

Research insights into teaching and learning for international students

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Internationalisation of higher education

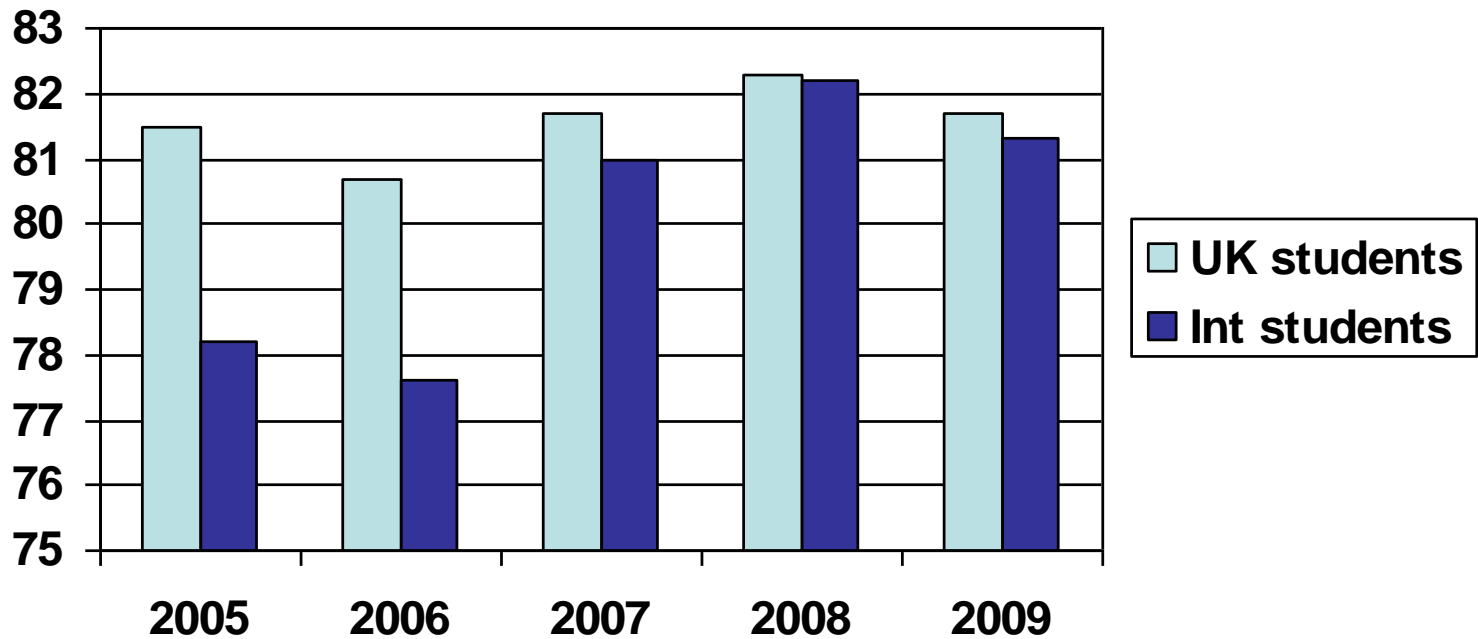
- International students on UK campuses almost 1 in 5 (22.9% increase 2010: *UUK*) plus increases in TNE
- Income £25.4b (*The Economist* 5/8/2010)
- Increasing competition globally for international students
- 3 million international students worldwide
- Importance of perceptions of **quality** (and reputation)
- Challenges and opportunities for teachers and students

Challenges and opportunities

- University contexts have changed **but teaching and learning practices relatively unchanged**
- Focus is usually on **students** to change and adapt
- IS seen as ‘bearers of problems’ rather than ‘**bearers of culture**’
- International students can be a resource for learning so that all students are internationalised (‘the world in our classroom’)
- Lecturers need support to also **adapt and change**

UK National Student Survey

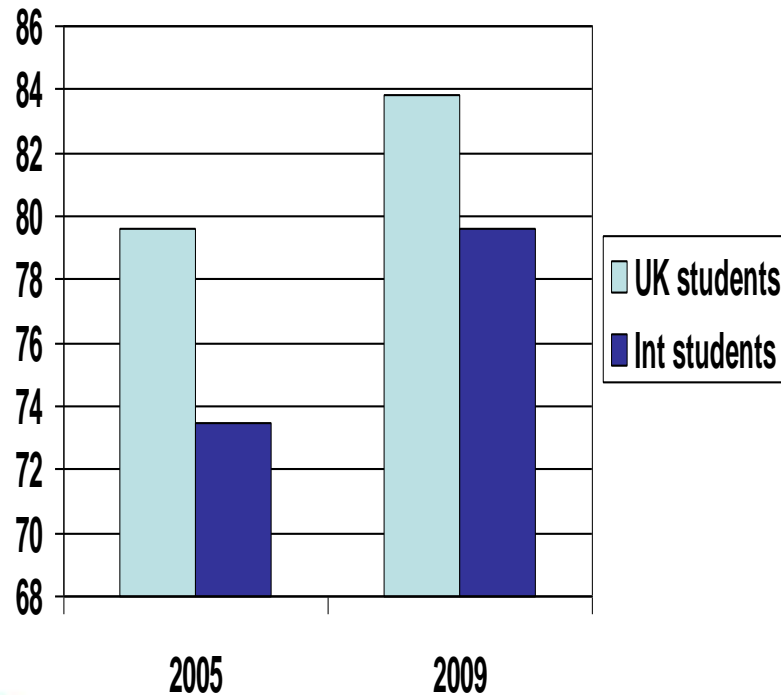
Q22 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course



NSS 2005-2009 results

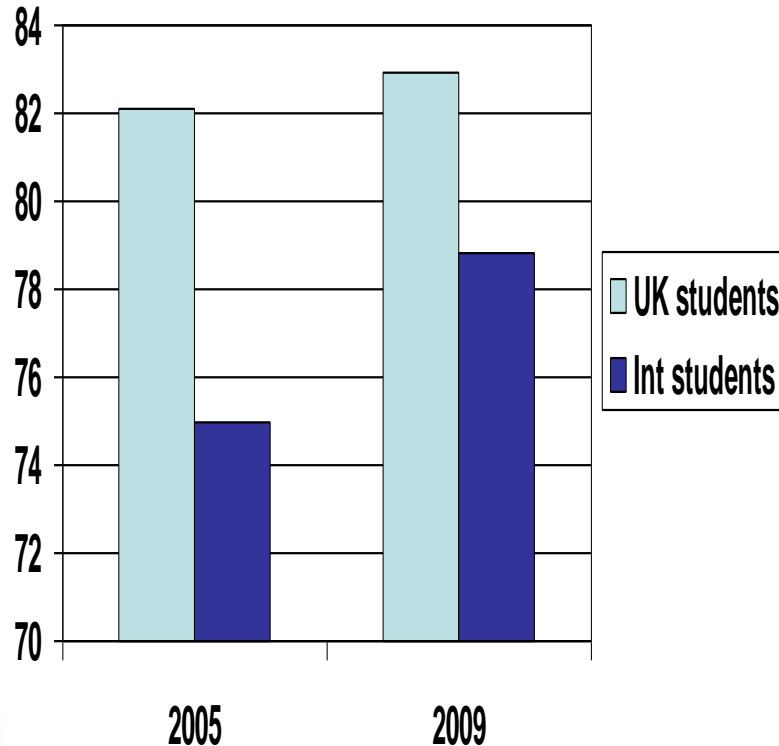
| | | Q22 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course | | | | | |
|---------------|--|--|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------|
| | | Definitely disagree | Mostly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Mostly agree | Definitely agree | Total |
| UK | | 25016 | 57364 | 78561 | 425091 | 290215 | 876483 |
| | | 2.9% | 6.5% | 9.0% | 48.5% | 33.1% | 100.0% |
| International | | 1834 | 4768 | 9460 | 42058 | 23813 | 81966 |
| | | 2.2% | 5.8% | 11.5% | 51.3% | 29.1% | 100.0% |
| Total | | 26850 | 62132 | 88021 | 467149 | 314028 | 958449 |
| | | 2.8% | 6.5% | 9.2% | 48.7% | 32.8% | 100.0% |

Q3: Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching



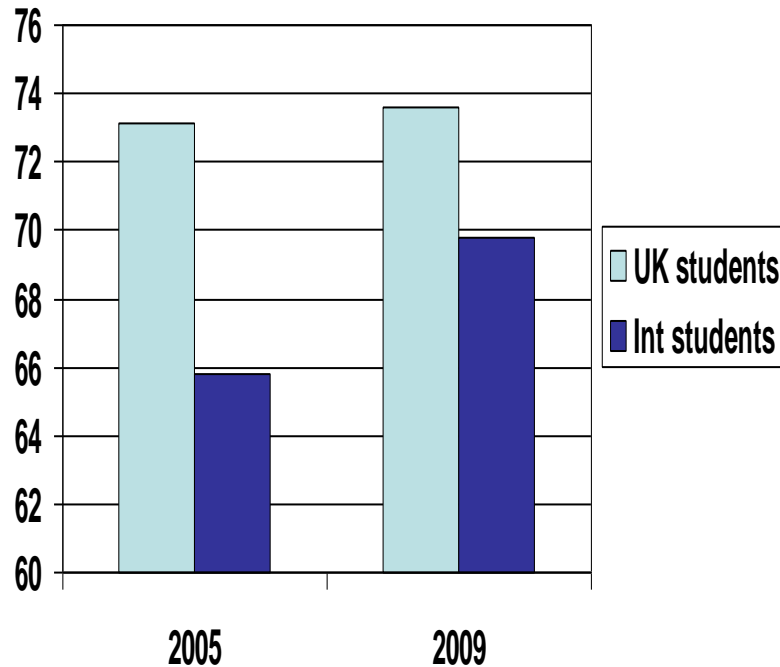
- In 2005 73.5% of IS and 79.6% of UK students were satisfied
- In 2009 79.6% of IS and 83.8% of UK students were satisfied
- Differences in satisfaction between UK and International students have decreased from 6.1% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2009

Q4: The course is intellectually stimulating



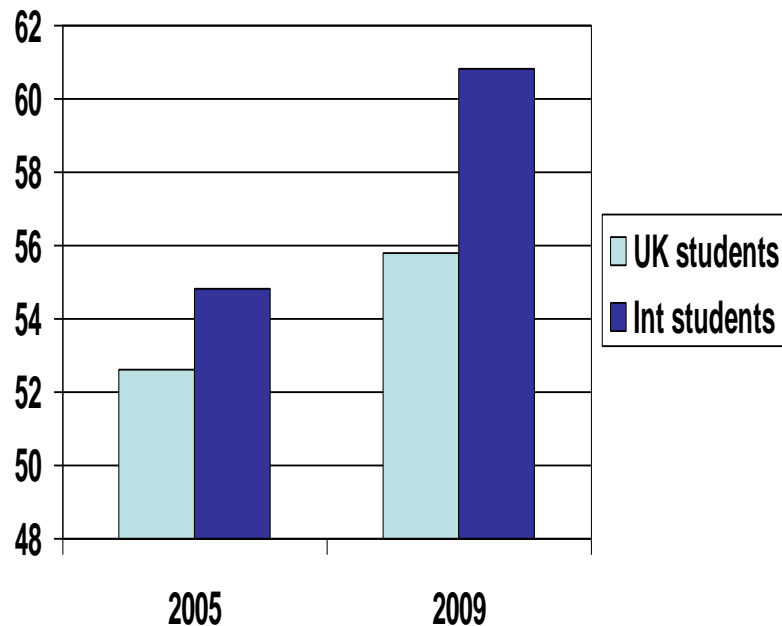
- In 2005 75.0% of IS and 82.7% of UK students were satisfied
- In 2009 78.8% of IS and 82.9% of UK students were satisfied
- Differences in satisfaction between UK and International students have decreased from 7.1% in 2005 to 4.1% in 2009

Q6: Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair



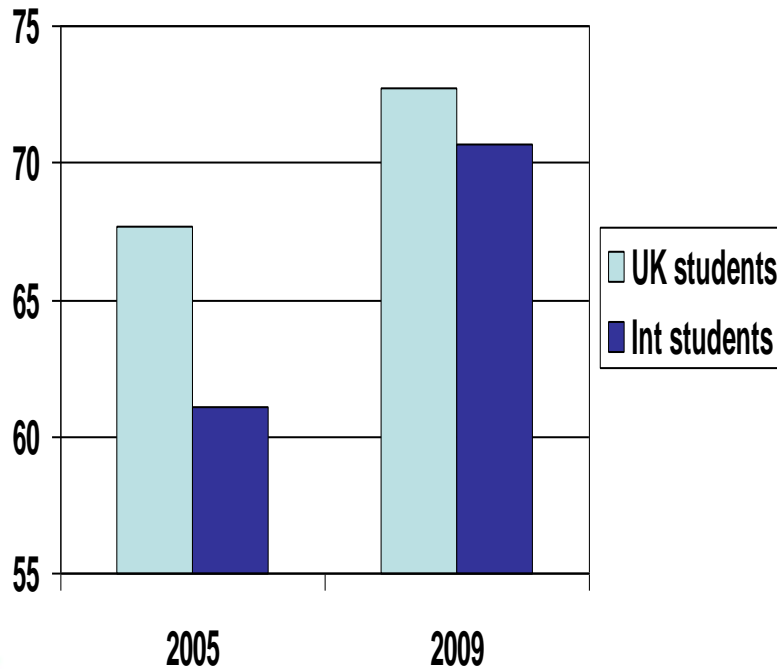
- In 2005 65.8% of IS and 73.1% of UK students were satisfied
- In 2009 69.8% of IS and 73.6% of UK students were satisfied
- Differences in satisfaction between UK and International students have decreased from 9.3% in 2005 to 3.8% in 2009

Q7: Feedback on my work has been prompt



- In 2005 54.8% of IS and 52.6% of UK students were satisfied
- In 2009 60.8% of IS and 55.8% of UK students were satisfied
- The only question on which international students are more positive than UK students
- Differences in satisfaction between UK and International students have increased from 2.2% in 2005 to 5.0% in 2009

Q10: I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies



- In 2005 61.1% of IS and 67.7% of UK students were satisfied
- In 2009 70.7% of IS and 72.7% of UK students were satisfied
- Differences in satisfaction between UK and International students have decreased from 6.6% in 2005 to 2.0% in 2009

'Pressure points' for students

- Different language, interactions : don't know the 'rules'
- Don't have the required background knowledge
- Language and assessment
- Difficulties participating and making friends
- **BUT** do achieve well with support and understanding (from lecturers, home students, co-nationals, wider community)

'Pressure points' for staff

- IS bring unfamiliar expectations and experiences
- Extra time (especially marking and supervision)
- Little reward or recognition
- **BUT** can be richly rewarding for lecturers and home students

Teaching International Students Project

Hosted by the UK Higher Education Academy
Funded through the Academy, UKCISA & PMI2
2 year project

TIS Team:

Janette Ryan, Jude Carroll, Fiona Hyland (ESCalate), Inna Pomorina (Economics), Melodee Beals (History, Classics & Archeology) , Simon Steiner (Engineering) , Malcolm Todd (C-SAP), Ali Dickens (LLAS), Andrea Frank (CEBE), Caprice Lantz (Psychology), Richard Atfield (BMAF), Adam Child & Katherine Lagar, HEA



Teaching International Students

The Teaching International Students Project is a joint initiative of the Higher Education Academy and the [United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs](#) (UKCISA) with funding from the [Prime Minister's Initiative 2](#) (PMI2). It is a two year project, hosted and co-funded by the Higher Education Academy.

Increasing student mobility and successful national policies to recruit international students have led to more culturally diverse higher education landscapes around the world. The UK is the most popular destination for international students due to the quality of its provision, and it is important that this quality is maintained.

The project therefore focuses on the ways that lecturers and other teaching staff can maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning for international students through providing guidance and information about how to meet the diverse learning needs of international students, and, importantly, in ways that will benefit all students.

TIS activities

The TIS project activities include:

- the ['International Student Lifecycle' Resources Bank](#)

Contact Information

Teaching International Students Project team

01904 717 500

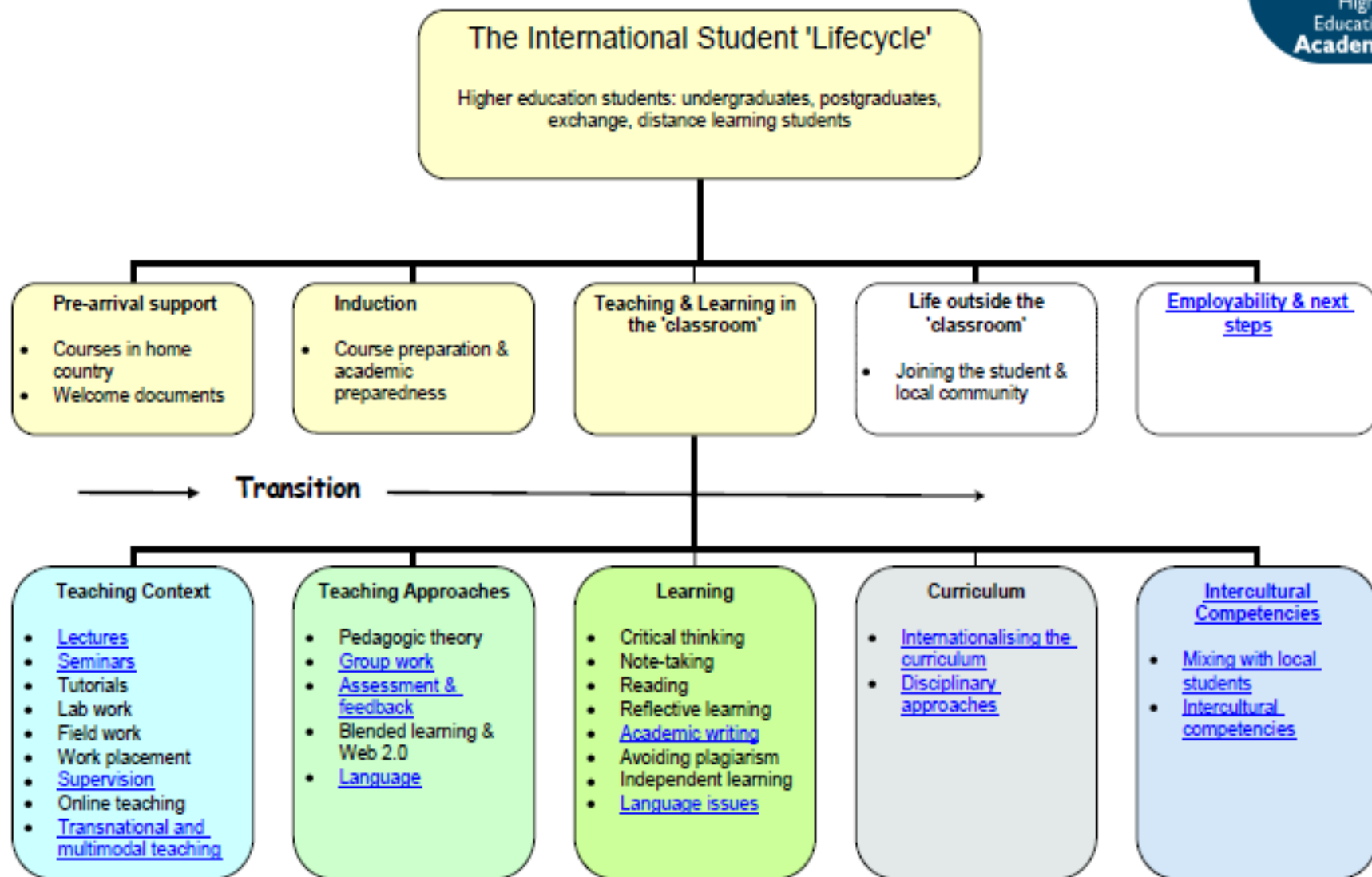
[Email us](#)

International Student Lifecycle

Resources Bank



Teaching International Students



The International Student Lifecycle

Welcome to the Teaching International Students Resources Bank.

A diagram of the 'Student Lifecycle' is available to [download as a PDF document \(PDF - 37KB\)](#).

This collection of resources is aimed at teachers in Higher Education. It targets issues which are especially (but not exclusively) relevant to teaching students who have travelled to the UK to study from other countries. You can read more about the TIS project and about the underpinning rationale for creating this resources bank [here](#)

If you teach international students, you can look to the TIS resources bank for:

- An overview of common teaching topics
- Selected resources for teachers
- Links to specialist sites and research databases
- Lists for further reading.
- Case stories written by teachers and by international students to make the topics 'come alive'.

You can use this site to check how others deal with teaching issues. For example, a check on how others handle group work could affirm your own approach and suggest further action.

You can use the Teaching International Students site to plan ahead.

Contact Information

Contact the team

01904 717 500

[Email us](#)



Supporting Individuals

Supporting Research

Supporting Disciplines

Supporting Universities and Colleges

Supporting Teaching and Learning

Assessment

PDP

Employability and Employee Learning

Inclusion

Internationalisation

Bologna

Teaching International Students

Resources

Learning and Technology

Sustainability

Open Educational Resources

Supporting and Influencing Policy

Assessment and Feedback

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the [Teaching International Students](#) project.

Many teachers find international students less problematic to assess than UK students and more than a few say they are 'a joy to teach'. On the other hand, many have concerns linked to students' varied language skills, background knowledge, and familiarity with UK assessment methods. This section concentrates on how teachers can assess students' work, using practices that are fair, reliable and efficient. It also considers feedback, which is an aspect of assessment crucial to all students but especially so for international students who may be unfamiliar with assessment requirements and with marking criteria. Feedback helps students to check if they are on track for success and to reorient their efforts if they are not.

Whilst the focus of this section is on teachers' actions, external factors also influence assessment. Assessment decisions might reflect disciplinary priorities, students' future employment possibilities, recruitment and reputation. Sometimes, teachers report they even think about financial matters such as the departmental budget if teachers' actions mean that many students fail. This complex context can make addressing assessment issues problematic.

In other sections, you will find additional guidance on issues associated with assessment such as [group work](#), plagiarism and critical thinking.

The main issues: getting started

Teachers' concerns when assessing international students often include:

Time. In a diverse student group, it can take longer to teach necessary skills, to provide practice opportunities,

Language

Description

The information on this page has been developed as part of the [Teaching International Students](#) project.

Language is one of the most difficult areas for both teaching staff and international students. Even with high IELTS scores (see <http://ielts-preparation.110mb.com/bands.htm> for an explanation of the IELTS bands) and good language skills overall, non-English speaking background students are likely to struggle at first with language in lectures and tutorials, complex reading and writing tasks, and new academic and disciplinary concepts.

The main issues: getting started

International students may have a range of difficulties with language especially at the beginning of their studies. They may have trouble with fast-paced lectures, non-standard English, accents, local references and discipline-specific language, and in the beginning may only understand between 10 and 50 percent of lectures. They may be unable to participate verbally in tutorials in any meaningful way or without encouragement. In assessments, they may not be able to demonstrate their true abilities.

There are many ways that teachers can assist their international students to cope with the challenges of learning in a foreign language or where terms and concepts are unfamiliar, and many of which may also be of benefit to local students. The following section describes:

- The complexity of language learning
- Steps teachers can take to increase their own understandability and the understandability of texts
- Ways to help students participate successfully and use language
- Steps teachers can take to improve students' own language skills

Steps teachers can take to improve students' own language skills

- In the early days of a programme, help students self-assess their language skills. The Open University Scotland produces an online workbook called 'Am I ready to study in English?' which sets tasks and guides a student to self-assess their skills. See <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3638>
- Organise group tasks of students speaking to each other (see the suggestions in Group Work to ensure these encounters are positive / helpful)
- Encourage peer support and review where students help each other (this needs sensitive organising)
- Where appropriate, explicitly point to opportunities to use English from the simple (listening to local media) to the more challenging (such as part time work or volunteering). This recognises that the university is not the only place for rich language interactions and requires the student, too, to take the initiative and move outside of their 'comfort zone'.

See also the sections on [Lectures](#) and [Seminars](#) for further ideas about the use of language and structures to assist students' comprehension and learning. The section on Assessment also gives ideas on assessing language in assignments.

Top resource

Carroll, J. (2005). 'Lightening the load': Teaching in English, learning in English. In J. Carroll & J. Ryan. (Eds.), *Teaching international students: Improving learning for all* (35-42). London: Routledge.

What is the evidence?

Further reading:

Ryan, J. & Viète, R. (2009) Respectful interactions: Learning with international students in the English-speaking academy. *Teaching in Higher Education* 14(3), 303-314.

Case stories from students and staff...

It takes us extra time

I am an international student currently studying MSc Economics. This is the first year and first time I came to UK. Actually, there are a reasonable number of difficulties while I am taking these modules. The biggest problem I have found is the listening skills. As an international student, one has to catch up with what the lecturers have stated in class. You know, the teachers often speak at a normal native speaker's pace. Sometimes it is hard to follow the instructors in detail, which can be a barrier to grasp the key elements in handouts. Often, some international students are ashamed to ask questions in class and even after class and let it be. Day after day, problems stick together and I do not know which to tackle first.

The next problem is the translation issue. For international students, if we want to totally understand the context from lectures, we have to translate English into our mother tongue. In some circumstances, we can not find the right interpretation for the terminology. The lecturers in foreign countries can only explain them in other words; maybe they are still a struggle for us to understand.

The third problem is our relatively lower reading speed. We international students read the core books and supplementary books recommended by the lecturers much more slowly compared with native students. Therefore, we need much more time consuming and grasping the idea of the book. This kind of problem is hard to solve. We have to practice more.

The final problem is the different way of thinking between English people and people from some other parts of the world. We international students often find it very

The problem with making assumptions

In the Qualitative Research Methodologies module I teach, there were now two groups of students. I realised that there were more Chinese students than before and that all of the Chinese students in both groups were regularly sitting together. Previously there had been only a few Chinese students and, I must admit, I hadn't really noticed where they had sat. The Chinese students and the other international students seemed to have similar questions and problems and seemed disconnected from the local students. **The local students seemed completely uninterested in mixing with the international students and tended to dominate the discussion in class, try as I might to get everyone to talk.**

Were (the international students) starting at a lower level and should I adjust my teaching? Should I just separate the international and the home students? ...Instead, I asked the students to self-select into a 'beginners' and a 'more experienced' group. ... **to my surprise, the following week when they turned up for the new self-selected groups, both international and local students almost equally chose each group...**

Extract from: TIS Resource Bank, Intercultural Competencies,
Mixing, learning & working together, A teacher's account...

 Search

Assessment

Audio & Visual Materials

Awards for Teaching

Classroom Experiments

eLearning

Employability

Excel

Funding

Maths Support

PowerPoint

Real World Examples

Research and Teaching

Student Motivation

Sustainable Development

Teaching Assistants

Quickjump to:Awards **Monthly Email Updates**

from the Economics Network

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Internationalisation

Up: [Home](#) » [Topic Index](#)

This section aims to provide useful information to economics lecturers in the area of internationalisation, including support for international staff, international students and implementation of the Bologna process in the UK.

Contents

[Supporting international staff](#)

[Supporting international students](#)

[International Student Stories](#)

[Resources from Higher Education Academy](#)

[Supporting implementation of the Bologna process in the UK](#)

[External links and resources](#)

Supporting international staff

Many new economics lecturers are international. The Economics Network runs staff development events for all economics staff including international staff, which provide opportunities for staff to discuss economics teaching and to meet others. Such events include a programme of workshops for New Lecturers, and a postgraduates who teach which provide sessions on teaching international students.

Our [Handbook for Economics Lecturers](#) provides subject-specific advice and tips for all economics lecturers on teaching, learning and assessment methods, and as such is useful to both national and international staff. There is a specific chapter for postgraduates who teach and a web section for [new lecturers/postgraduates who teach](#).

We have also developed a comprehensive collection of [case studies](#) of learning, teaching and assessment practice written by economics lecturers across the UK and from abroad, including [New Lecturer Diaries](#), some of which bear specifically on [the experience of international students and staff](#).

News from the Economics Network

- [Case study: Overseas aid in the Dragons' Den](#)
- [Learning and Teaching Awards, 2010](#)
- [Economics Network seeking a student placement for 2010/11](#)
- [Student Essay Competition 2010](#)
- [Case study: Teaching International Economics and Finance During the Global Financial Crisis](#)



New ways of working together

- Take **advantage of opportunities** of increased flow of people, ideas and perspectives
- More **holistic** approach to support - share resources and expertise
- International education as an opportunity for **two-way** learning and understanding
- Understanding **between cultures and civilisations (such as China)** through mutual respect and dialogue

Challenges and opportunities...?

- University contexts have changed **but teaching and learning practices relatively unchanged**
- Focus is usually on **students** to change and adapt
- IS seen as ‘bearers of problems’ rather than ‘**bearers of culture**’
- International students can be a resource for learning so that all students are internationalised (‘the world in our classroom’)
- Lecturers need support to also **adapt and change**