Academic Hospitality for International Students

in Higher Education:

Building Guidelines for Academic and Non-Academic Staff

IO3 TRAINING MODULES DESIGN

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Editors:

Gabe van der Zwaag and Jenny Chen (Stichting Business Development Freisland)

Contributors:

Aylin Poroy Arsoy, Ruyam Kucuksuleymanoglu, Yasemin Ertan, Tuba Bora Kilincarslan, Olcay Bektas (Bursa Uludag University)

Ganite KURT, Pinar Gokten and Orhon Can Dagtekin (Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University)

Tugba Ucma Uysal and Ceray Aldemir(Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University)

Asli Ocal and Gokhan Kivrak (International Murad Hudavendigar AIH High School)

Carmen Rodrigues Santos (Universidad de Leon)

Padraig Gallagher and Paul McCusker (Letterkenny Institute of Technology)

Audrone Rackauskiene (Kauno Technologijos Universitetas)

Academic Hospitality for International Students in Higher Education:

Building Guidelines for Academic and Non-Academic Staff

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"AcHopInt"

Coordinator:

Partners:

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MODULE 1

CULTURE

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Introduction

According to UNESCO's latest data, there are over 4,8 million international students around the world. They mostly enrolled in education programs in the USA and Europe. Eurostat 2016 data shows that at least 1,6 million international students are undertaking their higher education in the E.U. Member States. Around 120 thousand international students enrolled in Turkey according to the Turkish Higher Education Council data.

The increasing number of international students in Europe makes valuable contributions to national economies, inter-state strategic collaborations, human resource development, and community-based social-cultural development of the Member States. However, this cultural diversity causes significant problems in higher education institutions.

That is why we start with the subject of culture in this first module of the Academic Hospitality Curriculum. Because this subject is so broad and is known for its various forms, academic- and non-academic staff will learn about the fundamental cultural terms such as awareness, perception and differences, why adaptation and communication are essential. The objective of this module is to help university staff in self-understanding and broaden their cultural perspective.

Curriculum

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- ▪ Understand some the complexity of culture.
- ▪ Understand how different cultures are perceived.
- ▪ Understand how cultural conflicts originate.

Competences and Skills:

- ▪ Know how to be more self-aware.
- ▪ Know techniques to adapt to a different culture.
- ▪ Know how to learn from different cultures.
- ▪ Know how to communicate multiculturally.

What is Culture?

Common elements in a culture

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. The Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition goes a step further, defining culture as shared patterns of behaviour and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialisation. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group.

"Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things," Cristina De Rossi, an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London, told Live Science.

The word "culture" derives from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. "It shares its etymology with several other words related to actively fostering growth," De Rossi said. (Zimmermann, 2017)

Cultural differences and cultural relativism

The very first step, when getting to know a new culture, is self-awareness. Logical: before a comparison is made or perspective can be seen, it is essential first to learn the basics. In this case, that is the closest thing to oneself, namely the person in question. In other words, cultural awareness starts with self-awareness.

Self-awareness is the ability individual to know something is happening to an individual itself, and to understand why it is happening, what the reaction is to that stimulus and the effect generated by that stimulus.

Self-awareness is the ability to know what you are doing and understand why are you doing it. It happens when a person becomes the object of their attention. Self-awareness is all about understanding who you are, what are you doing, how you do it, and what impact do you have on others. Self-awareness is knowing yourself. (Vulture, 2019)

Exercise in self-awareness

For more information regarding self-awareness and to go into the material in detail, it is recommended to watch the video below. Some exercises can be useful. The full course takes

about an hour and a half, the part about self-awareness takes about 15 minutes. To do this, go to 18:22 of the video.

It is, of course, also recommended watching the entire video course. It will delve deeper into topics such as values, approaches to communication, approaches to teamwork, dealing with conflict and self-development.

The tool linked below is used to explore individual cultural competence. It helps to consider one's skills, knowledge, and self-awareness when interacting with others. Its goal is to assist in recognising which aspects can be improved when working and living in a diverse environment.

The above test will most likely reveal things that people were not aware of and where improvements can be made. The following link offers 15 short assignments that help improve self-understanding.

Constant change

It does not matter what culture someone belongs to or has their roots from; all these cultures will change over time. "Culture appears to have become key in our interconnected world, which is made up of so many ethnically diverse societies, but also riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, ethical beliefs, and, essentially, the elements which make up culture," De Rossi said. "But culture is no longer fixed if it ever was. It is essentially fluid and constantly in motion." This makes it so that it is difficult to define any culture in only one way.

While change is inevitable, the past should also be respected and preserved. The United Nations has created a group called The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to identify cultural and natural heritage and to conserve and protect it. Monuments, building and sites are covered by the group's protection, according to the international treaty, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This treaty was adopted by UNESCO in 1972. (Zimmermann, 2017)

Culture is always in flux, as conditions change, cultural groups adapt in dynamic and sometimes unpredictable ways.

Multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural

What is the difference between multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural? While they all might be under the same roof, they describe entirely different rooms. The differences in the meanings have to do with the perspectives we take when interacting with people from other cultures.

Multicultural refers to a society that contains several cultural or ethnic groups. People live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other. For example, in a multicultural neighbourhood, people may frequent ethnic grocery stores and restaurants without really interacting with their neighbours from other countries.

Cross-cultural deals with the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are understood and acknowledged and can bring about personal change, but not collective transformations. In cross-cultural societies, one culture is often considered "the norm" and all other cultures are compared or contrasted to the dominant culture.

Intercultural describes communities in which there are a deep understanding and respect for all cultures. Intercultural communication focuses on the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the development of deep relationships. In an intercultural society, no one is left unchanged because everyone learns from one another and grows together. (Schriefer, 2016)

Cultural conflicts

Cultures are embedded in every conflict because conflicts arise in human relationships. Cultures affect the ways we name, frame, blame and attempt to tame conflicts. Whether a conflict exists at all is a cultural question. In an interview conducted in Canada, an elderly Chinese man indicated he had experienced no conflict at all for the previous 40 years. Among the possible reasons for his denial was a cultural preference to see the world through lenses of harmony rather than conflict, as encouraged by his Confucian upbringing. Labelling some of our interactions as conflicts and analysing them into smaller parts is a distinctly Western approach that may obscure other aspects of relationships.

Origins of cultural conflict

Culture is always a factor within a conflict, whether it plays a central role or has a subtle and gentle influence on it. For any dispute that touches us where it matters, where we make meaning and hold our identities, there is always a cultural component. Intractable conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir are not just about territorial, boundaries, and sovereignty issues. They are also about acknowledgement, representation, and legitimisation of different identities and ways of living, being, and create meaning.

Conflicts between teenagers and parents are shaped by generational culture, and disputes between spouses or partners are influenced by gender culture. In organisations, conflicts arising from different disciplinary cultures escalate tensions between co-workers, creating strained or inaccurate communication and stressed relationships. Culture permeates conflict,

no matter what. Sometimes pushing forth with intensity, other times quietly snaking along, hardly announcing its presence until surprised people nearly stumble on it.

Culture is inextricable from conflict, though it does not cause it. When differences surface in families, organisations, or communities, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes.

When the cultural groups we belong to are a large majority in our community or nation, we are less likely to be aware of the content of the messages they send us. Cultures shared by dominant groups often seem to be "natural," "normal" or "the way things are done." We only notice the effect of cultures that are different from our own, attending to behaviours that we label exotic or strange.

Though culture intertwines with conflict, some approaches to conflict resolution minimise cultural issues and influences. Since culture is like an iceberg (mostly submerged), it is essential to include that in our analyses and interventions. Icebergs unacknowledged can be dangerous, and it is impossible to make choices about them if we don't know their size or place. Acknowledging culture and bringing cultural fluency to conflicts can help all kinds of people make more intentional, adaptive choices. (LeBaron, 2003)

Solutions to cultural conflict

Given culture's important role in conflicts, what should be done to keep it in mind and include it in response plans? Cultures may act like temperamental children: complicated, elusive, and difficult to predict. Unless we develop comfort with culture as an integral part of the conflict, we may find ourselves tangled in its net of complexity, limited by our own cultural lenses. Cultural fluency is a crucial tool for disentangling and managing multi-layered, cultural conflicts.

Cultural fluency means familiarity with cultures: their natures, how they work, and ways they intertwine with our relationships in times of conflict and harmony. Cultural fluency means awareness of several dimensions of culture, including:

- Communication
- Ways of naming, framing, and taming conflict
- Approaches to create meaning
- Identities and roles

Communication

Communication refers to different starting points about how to relate to and with others. Some of the significant variations relate to the division between high- and low-context communications, a classification devised by Edward T. Hall.

In high-context communication, most of a message is conveyed by the context surrounding it, rather than being named explicitly in words. The physical setting, the way things are said, and shared understandings are relied upon to give communication meaning. Interactions feature formalised and stylised rituals, telegraphing ideas without spelling them out. Nonverbal cues and signals are essential to the comprehension of the message. The context is trusted to communicate in the absence of verbal expressions, or sometimes in addition to them. High-context communication may help save face because it is less direct than low-context communication. Still, it may increase the possibilities of miscommunication because much of the intended message is unstated.

Low-context communication emphasises directness rather than relying on the context to communicate. From this starting point, verbal communication is specific and literal, and less is conveyed in implied, indirect signals. Low-context communicators tend to "say what they mean and mean what they say." Low-context communication may help prevent misunderstandings, but it can also escalate conflict because it is more contentious than high-context communication.

As people communicate, they move along a continuum between high- and low-context. Depending on the kind of relationship, the context, and the purpose of communication, they may be more or less explicit and direct. In close relationships, communication shorthand is often used, which makes communication opaque to outsiders but clear to the parties. With strangers, the same people may choose low-context communication.

Low- and high-context communication refers not only to individual communication strategies but may be used to understand cultural groups. Generally, Western cultures tend to gravitate toward low-context starting points, while Eastern and Southern cultures tend to high-context communication. Within these vast categories, there are substantial differences and many variations. Where high-context communication tends to be featured, it is useful to pay specific attention to nonverbal cues and the behaviour of others who may know more of the unstated rules governing the communication. Where low-context communication is the norm, directness is likely to be expected in return.

Naming, framing and taming

Ways of naming, framing, and taming conflict vary across cultural boundaries. As the example of the elderly Chinese interviewee illustrates, not everyone agrees on what constitutes a conflict. For those accustomed to the subdued, calm discussion, an emotional exchange among family members may seem a threatening conflict. The family members themselves may look at their interaction as a regular and desirable airing of differing views. Intractable conflicts are also subject to different interpretations. Is an event a skirmish, a provocation, an escalation, or a mere trifle, hardly worth noticing? The answer depends on perspective, context, and how identity relates to the situation.

Just as there is no consensus across cultures or situations on what constitutes a conflict or how events in the interaction should be framed, so there are many different ways of thinking about how to tame it. Should those involved meet face to face, sharing their perspectives and stories with or without the help of an outside mediator? Or should a trusted friend talk with each of those involved and try to help smooth the waters? Should a third party be known to the parties or a stranger to those involved?

John Paul Lederach, in his book Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures, identifies two third-party roles that exist in U.S. and Somali settings, respectively — the formal mediator and the traditional elder. The legal mediator is generally not known to those involved, and he or she tries to act without favouritism or investment in any particular outcome. Traditional elders are revered for their local knowledge and relationships and are relied upon for direction and advice, as well as for their skills in helping parties communicate with each other. The roles of insider partial (someone known to the parties which are familiar with the history of the situation and the webs of relationships) and outsider neutral (someone unknown to the parties who has no stake in the outcome or continuing relationship with the parties) appear in a range of cultural contexts. Generally, insider partials tend to be preferred in traditional, high-context settings, while outside neutrals are more common in low-context stages.

These are just some of the ways that taming conflict varies across cultures. Third parties may use different strategies with entirely different goals, depending on their cultural sense of what is needed. In multicultural contexts, parties' expectations of how the conflict should be addressed may vary, further escalating an existing dispute.

Approaches to meaning-making also vary across cultures. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars suggest that people have a range of starting points for making sense of their lives, including:

- universalistic (favouring rules, laws, and generalisations) and particularistic (favouring exceptions, relations, and contextual evaluation)

- specificity (preferring explicit definitions, breaking down wholes into component parts, and measurable results) and diffuseness (focusing on patterns, the big picture, and process over outcome)

- inner direction (sees virtue in individuals who strive to realise their conscious purpose) and outer direction (where virtue is outside each of us in natural rhythms, nature, beauty, and relationships)

- synchronous time (cyclical and spiralling) and sequential time (linear and unidirectional).

When we don't understand that others may have quite different starting points, conflict is more likely to occur and to escalate. Even though the starting points themselves are neutral, negative motives are easily attributed to someone who begins from a different end of the continuum.

For example, when First Nations people sit down with government representatives to negotiate land claims in Canada or Australia, different ideas of time may make it difficult to establish rapport and make progress. First Nations people tend to see time as stretching forward and back, binding them in relationship with seven generations in both directions. Their actions and choices in the present are thus relevant to history and their progeny. Government negotiators acculturated to Western European ideas of time may find the telling of historical tales and the consideration of projections generations into the future tedious and irrelevant unless they understand First Nations people understand the variations in the way time. Of course, this example draws on generalisations that may or may not apply in a particular situation. There are many different Aboriginal people in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and elsewhere. Each has a distinct culture, and these cultures have other relationships to time, different ideas about negotiation, and unique identities. Government negotiators may also have a range of ethnic, cultural identities. They may not fit the stereotype of the woman or man in a hurry, with a measured, pressured orientation toward time.

Examples can also be drawn from the other three dimensions identified by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars. When an intractable conflict has been ongoing for years or even generations, should there be recourse to international standards and interveners, or local rules and practices? Those favouring a universalist starting point are more likely to prefer international intervention and the setting of international standards. Particularists will be more comfortable with a tailor-made, home-grown approach than with the imposition of general rules that may or may not fit their needs and context.

Specificity and diffuseness also lead to conflict and conflict escalation in many instances. People, who speak in specifics, looking for practical solutions to challenges that can be implemented and measured, may find those who focus on process, feelings, and the big picture obstructionist and frustrating. On the other hand, those whose starting points are diffuse are more apt to catch

the flaw in the sum that is not easy to detect by looking at the parts and to see the context into which specific ideas must fit.

Inner-directed people tend to feel confident that they can affect change, believing that they are "the masters of their fate, the captains of their souls." [7] They focus more on product than process. Imagine their frustration when faced with outer-directed people, whose attention goes to nurturing relationships, living in harmony with nature, going with the flow, and paying attention to processes rather than products. As with each of the above sets of starting points, neither is right or wrong; they are merely different. A focus on process is helpful, but not if it completely fails to ignore outcomes. A focus on results is useful, but it is also essential to monitor the tone and direction of the process. Cultural fluency means being aware of different sets of starting points, and having a way to speak in both dialects, helping translate between them when they are making the conflict worse.

Approaches to create meaning

These continua are not absolute, nor do they explain human relations broadly. They are clues to what might be happening when people conflict over long periods. We are meaning-making creatures, telling stories and creating understandings that preserve our sense of self and relate to our purpose. As we come to realise this, we can look into the process of meaning-making for those in a conflict and find ways to help them make their meaning-making methods and conclusions more apparent to each other. This can be done by storytelling and by the creation of shared stories, stories that are co-constructed to make room for multiple points of view within them. Often, people in a conflict say words that sound as though both cannot be true. Narrative conflict-resolution approaches help them leave their concern with truth and being right on the side-line for a time, turning their attention instead to stories in which they can both see themselves.

Another way to explore meaning-making is through metaphors. Metaphors are compact, tightly packaged word pictures that convey a great deal of information in shorthand form. For example, in exploring how a conflict began, one side may talk about its origins being buried in the mists of time before there were boundaries and roads and written laws. The other may see it as the offspring of a vexatious lawsuit begun in 1946. Neither is wrong — the issue may well have deep roots, and the lawsuit was undoubtedly a part of the evolution of the conflict. As the two sides talk about their metaphors, the more diffuse starting point wrapped up in the mists of time meets the more specific one, attached to a particular legal action. As the two talk, they deepen their understanding of each other in context and learn more about their respective roles and identities.

Identities and roles

Identities and roles refer to conceptions of the self. Am I an individual unit, autonomous, a free agent or ultimately responsible for myself? Or am I first and foremost a member of a group, weighing choices and actions by how the group will perceive them and be affected by them? Those who see themselves as separate individuals likely come from societies anthropologists call individualist. Those for whom group allegiance is primary usually come from settings anthropologists call collectivist, or communitarian.

In collectivist settings, the following values tend to be privileged:

- cooperation
- filial piety (respect for and deference toward elders)
- participation in shared progress
- the reputation of the group
- interdependence

In individualist settings, the following values tend to be privileged:

- competition
- independence
- individual achievement
- personal growth and fulfilment
- self-reliance

When individualist and communitarian starting points influence those on either side of a conflict, escalation may result. Individualists may see no problem with "no holds barred" confrontation, while communitarian counterparts shrink from bringing dishonour or face-loss to their group by behaving in unseemly ways. Individualists may expect to make agreements with communitarians and may feel betrayed when the latter indicates that they have to take their understandings back to a broader public or group before they can come to a closure. In the end, one should remember that, as with other patterns described, most people are not purely individualist or communitarian. Instead, people tend to have individualist or communitarian starting points, depending on one's upbringing, experience, and the context of the situation. (LeBaron, 2003)

Culture shock

For international students, living abroad can be an exhilarating experience that encourages new world views, increases cultural curiosity and supports a willingness to explore unfamiliar terrains. However, it may also invite a sense of feeling a little lost in the world.

Culture shock is a common phenomenon and, though it may take months to develop, it often affects travellers and people living far from home in unexpected ways. Culture shock is more than merely being unfamiliar with social norms or experiencing new foods, and it tends to impact travellers even after they've become familiar with and comfortable in new cultures.

Culture shock generally moves through four different phases: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment and acceptance. While individuals experience these stages differently and the impact and order of each step vary widely, they do provide a guideline of how we adapt and cope with new cultures.

The four stages of culture shock

The Honeymoon Stage

The first stage of culture shock is often overwhelmingly positive during which travellers become infatuated with the language, people and food in their new surroundings. At this stage, the trip or move seems like the most fantastic decision ever made, an exciting adventure to stay on forever.

On short trips, the honeymoon phase may take over the entire experience as the later effects of culture shock don't have time to set in. On longer trips, the honeymoon stage will usually phase out eventually.

The Frustration Stage

Frustration may be the most challenging stage of culture shock and is probably familiar to anyone who has lived abroad or who travels frequently. At this stage, the fatigue of not understanding gestures, signs and the language sets in and miscommunications may often be happening. Small things — losing keys, missing the bus or not being able to order food in a restaurant easily — may trigger frustration. And while frustration comes and goes, it's a natural reaction for people spending extended time in new countries.

Bouts of depression or homesickness and feelings of longing to go home where things are familiar and comfortable are all common during the frustration stage.

The Adjustment Stage

Frustrations are often subdued as travellers begin to feel more familiar and comfortable with the cultures, people, food and languages of new environments. Navigation becomes easier, friends and communities of support are established, and details of local languages may become more recognisable during the adjustment stage.

The Acceptance Stage

Generally — though sometimes weeks, months or years after wrestling with the emotional stages outlined above — the final stage of culture shock is acceptance. Acceptance doesn't mean that new cultures or environments are entirely understood; rather, it signifies realisation that complete understanding isn't necessary to function and thrive in the new surroundings. During the acceptance stage, travellers have the familiarity and can draw together the resources they need to feel at ease. (The 4 Stages of Culture Shock, 2016)

Cultural adaptation

By adapting to a foreign culture, you can overcome your culture shock and develop meaningful relationships with those around you, rather than feeling anxious and confused in your new space. The following seven steps may help students to overcome a culture shock.

1. Keep an open mind. Do not automatically perceive anything different from being "wrong". Withholding judgment will allow you to be an objective observer and will facilitate the process of cross-cultural understanding. Also, if you are going to a country with which you know close to nothing about, do a little background information. As you learn about the country in which you are going to, keeping an open mind is necessary, and, who knows, you may find the reason for something you may not understand.

2. Make an effort to learn the local language. This increases your communication skills, and it helps you to integrate with the local community. It also demonstrates your interest in the new country.

3. Get acquainted with the social conduct of your new environment. Do not assume or interpret behaviour from your own cultural perspective or "filter". Behaviour is not data. For example, Americans often use the phrase "How are you?" to mean "hello" or "I acknowledge your presence as I pass you in the hall." A foreigner may wonder why Americans don't respond in detail to this question about one's well-being. Thus they may interpret the behaviour of walking away before one has a chance to respond to the question to be "uncaring", "superficial" or even "rude". An American knows otherwise and would probably not be offended that someone did not take the time to respond to this question. Remember: If in doubt, check it out!

4. Do not take cultural familiarity or knowledge at face-value. Even as you become savvier about rituals, customs and protocol in your new environment, be careful not to attribute an explanation or rationale to what you now believe you know. A little bit of knowledge can be misleading. Psychologist Geert Hofstede wrote that 'culture' is like an onion that can be peeled, layer by layer, to reveal the content. It takes a long time to really understand a culture in its social and historical context.

5. Make sure you get to know people in your new environment. Respectfully ask questions, read newspapers, and attend a variety of festivals and events.

6. Try to achieve a sense of stability in your life. Establishing a routine will give you a feeling of safety.

7. Maintain a sense of humour; this is crucial. Don't be too hard on yourself if you make a cultural gaffe or don't know what to do in a social situation. Laugh at yourself, and others will laugh with you. Most individuals will admire your tenacity and effort to understand their ways, especially if you are devoid of judgment and cultural comparisons that subtly and perhaps unconsciously convey a veil of superiority.

(How to Overcome Culture Shock in a Foreign Country, 2020)

Cross-cultural communication

It's no secret that today's work- and study environment are rapidly becoming vast, as the business and university environment expands to include various geographic locations and span numerous cultures. What can be difficult, however, is understanding how to communicate effectively with individuals who speak another language, or who rely on different means to reach a common goal.

Cross-Cultural Communication – The New Norm

The internet and modern technology have opened up new marketplaces that allow us to promote our businesses to new geographic locations and cultures. And given that it can now be as easy to work with people remotely as it is to work face-to-face, cross-cultural communication is increasingly the new norm.

After all, if communication is electronic, it's as easy to work with someone in another country as it is to work with someone in the next town.

And why limit yourself to working with people within convenient driving distance when, just as conveniently, you can do with the most knowledgeable people in the entire world?

For those of us who are native English-speakers, it is fortunate that English seems to be the language that people use if they want to reach the broadest possible audience. However, even

for native English speakers, cross-cultural communication can be an issue: just witness the mutual incomprehension that can sometimes arise between people from different English-speaking countries.

In this new world, good cross-cultural communication is a must.

While many companies now offer training in the different cultures where the company conducts business, it is essential that employees communicating across cultures practise patience and work to increase their knowledge and understanding of these cultures. This requires the ability to see that a person's own behaviours and reactions are often culturally driven and that while they may not match our own, they are culturally appropriate.

Suppose a leader or manager of a team that is working across cultures or incorporates individuals who speak different languages, practice other religions, or are members of a society that requires a new understanding. In that case, he or she needs to work to convey this.

Consider any special needs the individuals on your team may have. For instance, they may observe different holidays or even have other hours of operation. Be mindful of time zone differences and work to keep everyone involved aware and respectful of such differences.

Generally speaking, patience, courtesy, and a bit of curiosity go a long way. And, if you are unsure of any differences that may exist, simply ask team members. Again, this may best be done in a one-on-one setting so that no one feels "put on the spot" or self-conscious, perhaps even embarrassed, about discussing their own needs or differences or needs.

Demand Mutual Acceptance

Next, cultivate and demand mutual acceptance and understanding. In doing this, a little education will usually do the trick. Explain to team members that the part of the team that works out of the Australia office, for example, will be working in a different time zone, so electronic communications and return phone calls will experience a delay. And, members of the India office will also observe other holidays (such as Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday, celebrated on October 2).

Most people will appreciate the information and will work hard to understand different needs and different means used to reach common goals. However, when this is not the case, led by example and make it clear that you expect to be followed down a path of open-mindedness, understanding and acceptance.

❖ **Tip:** Acceptance is essential. However, you need to maintain standards of moral behaviour. The following "rules of thumb" seem universal:

- Team members should contribute to and not hinder the team's mission or harm the delivery to the team's customer

- Team members should not damage the cohesion of the team or prevent it from becoming more effective

- Team members should not unnecessarily harm the interests of other team members.

- National law is (obviously) important

When dealing with people in a different culture, courtesy and goodwill can also go a long way in ensuring successful communication. Again, this should be insisted on.

If your starting point in solving problems is to assume that communication has failed, you'll find that many issues are quickly resolved.

Keep It Simple

When you communicate, keep in mind that even though English is considered the international language of business, it is a mistake to assume that every businessperson speaks good English. In fact, only about half of the 800 million people who speak English learned it as a first language. And, those who speak it as a second language are often more limited than native speakers.

When you communicate cross-culturally, make particular efforts to keep your communication clear, unambiguous and straightforward.

And (sadly) avoid humour until you know that the person you're communicating with "gets it" and isn't offended by it. Humour is notoriously culture-specific: many things that pass for humour in one culture can be seen as grossly offensive in another.

Get Help If You Need It

Finally, if language barriers present themselves, it may be in everyone's best interest to employ a reliable, experienced translator. Because English is not the first language of many international businesspeople, their use of the language may be peppered with culture-specific or non-standard English phrases, which can hamper the communication process. Again, having a translator on hand (even if just during the initial phases of work) may be the best solution here. The translator can help everyone involved to recognise cultural and communication differences and ensure that all parties, regardless of geographic location and background, come together and stay together through successful project completion.

MODULE 2

TEACHING ISSUES

CONTENT

Introduction

Teaching international students can be a challenging but also pleasant task. Although commonly most educational systems around the world have common characteristics, they also have numerous differences between themselves. Most of these differences come from the cultural, political and historical contexts of the countries in which these education systems are based. For example, education systems in Eastern Europe and Eastern Asia put more emphasis on memorizing facts and doing well at exams. In contrast, education systems from Western Europe put a lot of focus on creativity and a more practical and workplace approach. The differences themselves are mostly harmless, and most students can adapt very quickly to any education system, but some aspects can ruin the international experience of international students. Thus, the purpose of the present model is to give advice and present how lecturers can improve the experience of international students. Many of the methods presented in this module will also enhance the learning experience of domestic students.

Curriculum

Expected learning outcomes:

- Understand the most common issues faced by international students

- Understand how better to organize your work to best deal with these issues

- Understand how to improve your teaching skills regarding international students

Competences and skill:

- Teaching skills: learn how to teach international students better

- Cultural skills: learn how to better adapt to different international cultures and how to better interact with them

Communication

Communicate expectations and course rules very clearly. In this regard, read and explain the syllabus clearly on the first-course day. Although this sounds like an unnecessary activity because students are expected to read the syllabus by themselves and understand it, this is not always true for several reasons. First of all, many universities in different countries do not necessarily make a course syllabus. Instead, the teacher is expected to present the rules and assignment to the students in person at the beginning of the course. Thus, explaining the syllabus form the front will create an equal playing field for students of all cultures. Secondly, this syllabus will act a contract between the lecturer and the students, so if a student has complaints about different course elements such as grading or deadlines, the lecturer can always point to the syllabus. Thirdly, the syllabus will also be essential for students who miss the first day of lectures. This is important because international students especially can experience numerous issues that could prevent them from attending the first day of class. Such events can include visa problems, travel issues (e.g. aeroplanes getting cancelled), legal issues (e.g. they have to be present at a government's office on that day to be registered). The same can be true for domestic students also. Consequently, having a well done and comprehensive course syllabus will make life much easier for students at the beginning of a class. It will also make life easier for the lecturers themselves since they will receive fewer questions from students regarding information that will be in the syllabus.

The syllabus itself should contain at least the following information categories: course rules, required materials (e.g. books), evaluation, deadlines and grading methods. Some details are essential for each information category because again, cultural differences can generate different expectations for each. The most important information will be explained next. In terms of course-rules always mention if attendance is mandatory or not since, in many universities, students are not expected to participate in every class. In contrast, in other universities, attendance for every class is mandatory. This again differs based on country and culture. For example, in western countries, most of the time, students are not required to have compulsory attendance since it is considered their responsibility to be in class. In other countries, attendance is mandatory at almost every class and failing to come to class can result in expulsion from the course.

In terms of course materials always mention the full edition of the book that students can purchase and, if possible, which previous versions of the books can be used. Some international students, due to financial constraints, cannot afford new books for all courses, and they might not be able to purchase the text in the first place. Thus, they might lose their confidence in their ability to pass the class, and their performance will suffer. In terms of deadlines, always mention the hour when materials should be submitted. For example, when a student reads

that the deadline is 10th of September he or she might consider that the deadline is on 10th of September until the end of the day when in fact it is intended to be 12 at noon. Even though you might mention in class that all deadlines are at noon, some students might not be present in that other class, and they will only remember the old information on the syllabus.

Study materials

Always make high quality, easily affordable, self-sufficient, self-explanatory materials that allow the student enough autonomy. The study materials that a lecturer offers international students is vital towards their success. To help international students, lecturers should apply the following measures: (Warwick, 2006)

a. Always use as many free resources as possible. As mentioned previously, international students have limited funds. Moreover, students are required to purchase materials for more than one course. Thus, both international and domestic students can struggle if multiple classes need them to buy expensive materials. Doing so can lead to outcomes such as the student deciding not to attend the course anymore or not studying for the exam, which in turn will affect their motivation. Several solutions exist to this problem. The first solutions would be to use a free version of a book which is available through the university library.

Nevertheless, some universities have specific contracts with companies that mandate that they offer only individual books to the students. In that case, the lecturer can check if the book comes with additional material such as free summaries or slides that he or she can distribute among the students. The lecturer can also opt to allow students to scan or to read his version of the book after class. This is specifically important in the case where the course involves homework because the students require the answer sheet present in the book to check if their task is done correctly. Lecturers can also petition university leadership to allow them to use more readily available resources for their courses.

b. Tying in with the previous point is the usage of the course slides. Slides are an essential part of teaching. The lecturers and students that make these tend to use them more often because it contains the information that the teacher considers to be relevant. The course slides, in many courses, are often the only material that the lecturer will directly create for the students. Moreover, students from cultures where purchasing books is not the norm usually only use the course slide for their study. Thus, in an international learning environment, the course slides become more critical.

Consequently, the following measures should be taken when designing the course slides. First of all, they must contain as much information as they can to the point where they can exist as a self-sufficient substitute to the book. This is mainly to accommodate international students who come from more unique cultures and international students who cannot afford the study material. This will also boost the international student's confidence

and create a trust-based relationship with the lecturer since, for a lot of international student's professors are authority figures. At the same time, the book is considered just a supplementary material.

c. Avoid using too many sources for one course because this can become confusing for international students and make sure that the sources that you are using cover all the necessary materials for the exam. In general, all of the information should be present in the slides and the course textbook. Avoid measures such as putting some information on the slides, leaving some information to be studied from the course textbook, telling students to learn other bits of information from a website, other bits from a YouTube video etc.

Examinations

Examinations are the most stressful part of the life of any student. Besides, tests sometimes vary depending on the country where they are examined. Some countries emphasize memorizing numerous facts for exams; others emphasize more creative approaches. Moreover, the way students are required to study for exams differs in each country. For example, in some countries, students only have to rely on the slides for an exam. In contrast, in other countries, students are required to use more specialized resources (research papers) to obtain extra points at an exam and potentially get the highest mark. The following set of rules will allow you to improve the experience of international students during exams.

1. Base evaluations specifically on the material you provided for the students during class. This is a common mistake a lot of lecturers, mostly from educational systems that rely more on independence and creativity do. In class, they present a number of general concepts, and they expect students to research the concepts that are not covered in course. This is a wrong approach because, in many cultures, students consider that they are only required to study what was taught during class. Students expect the exam to reflect the study material mentioned in official course documents.

2. When having more creative assignments such as analytical papers, research papers or essays always make sure to have strict grading criteria and to offer an example of what a "good" report looks like. What a "good" research paper looks like is dependent on the personal perception of the student as well as the culture of the student. For example, what counts as a "good" project by Dutch and German standards might not be considered a good project by Russian or Turkish means. The idea is not that one set of standards are better than another, just that they are different, and they might confuse the student. Here cultural bias plays a large role. For example, an Italian who has studied his entire life in the Italian education system will have probably written school essays based on the standards set by Italian professors. Thus, you begin to accept those standards as "the norm", and you consider those standards to apply to everyone.

Nevertheless, a Korean student who has studied his or her entire life in the South-Korean education system will have a different version of what is a good essay. Thus, if you grade the South-Korean's article based on Italian standards, the Korean student will receive a lower grade than expected and may consider that he or she was mistreated. Offering one or more examples on the course website of what a good paper should look like will establish a standard that all students can follow. A common counter-argument for this solution is that, if provided with an example, all students will follow it, and that will stifle their creativity. Nevertheless, this counter-argument is wrong for many reasons. First of all, an educational institution should have clear standards for grading since students rely on those standards to model their work. After all; a paper cannot be graded if the standards are not clear. In this regards, standardization and clarity should be prioritized. Secondly, having examples of how a work should look like does not lower creativity, and there are methods to prevent this, such as selecting a topic different from that present on the example paper. The subject, although different, can be tackled using the same methods as in the sample paper so the student can both be evaluated based on a standard set of criteria and he can also exhibit his creativity.

Office hours

Office hours are crucial because it allows international students to talk one on one with the lecturer. This is important for international students because often they lack the confidence to ask the lecturer questions in front of other students. This can be due to factors such as anxiety about asking questions in front of students of different cultures who might negatively perceive their questions. In other countries, it is also not that common to ask questions in front of large gatherings. (Elturki, 2018)(Pinantoan, 2012)

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is also a topic that needs to be seen from a cultural point of view because the standards for academic integrity differ between cultures. In some cultures, academic integrity rules are stricter while in others more relaxed. Nevertheless, that doesn't mean that students from different cultures cannot adapt to more stringent academic rules. They can, but they were not required to do so in the past. Consequently, similarly to the course rule, academic integrity should be explained to students at the beginning of the class or the beginning of the academic year. The rules themselves should be very exact and precise. For example, students should be told what maximum percentage of the words in one of their essays should be quoted instead of being described a more generic term such as "as little as possible".

Moreover, different examples should be given to students about what the university considers constitutes a plagiarised work. Finally, the university should have clear punishment guidelines

for plagiarism cases. For example, in the first case of plagiarism, the student can receive an official warning while in the second case of plagiarism, they will fail the course. At the third case of plagiarism, they can be expelled. Nevertheless, these punishment guidelines should be published and made known to the students beforehand since students from different cultures have different expectations when it comes to punishments related to plagiarism.

Communication during class

To avoid any discrimination, communication must be neutral concerning issues such as nationality, gender, race, sexual orientations etc. This should be easy to do for most lecturers since their courses do not involve dealing with such topics. Nevertheless, here are some guidelines that will help neutrally conduct a class. (Hall, 2018)

a. Be sensitive towards terminology and always educate yourself on different topics beforehand. For example, some people like to call all Britons as "English" and use the two terms interchangeably. Nevertheless, people from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland might disagree with the terminology since England is a separate cultural and historical region. Another example is if you describe something as "American". Although this terminology in Europe and Asia is mostly used to refer to USA citizens, people from Canada, Mexico, Brazil and Argentine also consider themselves "Americans" because they reside in the North American and South American continents.

In the same way, describing all Middle Eastern students as Arabs is not accurate since many ethnicities live in the Middle East. In general, always be respectful and neutral towards cultures. Lecturers are role models for their students, and students will pick up after the lecturer. Always intervene when you notice insensitive cultural behaviour from students. Interventions can mean anything from a verbal warning to reporting the offending students to the responsible university authorities.

b. Be inclusive when communicating. For example, use both the terms "he" or "she" when talking about students in general.

c. Use visuals when teaching. The language barrier can be difficult to overcome even for students who are proficient in a foreign language. By using visual aids, you will also allow international students to learn words more quickly since they will enable them to associate your comments with the images.

Educate yourself

Every culture has its particularities. After a class starts start researching the significant cultural specificities of students in your lesson. This will not only allow you to understand your students

better, but it will also allow you to navigate through any cultural mistakes that one can make. For example, if you notice a group of students from a specific country repeatedly sending you emails and asking for information that already exists in different course documents it might be because they come from a country or culture where lecturers are regarded as a high authority figure, and they are used to receive the information personally from the lecturer.

Multinational and multicultural study groups

Multinational and multicultural study groups will allow the students from your class to interact with other students from a different culture. Thus, the cultural ability of your students will be enhanced. Moreover, they will learn important lessons about working with students from different cultures which in turn is one of the leading educational points about studying in an international environment.

Learn from mistakes and your students

Teaching international students can be entertaining and productive. You will meet people from cultures and backgrounds that you only read about on the internet, and they will surprise you with their diversity and ideas. If you make a cultural mistake when dealing with an international student (such as previously mentioned, calling all British people English), do not worry. Apologize, learn from this mistake and move on. Students will understand.

Exercises

The following exercises should be conducted in groups of three. Please discuss the following:

1. What are the most common cultures your international students come from? What cultural particularities have you noticed about these groups of students?

2. Do you offer a course syllabus at the beginning of each course, and does it offer the information mentioned in this module? If no, why not?

3. Did you ever make an exam where some of the questions could not be answered only by the slides and course textbook but rather from a website? Did you notice any difference when it came to the final scores of the students? Did any of the students complain?

4. Did you make any cultural mistakes when teaching? What was the error and what happened afterwards?

5. Did your students ever have any issues with the course materials you required of them (e.g. not being able to purchase the course textbook)? How were those issues solved?

MODULE 3

SOCIAL ISSUES

CONTENT

Introduction

International students face a variety of social issues when studying abroad. These issues have been thoroughly detailed in different studies published on a wide array of student groups. Topics include accumulated stress, loneliness, discrimination, social conflicts, feelings of alienation and isolation etc. For example, in a study undertaken on approximatively 200 international students studying in Australia, it has been determined that two-thirds of interviewees suffer from loneliness and isolation, especially in the first months of their study. Another study mentioned that international students may isolate themselves from the students from the majority student group at that university and that they find support systems primarily which students from their own culture.

Although as academic and non-academic staff your involvement in the social life of students is minimal, there are several vital issues you can and should act upon. This module is designed to educate both academic and non-academic staff on how to deal with these critical social issues related to international students.

Curriculum

Expected learning outcomes:

- Understand the most common issues faced by international students
- Understand how to organise your work to best deal with these issues
- Learn how to help students deal with their social issues

Competences and skill:

- Observation skills: Learn how to observe better the issues that international students face
- Problem-solving skills: Learn how to solve different problems that affect international students
- Administrative skills: Learn how to use university resources to provide better aid to international students.

Issues with acquiring local knowledge

Target: Both academic and non-academic staff

Explanation of the problem

One of the most common social issues faced by international students is the difficulty of acquiring knowledge about the foreign city and university in which they are studying. This is especially true in the first weeks and months of their study. (Grey, Drawing with Difference: Challenges faced by international students in an undergraduate business degree, 2002)

The City

International students often have issues acquiring knowledge about the city where the university is located. This is because, although international students might check on the internet about different details such as location, planning and public transport, a lot of information is still missing from the internet. Other factors exacerbate these problems. For example, even if webpages with information are available, they might not be translated into English, their design might make them impractical to navigate, or the information provided might be outdated. Imagine needing to get to an appointment at a governmental institution only to find out that the bus that was supposed to leave in front of your home has not been operating for months. This can make it harder for international students to find information regarding different points of interest within the city, such as affordable housing options or to identify cheap shops in the town centre. In this regard finding reasonable accommodation is the biggest hurdle since affordable rents are hard to find in most cities, and a high number of local landlords do not post their offers in websites translated into an international language. The student's background and native culture also play a role. For example, a student who has travelled in more developed European cities and comes to study in a developing nation might be faced with an unpleasant surprise. Large Western European cities such as Zurich, Berlin or London might have well-developed websites run by organisations such as the local city council and non-profits, which can help foreigners navigate through the city. Moreover, these cities also have reliable public transportation which allows students to safely and quickly navigate from one part of the city to another, while cities in developing countries may not.

The university

International students also encounter issues regarding the university buildings themselves. In terms of navigation, universities occupy a large piece of land. Moreover, sometimes, their

websites are not made in an easy-to-understand way. Thus, people who do not know the buildings cannot easily navigate them and might be late for their class.

University bureaucracy and documents also pose a problem for international students. For example, the "student charter" which details the rights and obligations of a student. While uploaded on the university's website, it may be not easy to access it. A high number of universities have subpar websites where the search function does not work, and students have a difficult time accessing documents from the website. Other issues can also occur. University regulation and rules may be written in not one but in multiple forms spread across the university's website.

Moreover, sometimes, these documents are not translated into English or other international languages. This is part of a larger problem with sources of information available to international students: a high number of them do not work, or they do not speak an international language. For example, the websites of many universities only have certain parts of their websites in English. This is because the university wanted to cut costs so instead of translating all of their online resources, they only restated the resources which they considered will be most useful to international students. The pages which describe the university leadership (such as an executive board) or the legal rights of students or the examination appeal procedures are often not translated. It can have a devastating effect on international students since they have the same needs as domestic students. Imagine disagreeing with the result you obtained at an exam and not being able to find online the procedure you need to follow to appeal. Or imagine if your human rights had been violated through, for example, racial discrimination and you would not know where to appeal. International students often face these types of situations.

Solution

The solution, in this case, is always to share information and not get annoyed when an international student asks you something and does not appear to know information that you consider to be basic. You may be in a hurry to a class, and a student asks you about where a particular room or building is. At least try to answer the question as best as you can. Also, non-academic staff working in a specific position may be asked for directions or about the department responsible for solving an issue the student might have. If it is not part of your regular tasks and you don't know the answer yourself try to find out through your colleagues or through your internal systems which institution or person, the student should contact. It will only cost you some time, but for the students, it might solve a problem that might severely impact his study, such as exam registrations or paying tuition fees.

When it comes to academic issues, as a lecturer, note that most of the time you know more about the university than the students. If you notice a student is in a wrong spot and does not know about specific university regulations, proactively inform the student. For example, if you

are aware that an international student is studying for the first time at the university and has failed one of your exams, inform the student what rights he has regarding issues such as appeals procedures, resits etc. Besides, it is always useful to share contact details of the correct person that can help in such matters. For example, after every exam, you can send an email to the students who participated in that exam telling them what rights they have in case they fail. It will assure that any new international student gets this information. Also, if you know that a part of the university website that might be of interest to international students and written in English, give the administrators of the website a 'heads-up'. As a rule of thumb, make sure your students are aware of which rights they have regarding courses, examination and their results.

In the same way, you can offer information about issues that are not directed by the university. For example, if during the break of a course you hear a group of students wondering where they can purchase good second-hand quality bikes, and you are aware of such a shop you can intervene and offer them directions. They will appreciate it.

Exercises

1. Group up in pairs. Describe a location within the city to your partner (street name, landmark, city hall, etc.). Now your partner has to find out how to get to that location using public transport lines (e.g. bus, train) using information only on the internet (not from personal experience). Afterwards, the roles reverse. Do you think that the information you found is accurate? Why?

2. Group in pairs. Take a pen and a piece of paper. One of the members of the team describes a part of the university building, and the other member has to draw it like a map. Then the piece of paper is passed to the describing member who states how accurate it is. The roles then get reversed. Discuss your results.

3. Now make a group of 4. Take a piece of paper and draw a rough map of the city and mention on the map the locations which you think might be of interest to an international student. In the end, all of the groups come together and create a map where all of the relevant locations are mentioned.

4. Take a piece of paper. Write down the five most important documents or rules from the university that every international student should know of but from your experience do not. Explain your choices. Afterwards, compare your list with your colleague's list and debate what the differences are.

5. Take a piece of paper. Write down the parts of the university's website that you visited and are not available in English. Make a list which includes the elements of all participants. Make a plan for how the website can be translated into English or more international languages.

Isolation and formation of social silos

Target: both academic and non-academic staff

Explanation of the problem

Studies have shown that a high number of international students tend to group up with people from their own culture and not interact with people of different cultures. (Zhai, 2004) This phenomenon can cause numerous issues including lack of integration, higher dropout rates and racism. In case of international students, they might socialise and interact only with other students from the same country or the same region and get isolated from the majority culture, which can cause them not to connect with native students and their culture. This can lead to problems such as having trouble functioning in that society due to cultural conflicts with a member of the majority culture. At the same time, this puts international students at a high risk of discrimination since members of the majority culture will perceive them as antagonistic and not willing to integrate. The isolation of international students with their groups might determine students from the majority culture to do the same.

Nevertheless, when the majority culture students do so, they might end up racially discriminating against international students due to a lack of contact with them. This is because foreign students perceive "outsiders" as part of the majority culture students. Finally, living in a multicultural environment is one of the main reasons to study abroad, so students who isolate themselves are missing out on an essential academic experience. Both academic and non-academic staff should observe if these cultural silos are forming.

Solution

Academic personnel

- ◼ Make sure that all your classrooms are organised in a way to facilitate students from different cultures to interact with one another. This can be done, for example, by mandating that all project groups can not include a certain number of students from the same country. Moreover, when students are seated at their tables, you can arrange them to allow them to sit next to students from cultures other than their own.

- ◼ Confront and report extreme isolationist behaviour. In case you notice that students in your classroom organise themselves based on national boundaries and you notice conflicts between the groups (such as demeaning talk about one group by another group) address both groups and report the issues to other academic departments. Do not let the problems escalate!

Non-academic personnel

Here the advice depends on your role.

- If you are in a position (such as a student advisor or academic counsellor) where you directly talk to students about their academic life and performance also probe them if they integrate and interact with any other groups besides their group. If you notice any isolationist tendencies, examine them further on the reasons and encourage them to interact with students from different nationalities, especially those from the nationality of the country they are studying in. Explain to them the advantages of doing so and the disadvantages of not doing so. This will also allow you to determine the deeper reasoning behind their isolation which can range from culture shock, homesickness to the fact that they have been racially discriminated in the past which led them to isolate themselves. Isolation should not be treated as something normal.

- Confront and report extreme isolationist behaviour. In case you notice that students organise themselves based on national boundaries and you see conflicts between the groups (such as a demeaning talk from one group to another) address both groups and report the issues to other academic departments. Do not let the problems escalate!

- If you can do so organise university events which will enable students from different countries to interact with each other. For example, the university could organise a thematic dinner one evening with the theme being the home country of some of the international students from your university. During this dinner food from that specific country can be offered, and quizzes can be given regarding the history, geography, culture of that country. This will provide a formal way for students to get acquainted with other countries besides their own.

Exercises

1. What are the teams or the divisions in your university that could handle situations such as students isolating themselves based on cultural divisions? Have you ever reported any such case?

2. Create a group of 4. Talk amongst yourselves if you have witnessed students isolating themselves into cultural groups. Describe to each other the situation and how you dealt with it. In the end, each group presents their findings to the other groups.

3. Take into consideration the following scenario: In a class of 30 pupils that you teach, there are only three international students. When teaching the course, you notice that they always stay isolated and do not interact with the majority of the class. What do you do to fix this situation? Discuss among yourselves.

Mental issues

Target: both academic and non-academic staff

Explanation

Some international students exhibit various mental affection, such when studying abroad. Studying abroad might exacerbate existing issues. The most common are depression and homesickness.

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a mood disorder that negatively affects different aspects of a person's life. A depressed person usually has a negative mood and the incapacity to fully perform daily activities such as work tasks, eating, sleeping etc. Depression can last for years and may require medication to treat (Association, American Psychiatric, 2020)

Homesickness is a harmful condition caused by prolonged periods of being away from one's home. Its cognitive hallmark is preoccupying thoughts of home and attachment objects. Although all students who are not from the same city as the university suffer from different levels of homesickness, international students are more exposed to more extreme versions due to the considerable physical and cultural distance between their home and the university. Consequently, for them, homesickness can be more debilitating than for native students (Wilde, 2020)

Solution

Both academic and non-academic personnel:

- Recognise when one of your students is depressed or is suffering from homesickness. The most common symptoms include the following:
  - Poor hygiene
  - Constant fatigued look (always looks and is tired)
  - Lack of attendance
  - Exaggerated behaviour in class such as too much joking
  - Always sitting isolated in class, at lunch or in other public settings
  - Focusing too much on issues connected to home, such as continually dressing in traditional clothes from his country.
  - Use of drugs and alcohol. Some students might come intoxicated in class.
  - Physical aches or pain

❖ Inability to finish even simple tasks. For example, a student not being able to complete a simple exercise given as a homework

▪ Report these students to the responsible university authorities such as the student counsellor who can then refer them to seek more professional help such as a psychiatrist.

Exercises

1. Think of the common symptoms of depression and homesickness mentioned above. Have you noticed any of them in any of your international students? If yes, what was your reaction?

2. Create a group of three. Take a piece of paper. Imagine a scenario where you repeatedly notice a student exhibiting the symptoms associated with depression and homesickness. Write down how you would approach the student. Read your answers to the members of your group. Do you agree with their solutions? Make a combined solution that combines your ideas.

3. Discuss with your fellow group mates about the resources that your university provides to help students who are going through mental struggles. Do you think they are sufficient? What suggestions would you have to improve them?

MODULE 4

INTERNATIONAL COACHING

CONTENT

Introduction

Non-academic staff plays a vital role in a university since they deal with a high number of issues that directly affect a student which in turn can directly impact the student's academic performance. Some of these issues include administrative matters, counselling issues and coaching issues. For example, in most universities, when a student is encountering education-related issues, he or she is usually sent to a student counsellor who is in most cases a non-academic staff member. Depending on his or her position, that university staff member might also be required to motivate the student. Since motivation is one of the main reasons why students drop out of college, the role of non-academic staff in this situation is vital since they become surrogates for the adults that provided motivations for students at home.

Universities who accept large numbers of international students also have a specialized foreign student office that deals specifically with the needs of international students. Since non-academic staff interact intensely with students, their communication skills are essential since they must transmit accurate information to international students coming from many different cultures.

Thus, the present module is structured based on the issues mentioned above. First motivation issues will be dealt with, followed by communication issues.

Curriculum

Expected learning outcomes:

- Understand the motivational issues faced by international students
- Understand the dynamics of working in groups which include international students from different cultures
- Learn how to communicate with students from different cultures more efficiently

Competences and skill:

- Know how to motivate international students better
- Improve your teamwork skills
- Improve your communication skills

Motivation

Motivation is the desire to act regarding achieving a goal. It is a fundamental component of any activity. Research has shown that people can influence their levels of motivation. (psychologytoday, 2020). Motivation can be both extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside sources such as people or events. This type of reason is determined by the potential positive outcomes that a specific action might bring an individual. This type of motivation also applies to activities that are not necessarily enjoyable (Kazakova & Shastina). For example, some individual is motivated to come to work every day because of the financial benefits of doing so, not necessarily because they like their jobs. Intrinsic motivation comes from within. Intrinsic motivation tends to be considered more powerful, and its rewards more fulfilling. (psychologytoday, 2020).

How to better motivate international students has been the topic of study of numerous scientific works of literature since international students tend to display different levels of motivation compared to domestic students (Kazakova & Shastina); Thoonen, Sleegers, Peetsma & Oort, 2011; Raufeld & al., 2013). For example, Kazakova & Shastina conducted a study on 107 students in a university in which 56% of students were domestic, while 44% of students were foreign. They concluded that the international students have undergone mental and physical discomfort, which in turn motivates them more to achieve their goals. Local students, on the other hand, are more motivated by intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, the motivation of international students can also decrease when confronted with a new environment.

Solutions and recommendations

Promotion of university

The first step towards attracting international students and keeping them motivated is the promotion of the university. Studies have shown that international students come to a foreign country for several reasons mainly: the ranking of the university, to study in a multicultural environment, to appease their parents, to benefit from the economic opportunities offered by the country in which the university situates as well as to benefit from specific benefits that the university provides (such as high tech laboratory equipment) (economicsnetwork, ak. uk).

Although this mainly applies to incoming students, it also keeps present students motivated. Consequently, the university should take the following measures.

- Mention on a specific section on the university websites which awards the university has obtained over the years. This can include for example awards for excellence, a high ranking in student satisfaction surveys, awards received by lecturers etc. Also, if applicable, if a specific

student comes to your counselling and you noticed he lacks motivation, remind him of the benefits of studying at this university. For example, remind him that he is studying at a well-ranked university and that he has the prospect of obtaining a fantastic job after he graduates.

■ Role models

Students are inspired by the success stories of other students from the same university since it gives them a glimpse of their potential future. In this regard, make sure you try your best to keep in contact with your alumni and publish their success stories on the university website. For example, if an ex alumnus of the university gains a high managerial role in a company try and take his interview and publish it on your website. Also, invite him to give a talk to students currently studying at the university. They will appreciate it.

■ Description of the opportunities of a country

There are numerous external websites, but it would be a good idea for the university to also have a section on their website regarding the benefits of studying in a particular country. Also, if a student asks directly about such services, the university staff should be prepared to inform the student of such benefits.

■ In general, the university should promote any other positive aspect on its website for current students to feel more motivated to study there. For example, the opening of a new sports facility, or a new student group should be advertised on the official university website.

Results based orientation on marks and scores

Students, from a wide variety of cultures, put great emphasis on the scores they obtain as part of their academic study. This may be due to reasons such as them wanting to access higher-paying jobs in the future or because their families at home require them to take results. Some are competitive and are motivated by the ability to get the highest mark possible. The university could use that to their advantage to encourage students.

Exercises

1. Create groups of four. Write on a piece of paper what you consider to be the top 5 benefits of studying at your university. Compare your results with the other groups afterwards.

2. What successful alumni from your university do you know? Do you know if the university has kept in contact with them? Discuss amongst yourselves how you would organise an event at the university centred around these successful alumni.

3. Does your university offer a student ranking for students? If not, do you think it should be implemented? Discuss the pros and cons.

Teamwork

Working in a multicultural team produces its own set of distinct challenges compared to regular groups. For example, members from certain cultures might want to do more than the mandatory working hours, while others will not. Other issues involve communication. For example, members from more outspoken cultures will regularly voice their opinions; other people from more hierarchical cultures will make sure that expressing themselves will not place them at odds with their superiors. Issues can also involve gender roles since, in some cultures, women are not valued the same as men. Below are the solutions to some of the most common issues present when working in teams with international students (Allthingstalent, 2010; Livesalesman, 2018).

Solution

■ Be inclusive and make sure everyone is heard and part of the decision-making process. When working in a team in an international context, a high number of factors can make individual team members not fully participate in the workings of the team. As mentioned in other modules, some students might suffer from cultural shock or lack of cultural adaptation and might not want to fully participate in a group with people from outside their home culture. Others might hold different cultural views that might make them have a lower opinion of people from certain other cultures, nationalities or of people with different genders (especially women). In this regard, they might perform actions such as interrupt, ignore or talk over people from the groups they hold certain prejudiced groups again. In turn, this could start a cycle of involvement in the team itself since the team members who are discriminated will stop participating in the team. The best solution, in this case, is to establish a culture where every team member has the chance to express their view on any point of discussion for an equal amount of time. The order in which the team members are selected to represent their viewpoints should be neutral (e.g. alphabetical order). Thus, all team members have an unbiased and fair system in which to express their views.

■ Allow members to know each other better. Team members work better with each other if they know more information about different aspects of their life such as hobbies, country of origin, music preference etc. This allows team members to discover common interests that they might have and thus develop a closer relationship. When teams are being formed, make sure that every team member gets 5 minutes to present themselves.

■ Work styles. In a team, work styles also differ due to cultural influences. For example, some cultures, such as Western European cultures see time as linear and limited. Students from these cultures will prefer to finish all tasks at the university in the same session and not finalize any tasks at home. This is because at home, they will focus on other tasks. In contrasts, students from cultures where time is seen as cyclic or endless might prefer to do their work in the following days without worrying about time constraints. A solution, in this case, is to offer

realistic deadlines for each team-related task to assure that every member can finalize their assignments on time (Pant, 2016).

■ Communication. As you will see in the next part of the module, communication differs drastically between cultures. This, in turn, impacts the way that a team works. For example, individual team members from low context will speak their mind more directly while team members from high context will use indirect communication. Moreover, team members from high context cultures might mistake the directness of the team members from low context cultures as rude or impolite. The solution, in this case, would be to establish a middle ground. Communication should be mainly directed at the topic of the project, but, at the same time, it should be polite and respectful towards all team members.

■ Solving conflicts. Conflicts that occur in multicultural teams can have a cultural background. For example, people from cultures where time rules are obeyed strictly might consider team members from cultures with a more continuous vision of time as lazy, and they might verbally reprimand them. In turn, this will cause personal conflict within the team. In this regard, when solving conflict, every team member must feel like they are treated fairly. A solution for solving cultural disputes would be to revert to the rules established at the formation of the team. Since every member participated in creating these rules, they will also have an easier time accepting when they are enforced.

Exercises

1. Create groups of 3. Imagine you were a member of a team which included students from many different cultures. What rules would you establish from the beginning to assure the smooth functioning of the team? Discuss among yourselves.

2. Imagine the following scenario. In a team that includes international students, you notice that one of the team members is silent and does seem enthusiastic to participate in the activities of the group. Discuss among yourself what is the best way to motivate the team member to become more involved.

3. Imagine the following scenario. You are a member of a team which includes international students. The university gives the team an assignment. Some of the students prefer to work with the whole team and to finish all of the tasks as a team during regular working hours at university. Other students prefer to perform their functions at home and discuss and put them together later at the university. What method of work do you choose and how would you bring together a team whose members have all of these different working methods?

Communication

Communicating with people from a high number of different countries and cultures is difficult since communication is understood differently in each culture. Several models exist regarding these communication difference.

One of the most common is the high context communication/low context communication cultural framework as developed by Hall (Southeastern University, 2016). According to Hall, a high context culture uses implicit communication and nonverbal cues. In a high context culture, a large amount of background information is needed to understand the communication process accurately.

High context cultures have the following characteristics:

- Association: relationships develop over more extended periods and rely on a high degree of trust.
- Interaction: nonverbal communication such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions and eye movement are seen as necessary. People exhibit conflict-avoidance and are sensitive to negative messages coming from nonverbal communication. Conflict is personalized meaning people from high context culture will take disagreement more personally than those from low context cultures.

Examples of countries where a high context communication is present are China, Arab countries, African countries, as well as Latin American countries such as Mexico.

Low context cultures have the following characteristics:

- Association: relationships are mostly based on specific goals and may have a shorter duration.
- Interaction: nonverbal communication is not seen, as necessary. Communication is explicit, direct, and based on the idea of the efficiency of transmitting the information. Conflict and disagreement are depersonalized. The focus of a dispute is mostly to find an efficient and rational solution to a problem and in most cases, dispute is not taken personally.

Examples of countries where a low context communication is present are Western countries such as Germany, Scandinavian countries, the USA, the UK etc.

Besides these general guidelines, certain particularities exist for every culture. For example, people in Japan prefer to speak face to face rather than online. (Southeastern University, 2016)

These particularities can lead to unforeseen situations. In a TED talk, Ricardo Fernandez, a manager from Spain, gave an example of such a situation. He was communicating through

instant software with a colleague from South Africa. At the end of the conversation, his South African colleague stated: "I will call just now". Ricardo thought that his South African colleague would call him immediately. He waited for 15 minutes, and then he called back his South African colleague asking why he did not call. His South African colleague said that he indeed promised to call "just now", but that meant that he would call sometime in the future (Fernando, 2018). Imagine a situation where you are talking to a student discussing an administrative issue, and the student at the end will say "I will call you just now". You will be left waiting for a call from the student, and maybe you will have to postpone specific tasks while you wait thinking it is a serious matter.

Solution

1. Be explicit in your communication. Direct communication can be defined as a type of communication which uses measurable parameters. For example, when requesting a student to submit a form, mention the exact day and hour of the deadline. In this regard instead of having a deadline of "March the 24th" it is better to say that the deadline is "March the 24th, 4 p.m."

2. Politely ask questions if you do not understand something. Not understanding a particular type of communication is expected, and international students also know this in regard. This can happen quite often when the student translates expressions and phrases directly from their language into English. For example, imagine a scenario in which you would have to send a foreign exchange student some documents that he or she has to submit back to her home university. One day the student sends you an email asking you if you have "filled the paperwork" for her. Although this email seems straightforward, it can have different meanings. For example, the student might not be aware that you only have to deliver the documents and then has to submit it to one's university. In certain cultures, documents get transmitted directly between institutions due to either legal requirements of a low level of trust. In this regard, the best option is to send the student an email reminding her of the official university policy and asking her to clarify her question further. Also, concerning this point, it is essential to ask open-ended questions and not only yes or no questions. If you ask open-ended questions, the person you are communicating with also has to provide a more precise explanation of the situation, which in turn will help you figure out a better solution to it.

3. Listen when international students are talking to you and don't interrupt them. In some cultures, it takes a bit longer for someone to get to the exact point of the question. Also, the student may not be entirely sure about what to ask you. If you detect that this is happening, allow the student to finish the communication to pick up details and ask further clarifying questions afterwards.

4. Avoid the personal type of communication such as humour. Humour is perceived differently in different cultures, and a joke can offend a person.

5. Research the communication cultures of the most common groups of international students in your university. This will allow you what general patterns of communication these students apply and be ready for any particularity. Nevertheless, keep in mind that students are unique, and some students do not follow the same pattern of all behaviour of the general culture of their home country. National cultures are just descriptive of the average behaviour of individuals, not of each action.

6. Learn to enjoy talking to international and learn from your mistakes. Communicating with international students is a pleasant learning experience. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. By communication with a high number of students, you will develop your style of communication that will work in most cases.

Exercises

1. Create groups of 3. Have you ever had a negative situation due to miscommunication with an international student based on cultural differences? Please describe the problem to your fellow group members and discuss how you solved the case.

2. Discuss amongst yourselves what cultural communication particularities you have regarding students from different countries/cultural regions.

3. A student from an East Asian country comes to your office and asks you when a particular set of documents is ready. She seems agitated, with her body language showing signs of nervousness. Please discuss what you can infer from her questions. What follow-up questions would you ask?

4. One early morning when you arrive at work, an international student comes to you dressed in a traditional garment that looks like vegetables are attached to it. Being early in the morning, you make a slight joke about her wearing vegetables. She becomes visibly upset about the joke. How do you solve the situation?

5. Discuss with the entire group. You are an admissions officer at a University in the USA. One day you receive an email from a student from Eastern Europe who is applying at your university. In his email, he is stating that he tried to apply by the official deadline of February the 10th at 1 p.m. but that the computer system noted that the enrolment period was over. You look into the computer system and realize that the student tried to submit his application at 4 p.m. You inform the student of your findings. He replies that he did submit by 1 p.m. but that in his home country 1 p.m. is the equivalent of 5 p.m. in the USA. He is upset and states that the website of the university mentioned 1 p.m. as a deadline and not 5 p.m. How would you react to such an email? Do you think this would be a reason for the university to be more specific about the date or do you think that the foreign student is wrong because he didn't presume automatically that the official 1 p.m. deadline was about the time zone of the country that the university is situated in?

MODULE 5

COVID 19 PANDEMIC

CONTENT

Introduction

The whole of humanity has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the universities are no exception. A high number of universities worldwide have either temporarily closed or have moved their classes online. Although universities previously offered online courses, presently, this is done on a much larger scale since all the students or the vast majority of students are now undertaking their education online. This poses unique challenges both for students and for university personnel.

The present module will advise on how to deal with online education. By applying the techniques presented in this module, you will improve the quality of studying of both students and yourself.

Curriculum

Expected learning outcomes:

- Understand the main issues facing students during online learning

- Understand the main issues facing academic and non-academic staff during online learning

Competences and skill:

- Improve your online teaching and communication skills

- Learn to better interact with students in an online environment

- Learn how you can modify your work habits during the COVID situation

Methods

Academic staff

1. Allow 5 minutes at the start of your lecture for all students to connect to the online class. Some students have slower equipment, or they may encounter unknown technical errors which can lead to them missing the first sections of the lecture.

2. During the pandemic, students cannot go to the library anymore and cannot access student computers. This can have an impact on several things. First of all, they can no longer borrow books, so students who relied on borrowing a book for the duration of the course are unable to do that now. Secondly, students cannot access particular academic articles from specific journals that are only accessible from university terminals. Thirdly, students do not benefit from the quiet study spaces that exist in the library, and they cannot meet with other students to practice questions. Consequently, the course requirements and course materials need to be modified. (JellyFish.tech, 2020)

   As part of the course, try not to rely on textbooks but mostly rely on slides. It is difficult for students from lower incomes to operate without a library since they cannot borrow books anymore. Changes will also have to be made when it comes to assignments that involve secondary research. Make sure before you assign essays or other research work to students that students can find enough secondary sources without the need of university terminals or that they can access such articles through their university account.

   The lack of access to terminals is essential also in the case of projects that involve specialised software (e.g. Atlas.ti, SPSS). These software programs require powerful computers that can mostly be found on university terminals, and they rarely can run on an underperforming student laptop. Moreover, the license for these products is costly. Thus, for the vast majority of students, they are inaccessible from outside of the university. For these types of software, the solution should be to either to modify the course requirements completely to avoid their usage or to allow the use of a free alternative with lower system requirements. This might prove difficult since several university courses are explicitly designed to teach students about this software and a lot of high-level projects (such as bachelor theses). The solution that this module proposes is that students receive theoretical exams based on the software. This will show that they know how to operate the software at a basic level.

3. Be available to students either through email or through forums. Students rely on social and personal interaction with the lecturer to be motivated to study and to ask questions. Thus, during quarantine, it is more important than ever to answer student emails and on time and to offer them detailed explanations through the emails. This achieves two purposes: first, students get their questions answered, and secondly, students get the psychological comfort that a lecturer is there to help them in case they need to. (SkillsYouNeed, 2020)

4. Redesign group projects so that they can be done online. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, group projects were usually done by the students in the university facilities. For example, a group of students would meet in the library or at another university venue; they would stay there for almost the entire day and finish the project there. Besides gaining knowledge about a particular topic, this allowed students to build other skills as well. For example, students gained their teamwork skills on these projects since they were one of the few opportunities to engage in teamwork before entering the workforce.

Moreover, these projects were an excellent socialisation tool since students learned to better interact with each other. These group projects can be redesigned to fit the COVID-19 situation better. Some advice:

- Allow the projects to be done using collaborative software such as Google Docs or word online. Usually, lecturers require students to submit a Word or PDF document to the university website. There it is checked for plagiarism. Websites such as Google Docs are an appropriate alternative because the content of Google Docs documents can still be checked for plagiarism by copy-pasting its content manually into the plagiarism check software.

- For these projects mandate that students spend at least a couple of hours per week in a video call where they can work on the projects. This will ensure that the students will still gain valuable teamwork and social skills necessary in their future professional career.

Group projects also have an essential role in the psychological state of the students. A high number of students suffer from issues such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. A high number of times, mandatory university group projects are one of the few times they interact with other students and get the opportunity to socialise. Without these group projects and meetings, their mental state will deteriorate further. Thus, these group projects must be maintained and organised.

5. Make your class material as self-explanatory as possible. Students engaged in online lessons have fewer chances to ask questions and participate in class. Therefore, assuring that your course slides are self-explanatory is essential. This will also benefit you as an academic because you are busy and the more self-explanatory your course materials are the fewer questions you will receive from students. In this regard, the organisations of your online materials can also be improved. For example, always put all the information in one document. Do not spread it through multiple forms. In this way, it will be easier for students to find the information in one place.

6. Communicating online is different than communicating face to face, mainly because there is a virtual interface between you and your audience. Moreover, a high number of lecturers are not comfortable speaking in front of a webcam. Below is some advice on how to improve your online lessons.

■ Design your setting appropriately.

  ❖ Focus the camera on yourself and zoom in as much as possible. Students who attend your lessons want to see and hear you.

  ❖ Eliminate distractions. Dress as you would in a classroom and out the webcam or laptop in a place where there are not many objects in the background.

■ Speaking in front of a webcam is different than speaking in front of an audience. In contrast to a classroom, the audience is not in the same room as you. Therefore, the recommendation is to image your students as being in the same room as you. A handy trick that you can employ is to place a mirror directly underneath the webcam. Thus, you will be looking at a familiar face while you speak, and it will appear you are making eye contact with your students. Once you get used to speaking in front of a webcam, you also try looking directly at the webcam when you talk because the effect is more powerful. If you decide to do so, put the webcam at eye level and position yourself right in front of it. Also, if you have the lecture slides and materials on the screen, try to resist the temptation to look at the screen and focus on the webcam. (Communications, 2013)

■ Pay attention to your body language. Keep a straight posture: straight back with straight shoulders. This is also good for your health, and it communicates your authority to your students.

■ Make your lectures more engaging and interactive. One of the main disadvantages of online courses is that students can get very easily distracted, and there is no way to supervise them. For example, it is effortless for a student to pretend like he or she is paying attention to the lesson while having a browser window opened where he or she is watching a YouTube video. Therefore, interacting with students is essential. Do this by asking the students questions. For example, after a part of the lecture is finished, pick a student at random and ask him or her something about the part of the lesson that you just finished teaching. If the student does not know the answer, ask someone else. This will show the students that they need to pay attention in class in order not to have a bad image in front of the lecturer. You can go even further and make a specific part of the final grade (e.g. .10%) based on participation.

Non-academic staff

The impact of COVID-19 on the interactions between non-academic staff and students is high. Usually, in most scenarios involving non-academic staff students would go to their office for an impromptu face to face meeting, or they would schedule a face-to-face meeting via email. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, these types of arrangements are no longer possible, and all interactions with students have to be carried out online. Consequently, here are some tips for non-academic staff to ensure a better working relationship with students during this time.

■ Use the webcam to talk to students as much as possible. Usually, non-academic staff do not have webcam meetings with students. Nevertheless, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that they do. Using the webcam has two main advantages. First, it allows the students to ask multiple follow up questions and obtain the answers to them instantaneously. Issues that non-academic staff usually deal with (e.g. administrative issues) are notoriously complex, and the information related to them can be spread through multiple documents on the website of the university. This, in turn, makes students ask various questions and follow up questions for them to obtain a good understanding of the issue. Asking multiple follow up questions through email is impractical since one email might be replied to a couple of hours after the first email was sent. This is impractical for the student who might need a problem solved quickly. Secondly, it allows the student to talk to an actual person who can bring a sense of comfort. Personal interaction is essential for gaining trust, and in many cultures, this is the norm for social relationships. Talking to a student face to face for a short amount of time gives them the confidence that their issue will be solved.

■ Set up a system where you prioritise urgent email first and inform students about how to mark emails as urgent. This is because a high number of student issues are urgent. Typically, to solve these issues students would go to the office of a staff member to immediately talk to someone and fix their issue. Examples of such problems are exam registrations or issues with paying the university fees. If a student finds out one day before an exam that he or she is not officially registered for that exam, the student needs an administrative staff member to talk to immediately in order to fix the issue. He or she cannot wait for the standard 3- or 5-day email reply time. Students should be aware that in case of emergency emails should be marked appropriately

■ Organise the information on the university website appropriately. Due to the lack of personal contact with non-academic staff, the first-place students turn to for information is the website of the university. Therefore, the website should be well organised and easy to navigate. A good website will allow for finding information more easily. Thus, it will save both the student and your time since, if the student finds the information, the student will not contact you for information.

Exercises

1. Create groups of 3. Have you changed the way you make slides to make them more self-explanatory? Why or why not?

2. What differences have you noticed when teaching in front of the webcam versus teaching in a physical classroom? Discuss which of the techniques mentioned related to speaking in front of a webcam would be most useful for you.

3. Would you accept a project done in Google Docs as opposed to one written in word and submitted on paper? Why or why not?

4. Discuss among yourselves how you have modified group project to account for the fact that the university facility or the university library is closed.

5. Take out your phone. Think of the most common types of information students ask of you and then see if you can find this information on the university website. Group in groups of 3 and discuss the outcomes of your findings. Was the information easy to find? Why? Why not?

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