural values influence Western learning styles.

2.2 ii Culture Shock.

Li et al., (2010) define culture shock as the challenges faced when adapting to a new culture. Brown and Holloway (2008) cited in Lillyman and Bennet (2014) develop this to include the anxiety arising from the loss of familiar signs and symbols which make up social intercourse.

Li (2012) categorises the cultural challenges faced by international students into two categories:

1. Psychological Challenges – such as the feelings of anxiety and isolation due to different cultural norms
2. Academic and linguistic challenges which cover the need to acquire linguistic skills and to adapt to a different academic culture.

Section 2.2 focuses on the first category by considering the challenges faced when adapting to foreign norms and beliefs. Section 2.3 will focus on the challenges faced when adapting to a new academic culture.

Gu (2010) defines adapting as the way in which students change or fail to change their behaviour to fit in with a host culture. Gu (2010) further states that this process differs by person as a result of personal and situational factors. This suggests that culture alone is not always the root cause of any adaptation issues faced. Wang et al., (2012) agree and caution against making the assumption that all students from the same culture experience culture shock in the same way and rather suggest that students adjust at different speeds and to a different extent. Lillyman and Bennett (2014) suggest that adapting is positive as it leads to improved intercultural understanding.

Gu (2010) acknowledges that the process of adapting to Higher Education is more challenging for international than home students as they must understand and adapt to new norms of behaviour, linguistic capabilities and a different academic culture. Zhou et al., (2008) agree that international students face new expectations, social norms and behaviours as well as facing the challenges of adjustment faced by all students and that if students assume the new culture will be identical to their home culture then the adjustment can be very difficult and they are likely to face culture shock.

Neri and Ville (2007) compare international students arriving overseas for H.E. with newly arrived immigrants, suggesting that both encounter an unfamiliar culture with different behavioural norms and expectations, a different natural environment and climate, a foreign language and different institutional expectations and rules.

Bamford (2008) reminds us that often culture shock and the process of adapting to new norms is still in progress when a student's first assignment is due, adding that something as routine as handing in a piece of coursework can be challenging in a new environment with different rules and norms.

Kingston and Forland (2008) point out the growing degrees of tension arising due to a conflict in the expectations of the rapidly growing international student body and the implicit norms of social and academic interactions in H.E.I's. Swain (2014) describes the pub culture in the UK which the Asian students find particularly difficult, yet due to the need for teamwork in group projects, Asian students believe that socialising is important and feel that they have to go to pubs and clubs in order to socialise with home students. Lee (2009) carries this anxiety further into the classroom by comparing the Western students individualist style where explicit expression of opinions is valued and encouraged with the collectivism prevalent in Asian countries which combined with worries about the consequences of loss of face often prevents students from speaking up. These differences in cultural norms can lead to integration issues for international students.

2.2. iii Oversimplification of culture

As discussed above, culture is not alone in causing differences and to assume that it is, is a dangerous oversimplification.

Lillyman and Bennett (2014) suggest that many researchers refer to specific cultural differences and that they assume the differences between an individual and a collective society incarcerate the differences and hence the challenges. Kingston and Forland (2008) challenge these ideas suggesting that they are generalised assumptions. Signorini et al., (2002) cited in Lillyman and Bennett (2014) further challenge equating a culture with the concept of a nation. Cheng (2000) agrees with this view stating that the assumption must be handled with care and that Asian students whilst having similarities have their own particular cultures.

2.2. iv. Integration issues

a. Culture hindering intercultural communications:

Turner (2006) cautions against imposing home cultural norms, behaviours and expectations on international students, who lack knowledge of these norms. Participants in Khawaja and Stallman's (2001) Australian study discuss the challenges of communication between home and international students as a result of the differing social and cultural norms of the two groups. The Australian students perceived the passive and polite style of international students as a lack of confidence and Asian students felt uncomfortable with the relaxed and informal style of the Australian students. These perceptions can prevent integration from occurring.

b. Impact of poor integration on academic performance:

Rastall (2004) cited in Kingston and Forland (2008) suggests that Asian students in particular suffer from marked culture shock when entering UK HEI's and that this is a key issue impacting on student success. Rastall (2004) further purports that the difficulties that East Asian students have with conversing with their English speaking peers leads to possible negative impacts on their motivation and self-image which in turn can impact on their academic success.

2.2   v. The role of staff

Much of the research looking at the perceptions of staff when working with international students illustrates the deficit model approach. This deficit model assumes that any problems lie entirely with the international students who struggle to adapt. This shows only one side of the problem whereas Tran (2001) considers the other side of the problem by recommending that academic staff should adapt to enhance their teaching and learning. Lillyman and Bennett (2014) agree with this view, and add that internationalisation of the curriculum is also important to make it more relevant to international students' educational values.

2.2   vi. Impossibility of isolating culture

Despite the fact that it can be muted that elements of culture and in particular the impact of *"culture shock"* lead to anxiety and a reappraisal of self-image, Gu and Schweinfurt (2006) cited in Gu (2010) suggest that culture cannot be isolated and that in addition to culture, factors such as identity, motivation and relationships with lecturers should also be considered. Gu (2010) suggests that despite intercultural challenges and struggles, most students survive these learning and living challenges and change and adapt.

Cheng (2000) agrees with this view and states that attributing reticence and passivity of some Asian students to their cultural behaviour and norms is groundless suggesting that this assumption could lead to other skill gaps in international students, such as language proficiency and experience, being overlooked. Rastal (2004) cited in Kingston and Forland (2008) believes that as students are generally quick to adapt, the impact of cultural factors may well be overestimated.

The Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) acculturation model below illustrates that culture is just one element that plays a part in the acculturation process along with personal characteristics and situational factors which further suggests that culture cannot be isolated.
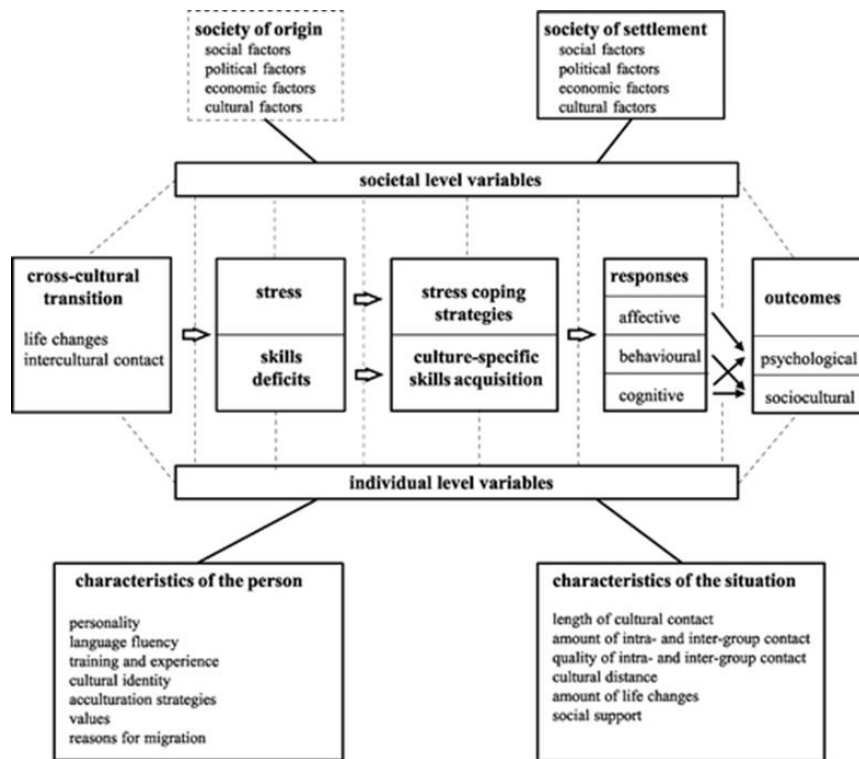
Figure 2 The acculturation s model Ward, Bochner and Furnaham (2001) page 44

The model in figure 2 above suggests that culture is only one small part of the factors that impact on student outcomes and that situational and personal characteristics also have a strong part to play.

Conclusion.

Although culture generally has an impact in terms of culture shock which might impact on international students' feelings of isolation, motivation and estimation of self, it appears that academic culture causes more challenges for international students. The Confucian (Eastern) academic values are often contrasted with the Western Socratic academic values in research.

Tran (2012) purports that Confucius valued students who were modest and reflective and who learn from respected teachers who are viewed as the font of all knowledge. The Western Socratic learning styles by contrast suggest that individual learners should challenge their ideas and those of others. Kingston and Foreland (2008) developed a useful table summarising the differences between the Confucian and the Socratic learning styles. (Table 1 below)

	Western/Socratic	Eastern/Confucian
Culture (Hofstede)	Low power distance (individualist)	High Power Distance (Collectivist)
Attitude to knowledge	Extending/Speculative Transforming	Conserving/reproducing
Academic approach	Divergent	Convergent
Learning styles for success	Deep Strategic?	Rote? Superficial Strategic?

Table 1 Summary of Socratic versus Confucian traditions. Kingston and Forland (2008) pp 207

This will be discussed further in section 2.3 below.

2.3 Academic culture

2.3.i: Teaching style

Major (2005) reports that many scholars indicate the experiences of Asian students prior to their arrival in the UK as being teacher dependent with students relying on rote learning and being passive and unquestioning. As a result, adjusting to an academic culture where critical analysis, debate and questioning are valued and seen as key factors for academic achievement can be problematic.

Curran (2014) agrees with this view, stating that Chinese learners in particular are stereotyped as silent, teacher dependent and that memorisation represents learning for them. Phan (2004) concurs that teaching is on the whole didactic and the *"empty vessel"* teaching method is employed. Furthermore, Chen (2012) reveals that Chinese teachers tend to teach at a very fast pace due to the amount of material to be covered.

Bartram and Bailey (2009) contrast the encyclopedic (knowledge centred and didactic) focus linked with Asian teaching and the more pragmatic and process focussed methods of the UK and USA. Bamford's (2008) research endorses this contrast with Asian students commenting on the very different teaching style in their home country and the initial learning challenges this leads to as they were unsure as to what tutors expected and often too shy to express their difficulties. The Western emphasis on independent study and on developing ideas was also new to international students and in particular the large amount of reading (in a second language) and synthesizing information in a critical way was recorded as being difficult (Bamford 2008). Quan et al., (2013) point out that Asian students expect to arrive at a correct answer and are surprised when they hear that there may not be one.

This approach to learning has often been blamed on a Confucianist approach in literature, however Deng (2014) cites Cheng and Xu (2011) and Liu (2011) as debunking the mistaken blame of Confucian pedagogy for rote learning, memorisation and regurgitation. Deng (2014) and Wu (2011) cited in Curran (2014) suggest rather that the introduction of the *"Keju"* or Civil Service examination has led to a very competitive educational environment reliant on memorisation and mastering stylistic skills in order to be successful.

Leask (2004) cited in Carroll (2005)   likens the arrival of overseas students to a UK HEI to learning how to play a new game. Success in this game would depend on being able to figure out the new rules, to apply the rules and winning by achieving good grades and positive feedback leading to confidence and

reassurance as a learner. All students have to learn the rules of this game regardless of their nationality, however for international students there are more challenges to adapting. Carroll (2005) suggests that some students may not actually realise that the rules have changed and will continue to use the learning style that has been accepted thus far.

Carroll (2005 page 31), lists the systems in which international students have spent years prior to arrival as:

- o " Teachers tell and students listen;
- o   Students tutor each other outside class and co-operate in completing work, often copying each other's answers;
- o Tasks are highly structured and teacher-directed;
- o There is lots of homework, tested orally in class;
- o A high value is placed on knowing information and accessing it quickly but low value is placed on using information or evaluating it; and
- o Personal diligence (expressed as time on homework) is the norm. "

Li et al., (2014) point out, however, that teaching styles are likely to become more similar as more Western universities set up campuses overseas and these universities transfer their preferred teaching style.

2.3. ii Learning style

There is some disagreement amongst scholars on the approach of international learners to learning and knowledge. Much of the research has been carried out looking at the learning styles of Asian (particularly Chinese) students as these currently represent the majority of students studying in the UK. There is therefore a sizeable gap for studies looking at the learning styles of different nationalities

Carroll (2005 page 33) explains the importance of being explicit about teacher-student relationships in order to manage student expectations as students may have had previous experience where:

- o " Teachers as experts and authorities, providing answers;
- o Teachers acting as parental figures, guiding and being involved with the student as a person;
- o Teachers knowing the students' problems and guiding them to solutions;
- o Teachers giving clear instructions on what students must do; and
- o Teachers being generally available to students out of class."

a. Perception of Asian learners as passive / rote learners.

Grimshaw (2007) states that a substantial body of research has developed around the concept of *"The Chinese Learner"*.   This research has led to a list of defining features including: *"Lack of learner autonomy, lack of critical thinking; reticence in class; preference for a reproductive approach to learning and reliance on a limited range of strategies to learn, especially rote memorisation."* As such Grimshaw (2007) summarises the Chinese learner as a *"passive recipient of knowledge."*

Bauman and Hamin (2011) use Stankove's (2010) study as an example of grouping students from Asian countries together as a contrast with students from Western / Caucasian societies. Stankove (2010) believes that Confucian attitudes are unforgiving towards underachievement leading to the Asian student view that effort and persistence are required to achieve high levels of academic performance.

 Stapleton (2002) claims that Asian learners are often characterised as lacking in critical thinking skills and that due to their collectivist and hierarchical characteristics, they avoid argument and debate. Cheng (2012) points out that many academics continue to state that Chinese students are on the whole passive. Durking (2008) agrees, proposing that in East Asia students focus on listening, the interpretation of accepted fact and they resist expressing their personal opinions in particular if these go against received wisdom. Carroll (2005 page 28) speaks of the perception that busy academics have of international students as the *"negative impression of their own cultural values ('they never speak', 'they plagiarise', 'they want too much support', 'they take up too much of my time.').* Although this is true in some cases (for both home and international students), it would be helpful if staff were to

consider the transition that these students are undergoing and support them in adapting to new ways of learning.

Stapleton (2002) refers to the extensive teaching and learning discourse in particular the stated need to consider the learner's cultural background in order to improve teaching methods. In these discussions Eastern and Western academic cultures are contrasted and academics such as Grimshaw (2007) state that a deficit model is applied to Eastern learners who are characterised as group oriented, hierarchical and harmony seeking in contrast with Western learners who are depicted as individualistic, adversarial and equal. If this is the case, then adjusting in a short period of time to such a different academic culture is likely to be extremely problematic.

Humphreys (2014) in a study of Vietnamese learners states that from school age students acquire deep-seated views as to what learning involves and this is centred on dependence. As such, adjusting to a new system which requires independent learning can be fraught with problems. He commends the use of a form of Vygotskian scaffolding in order to support a more autonomous approach.

Charlesworth (2008) cited in Xia (2009) gives a more positive view of the less active learning style of East Asian students by focusing on their preferred reflective learning style which involves taking the time to contemplate things, to listen carefully to others and to try not to impose their ideas on others. This view is corroborated earlier under academic writing where international students in particular Asian students were shown to prefer a more contemplative and circular rather than a linear approach to essays.

Lee (2009) points out that in order to participate in class discussion, international students need not only the required academic language but also an understanding of the discourse norms in the host country classroom. As such international students are constantly having to adapt between their prior knowledge of how things are done and the new classroom rules. Even though they may have understood and prepared for discussions of the topic, knowing when to pick the right moment to join a discussion is difficult in a different culture and often when they are finally ready to speak, the discussion has already moved on. Lee (2009) continues that there are in fact substantial differences in norms surrounding when to talk in Korean and US society as evidenced by his findings from his research. Korean students for example only say what is essential whereas Americans talk as a learning mechanism. In Korea, talking too much is a sign that people are not particularly well educated. Deep-seated norms such as these are likely to lead to misperceptions of a student's ability and engagement to the unsuspecting western lecturer.

Arkoudis and Tran (2010) further suggest that individual lecturers appear to have problems understanding how to meet the different needs of a diverse student body and that the sharing of good practice would aid this understanding. They point to the need for clear policy guidelines at a systemic level and consideration as to how to create a culturally responsive learning environment.

b. The Danger of Stereotypes

Kumaravadivelu (date unknown) cautions against the homogenization of approximately 3 billion people all labelled as Asian as this leads to stereotypes over time. Chen (2000) agrees arguing that suggesting that all Asian students are passive and reticent is a myth as shared learning style does not occur across this wide geographical spread and diverse cultural backgrounds. He further suggests the possibility that a small percentage of reticent students will lead lecturers to believe that all Asian students are reticent.

Grimshaw (2007) criticises the assumption that Chinese students are a homogeneous group with the same values and behaviours indicating that the term Chinese learner is applied to individuals from PRC, Taiwan and elsewhere without considering the differences that there may be. Matias (2013) supports these views stating that the Chinese speaking world is heterogeneous and cultural habits and norms change to a considerable degree between regions. Lee (2009) concludes that although there are many similarities among Asian students, there are cultural differences which may differentially influence behaviour and participation in class discussion.

Littlewood (2000) carried out a study comparing Asian and European students' attitudes to learning and his study raised further doubts about the prevailing ideas portraying Asian students as passive learners with a lack of critical thinking skills. His study purports that Asian students do not in fact want to be spoon-fed information but would prefer to explore knowledge by themselves. Grimshaw (2007) also refutes this view of Asian students as rote learners who are passive and reluctant to challenge the opinions of lecturers. Stapleton (2002) expands that the current constructs of the "Asian Learner" fail to recognise a new generation of students with a different approach to learning from the traditional approach.   An attitude study of 70 Japanese undergraduates carried out by Stapleton (2002) evidenced that Japanese students were happy to dispute the opinions of authority figures and that they also had a clear idea of critical thinking. This suggests that education is changing in Asia and that Asian learners will change too.

Some scholars believe that situational factors have a large influence on a student's ability to adapt and perform well.   Chen's (2000) article argues that characterising Asian learners as reticent and passive is a gross overgeneralisation. His recent research illustrates that Asian students desire to participate in class and that if they are quiet, rather than blaming a different academic culture, it appears that situational factors may be at fault.   These could include teaching methodologies and language proficiency. Gieve and Clark (2004) agree suggesting that contextual factors will also determine a student's study approach in the UK.

c. Changes in East Asian learning styles

Kingston and Forland (2008) cite Shi (2004) who believes that traditional Confucian learning is in a state of flux and the current generation of East Asian learners is growing increasingly similar to their Western peers and that Confucian learning culture is becoming more individualist in approach and more similar to the Western world.

Kember (2000) believes that Asian students are able to and do adapt to more active learning styles but that an understanding of the learning context of Asian students is valuable to those who must teach Asian students in order to avoid some of the widespread misconceptions.

Tran (2011) describes an emergent stream of literature arguing against the common stereotypes of Asian students and highlights the need to desist from blindly linking learning styles and cultural backgrounds. Instead he suggests that it would be more important to study how a student copes with the challenges.

d. Situational Factors

Mathias et al., (2013) suggests that Confucian Heritage Countries (CHC) i.e. P.R. China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan are surface, passive, rote learners concerned mainly with memorising materials. By contrast Western students are stereotyped as deep learners who intend to understand the meaning of the knowledge they are gaining.   Tan (2011) cited in Mathias et al., (2013) suggests that rather than merely memorising materials that CHC students use rote learning concurrently with deep and achieving learning approaches. He believes that the stereotypical view of Chinese learning styles is overly simplified. Kember (2000) concurs, suggesting that Chinese students use memorisation in order to understand before moving forward. Mathias et al., (2013) point to increasing numbers of studies showing little difference between Chinese and home students and suggesting that the differences between the two groups could be more contextual for example as a result of the types of examinations or coursework set rather than being a result of cultural differences.

The paragraph below supports the idea that situational factors impact on how a student learns rather than culture, as the memorisation comes as a result of a fear of failure.

Saravanamuthu and Yap (2014) cite Munro 1985 who purports that the current Chinese education system discourages students from striving to achieve understanding beyond the boundaries of the prescribed knowledge in contrast to the goals of traditional Chinese culture. Chinese learners are motivated to pass exams in order to achieve their personal ambitions, to fulfil familial obligations and to save face. Gu (2008) suggests that they expect their educators to help them in this quest.   Fear of failure forces them to refer to scripted answers.

Kumaravadivelu (date unknown): goes further to suggest that the behaviour attributed to Asian students can also be attributed to home students. Other situational factors include the excessive workloads, centralised curricular, didactic and expository teaching styles and the use of coursework or exams that emphasize reproduction of knowledge over creative and original thought.   Lui (2001) agrees that alongside cultural beliefs it is also important to consider factors such as the relevance of the topic being taught and the skill of the teacher.

Chen (2012) states that most discussions about Chinese students and their proclaimed inclination towards passivity and rote learning tends to focus on students lacking the characteristics essential for academic success in the West. This is merely looking at one side of the situation and in order to understand educational experiences, it is vital to look at both the learner and the pedagogical approach simultaneously.

e. Assessment expectations

Chen (2012) describes predominant Chinese exam assessment methods as requiring correct text book answers. In order to do well under this system, students need to work hard, write down exactly what the teacher says and guess what might be in the exam. Another criterion for success is to avoid giving personal opinions which may conflict with text book answers as these will not gain marks.

For non-exam assessments, teachers often give student exemplary assignments on which to model their answers. Students also receive formative feedback on their work prior to hand in and students clearly understand the assessment criteria and expectations.

Liu (2012) explains that the evaluation systems vary considerably between China and the UK. Evaluation in Chinese universities focuses on structure and depth of knowledge whereas in the UK it is more important to show flexibility in the application of knowledge and a more creative approach. This change is very challenging for South Asian students.

Furthermore, Durkin (2008) expounds that Western critical thinking involves rigorous debate and a search for truth. This western approach finds its foundations in the Socratic-Aristotelian approach to critical thinking.

Durkin (2008) further cites the Thayer-Bacon (1992-3) *"battlefield mentality"* which is a result of polarised critiques and the rejection or acceptance of theories and ideas on the basis of firm evidence and logical argument. Durkin (2008) further explains that this explicit approach is characteristic of low context cultures such as the UK together with an acceptance that views should be challenged. Asian students on the contrary are high context and as a result implicit arguments are more important as is maintaining harmony and avoiding confrontation and conflict. Quan et al., (2013) states that many Asian research respondents admit to being uncertain as to what is expected to produce good or acceptable work and are not told how to do this step by step.

f. Adapting to a new academic culture

Major (2005) purports that scholars across different disciplines have discussed cultural and academic differences between Western and Asian universities. There is a consensus that it is more difficult for Asian students to adapt to a different culture than any other international students.

Cultural dissonance between their home country and the new academic culture can lead to culture shock. Major (2005) suggests that this dissonance impacts on different aspects of students' social and academic daily life and has repercussions on the students' sense of self-concept and interpersonal relationships. Major (2005) further suggests that this culture shock together with mental fatigue and loss of confidence can lead to lower academic performance.

Liu (2012) discusses the different conceptualisation of university life in China and in the UK. In China, apart from the 4000 word dissertation, students have few classes in the last year of university and fill their time with an internship and job seeking. Liu's (2012) respondents were shocked by how busy they

were studying in the UK. Furthermore, because of low English ability studying took longer for them than for their English peers.

Huang (2008) suggested that the challenges of the new environment mainly involve daily life issues, academic adjustment, and identity crisis and language issues including communication with host nationals.

Li (2012) suggests that master's programmes in the UK with a duration of 1 year mean a steep learning curve for students and essentially the whole year could be seen as a period of transition, spent mastering the norms of academic literacy. Quan et al., (2013) suggest that there are significant differences between the learning style and scholarly skills such as critical thinking and referencing and the learning experience and habit acquired in their home country significantly influences their ability to adapt to a new learning style. Quan et al., (2013) point out that new academic environments create challenges for all students but that it can be assumed that international students entering university at an advanced stage find the transition process even more difficult as the first three months of study in a new environment appear to be a particular challenge for international direct-entry students, where 72% of final-year direct entry students described their transitional experience as *"very difficult"*. The difficulty seemed to stem from three clear factors:

   a.   the teaching style
   b.   time constraints
   c.   personal willingness to adapt.

Quan et al., (2013) argue that due to the steep learning curve and the requirement for a speedy transition that students should not just rely on institutional support but must make serious efforts themselves, as entering the UK system for a short time period i.e. the final year accentuates issues such as English proficiency and adaptation to new teaching styles.

Carroll (2005) turns the idea of international students adapting on its head by suggesting that teachers should become knowledgeable about their own academic culture and realise that this is also a culture and belief system and by acknowledging this, to accept that it is important to explicitly explain their expectations and not assume that international students will know these. Teachers who have only worked within one academic culture, tend to take for granted the fact that international students will adapt and know the correct way to behave in seminars, to interact with staff and to structure an essay.

g.   Impact of Academic Culture on performance

Gu (2005) refers to the idea of *"learning shock"* which happens when a new way of learning differs significantly from ones prior learning style leading to a feeling of cognitive dissonance. Lewthwaite (1996) and Gu (2005) suggest that this stage of uncertainly where the individual is unclear as to what is expected and of behavioural norms can impact on one's self esteem. Gu (2010) believes that personal, psychological and pedagogical factors can impact on the extent and the success of adaption and transition can impact a student's chances of ultimate success. Gu (2010) states however, that despite the challenges faced, findings of research strongly suggest that most international students do manage to adapt and this is primarily due to their will to succeed rather than their dependence on others.

Wang (2012) discusses the challenge faced by international students in a new environment when students fail to achieve the academic level they achieved in their home country leading to dissonance and a focus on the gap between their actual performance and their standards.

Rientes (2013) speaks of the culture shock as a result of differing academic norms and expectations which are exacerbated by large cohorts meaning that the international students have few opportunities to develop relationships with their lecturers and other students.

Quan et al., (2013) talk of the dissonance that occurs as a result of international students having a differing view of the role of a supervisor for dissertations.

Bauman and Hamin (2011) examine studies that consider the link between culture and academic performance stating that many studies focus on the differences between Caucasian and Asian cultures to explain different approaches to learning.   Joy and Kolb (2009) suggest that cultural differences lead to different learning styles which are likely to negatively impact on overseas students' performance in the UK.

In terms of the importance of education in students' lives, Bauman and Hamin (2011) cite Fuligni (2001) whose research findings revealed the high importance international student place on academic success and on the utility of education for their adult lives. The cultural value of education is handed down from generation to generation.

Li and Armstrong (2009 page 4) cite Chinese maxims such as *"to be a good scholar is to be top of society."* And *"through studying you will gain beautiful girls and houses made of gold."* These maxims according to Bauman and Hamin (2011) reveal that culture drives the value that individuals place on their education and cite Eddey and Bauman (2009) who empirically established that cultural background is important in determining academic success. They also reveal a strong association between language proficiency and academic performance.

A study by Lan et al., (2011) cited in Bauman and Hamin (2011) considered how Asian students outperform north American students in certain learning tasks that required students to draw on their attentional control. They explain this success as a result of learning styles since they were young children.

h. Orientations towards knowledge

Curran (2014) cites Nisbett who explains the differing world views and orientations to knowledge of Asian and Western societies. Westerners value categorical classifications and believe the world functions according to natural laws and is regular enough to allow systematic reasoning. Asians tend to take a holistic view of the world and are interested in the complex interactions of all elements. As such formal logic is rarely used in problem solving.

 Liu and Littlewood in Cheng (2000) dissect the Chinese term for knowledge which is "*Xuéwèn*". "*Xué*" means to learn and "*wèn*" means to ask. This implies that questioning is central to the pursuit of knowledge. Cheng (2000) therefore challenges the notion that students will not challenge authority as being part of their academic cultural background.

Kingston and Forland (2008) explore collectivist education systems found in Asia and based on Confucian philosophy and the individualist education traditions based on Socratic philosophy. They explain that East Asia's collectivist educational traditions emphasise learning as a one-time process for the young as a collective group. The Western world's individualist educational traditions by contrast emanate from the Socratic philosophy and emphasise learning as a lifelong process for individuals.

Kennedy (2010) suggests Asian teaching is largely didactic, text bound and teacher centred with limited time for discussion.   Chan (1999) agrees suggesting Chinese learners have been indoctrinated to respect the wisdom of teachers and text books and are unlikely to challenge them.   Traditionally western medieval universities encouraged dispute whereas traditional Chinese education involved rote learning of the classics prior to understanding. (Kingston and Forland, 2008). Carroll (2005) illustrates this point by discussing a Chinese student who believed that a classroom was a place where you listened without speaking to what a teacher was saying and tried to make sense of it. When asked to discuss a point with his classmates, he could not understand why he should take with someone who does not know the answer either.

Ryan and Louie (2007) and Tweed and Lehman (2002) believe the positioning of Western and Asian learning as binary opposites i.e. deep/surface, passive/active is an oversimplification, inferring culture is unchanging and homogenous.

i. Overview Arkoudis

Arkoudis (2006) suggests there are four main challenges facing international students which he classifies as:

a. Living and learning in a different culture;
b. Learning in a foreign university context;
c. Learning while developing English language proficiency;
d. And learning the academic disciplinary discourse

The table below from Turner and Acker (2002, Page 168) shows the differences between Chinese student experience and also their perceptions as opposed to the expectations of UK higher education attitudes.

Chinese student- "model" experience	UK system's expectations of "model student behaviour	Perceptions of Chinese student performance in UK higher education
Experienced in developing techniques for processing large quantities of data.	Experience in taking a critical approach to complex problems and literature	Experience in rote learning and memorisation of data
Accustomed to individual – based approaches to learning and assessment	Accustomed to working in groups and alone	Students do not make contributions to group work.
Accustomed to expressing knowledge as unitarist ideas and factual trust. Knowledge as conformity	Understanding is achieved by reconciling conflict opinions; knowledge as iconoclasm with the past.	Students do not understand how to build and argument or reference: find it difficult to express complex ideas
Examinations accurately measure academic accomplishment	Examinations are one of many different methods of assessment	Students poor at assessment other than exams. They do not take their coursework seriously
Lecturer is the "Expert" who conveys absolute knowledge and truth.	Lecturer is mentor who opens up the doors to reflective, independent thinking	Students ask lecturers to provide all the answers to learning development.
Learning happens to the young: Maturity should bring full understanding	Learning is a lifelong process.	Student want to get through their education. They want all of the answer.

Chinese student experience and perceptions vs UK higher seduction attitudes. (Turner and Acker 2002, p 168)

The table above shows the difference between the expectations of Chinese students and the UK HEI expectations and this illustrates the gap which can lead to problems.

Appendix 2 - Qualitative research - Information from the transcripts

1. WHY WANTED TO STUDY IN THE UK

The key reasons for wanting to study in the UK were:

- High and recognised quality of education
- Improve English as it is a world language.
- The two factors above → enhance future career prospects

The UK was attractive to students because of its proximity to Europe, which meant travel options and also because it is further away from home and therefore more of a challenge than a country such as Australia which is a key competitor with the UK for international education. Many Asians, in particular Malaysians, got to study in Australia. Word of mouth from direct family members, relatives, agents, local colleges and returning students also ensure that the UK is an attractive destination for education. The option to have top up degree / study in the UK for just one year, makes this an affordable and desirable option for many students. By comparison US universities often require students to study for longer and often to start a course from scratch.

2. WHY UWE?

Partnerships arrangements were important to international direct entrant students and UWE was a chosen destination as these partnerships reduce the risk for students as the University already has a good reputation with partner colleges. The type of courses available was also a frequently mentioned reason for choice. Most of the students interviewed had considered the ranking of UWE amongst universities and were guided by their friends/ alumni who spoke highly of the university. Word of mouth and the UWE website were both influential in guiding choice.

3. HOW FOUND OUT ABOUT UWE:

Key ways of finding out about UWE were via their home university, word of mouth of friends, family, colleges and alumni and the UWE website. Others were guided by their agent or the UWE regional office.

4. CHALLENGES

Although challenges such as cooking and finance were mentioned the focus of this next section will be on the core academic challenges.

A. INTEGRATION

As international students join UWE to experience something different and to improve their English, integration is a good way of achieving this and should be seen by home students as beneficial to themselves also. Unfortunately, the reality is far from this with a definite minority of those spoken to feeling they had integrated successfully. It should be remembered , however, that these students had only started their programme two months prior to the research taking place and as such, integration may not have occurred at this stage.

Integration issues for international students has been a recurring theme in both the academic literature but also in the researcher's current and previous research. Practical reasons for lack of integration have been noted as timetabling and accommodation and at the most extreme end home student "racism" and stereotyping of international student was mentioned with worrying regularity. The other core area mentioned was poor language skills acting as a barrier to integration.

i.   Timetabling:

International students often tip into ISIS very late in the day and as such appear to be allocated en masse into international only groups which may have to be added to the original number of workshops estimated. This is further exacerbated by the geographic targets not being estimated by programme.

011chi2M1: "My group is all the international students and no British people."

007HK03F1. "All international. A lot of them are Asian."

As the students come to the UK to get a British experience and to improve their English, this is something that needs addressing.

ii.   Accommodation:

The issue with accommodation appears to be partially to do with allocation issues but primarily student choice. International students often find the cost of university accommodation prohibitively expensive and so end up living in a Chinese or Brazilian house for example, where the rent is much lower as they can have extra people staying in the house. This leads to the students mixing a lot less with other nationalities and also leads to language levels remaining static or getting worse.

015chi2F1: "a big purpose is to learning English, but just staying in the accommodation and talking Chinese with my friends."

001MAL2M1: "I just found that my whole neighbourhood which is the place I stay there is a lot of Malaysian students. "

021BRA3F1: "Basically I live with just Brazilian so this created a more difficult."

Students recognise this issue, but financial constraints mean it is impossible for them to move into UWE accommodation. Again due to late arrival / confirmation, International students are often housed together if they do decide to choose UWE accommodation. Even when placed amongst home students, however, this is not without issues as they are housed with first year students who are more interested in partying and enjoying their new found freedom rather than meeting international friends who want to work hard as they are second or third year Direct Entrants.

iii.   Racism.

More worrying is the feeling of non-acceptance by local students. Again it should be remembered that these statements are based on students who had only been at UWE for a couple of months and so may not at that stage have integrated.

Not all of the students had encountered this issue:

012viePGf1. "fortunately my class is really close and they are very friendly."

This postgraduate student found her group worked well together and exchanged ideas but she talks of her friends who had a less satisfying experience.

012VIEPGF1: "My friends feel very hurtful because the (home students) don't want to change idea with them, don't want to play with them."

International students further think that local students have stereotyped them.

016MAL2M1: "We don't mind mixing with local students but the local students here I think a bit of impression on us that is why they tend to stay away more."

017MAL2F1: "the local students have this stereotype on us, like Asian students are smart, all they do is study….. especially if you are of Chinese heritage they think you can't speak well and they don't and they don't talk to you , they don't initiate conversations because they are like okay, maybe she doesn't speak English as well, they can't do work as well because they can't communicating in English."

The students admit that not all home students are unfriendly but that international students find it difficult to approach them for fear of rejection.

017MAL2F1: "I have met local students who are perfectly fine, it is just when you've felt the rejection a few times, you get afraid of approaching them yourselves. As much as people like to say we always stick within our group, they stick within their groups too."

The same student mentioned how home students avoided the table she and her friend were sitting on.

"We sat on the table in the centre of class and when everyone came in they literally just dispersed around us….nobody wanted to sit with us unless they were told to do so."

Home students, however, who have travelled (gap year or Erasmus students) tend to be more accepting of international students and more willing to engage.

017MAL2F1. "I have found that students that are more interested in Asia are more accepting. The friends that I have made are generally they love Asia. They tell me that "I love Asia, I've been to Asia." They can related to your heritage."

Other students expressed difficulties integrating and felt that home students were unsure as to how to behave around them.

022MAL2F1: "They look at me very weirdly and they don't talk to me because maybe they think that I don't know how to respond and I don't know how to speak in English."

A Thai student felt that home students were unsure as to how to interact with international students.

013tha3f1: "Maybe they just don't know how to talk with Asians."

Others felt that they were being discriminated against.

017MAL2F1: "It felt really in a way like you were being discriminated."

Some of the classes were fine but they were the exception.

013Tha3F1. "mostly they ignore, but… there is one class that is very friendly and … 80% are taking to me and we are laugh and having fun talking."

Interestingly, a Malaysian male third year student expressed the opinion that actually sometimes Malaysians don't want to work with UK students because they feel they work less hard. The assumption is often that home students don't want to risk working with international students.

016MAL3M1: "In Malaysia as well after my third year I would know who I would want to work with."

In other words when grades are at stake, students do not want to take a risk with the unknown and jeopardise their grades.

iv.   Clubs and Societies

Students who are proactive and join clubs and societies are more likely to make friends and hence become more integrated.

CC: "You said you joined the photography society, has that enabled you to make friends with people who are local?"

011chi2m1: "yes yes"

And

008BRAPGM1: "I'm in the volleyball society and … they are very friendly, they try to have a conversation, they try to engage me in the group. "

But some of the activities inevitably primarily attract other international students i.e. the community hub café lingua.

015chi2f1: "I try to join some activities and they just ignore. I go to the exchange language but there are less local people go there. "

Socialising generally was brought up as something international student find difficult as they feel that home and international students come from different backgrounds and have different objectives.

005MAL2M1 "We don't have much in common to really talk about, cause in Bristol is the place where a lot of night life is and …. I am not used to night life, I don't drink, I don't smoke and stuff like that"

The drinking and night club culture in the UK is one that many international students find very difficult Finding common ground is key to good integration. Some of the international students suggested ways of helping them to integrate. I.e. running events at the weekend where they can meet local people or running fun events for everyone on the campus – international food fair/ mini fairgrounds/ gaming event. The proactive students stressed the importance of joining clubs and societies in order to better integrate and make friends.

011chi2M1: "I think this is the important way to make friends."

One student went to the apple harvest festival and enjoyed interacting with children with skittles and apple bobbing at Halloween.

009MAL3F1: "we made like brooms because it was approaching Halloween…. It was really fun."

Those that feel unable to commit to weekly clubs and societies feel that either the time or the cost is the issue. Also it is more difficult for them to commit to activities on week days.

009MAL3F1"I tried out choir last week, but I didn't go yesterday because I have assignments and so I think that commitment is a really big issue for me."

015chi2f1: "sports societies quite expensive and even though I want to try to join I joined it in China, badminton societies and now it is quite expensive so I think I could choose another."

Time was the other issue.

007HK03F1 "Because I think the time is limited. I want to concentrate on my studying first. "

Into 5: "I haven't got around to because I am so busy right now."

020HK03M1 "Because of the homework."

As such finding a balance is very difficult for these students.

B. ACADEMIC CULTURE

A key theme that came out in the interviews was the very different academic culture that international students were exposed to when they started their studies in the UK. This was evident in feedback from Asian, Brazilian and European students who formed the interviewees.

i.   Timetables

Many expressed academic culture shock at the expectation of independent learning. All nationalities interviewed had a much fuller timetable in their home markets.

Interviewee 14 – "the lectures are just one hour as well as the tutorials but back in Malaysia we have lectures for three hours just for one class."

008BRAPGM1: "There is a different system from Brazil. Here we have time to study by our own and we have to manage our time better or we get in trouble."

By contrast in Brazil, the whole week is filled with lectures:

008BRAPGM1: "the length of lectures in the week. Every day I have lectures and here I don/t have it."

The same student said that in Brazil a register was taken to monitor attendance which gave students the incentive to attend as they knew the consequences of non-attendance were negative.

"There are some register. And here we don't have, so if we don't want to come to the class we don't need. "

Another Brazilian student studying science stated that the classes are much longer in Brazil.

021BRA3F1: "In Brazil, we have class during all day, I think it is 6 hours per day we have classes, especially in medicine. "

Independent study does not appear to come naturally and is a skill international students need to acquire. .

021BRA3F1: "Here it is different. I have more free time than I'm the class and I need to use this time to study but I don't know how to study."

A third Brazilian student noted similar difficulties:

019BRAPGM1 : "Really actually I do not think it's good for me because I don't work very well if I don't have class. I just stay at home…. I am used to do everything in the class and when you finish your class you are free."

Although tutorials are on the timetable in Hong Kong, one student stated that in fact they were just a continuation of the lecture.

007HK03F1: "In Hong Kong we don't have tutorial. We have the tutorial lesson in the timetable but that tutorial lesson we just continue our lecture."

The fact that the lectures are so long, often means that text books are not required because all of the information is found in the lecture slides and the lecture and as such, independent reading is not necessary:

005MAL2M1: "back in Malaysia… the tutorial is two hours long and the lecture is two hours long whereas here it is cut in half. ……here a lot of it is not in the lecture slides, but back in Malaysia the lectures are really long and a lot of information are already in the lecture slides so you do not have to buy any books at all."

This could help to explain why some international students fail to move far beyond the lecture slides and engage in extra reading to supplement the lecture information.

Some expressed this differently in terms of enjoying the flexibility in the UK:

009MAL3F1: "It's definitely more fun here and more hands on."

And once they got over the surprise they enjoy the freedom

014MAL2F1: "I actually prefer it here because it more of an independent kind of

14MAL2F1 "Over here it is really up to you to use your initiative. I prefer it that way, it's more flexible in terms of how you want to study. "

ii. Methods of delivery

The methods of delivery were also seen to be quite different for example one Chinese student had never received a workshop session prior to coming to the UK.

015chi2f1

"In China we are always lots of... it's more like lecture, lots of course like lecture and come to UK and I found wow there is another style of studying like called a workshop."

Furthermore it appears that in other countries, the teaching method is much more didactic (lecturer) and passive (student).

This relationship has been engrained since primary school and as such it is difficult to change these habits.

015chi2f1: "In China teachers always speaking and even though they ask some questions, the students sit in silence."

017MAL2F1: "In Malaysia, when I'm studying it's really more of the lecturer talks and the student listen."

iii. The silent student:

This mention of a more didactic approach led to a discussion about why Asian students might be quiet in class – the silent Asian student:

There were a variety of reasons given: personal; getting the wrong answer; speaking in front of UK students and feeling intimidated; culture; language.

a. *Personal:*
009MAL3F1: "Maybe because they are shy."

0010chi2F1: "I like to talk. For some Chinese friends of mine, they don't like to talk and they hate the group job. "

001MAL2M1: "it depends on the person itself. "

On this point, the same could be said of UK students, where some are quiet and appear not to engage in class discussion and others are very happy to talk.

b. *Getting the wrong answer:*
009MAL3F1: "to be embarrassed if the answer is wrong."

It appears there is often a right or wrong answer in Asian teaching. Students worry about the embarrassment of getting things wrong and so would rather not speak.

c. *Speaking in front of UK students:*
"Some people …. They are indifferent. They just look at you and then they ignore you. "

Some students feel rebuffed and ignored by UK students and moreover, they felt that they are being judged by their answers and their inability to speak fluently without accent.

"We feel like when we talk maybe the words don't come out, like Maye they don't get what we are trying to say or say the wrong things and like I guess you feel like in a way they are indirectly judging the way you speak."

Students mention that they have to translate a question into their language consider their response, translate that into English and by the time they are ready, the class has moved on.

d. *Culture*

A central reason, however, appears to be the cultural norms are to listen rather than to speak up.

009MAL3F1: "it's like the norm not to speak up."

017MAL2F1: "I think maybe it's a cultural thing, we don't really speak up much so our classes are really like sit down and listen to whatever they are teaching and then you just leave rather than like an interaction."

008BRAPGM1: "I think here, people talks more. Like give their opinion more."

And sometimes a lack of understanding as to how to participate.

007HK03F1: "I know what they are talking about but I don't know how to participate in the group discussion."

There are several Asian proverbs along the lines of "empty vessels make the most noise. Which results in Asian students feeling irritated by home students constantly querying and contributing. The Asian style is to listen in order to gain understanding and only when understanding is reached to contribute. In the UK the learning style is to learn by questioning along the way. This is the difference between the Confucian and the Socratic path to knowledge.

001MAL2M1: "I think that my parents taught me a way that sometimes it's better to listen to what people say first before you say something now."

001MAL2M1: "its better that you listen what's going on and then you just observe. That's what my dad told me to observe."

001MAL2M1: "some of the students when it start talking and they just giving out points which I feel like is actually not relevant at all so I feel like don't just blast out something that you think. You just want to impress the teacher because you just want to get the teacher to know that "I am always engaged in class." That no right. That's not one thing good that you just blast out something that I not relevant at all."

The questioning style of home students can be seen to be very aggressive.

022MAL2F1: "based on what I've seen, but I've observed, it is quite true because we don't really back in Malaysia respond to the tutors so much but to them here they are like very aggressive, they really pour out their points and whatever."

And the order of discussion is much more formal.

022MAL2F1: "back in Malaysia we don't really talk back unless the tutor is asking."

020HK03M1: "because in Hong Kong when the teacher is talking about the works or explaining we cannot say anything, we have to wait to them to finish, then we can raise our hands and ask the questions."

e. *Language*.

Language skills also hold back international students who may feel unable to contribute because they simply cannot keep up with the discussion.

"Sometimes during the class because English is their first language, they react very quick, very fast. Sometimes for me just listen and think oh figure out what the teacher want to say."

iv. LEARNING STYLES.

a. *Spoon-feeding:*

Students of all nationalities interviewed were used to being "spoon-fed" an not used to independent learning as is shown by the three students below.

004SPA3F1: "I've never had to go to the library ever (laughing) then I've never had to prepare for any class, never had any seminars, we just go to class, take notes and the teacher gives us the books we have to read. They give everything to us they do everything."

014MAL2F1: "In Malaysia they actually like sort of spoon feed you so they expect you to what they teach is what you are supposed to learn whereas here they teach you and you have to do your homework, own research."

007HK03F1: "in HK the tutor would provide the… some… notes for us and we do the literature review based on the notes its ok."

The students were not used to going to the library to find information:

007HK03F1: "I don't know how to find the suitable materials. There are 1000's of books, and I don't know which one is best, which one is relevant to my project."

It was interesting that this was not just the case with Asian students but that the Spanish students and Brazilian students felt the same.

b. *Rote learning:*

Rote learning was also common and indeed encouraged and expected by lecturers in Europe and Asia.

004SPA3F1: ""You didn't have to think a lot, she just said highlight this and remember it for the exam."

007HK03F1 "in HK the system is just like that. When we are in Primary 1, we just read the book and we don't need to think about the other thing. Just memorize it."

007HK03F1: "In Hong Kong they say 'you must write the definition exactly."

One student explained the role of rote learning in Asian society.

005MAL2M1: "A lot of students do that, sometimes you just don't have the choice but you have to memorise. Understanding is a choice as well, you can understand and it's a big advantage and I have got too many of my subjects with good results because I understood them which is a very important point   And I know some of my friends do it by memorising and sometimes they get it done as well but I know it's really important to understand. On the first level, it may seem really easy and you can memorise and ET through but when you go to higher levels, you really need to understanding."

This shows that rote learning is actually only seen as the start of the learning process in Asian countries and that to gain enlightenment, understanding is more important than memorisation.

Another student said it depended which subject you study as to whether you learn by rote:

010CHIF1: "It depends on which subject….. for accounting it is more practical, not much things for you to memorise,………for some other subjects, something like business law or something, most of art of business law you should memorise, so it depends on which module, each subject are you take part in so that's what I think."

c. **_Assessment/ how to score well / expectations:_**

International students also found understanding expectations and understanding how to do well in assignments a challenge.

009MAL3F1: "In Malaysia, the lecturers they give you a guideline like a structure, let's say for an assignment they will give you a structure and you kind of know what they want whereas for here, they, the lectures here encourage you to speak out and you always write about your arguments and we always evaluate things whereas in Malaysia we just take things in face value."

009MAL3F1: "I know what they, I know what my lecturers want but I just don't know how to get there yet."

So often the students understand what is required but not always how to get there.

007HK03F1: "In HK we just memorise the books and then you can pass the examination. And pass your project. But here I think there are a lot of research on it and every day I need to study."

007HK03F1 "in HK they would provide the marking schemes or something like that. For example, how do you get the highest score?"

Several students wished they could see this at UWE.

005MAL2M1: "You can study for an exam in Malaysia just by looking at the lecture notes, you don't actually need a core text book or anything but here you need one."

Which again confirms why students often fail to move beyond the lecture slides.

016mal3m1: "in Malaysia during exam times, we have a pre-exam meeting right where the teacher actually kind of specifies which chapters we have to study on."

010chi2f1: "I finished the taxation and planning examination yesterday afternoon and I find there is a multiple choice examination. I find it is because not all the questions answered you can find from the lecturer for tutorials. Some answers you should find on your own from the text book from the reading, but in China 90%, most of the examination questions are from the class before you take the examination, the teacher will tell you what kind of question they want to test you and they will make it clearly."

So with exams the expectations and the reality are very different between the UK and overseas and a common concern was that grades achieved in the UK were lower.

001MAL2M1 " I think passed this up back in Malaysia maybe I'll get a much more a bit higher mark compared to now. Which is probably a B cause I got a D so it is kind of like stress."

5.BEST THINGS ABOUT STUDYING IN THE UK

Students were asked to spontaneously talk about what they like best about studying in the UK and what they like least.

The most popular areas discussed in terms of best things about studying in the UK were the independence, new experiences, learning English and surprisingly the weather. Safety, the fun had volunteering and support and facilities available were also mentioned. This was all entirely unprompted.

a. Independence:
Independence was on the whole seen as positive with some opting to come to the UK rather than Australia in order to be further away from their parents.

004SPA3F1: "I have always lived with my parents, now I'm like more independent. "

Interview 5: I like the freedom, I can travel when I want to."

b. Experiencing new things:
Most were excited by the prospect of having new experiences.

012VOEPGF1: "I can learn about what I didn't know before….. And I can experience the new life in the UK. It's really different from Vietnam and the people in here is really nice."

And of taking advantage of everything the university offers.

Interview 2 "I really like everything, I am really glad that I got this opportunity….. They have so many clubs and societies, you can do anything as long as you want to."

001MAL2M1: "Best of all? The exposure? Like experience, different lifestyle cultures."

And the opportunity to rethink one's future.

021BRA3F1 "The best thing? too many things….. So different here. I have another world, I have another routine, and I have another expectations so that I can think about my life."

019BRAPGM1" The best think, I think it's you know another country another culture, I can travel around Europe, it's easier than when you are in Brazil, you can't. "

And the opportunity to travel was very popular.

c. Learning English:
As a world language, the ability to improve English skills and become more competitive in the job markets as a result was very important for many.

022MAL2F1: "First of all, my English. I can feel that my English has actually improving much better."

019BRAPGM2: "and to learn English, I think is my main goal when I came here."

012VIEPGF1: "the best thing is I can speak English every day."

d. The weather!!
The weather was also liked because there is no heat and humidity.

008BRAPGM1: "The best, the weather."

Interview 5: "I like the weather here, I like cold weather because back in Malaysia its really warm and everyone they hate warm hot weather. I gets really hot. Close to 40 degrees and it's very humid."

022MAL2F1 "I love the weather here compared to Malaysia."

6. The worst things about studying in the UK:

The worst things were lack of integration, learning to live with other nationalities and the food. The cold weather, difficulty in getting an internship and feeling homesick were also mentioned.

a. Integration:

This is a major theme throughout the research and international students find this particularly difficult. It should be remembered again that this is the first semester and that the same students will be tracked to see if this improves.

015CHI2F1: "I just can't making more friends."

Interview 5: *"So far I don't really have a group of friends, I haven't found a group of friends to hang out with."*

021BRA3F1 "I think it's the relationship with the British people."

b. Living with other people.

009MAL3F1. "I think living with other people. I not quite used to that yet………. We are all Asians, but there is one from Hong Kong, one from China, and the rest is Malaysians so I feel like it's a little bit unfair for the one from Hong Kong and the one from China because they kind of feel left out sometimes.

c. Food

The taste and cost of the food was mentioned also.

008BRAPGM1: "The worst thing, I think it is the food here…. I didn't get used to the food. It's very different to Brazil."

And it is not just the taste of food but also the cost. Asian students in particular are used to being able to buy very affordable street food.

020HK03M1: "I can't find any good restaurants because in here I want to find some Hong Kong food and Chinese food is very difficult and if I find it, it's very expensive"

7. WHAT SUPPORT WERE THEY USING?

It seemed that in these early stages that the students were aware of the support but not aware of what support they needed. As such quite a few had not accessed it.

017MAL2F1 "I think that's my main issue because I don't know what I am doing wrong or right and at least once I get the coursework back, no matter how I do, at least I know which areas I need to improve."

And a Brazilian student informed me that they are not used to support in Brazil and as such, did not know how to use it.

021BRA3F1 "But it's another cultural thing, we don't have too much support in Brazil, so we don't know how to use. How and when… things like that."

It is important to be clear that UWE does not run a proofreading service.

"Can they check any spelling or mistake in my coursework?"

Those that wanted to get internships were very pleased with the support that they got from the career hub.

009MAL3F1 ""I really need to brush out my CV and my cover letter and I met up with Lyndsay."

The Academic Success Centre was also generally seen to be helpful by those who used it.

009MAL3F1 "I really needed help … how to read articles efficiently… that was really useful"

010CHI2F1: "academic support centre, the tutors help us with that and they totally understand English is not your first language so they give us a lot of useful suggestions."

8. ADVICE TO STUDENTS FROM THEIR HOME COUNTRIES CONSIDERING COMING TO THE UK:

a. Language:
Most stressed the importance of having good language skills prior to arrival in order to do well.

011CHI2M1: "I think they should improve their language first."

019BRAPGM1: "Studying English before you came."

Independence and cooking!

011CHI2M1 "I think it's better to enhance the skill of independence and probably some skills about cooking."

b. Embrace new experiences:
The second most mentioned piece of advice was to take advantage of all of the new experiences on offer.

009MAL3F1 "Be open minded to meet new people."

004SPA3F1: "it's a great opportunity and experience. Something you will not experience back home."

002SPA3F1: "Make the most of your time here because there is so much to offer so you should technically do as much as you can." …. I have never had half the amount of opportunities that I have had at UWE."

010CHI2F1 "Be brave a face new challenge……. Enjoy the new life, it is good."

c. Work hard.
And the importance of working hard in particular in the context of having a lighter time table and of facing new challenges.

009MAL3F1: "be persistent in your work because it's going to be tough."

007HK03F1 "study more. Read more. Speak more."

d. Make friends:

And a stress on trying to be outgoing in order to try to make friends.

005MAL2M1: "take time to make friends. Don't rush I guess."

001MAL2F1: "just try to make friends. Try to be the one to open up to people and don't wait for people to talk to you."

o22MAL2F1 "Talk to the white first because they won't start talking to you…. You need to open up to them so they know you can actually an in English and you can understand what they say."

Appendix 3 – Cluster group findings.

Economics.

The interviewer did not attend a cluster meeting but rather interviewed the head of department about his views on what the department was finding difficult about working with international students as having a mixed cohort is new to this department.

Key issues were identified as:

- Mapping
    - There has been a huge increase in international students and the department feel that many are not equipped to deal with the challenges of a UK degree.
    - Are we recruiting the right students?
    - Academics should be involved in the mapping to ensure that we are not just going for numbers but rather by ensuring that we are getting the right students who will be able to cope with the challenges or who will adapt quickly.
- Level 3 students – direct entrants:
    - These students tend to be totally lost
    - 9 months is simply insufficient to get them up to speed.
- Analytical and critical approach.
    - International students tend to be good with numbers
    - The economics degree needs them to have analytical approaches and an ability to be critical

Key areas where the department needs support:

- Integration in seminars – how to manage this
- Managing group work.
- Understanding culture – i.e. silence in seminars.

Accounting and Finance

Key issues identified as:

- Students ratios unbalanced:
    - A and F have higher number of international students to home students.
    - This has led to home students stating that they feel intimidated and uncomfortable.
- Communications:
    - In particular level 3 students where the language is not sufficient in many cases for the demands of the course.
- Mechanics of integration:
- Two way understanding of academic culture needed.

Tool Kit requirements:

- How to integrate students
- Managing an unbalanced cohort.
- Staff training – academic culture

Marketing Cluster.

Key issues:

- Language:
    - Poor language rather than lack of ability
    - Spoken language in tutorials
    - Written language with the academic conventions in the UK.
    - Misunderstanding the requirements of assessments etc.
- Academic Culture:
    - Plagiarism
    - Staff assumptions as to what people have already learnt.
    - Students understanding expectations:
        - Supervision
        - Disappearing for Chinese New Year.
    - Student expectations
        - Leniency
        - Supervision
        - Draft versions
    - How previously taught
    - How international students like to learn.
- Culture:
    - Understanding names and how to say them.
    - What nationality are the students?
    - Worried might offend them.
- How to deliver to a mixed cohort:
    - Slow speed irritates home students
    - Dumb down tutorials.
- Integration (in particular direct entrants to the third year)
    - TIMETABLING – late arrivals/ confirmations → international students all timetabled into the same sessions.
    - Rooms – need to be conducive to mixing student up.
        - Often too small
        - Badly laid out
        - 1 hour tutorial → no time to rearrange rooms each session.
- Staff lack of knowledge
    - Staff unaware of the support available and of the resources for student support
- Late arrivals:
    - It makes it really difficult in a semesterised teaching models if students are allowed to arrive late.
    - Sorting out visa problems. Some people appeared in week 9
    - Need an advertised cut off point that we stick to.
- Mapping:
    - Level of knowledge of students may not be sufficient for what they need to undertake as direct entrants.
    - Supervision virtually impossible for students who join in the third year.
- Home student attitudes:
    - Not very broad minded.
    - Not very willing to mix
    - Do not see the advantages of an international cohort as fixed on getting a good grade.

Key areas for tool kit:

- Staff training:
    - Understanding culture
    - Names
    - Different academic culture
    - Good practice.
- Integration:
- Academic culture
    - How to develop differentiated learning approaches
    - Expectations – setting these out clearly with rewards, penalties and consequences.

HRM cluster

Challenges faced:

- **Integration:**

    Home students → we need to change their perception of working with international students.

    Also to get away from the idea that international students pull down the mark,

    MAHRM – tensions not just with home versus international students but also between different nationalities who have different levels of English. . English proficiency seen as an entry requirement. If get in at undergraduate level at 5.5 might not improve at all whilst here and so this will not be sufficient for postgrad level.

- **Marking expectations:**

    Issue that without realizing it sometimes we give the international student the benefit of the doubt and read between the lines, whereas with a home student we might be a bit harsher.

- **Academic Culture:**

    General feeling that direct entrant students are being set up for failure. Level 3 home students struggled writing a literature review even though they had had much more support at level 2.

    Their culture is not to challenge our views.

    Guidelines early on?

    Assessments – they do not know how to put together essays. → Support needed.

- **Knowing how to behave with international students:**

    Worries about causing offence.

    When do you intervene when you think somebody's language is not up to it?

- **Language issues.**

    Sometimes international students shut down and decide they cannot speak.

    We need to be clear that lack of language skills does not indicate lack of intelligence.

Having to simplify language can be a problem as it causes home students to disengage.

Toolkit requirements

- **Staff intercultural training**
- **Integrating students**
- **Teaching mixed cohorts.**

SOM group cluster meeting

Challenges:

- **Malpractice:** Very big problem in this faculty is the fact that students (primarily international direct entrants) sub-contract their coursework. How do we stop this? Assessment regulations.
- **Third year direct entrants and also Level M direct entrants:** Insufficient time to bring them up to speed.
- **Academic culture:**
  - Understanding the nature of teaching in the UK at UWE
  - Disengaged feeling with teaching
  - Failure of assimilation of how to approach.
  - Linear minds versus circular logic
  - Different mindsets
  - Collaborative
    - Revise everything together.
    - Go to meetings with tutors together
  - Identical exam papers because they work together on questions and then memorise the answers.
  - Cultural sense of what to do
- **Practice and applied-based work. – How to tackle the issues here.**
  - Consultation
  - Business culture – how it works
  - Over timidity / lack of questioning
- **Language:**

This is an area of weakness

- More intense language education needed
- IELTS does not really show whether someone is up to the challenge.
- → Malpractice such as sub-contracting their coursework.
- Lack understanding and so turn to memorizing answers → inability to apply information.

OS Group

Challenges

- **Language:**

Often the written language is reasonable but they have never spoken the language. They have just studied to get the relevant IELTS score but need much more practice in spoken language.

Holds them back – they cannot assimilate what is being said and spend so much times on their phones trying to translate what is being said.

- **Academic culture**

Asian students tend to be quiet. It is difficult to tell whether this is because they are not engaged or because they are shy.

Personality rather than nationality is often what allows people to mix successfully.

- **Integration:**

Some staff, however had issues trying to integrate. Conroy had DE from the Far East and equal numbers of home students. He tried to merge them into groups and the UK students left. Far Eastern students actually work well alone but you could ask yourself why they would want to come in future if they are taught separately.

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- **Skill levels**

MSc modules the students are totally heterogeneous. How do you balance the teaching of students who at one end are engaged and have work experience with the other end of the scale who appear unengaged, have no / limited work experience and really do not know what they are doing.

Emphasis tends to be on the deficit of international students i.e.   Focus tends to be on areas where they are weaker i.e. language. We need to turn this around and look at where they bring something. Also can we add any international elements in modules and use students as resource. This is possible in the majority of modules for OS.

- **Tool Kit required for OS**:
  - Clarify outcomes
  - Clarify reward systems
  - Smaller class sizes and more staff.

Signposting Document

Click the Images to Navigate

Bristol

Integration

Academic skills

Language

Welfare

Key Contacts

Bristol - Housing

UWE Student Lettings shop has reduced fees for students and is situating on campus at Frenchay.

Students can visit the UWE SU Accommodation Help Page for more information, which includes a glossary of common terms used by Letting Agents, and a guide to what students can expect when letting in Bristol.

Students can connect with others and find potential flatmates on the UWE SU Flatmate Finder Facebook Page. **Bristol - Jobs**

The Students Union runs a job shop, with part time and flexible work suitable for students.

Bristol - Transport

UWE has extensive information about how to get to all campuses, including campus maps. Students can buy bus tickets from the UWE Student Lettings shop on Campus, or from Wessex Bus or First directly.

Bristol - BISC

Bristol International Student Centre has local trips, to help students get a sense of the surrounding area, and organises events for International Students within Bristol. They also organise the Christmas Day hosting Scheme, which operates on a first come first serve basis.

Bristol - Local Events

Visit Bristol has a well-presented list of weekly, seasonal and one-off events happening in Bristol.

Integration – The Students Union

Off The Wall: This is a £10 membership, or £1 pay as you go service. Off the Wall offers "one off" sports and activities such as dodgeball, windsurfing, Ultimate Frisbee and seasonal activities such as Easter egg hunts. The Off the Wall program is particularly relevant for students who want to be involved with activities, and meet other students, without having to commit to teams or societies.

Student Networks are akin to societies but for specific identity groups. Notably active networks in UWE the 2014/2015 academic year have included Malaysian, African, Nigerian and Vietnamese Networks. Student Networks meet usually a couple of times a month, they are run by students and primarily put on social events, but can additionally offer support.

Pippa Hyland can co-ordinate new networks, there is funding from the SU for this. Networks are free for students to belong to.

Volunteering: Action Days are "one off" volunteering days. Students can get involved in helping the community without signing up for extended commitments to volunteering.

Examples include 'beach cleans' every summer. These activities are particularly suited to International Students as they are often high-energy activities without any particular language requirements, or requirements for nuanced local cultural understanding.

International Students Welcome Fair – takes place in September just before Freshers Week. Information about support, provide students with a 'checklist', advice on how to open a bank account, set up a phone, find NI number etc.

Freshers Week is run by the SU has many events that are daytime/ alcohol free. The Guide to Freshers Week is usually only sent out to home addresses in the UK, and can be a challenge to distribute to International Students on Arrival. It would be good if students could be signposted to this document as much as possible so International Students can engage with it.

Integration – The Community Hub

The Language Café (Café Lingua) takes place on the first Wednesday of every month at the Octagon. There is a free slice of cake and coffee!

Students who come to café Lingua are also often signposted to "official" language services within Bristol.

The Language Exchange is an informal exchange of languages, students can "seek" or "give" a language, students are paired with either "buddies" or groups.

Both of these are popular with international students – would be good to get "home" students and staff to attend.

 International Conversation (i-con) at the Community Hub, £2 Lunch, network with other International Students and meet friends.

Integration – BISC

BISC is the Bristol International Student Center, it is a Christian organisation that facilitates hosting in family homes at Christmas. BISC also offers trips in and around Bristol and further afield, year-round. BISC welcomes students of any faith and no faith.

Integration - Global Student Support

Global Student Support runs many events for international students, including daytrips and question and answer sessions on many relevant topics. These are listed on the Global Student Support Facebook page.

Students can also sign up for Global Pal sessions. Global Pal Leaders are international students themselves who can lend friendly and approachable first hand expertise, having gone through similar experiences themselves.

Study Skills – The ASC

The Academic Success Center runs drop in appointments with subject specific "Associate Support Lecturers", in addition to Study Skills workshops. Students can book hour long sessions with Assistant Lecturers on a weekly basis through InfoHub. Workshops help with study skills, such as writing a Literature Review and looking for academic resources but can also be briefed on the specific requirements of each discipline to provide tailored supports for modules currently running.

Key Benefits for Staff:

- Students can book hour long appointments with ASLs for more generic essay help.
- Tutors can give tailored workshops and one on one tutorials for your   module.
- The ASC can provide group work support and arbitration.

Study Skills – ELASU

The Centre for English Language and Academic Skills offer a wide range of English language support both before students start a degree (Pre-Sessional English) and during their studies. They offer courses across a variety of durations, specially designed with international students in mind.

Dropins: These vary every term, and during fixed times for each ELASU tutor.

Study Skills Workshops: Students can book on academic study skills workshops, available through the Library events page – be careful, because these workshops are marked as 'events', although they are part of ELASU.

Language courses: These courses can run across Semester One and Semester Two, or students can just do one semester. Although students attend ideally from session one, they can join at any time. It is necessary to purchase a course textbook. There are two levels and the course runs for 2 hours a week.

Registration sessions: the second week of term, these sessions can include testing for different levels, an introduction to the language courses, information, answer questions etc.

Key Benefits for Staff:

- Staff can direct students to language support through ELASU. If tutors do come across a student they see to be struggling, they are able to refer them to a language course even if it has already started as students are able to join after the first couple of weeks.

Study Skills – PAL & Global PAL

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is an academic support scheme where students trained in facilitation and coaching techniques plan and deliver study support sessions for other students. PAL aims to ease the transition into Higher Education and to provide support for students by other peer students. Students can find out which programmes at UWE offer PAL support here.

Students can sign up for Global Pal sessions. Global Pal are international students who can lend friendly and approachable first hand expertise, having gone through similar experiences themselves.

Study Skills – The Library

The Library has a wealth of subject specific resources. Browse here on the Library website.

The Library offers a 24 hour "Ask A Librarian" chat service. This is really useful to get urgent resource based questions answered quickly.

Study Skills – Espresso Maths

Espresso Maths is for all members of the academic community, who need help with maths or statistical problems. Details can be found here.

Language - ELASU

The Centre for English Language and Academic Skills offer a wide range of English language support both before students start a degree (Pre-Sessional English) and during their studies. They offer courses across a variety of durations, specially designed with international students in mind.

Dropins: These vary every term, and during fixed times for each ELASU tutor.

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Registration sessions: the second week of term, these sessions can include testing for different levels, an introduction to the language courses, information, answer questions etc.

Key issues for staff:

- Students not being referred early enough. If tutors do come across a student they see to be struggling, they are able to refer them to a language course even if it has already started as students are able to join after the first couple of weeks.
- Students not being able to sign up for study skills as they are confused about the sign up process/ what is being offered/ how is related to language courses. Staff could direct students to the sign up page on the Library website.

Language – Students Union

Student Networks are akin to societies but for specific identity groups. Notably active networks in UWE this semester have included Malaysian, African, Nigerian, Vietnamese.They meet usually a couple of times a month, they are run by students and primarily put on social events, but can offer support

Pippa Hyland can co-ordinate new networks, there is funding from the SU for this.

Networks are free to belong to.

Language – The ASC

The Academic Success Center runs drop in appointments with subject specific "Associate Support Lecturers", in addition to Study Skills workshops. Students can book hour long sessions with Assistant Lecturers on a weekly basis through InfoHub. Workshops help with study skills, such as writing a Literature Review and looking for academic resources.

Key Issues for Staff:

- Students can book hour long appointments with ASLs for more generic essay help.
- ASC tutors can examine and give advice and feedback on structure, with a discipline specific background.

Language – The Community Hub

The Language Café (Café Lingua) takes place on the first Wednesday of every month at the Octagon. There is a free slice of cake and coffee!

Students who come to café Lingua are also often signposted to "official" language services within Bristol.

The Language Exchange is an informal exchange of languages, students can "seek" or "give" a language, students are paired with either "buddies" or groups.

Both of these are popular with international students – would be good to get "home" students and staff to attend.

Welfare – The Students Union

The Advice Centre is independent from UWE academic structures and deals with housing, academic and monetary issues.

The Student Letting Agency – helpful, in students' interests and provides cheaper agency fees.

The UWE "Find a Flatmate" Facebook group helps students to find a suitable flatmates, within a group of other likeminded UWE students.

Student Networks are akin to societies but for specific identity groups. Notably active networks in UWE this semester have included Malaysian, African, Nigerian, Vietnamese. Student Networks meet usually a couple of times a month, they are run by students and primarily put on social events, but can additionally offer support.

Welfare – The Community Hub

 International Conversation (i-con) at the Community Hub, £2 Lunch, network with other International Students and meet friends.

Pastoral Care at the Octagon offers a reflection room, faith spaces, for quiet and alone time, support for students with faith needs, Buddhist Meditation and yoga

This is UWE's source of Faith and Spirituality resources, but offer a key source of wellbeing support – Ian Yemm University Chaplain is also a key contact for students with Pastoral needs, especially International Students.

Welfare – BISC

BISC is the Bristol International Student Center, it is a Christian organisation that facilitates hosting in family homes at Christmas. BISC also offers trips in and around Bristol and further afield, year-round.

Welfare - Global Student Support

Global Student Support runs many events for international students, including question and answer sessions, support in setting up a bank account, money matters and other key information. These are listed on the Global Student Support Facebook page.

Welfare – Student Visa Support Service

Students can find and attend drop in sessions, run every weekday morning. Students can ask questions, have their documents checked, and organise an appointment to submit their documents to UKVI.

Key Contacts

The Community Hub

Name	Role	Email	Phone
The Community Hub		communityhub@uwe.ac.uk	(0)117 32 82334
Ian Yemm	Pastor (Pastoral care and support/ BISC contact)	Ian.Yemm@uwe.ac.uk	(0)117 32 81918
Rachel Colley	Experience and Enrichment Project Officer (Volunteering, Café Lingua)	Rachel2.Colley@uwe.ac.uk	(0)117 32 82010

Global Student Support

Name	Role	Email	Phone
Global PAL Enquiries		pal@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 86463
Global Student Support Team		globalstudents@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 86964

Welfare

Name	Role	Email	Phone
The University Health Center			0117 32 86666
BISC	Bristol International Student Center	bisc@bisc.org.uk	0117 9159826

		advice@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 82676
Advice Centre, The Students Union		advice@uwe.ac.uk	0117 32 82676
Student Advisers, UWE			0117 32 85678.

The ASC

Name	Role	Email	Phone
Craig Whittaker	Lead Academic Support Tutor	Craig.Whittaker@uwe.ac.uk	(0)117 32 83422

UWE SU

Name	Role	Email	Phone
Philippa Hyland	Campaigns and Community Support Officer	Philippa.Hyland@uwe.ac.uk	
Scarlett Oliver	VP Community & Welfare	Globalstudents@uwe.ac.uk	

The English Language and Academic Skills Unit

Name	Role	Email	Phone
David Phelan		academic.skills@uwe.ac.uk.	