



Supporting International Students of Economics in UK Higher Education

Margarida Dolan, International Consultant
Margarida.Dolan@gmail.com

Edited by
Dimitra Petropoulou, Lecturer in Economics, University of Sussex
D.Petropoulou@sussex.ac.uk
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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Challenges faced by international students of Economics in Higher Education.....	4
3. Supporting International Students of Economics at the University of Aberdeen	6
3.1 Background	6
3.2 Working in mixed groups to gain from complementary skills	6
3.3 Being mindful of the use of language	7
3.4 Using international examples: familiarity or unfamiliarity	7
3.5 Supporting postgraduate international students in taught programmes improve their employability prospects.....	8
3.6 Induction events in China: supporting international students in 2+2 programmes.....	9
3.7 The role of the Advisors of Studies	9
3.8 Training of postgraduate tutors.....	9
3.9 Assessment	10
3.10 Supporting international students develop oral, written and feedback skills.....	10
4. Supporting International Students of Economics at the University of Bristol.....	11
4.1 Background	11
4.2 Taught postgraduate programmes	11
4.3 Introductory week.....	11
4.4 Structure of the taught postgraduate programmes	12

4.5 Teaching practices.....	12
4.6 Research methods and study skills week.....	13
4.7 Dissertation	13
4.8 The International Librarian	14
4.9 Plagiarism.....	15
4.10 Pre-Masters in English for Academic Purposes.....	15
5. Supporting International Students of Economics at Cardiff University	15
5.1 Background	16
5.2 Welcoming international students to Cardiff	16
5.3 Supporting international students in MSc programmes.....	16
5.4 Personal tutoring system	17
5.5 Teaching and assessment	17
5.6 Dealing with plagiarism.....	18
5.7 Working in groups.....	18
5.8 Language support.....	18
5.9 The Maths Support Service	18
5.10 Student Support and Careers Advisory Service	19
5.11 Social events	19
5.12 Alumni.....	20
5.13 International Foundation Programme, Cardiff Business School.....	20
6. Supporting International Students of Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).....	21
6.1 Background	21
6.2 Diversity at LSE: a tradition	22
6.3 Avoiding the domination of the mono-culture group	22
6.4 Supporting international students to participate in class.....	23
6.5 Stretching exceptionally high-ability international students.....	24
6.6 LSE100.....	24
6.7 Student Union Societies at LSE	25
6.8 International Organisations Day	26
7. Top Tips.....	26
Websites of interest.....	27
References	28

1. Introduction

Between 1975 and 2009, the number of international students worldwide increased more than fourfold, from 0.8 million to 3.7 million.^[1] Over 3.3 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship in 2008.^[2] With this increase in mobility of students, global competition to provide international education has increased dramatically. The UK's share of international education is estimated to be worth more than £10 billion^[3] and provides a dynamic, highly skilled and sustainable industry. It is in the light of this context that the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) was launched in the UK in 1999 as a five-year strategy, with funding of £27 million.^[4] Among its aims were: to increase the number of international students in Higher Education (HE) by an additional 50,000 by 2004–05 (estimated to be worth £500 million *per annum* in new export earnings)^[5] and to enhance the quality of the education and training received by international students.

In 2006, a second five-year phase, known as PMI2 and costing £35 million, was launched.^[6] It aimed to attract an additional 70,000 international students to UK HE; to double the number of countries sending more than 10,000 students *per annum* to the UK; and to improve the experience and employability of international students. Improvements in the experience of international students were thus being sought at the same time as the number of international students was increasing. Adjusting to such a rapidly changing environment without compromising on the quality of academic standards is thus a very important issue for HE institutions (see for example Alauddin and Butler).

International students of Economics in the UK have also increased noticeably, in line with the general trend over the past few years. According to data published^[7] the total number of Economics students (aggregate of undergraduate, postgraduate, full-time and part-time) in the academic year 1998–99 were 23,030, of which 8,442 were international students (European and non-European). By 2008–09, these numbers had risen by 38% to 31,740 and 11,690, respectively. The total number of Economics students further increased to 34,895 in 2009–10, and to 36,820 in 2010–11. The global financial crisis was found to be a key factor behind the recent surge in enrolment onto Economics degree programmes.^[8]

The presence of unprecedentedly high numbers of international students of Economics in UK HE affects all staff, regardless of seniority or experience. Independently of how well resourced Economics departments/sections are, some appear to have evolved clear approaches to supporting international students whilst others are hesitant as to how to proceed. Staff from departments in which good student support is already in place tend to articulate the challenges posed by international students in constructive ways. They describe using creative approaches in their teaching practice, are more open to considering alternatives and view the presence of international students as an opportunity to drive improvements that benefit all students. Staff from departments where guidance is unclear, or limited, report a sense of frustration, and express concerns that the presence of international students works to drive down academic standards.

The aim of this chapter is to share case studies of best practice in support given to international students of Economics. In particular, the approaches and practices employed by

1. [the Economics section at the University of Aberdeen Business School](#),
2. [the Department of Economics at the University of Bristol](#),
3. [the Economics section of Cardiff Business School, University of Cardiff](#), and
4. [the Department of Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science \(LSE\)](#)

From the Economics section at the University of Aberdeen Business School, approaches were collated relating to working in mixed groups to gain from complementary skills; being mindful of

language used; supporting postgraduate international students in taught programmes in improving their employability prospects; training of postgraduate tutors; assessment; and supporting international students in developing oral, written and feedback skills.

At the Department of Economics at the University of Bristol aspects of practice were collected relating to taught postgraduate programmes; the introductory week; the structure of the taught postgraduate programmes; teaching practices; research methods and study skills week; the support given for dissertations; the role of the International Librarian; and the pre-Masters in English for Academic Purposes.

At the Economics section of Cardiff Business School, University of Cardiff, examples of practice were collected relating to welcoming international students; supporting international students in MSc programmes; the personal tutoring system; teaching and assessment; dealing with plagiarism; working in groups; language support; the Maths Support Service; Student Support and Careers Advisory Service; Social Events; Alumni; and the International Foundation Programme.

At the Department of Economics of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) aspects of support were collated around diversity; avoiding the domination of mono-culture groups; participation in class; stretching exceptionally high-ability international students; LSE100; student Union Societies; and the International Organisations' Day.

The next part of this chapter outlines the key challenges faced by international students identified in the education literature through surveys and case studies. The case studies of best practice for each of the UK HE institutions follow, as well as top tips that emerge from the case studies in their entirety.

2. Challenges faced by international students of Economics in Higher Education

The 2010 Economics Students Survey of International Students of Economics in the UK sheds light on the experiences and perceptions of international students.^[9] Students whose English is non-native were asked how not being a native speaker affected their learning; 54.3% reported feeling their learning was not greatly impacted, while 40.4% felt it had some effect but not very much. Encouragingly, only 5.3% felt that being non-native English speakers impacted greatly on their learning experiences. Nonetheless, comments from international students in the Survey include:

'It makes me hate reading and writing at most time as they are both my weakest aspects in learning so usually I will not choose some courses which are essay writing but no exams! So it does affect my studying to some extent';

'Sometimes you take longer to learn or read certain things as English is not your first language. However after the first year at uni it gets far better';

'Essay writing during the first year was a little difficult'.

Aggregates of qualifications obtained in UK HE for 2008–09 and 2009–10, across all subject areas, also indicate that non-European Union domiciled international students obtained lower grades than their peers, with fewer first class and upper second class grades, and more lower second and third class/pass grades obtained.^[8] Moreover, Davies *et al.* (2007) report that cultural background influences students' evaluation of Economics teaching in an Australian university;^[10] it would thus be unsurprising if the self-evaluation of non-native English speaking students, on how their learning is affected, also depended on cultural background. What emerges from the literature is the need to

support international students, so that their achievements are comparable to those of UK/EU students with similar academic potential.

In 2003, the Central Council of the Economic Society of Australia (ESA) conducted a survey to examine the standards of work achieved by students of Economics in Australian universities, what affects these standards, as well as to identify policies for maintaining or improving them.^[11] International students typically made up over 30% of all students, and even higher in first year studies, at all levels of Economics study.^[12] The level of English language of international students was identified as one of the factors affecting student standards. Johnston (2001) examines the perceptions and experiences of first year students in an Economics and Commerce Faculty in Australia, and concludes that whilst confidence in written and verbal communications skills was maintained over the semester for students with an English speaking background, those with a non-English speaking background suffered a deterioration in skills confidence.^[13] Johnston suggests students are given opportunities to practise verbal skills through collaborative group learning, or through other forms of class interaction. In fact, offering opportunities for international and UK students to mix in class and to engage in group work outside class is a feature of all the case studies presented in this chapter. Further, Johnston suggests English language support programmes in the context of the disciplines of the Economics and Commerce Faculty, are likely to be important for non-English speaking background students. Such a service is provided, for example, by Cardiff Business School and LSE.

Brown (2008) highlights international students' anxiety, and feelings of shame, inferiority and of being disadvantaged regarding their level of English language.^[14] This has an impact on their self-confidence in engaging in class discussion and in social interaction, and contributes to some students communicating mainly with others from the same country, which inhibits further progress in English language. LSE has a long tradition of a high proportion of international students, and some of the strategies used to avoid the domination of mono-culture groups are presented in this chapter.

Recently arrived international students, in particular, may misinterpret their observations and experiences, which can then lead to misunderstanding and strengthen unhelpful stereotypes. This, in turn, can affect cultural adjustment and prevent more meaningful intercultural learning.^[15] The potential role of staff with international exposure, who can identify differences between UK academic and non-academic culture and that of students' native countries, should not be underestimated. The Departments/sections of Economics presented in this chapter are very active in supporting international students in coming to understand practices in the UK that international students typically struggle with. For example, the Economics section of the University of Aberdeen Business School, in addition to the induction programmes offered to recently arrived international students, also conducts pre-arrival induction events in China for students in 2+2 programmes.

McCallum (2004) presents a case study of teachers, including teachers of Economics, on a Foundation Programme in New Zealand.^[16] The teachers support the transition of students' expectations regarding learning; in particular, from book-centred, teacher as the 'transmitter of knowledge' approach, to critical learning approaches. Language development, a supportive learning environment, variety of teaching styles and resources, clarity of instructions, and working in groups were all identified as successful teaching approaches. Well-resourced Foundation Programmes were also found to facilitate the transition of international students towards university study. Several UK HE institutions offer Foundation Programmes for international students intending to go on to undergraduate studies of Economics. For example, Cardiff Business School offers an International Foundation Programme with Economics-specific modules, and the University of Bristol offers an International Foundation Programme of English with Economics and Finance. The University of

Bristol also offers a full-time one-year programme Pre-Masters in English for Academic Purposes, including for Economics programmes.

International students' access to Libraries can also be affected by language, as well as cultural and technological barriers,^[17] while cultural expectations may affect the way international students perceive the role of Libraries and use library resources.^[18] Assisting international students in incorporating Library use into their study practices and accessing Library resources is a further potentially important aspect of support provision. For example, the University of Bristol employs an International Librarian, whose responsibility it is to research and develop the access of international students to its Library services.

Curriculum changes, particularly those involving large numbers of staff and students, present multiple challenges. Crosling *et al.* (2008) discuss the organisational challenges of curriculum internationalisation.^[19] Of the case studies presented in this chapter, the approaches taken at the University of Aberdeen Business School when choosing the use of international examples in lectures are of particular interest.

To encourage the Economics HE community in supporting international students, the Economics Network has funded a number of projects, including publishing a guide for Economics lecturers on how to motivate international students,^[20] as well as a project on promoting international Economics students' participation and satisfaction.^[21]

3. Supporting International Students of Economics at the University of Aberdeen

3.1 Background

The University of Aberdeen has a student population of around 16,000 from over 120 countries. Economics is taught at the Economics section of the University of Aberdeen Business School. Over the past 15 years there has been a noticeable change in the profile of student cohorts in that the majority of students used to be local, while now they are largely international. At the University of Aberdeen, like most Scottish universities, students enter a general four-year MA rather than an Economics degree programme. The first year is broad and the second year narrows students' choices. It is at the end of the second year that students can commit to an Economics degree. Local students may be as young as 16 years old when they enter university and many have not studied Economics before. The system thus gives students the chance to choose to study the discipline from a position of experience at introductory and intermediate levels. In terms of lecturing, this means the first year cohort can be as large as 400 students, with numbers dropping to around 150 students in the second year.

3.2 Working in mixed groups to gain from complementary skills

There is agreement amongst staff interviewed that the participation of international students has driven up academic standards. Previously, many local students faced difficulties, particularly in relation to numerical skills, the general perception of students being that developing these skills was 'impossible'. International students typically have more extensive formal training in mathematics than their UK peers, often display outstanding numeracy skills and tend to have a very strong work ethic. Staff report that the high degree of effort international students invest in their university studies has raised the expectations of the Economics student population overall.

For all students to gain from the complementary skills of the local and international student cohorts, namely numerical and language skills, the Economics section ensures international and UK students work in mixed groups in tutorial situations and in group projects. Having a common goal enables international students to communicate at a deeper level and encourages them to make the effort to be understood by their UK peers, and *vice versa*. Student collaboration tends to increase as students progress to the third and fourth years, typically working more intensely in smaller groups, and on more focused and complex projects that require finer complementarities of skills amongst group members. Moreover, the skills gained from working in mixed groups are emphasised to students, as well as how these skills are transferable to their future professional lives.

The University of Aberdeen Business School and the Library have a number of allocated spaces for students to work in groups.

3.3 Being mindful of the use of language

At the University of Aberdeen Business School, Economics staff are particularly aware of using language that is accessible to international students. For example, expressions such as ‘fortnightly tutorials with students on odd weeks or even weeks’, are understood immediately by UK students but can cause confusion to international students. Does ‘fortnightly’ refer to fourteen or fifteen days, and does ‘odd weeks’ mean having tutorials now and then?

English words are also sometimes used differently in an academic context.

Staff are mindful initially to use a word consistently, and only subsequently introduce other words used in textbooks and journals, emphasising similarities and differences in meanings so that students learn when to use each word. For example, in Macroeconomics textbooks a policy may be referred to as ‘effective’ and further on as ‘efficient’. Students may start to associate the word effective in the context of ‘an effective way to increase National Income is to increase Government expenditure’ with the achievement of a good result. So when given the situation of decreasing National Income by decreasing Government expenditure international students may be confused by the use of the word effective, as they associate this situation as not being favourable.

Latin words and expressions used in academic English can also be problematic. For example, ‘*ex ante*’ and ‘*ad hoc*’ are meaningless to many international students. Being mindful of explaining such expressions supports the learning of international students, and many UK students also benefit.

3.4 Using international examples: familiarity or unfamiliarity

International examples from around the world are used as international students engage well with examples from their countries and geographic area. The choice of international examples is considered carefully. Typical examples include the Mumbai Tiffin Box Association, Hong Kong gas and Singapore hawker stalls. Other examples are chosen which all students are likely to be familiar with or, on the contrary, that all students are likely to be unfamiliar with. In both cases, the great majority of students start from a very similar knowledge base. When discussing exchange rates, a typical Eurocentric choice is to use the Euro as the currency that many European students are very familiar with, and many non-European students are not familiar with at all. As an alternative to the Euro, the US Dollar can be used as many countries in the world trade in US Dollars. Choosing the Norwegian Krona has the advantage that very few students are likely to be familiar with it. Unfamiliar examples have the advantage that there are no pre-conceived ideas of value or how strong the currency might be, and can help students think about the fundamental principles and achieve deeper learning.

3.5 Supporting postgraduate international students in taught programmes improve their employability prospects

The MSc in International Business, Energy and Petroleum has been running for several years and the majority of the postgraduate students it attracts are from sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria and Ghana, Eastern Europe and EU students, many of which are from Germany. The proportion of UK students is typically less than 30%. Although the programme is very intensive on Economics and Finance, the academic background of the students is diverse. Besides students with an Economics background, who have a strong academic grounding in Mathematics, candidates who have excelled in other disciplines, who may have never had a Mathematics component in their undergraduate degrees, may also be offered places. Because of the students' diverse starting points, both in terms of language and academic subject, the first semester aims at getting the students to an equivalent knowledge base.

From the first year the course ran, it became clear that a number of international students had anticipated that entry to the MSc implied entry to a job. The first step was to make it absolutely clear in all published information that the course leads to an academic qualification only and that it does not include a job. The programme's organisers were keen that international students gained as much as possible from their time at the University of Aberdeen, so researched ways through which they could contribute to the professional aspirations of these students. This provided the programme with the opportunity to evolve in a non-traditional manner, compared to what is normally expected from an MSc in this field. The programme is now creating strong connections with local companies that can provide training to postgraduate students. While the students are still fully supervised by an academic supervisor, they also gain an industrial referee. The training is highly relevant to the topics of their academic dissertations and greatly enhances students' employability prospects both in the UK, and in their countries of origin where such training is greatly valued. Students gain a deeper understanding and practical experience of the working environment in UK companies, which frequently have international connections. Increasing the number of dissertations where there is an explicit contact with companies has enriched the overall postgraduate students' experience at Aberdeen, while local companies also benefit from the presence of highly trained professionals from other cultures.

Collaboration with the Department of Engineering at the University of Aberdeen has greatly facilitated this process, since this type of collaboration is a well-established practice in Engineering. Also inspired by the practices of Engineering is that students receive guidance on presentation skills including what is required to prepare a presentation, to deliver it, and to respond to questions and comments from the audience. At the end of the MSc programme all the students present their work both as an oral presentation and as a poster during a dedicated event, which is attended by both business partners and academics. Experiencing the challenges of presenting to a diverse audience is crucial to the development of communication skills, which are fundamental for employability. For many international students, this is the first opportunity to learn and practise these skills, which they really value.

Listening to international students' career expectations has created the need for the Economics section at the University of Aberdeen Business School to explore and adapt the expertise already available in another department. The result is a non-traditional MSc programme that is proving to be stronger in its scope as it provides the opportunity for students to develop close links with UK business and improve their employability skills.

3.6 Induction events in China: supporting international students in 2+2 programmes

The Economics section has 2+2 collaborative agreements with two Chinese universities. Undergraduate students from these universities study the first two years of their Degree in China and the final two years at the University of Aberdeen Business School in areas of Economics and Finance. Chinese students are very motivated and achieve outstanding results, on average, with many staying on for postgraduate studies.

As part of the programme, academic staff from Aberdeen travel to China to conduct induction events. They give talks highlighting the differences between studying in Aberdeen and studying in China, including assessment methods, writing styles, referencing and plagiarism. The collaboration of academic staff is crucial to provide specific information that goes beyond the expertise of administrative staff who run such events, and to interview candidates to ensure their academic level is suitable.

3.7 The role of the Advisors of Studies

International students have access to comprehensive information about the University of Aberdeen Business School that explains what they can expect, so that they can make informed choices before they arrive and whilst they are in Aberdeen. However, the School is well aware that international students may not fully understand the information provided.

The Advisors of Studies are academic members of staff who support international students within academic departments. They have experience and particular knowledge of the general support needs of international students. The Advisors of Studies meet the students soon after they arrive and advise them on key aspects of the academic organisation and the overall university experience. This includes an overview of the degree; the courses students can take; the facilities and services available; the Student Union; the structure of the university and how it operates; and very importantly, university regulations and what is expected from the students. Information concerning plagiarism is also emphasised, since this is a new concept for many students and at odds with the practice in some cultures.

The support services available, including Finance, Medical, English language and Counselling, are discussed, and international students are advised on what to do if there were to be changes in their personal circumstances that might affect their academic progress.

The extensive training provided by the Library is also discussed with students.

3.8 Training of postgraduate tutors

First year tutorials are given by postgraduate researchers who receive dedicated teacher training using interactive approaches, and based on the needs of international students. Tutors participate in the training provided by the Economics Network for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). They also receive in-house training, which includes attending the first lecture of the course to meet the new students, and to develop a real sense of being part of the teaching team. Further, tutors meet lecturers regularly to discuss any issues or approaches to be used. Many tutors are international themselves, and the opportunity to be trained comprehensively supports them to develop and practise teaching styles, and further allows them to understand UK academic practices at a deeper level.

3.9 Assessment

Staff at the University of Aberdeen have learnt from experience how different cultures have different expectations towards assessment. For example, in the past a whole group of international students from a Scandinavian country failed their first year exams as they had no prior experience of time-limited exams. Other international students have failed the most basic multiple-choice questions due to not understanding what is required. Regarding essays, some international students produce long pieces of work that touch on many different issues rather than an in-depth account of a specific aspect. Many international students do not understand the specific terminology in questions, and what makes the difference between a first and a 2.1.

With regards to the choices of courses available, it is sometimes the case that international students self-select courses for which the assessment is less language intensive. For example, many Asian students choose courses with Mathematics and Statistics and avoid courses whose assessment involves essay writing. To balance this situation, and taking into account that international students who are awarded a degree from a British university are expected to have a high level of academic language, exams are organised so that students utilise and develop both their numerical and language skills. Being specific, clear and providing prompt feedback is important to all students, but to international students in particular, as they are more likely to be uncertain about what is expected of them. Economics lecturers show students how they are expected to answer exam questions, including how to structure the answers by analysing past exam papers. International students are shown resources available from the Economics Network, which can be very helpful for studying and exam preparation.

3.10 Supporting international students develop oral, written and feedback skills

Students choosing to study Economics in year 2 are given the opportunity to give a formal oral presentation, for which they receive feedback from their peers and from the lecturer. The students in the audience are asked to give constructive feedback on the presentation content; what could have been done better; what could be added or removed; and how it could develop further if it was to be written down as an essay.

In years 3 and 4 of International Economics, this process is taken further. The students have to prepare and give a presentation for which they receive feedback from both peers and the lecturer, and they then have to write the presentation in an essay format taking on board the comments received. The assessment is in two stages, each of which is half-weighted. The visibility element of the presentation, where students have to share their expertise, is very different from the nature of essays. Essays tend to be more private and the feedback is normally read in isolation and even when shared with others, it does not tend to have the same impact. International students in particular do not always fully understand the meaning of some written comments as they can be ambiguous, but they may not ask for clarification. In oral presentations there are more opportunities to clarify what is meant, and other students may enquire about alternatives.

It is also important for students to manage their expectations as they do not always have a realistic view of their abilities. The opportunity for peer reference and to discover where they are relative to the group is both revealing and a useful mechanism for motivating improvement. It is more of a discussion of possibilities that if managed properly can result in a very high standard of work.

International students may never have had to write an essay in the past, and may struggle with structure and language to present an argument. However, many British students who traditionally had essay writing skills at entry level are no longer trained as intensively at secondary school. With

the training provided at the Economics section of the University of Aberdeen Business School and the opportunities to practise and learn from feedback, the standard of students' work tends to increase very quickly and then stay high. Students who wish to perform well can also gain from the reference standards of their peers. Presenting their work, giving and responding to constructive feedback, and presenting arguments in writing are very important skills for students' future careers. The process is very work-intensive but students, particularly international students, greatly benefit from the skills gained.

4. Supporting International Students of Economics at the University of Bristol

4.1 Background

The University of Bristol has approximately 12,500 full-time undergraduate students, and 5,250 postgraduates. There are 4,000 international students from about 100 countries. The Department of Economics is part of the School of Economics, Finance and Management of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. The Department has a long tradition of attracting international students, typically to its undergraduate and research postgraduate programmes. Over the past few years its taught postgraduate programmes have become extremely popular. These courses are attracting unprecedented high numbers of international students to such an extent that some student cohorts are almost entirely made up of international students.

4.2 Taught postgraduate programmes

Rather than enrolling on the straight postgraduate taught Economics programme, which is generally chosen by students who wish to go on to do a PhD, most international students enrol on joint Economics Masters programmes, such as Economics, Accounting and Finance, or Economics, Finance and Management. Most international students who do these joint postgraduate programmes aim to return to their country of origin to follow careers outside academia.

While the international postgraduate students have the required academic and English language levels at entry, in practice many struggle initially with academic language. Moreover, most lack the experience of some standard UK academic practices that a UK undergraduate will gain over the course of an undergraduate degree. For example, by the time most UK students enrol onto a Masters programme, they will have had comprehensive training and experience of referencing, how to avoid plagiarising, writing academic text, reading effectively, using university libraries and accessing academic resources electronically. For many international students, however, these are all new and without appropriate systems in place, they would not enjoy the learning experiences and achievements of their UK counterparts with a comparable academic record and potential. The Department of Economics has therefore incorporated a number of practices to support and encourage international students on these taught postgraduate courses.

4.3 Introductory week

During introductory week, the Department contributes to a programme of lectures to ensure that the international students are aware of the requirements, entitlements and expectations in the University's regulations and code of practice for taught programmes. All students will have had access to these regulations before arrival, but the Department is well aware that many students do not read or fully understand them beforehand. Lecturers emphasise areas that many international students traditionally struggle with, in particular referencing and plagiarism.

The contribution of the subject-specific Librarian is crucial and the Department has an outstanding provision for international students, as the School's subject-specific Librarian is also the University's International Librarian. The Librarian informs the students in an accessible, friendly manner of the services available, addresses common difficulties that students encounter and supports them in seeking help.

Students learn about government statistics available for free on public websites from many countries that have English versions (for example, Russia and countries previously in the Eastern bloc); how to access and use social bookmarking, as this is an easy and useful way of organising links to websites of interest; and that some of the bigger journal article databases offer, apart from full journals in English, outlines/headings in different languages including Mandarin, Japanese, Spanish and French.

All the staff involved are careful to consider the needs of recently arrived international students, who are only just getting used to the diversity of ways of speaking English and English accents. Friendliness, clarity, pace of delivery and accessibility are particularly taken into account, and all materials and contacts are available in print and on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Staff members also offer to answer any remaining questions at the end of their talks, for those students who may feel more comfortable in asking questions one-to-one. A number of students, particularly international students, appreciate this, as they are clearly uncomfortable in asking questions in a big group.

Students are also informed about the 'International Advice and Support' service at the University that further helps and guides them on any queries or worries and welfare issues.

4.4 Structure of the taught postgraduate programmes

Programmes are delivered in three terms. In the first term, it is considered that international students in particular gain more from a structured approach, and from more contact hours. There are thus four compulsory units delivered in 16 one-hour lectures, and eight one-hour tutorials, typically delivered every fortnight. The second term is less contact-intensive and students can choose four optional units, which are taught in 10 one-hour lectures and five one-hour tutorials each. The third term focuses on writing a research-based dissertation of a maximum of 15,000 words. Each student is assigned a project and a supervisor who they meet regularly for supervisory sessions; the combined standard time for these meetings is four hours.

4.5 Teaching practices

The lecturing staff are aware of the specific learning needs of such internationally diverse student cohorts, and of the potential for students to learn internationalised perspectives from each other. To support international students, in terms of the curriculum, case studies are almost always taken from around the world so that they are meaningful to as many international student groups as possible, and so that all students gain an internationalised outlook. The lecturing styles also aim to facilitate students following in real time including the pace, explaining culturally specific references and making written resources available.

One of the most significant changes to support international students in the taught postgraduate programmes is that the Department has a policy that all the students receive copies of the lecture hand-outs at the beginning of the lecture. The lecturers are responsible for organising the lecture materials earlier than they would have done traditionally, and to get these materials copied at the reprographics service. The international students, in particular, are very appreciative of this initiative

as they can follow the lectures without being worried about missing out on relevant information, and the lecturers see how international students benefit. There is an emphasis on bringing interaction into lectures, and students are encouraged to ask questions. It is accepted, however, that for many international students it is difficult to ask questions in large lecture theatres particularly as some of the units in distinct programmes are taught together. Taking this into account, lecturers aim to be available to answer questions directly after the lecture and typically small groups of students gather around lecturers at the end.

The tutorials are entirely given by the academic staff who teach the units. With over 500 Masters students in four or five different programmes, it is not logistically feasible to have very small tutorial groups, but an effort has been made to keep the tutorials to a maximum of 15 students per group. Some courses are almost entirely made up of international students, so the tutors know that many of these students are initially reluctant to speak up in their second or third language in class, particularly in large groups. It is easier to get international students speaking and presenting in smaller groups.

4.6 Research methods and study skills week

In June, the Department organises a very successful dedicated research methods and study skills week to prepare all students in taught Masters programmes how to research, access and interpret sources of interest and to write their dissertations. Lectures during this week include on technical software packages, such as STATA; how to write well; information literacy; and a comprehensive review of issues to do with reading effectively, plagiarism and referencing.

The University of Bristol has very clear standards available to all students on the level expected from academic written work and there is guidance on how to find proof-reading support. For example, the aim of the academic writing skills classes is to raise students' awareness of common mistakes, anonymous examples from previous Masters dissertations are used to explain how lost marks could have easily been avoided. Examples include American English and UK English spellings; use of apostrophes; a comprehensive list of common misspellings (e.g. principal and principle); how to display quotations; good and bad quotes; and academic referencing.

The International Librarian gives a number of sessions. Apart from reviewing and demonstrating key databases of interest, there is a focus on websites where students can get specialised data, particularly free websites that they may continue to use well after completing their degree.

4.7 Dissertation

Regarding the dissertation, supervisors decide what areas they want to supervise and projects of interest to them. Students are given a number of titles, with datasets and recommended reading, and they are allowed to choose their project. Supervisors meet students regularly to provide guidance and support regarding the writing process and the reading material, and to make further suggestions.

All international students in the Masters programmes will have obtained a good first degree, but many have little experience of writing long academic documents. Having to produce a document typically between 13,000 and 15,000 words can be quite intimidating for students who have never written any long documents. Considerable time is spent with writing issues, including the structure of the dissertation and plagiarism so that by the time the students submit their thesis it is not likely that they have plagiarised.

4.8 The International Librarian

Recognising the importance of addressing the needs of international students, in 2011 the University of Bristol created a new position: that of International Librarian. In light of extensive involvement in supporting the learning and the development of resources for international students over the years, the subject Librarian for the School of Economics, Finance and Management was given this position, which is now combined with the previous role. The International Librarian speaks a number of languages, and was an international student and can thus empathise with some of the difficulties that international students experience.

The large numbers of international students can be a challenge as their needs are very diverse. The Library's response is to have a range of information and resources so that as many of the students can benefit. The International Librarian maintains and updates the library services that already work very well for international students, and researches the implementation of alternatives or new services suggested by students and staff, and by colleagues from other institutions.

Considerable effort is placed on having clear, comprehensive Web pages with all the information accessible to guide international students even before their arrival. The Library has a dedicated page for international students that can be accessed from its main menu via a quick link. This page welcomes international students and provides information on Library teaching sessions, and on the library's international collection recently re-branded as "International Students: Studying in the UK". The collection has books about academic practices including writing, essays and avoiding plagiarism, and about the English language and aspects of life and culture in the UK. The international students' Library webpage has links to study skills websites of interest hosted by the University of Bristol and other institutions. Notably, there are links to the library glossary with the most common Library words; to the 'Internet for Economics' of the Virtual Training Suite, a free online tutorial to help students of Economics develop internet academic research skills, which includes extensive tutorials, resources and links to key websites for Economics; and to 'Prepare for Success' a web resource with learning activities to support international students to prepare for study in the UK.

The Library website has a number of video tutorials from 'Introduction to Library Services', to 'Understanding references on your reading list' and 'Accessing electronic Library resources away from the campus'. These come with transcripts, which students can download. With regards to subject-specific resources and support, the library has a webpage that shows in six steps how to research a topic in Economics, Finance or Management that can be very useful to international students. Moreover, the International Librarian contributes to the welcome induction events by giving talks informing the students of the services available and to the research methods and study skills week, as mentioned previously. Hand-outs are made available in advance, on the VLE.

The International Librarian informs students about follow-up teaching sessions, which are also advertised on the VLE. For Masters students, in particular, there are specific sessions on key databases for their subjects, including Business SourceComplete, Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar. These sessions have a component of live demonstrations on the screen, followed by a hands-on component, where the students practise accessing the databases for Economics searches. Most students doing Masters degrees in the Department are digitally literate, and are very quick to learn new digital skills. This hands-on component is very important for students, as they try to apply their learning under the International Librarians' guidance. Any difficulties encountered are dealt with on a one-to-one basis.

4.9 Plagiarism

In the UK, many children learn about the need to distinguish what others write from what they write at primary school, whilst in other parts of the world this is not the case. Students' course books and the Library pages contain all key information about plagiarism, and there are practical sessions where students are taught about plagiarism and how to avoid it. Often international students copy whole paragraphs of text, word by word without acknowledging their sources even when they have been trained and warned of the risks of plagiarism. The issues surrounding plagiarism cause a lot of anxiety and need to be reinforced through various means.

As well as offering structured sessions, the International Librarian explored other approaches including informal sessions where students could ask questions; the format was thus driven by the students' needs. These sessions were not as successful as had been intended since students attended but did not ask questions. The International Librarian had to volunteer areas that could be covered during the sessions, and use materials pre-prepared in anticipation, effectively building a structure into these sessions. The International Librarian aims to produce further guidance for international students with regards to plagiarism, which is an important issue for these students.

The International Librarian realised that the help screens on some of the databases of interest to Economics could be confusing to some international students. To address this, the Librarian writes guides to databases in clear English and with added screen shots so that students have clear visual guidance in addition to the text. These guides are also available on the VLE.

4.10 Pre-Masters in English for Academic Purposes

The surge of international students wishing to study at postgraduate taught level at the University has led it to offer a full-time, one-year programme Pre-Masters in English for Academic Purposes. This programme prepares international students for studying at postgraduate level, including those wishing to pursue Economics.

The programme is delivered by the Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies. It is organised in such a way so as to enable international students to clearly understand the requirements and expectations of studying at Masters level. Students have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and use of academic English grammar and vocabulary, and to learn academic skills including Economics essay writing, note-taking, effective reading, contributing to discussions and giving presentations.

Taught in small groups, the course offers modules on Essential Academic Writing, Essential Text Response, Research and Report Writing, and Exploring British Academic Culture. Students also engage in a final Library-based research project and presentation in Economics where they put in practice what they have learnt.

The Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies also offers an International Foundation Programme of English with Economics and Finance, aimed at international students who may want to study Economics at undergraduate level.

5. Supporting International Students of Economics at Cardiff University

5.1 Background

International students who choose to study Economics at Cardiff Business School join an international academic community of nearly 2,000 students from 60 countries, and staff from about 30 countries. The school also has a strong network of alumni from 120 countries. There is a long tradition of bringing together academic perspectives informed by international diversity, of embracing international students and of seeking how best to support their success in a variety of ways.

5.2 Welcoming international students to Cardiff

Cardiff Business School recognises that it is a major change for many international students to study in the UK, in terms of social, study and research practices. For many international students this is the first time they have travelled outside their country of origin, and many will be very excited by this opportunity but will also have a number of anxieties. For example, the experience of trying to orient oneself in a big airport, typically with bulky luggage, whilst not being able to clearly understand others or make oneself understood to others can be overwhelming.

International students coming to study Economics at the Cardiff Business School are supported from the moment they arrive in the UK, so that they feel welcome and looked after at a time when they could feel vulnerable. The International Office, in collaboration with the Business School, organises a full programme of induction activities including the collection of international students from airports (Heathrow and Cardiff) in easily recognisable minibuses, help with luggage, and transport to student accommodation in Cardiff. The university accommodation in residences is arranged prior to the arrival of the international students, is guaranteed for the duration of the period of study and is mostly within walking distance of, or a bicycle ride from, the Business School. Single gender accommodation is also offered as an option.

The induction activities for the undergraduate Economics student cohort includes talks and tours to the Business School, its Library and university facilities, and social events where students can meet and mix with their colleagues and meet Economics staff. Representatives of the University and of the Business School, including course convenors, participate. Students are informed of what they can expect from their courses and from the University. The induction activities are excellent opportunities for international and UK students to meet and network, and to create a sense of community with a shared purpose.

5.3 Supporting international students in MSc programmes

The School acknowledges in its induction provision that it is imperative to develop a community amongst students and staff in intensively taught postgraduate programmes that last only a year. Students in such programmes, including international students in Economics Masters programmes, typically have high expectations and high requirements and the induction programme is customised accordingly. An expression of the high level at which these programmes are conducted, is that students are given copies of the core text books they need.

Meetings take place early on between each student and their allocated personal tutor, where students are encouraged to seek advice on academic matters, or any issue that may impact on their future progress.

Each individual postgraduate degree programme organises an event to introduce students to each other and to highlight the importance of peer support and networking. Course tutors are invited to

participate, and the framework of the course, expectations and requirements are explained as well as the support systems in place within the School, including those relating to English language, careers and disability. The School is aware that international students, in particular, may miss out on or may misunderstand relevant information provided to them during induction week. There are, therefore, systems in place to ensure that students are informed and feel supported at all times.

5.4 Personal tutoring system

Undoubtedly, the personal tutor system constitutes a very effective support structure for international undergraduate students of Economics. Each student is attributed a personal tutor with whom they have scheduled one-to-one meetings on a monthly basis. Students are further encouraged to meet with their personal tutor outside the scheduled times if any problems arise. The meetings with personal tutors are mainly for academic guidance that may include choice of modules, and for clarifying academic practices or issues, for example assessment methods and plagiarism.

The role of personal tutors goes well beyond the strictly academic, as it also includes helping with any problems that affect, or may come to affect, the students' academic achievements. Personal tutors are fundamental for pastoral support, particularly of international students. Their role of guiding students in need to other support services within the School or the University is well established. Personal tutors get to know their students very well, and they normally act as referees for their tutees in the context of job applications.

5.5 Teaching and assessment

Regarding teaching and assessment, Economics teaching staff at Cardiff Business School use a variety of methods to address the diversity of international students. Teaching staff are encouraged to use interactive methods to enliven their teaching; to embed international examples from research carried out in the Economics section; and to use relevant international examples when explaining economic models that go beyond US- or UK/Europe-centric normally presented in core Economics text books.

Some international students find it very difficult to take notes in class so resources are available on the VLE, and teaching staff prepare hand-outs that are distributed at the beginning of lectures.

Economics international students can also benefit from practical experience of the financial markets by means of a fully interactive Trading Room. The Trading Room replicates real-world trading experiences and functions, and allows students to develop a number of skills and insights as they test their technical knowledge of finance-related challenges.

The assessment portfolio is diversified, to provide for an international student population with very different previous educational experience as students from different regions may find elements of assessment particularly challenging. For example, some international students find essay type questions initially very difficult, others have never experienced written tests, and some have never had timed examinations. Group work, and preparing and giving oral presentations, can be particularly testing for many international students. These issues are especially significant for newly arrived international students. As international students progress in their programmes, they learn what is required from them and grow to understand what to expect.

5.6 Dealing with plagiarism

Regarding essay writing, particular emphasis is placed on ensuring that international students do not plagiarise. Hand-outs, online information and lectures are part of the Economics staff's efforts to support international students in understanding what plagiarism is and its consequences. Practical tips on how not to plagiarise by using examples of how to summarise information and what is acceptable and unacceptable practice are also available.

Once they start writing assignments international students who have seemingly understood all the information provided regarding plagiarism, do not follow the guidelines explained and provided. Personal tutors are very quick at picking up problems faced by inexperienced or anxious students, who inadvertently do not follow the requirements. By year 2, with the support of personal tutors, international students rarely need to be reminded of plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarising. For international students in taught postgraduate programmes, and for those who come for a short period of time, personal tutors are particularly alert, so that problems regarding plagiarism do not arise.

5.7 Working in groups

Teaching staff in Economics understand that many international students are unused to working in groups and find it difficult to see the relevance of group working in an academic context. The staff explain the skills that can be gained through working in groups, and in particular, groups with international membership, to deter UK and international students who want to work in groups where all members are from the same country or region.

5.8 Language support

Other specific mechanisms to directly and practically support international students include the provision of in-house English language support classes given by specialist academic language tutors. These classes are free of charge, and are different from the pre-sessional English language courses provided by the University. They are organised by the Business School and focus on the development of advanced academic English skills. Particular emphasis is given to the language skills needed to write academic essays.

For some international students, even at postgraduate level, this is the first time they are required to write long written pieces of academic text in any language, so it is not surprising that many miss the significance of essay writing in academic practice, and find writing essays problematic. Undergraduate international students can normally access two hours of small group English classes per week, during their first two terms at the School.

The provision of English classes to international students in taught postgraduate Economics programmes is more intense due to the shorter time-frame of their programme, and the higher level requirements of their written work. International students in these programmes can enrol in two hours per week of tailored, small group, English classes, and can also benefit from one-to-one language tutorials. PhD students can also enrol in one-to-one tutorials.

5.9 The Maths Support Service

Another source of support that is available for international students is the Maths Support Service. Students with problems in mathematics or statistics can either attend pre-booked appointments or

drop-in sessions. The Service is staffed by tutors who are friendly, informal and very well prepared technically. Both appointments and drop-in sessions can be on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, and typically last 30 to 50 minutes. The Support service also offers Economics-specific, drop-in sessions that can be organised through the Cardiff Business School.

The Maths Support Service's website²³ also offers access to electronic resources including tips on study skills for Mathematics, reading, writing, problem solving, revision and exam skills. These resources include online tutorials, booklets, quizzes, links to Maths software for Economics (METAL²⁴ and Bized²⁵), links to the Economics resource part of the Mathcentre website²⁶, and to other more general maths and stats websites that address different learning levels.

Whilst the Service is available to all University of Cardiff students, newly arrived international students in particular may benefit, as they tend to feel anxious in asking questions to their teaching staff, and may find it easier to ask for support outside the School. In addition, being able to access online resources in their own time, at their own pace, can be reassuring for international students.

5.10 Student Support and Careers Advisory Service

The Business School has a dedicated Student Support Officer who also has the responsibility of being the School's Student Disability Contact. The remit of these combined posts is to be an easily accessible point of reference for the multitude of resources available at the University at large including student finance, regulations and support services, and to provide information on how to access disability/specific learning difficulties support.

The Business School also has its in-house careers advisory service, which is particularly important in supporting international students seeking internships and applying for jobs. The service supports international students in contacting prospective employers, preparing CVs and covering letters, filling in electronic job application forms, and providing training on job interviews.

5.11 Social events

With the advent of free, or near-free, digital communication systems and social networking platforms available on mobile phones, some international students can miss out on opportunities to socialise with their colleagues, by spending their free time socialising virtually with their friends back home. This effectively reduces their need to explore new friendships, and affects the development of their English language skills.

Social events organised by the Economics section and the School become particularly important to avoid such situations becoming commonplace. For example, as part of the support mechanisms for dissertations that Economics taught postgraduate students are required to write, the Business School organises a two-day residential academic and social programme. Each student gives a presentation with the proposed outline of their dissertation, and the academic staff offer comments and suggestions.

International students, in particular, really appreciate the combination of the academic focus of the residential with being able to meet their teachers informally. The event takes place in an impressive period home in the Welsh countryside, which adds the opportunity for international students to experience an unusual traditional setting.

The Cardiff Business School organises social receptions where postgraduate students in taught programmes can meet academic staff on a less formal basis, and a high-profile annual formal dinner

in Cardiff City Hall for all postgraduate students in taught and research programmes. The dinner is attended by the most senior University personnel, academic and support staff, and by local business and political dignitaries. International students are encouraged to wear their formal national dress and this event constitutes a most memorable experience for all.

5.12 Alumni

Economics students at the Cardiff Business School benefit from the public celebration of its successful international alumni. This can be meaningful in supporting current international students as it confirms that they are valued. *Synergy*, the School magazine, features profiles, interviews or main articles, including cover articles, of high-profile international alumni. Keynote speakers from all over the world are invited to contribute to the seminar series organised by the School. Students understand the employability benefits of learning in such a lively international environment.

5.13 International Foundation Programme, Cardiff Business School

This is a comprehensive one-year academic training programme that aims to prepare international students to meet the requirements and expectations of UK academic, cultural and social life. International students wanting to study Economics can have 'Introduction to Economics' as one of the specific modules they can choose to study. This covers principles and tools of microeconomics and macroeconomics, and relationships with economic policy and implementation. Other academic modules in the programme include 'Business Studies', 'Quantitative Methods for Business' and 'Introduction to Management'.

The programme's non-academic compulsory modules are 'English Language and Study Skills', 'English for Academic Purposes', 'Integrated Study Skills' and of particular relevance 'British Social and Cultural Environment', as it is recognised that social and cultural aspects can impact greatly on the settling in, retention and achievement of international students.

In terms of language, the aims of the programme are that international students wanting to undertake Economics study develop their English language skills to a level that allows them to feel confident reading, writing, speaking and listening to academic level standards, and to increase their knowledge of subject specific technical vocabulary for which, notably, they have specialist tuition available.

International students have the opportunity to learn the practicalities of the UK academic system since and the modules are taught in a variety of ways, including lectures, seminars, tutorials and online materials. Similarly, the assessment methods used during the programme aim at training international students in what they will experience once they start their undergraduate study. These assessment methods range from exams, essays, reports, oral presentations and project group work.

Over the course of the programme, international students learn, experience and get used to aspects of academic UK practice that traditionally many find difficult. These include asking and answering questions in class, contributing with ideas, critically appreciating academic resources, completing timed exam questions, understanding marking schemes, academic referencing practices and plagiarism issues.

Other practical skills include the use of the Library and Resource Centres; the computing facilities, IT systems, and software packages (particularly word processing, spreadsheet and slideshow programmes), as well as the internet to study and communicate with staff and colleagues. International students are advised on how to access support from the University Computing

Advisory Service. They also learn the significance of Personal Development Planning (PDP) to record their own reflections on the learning process and achievements, to set learning and development goals, and for career development. PDP approaches are not generally available to undergraduate level students in many countries, but are very useful as similar reflection and recording tools are increasingly being used as part of the assessment methods for project group work in Economics courses.

Students also get to know and to use the attendance recording system in use at the Business School, and the legal reasons for its use.

The International Foundation Programme at the Cardiff Business School offers the compulsory module 'British Social and Cultural Environment'. This module deals with cultural issues relating to the UK, Cardiff and Wales, and raises awareness of some of the practical, everyday situations that typically can result in unnecessary anxiety for newly arrived international students. Simple things that UK students would not normally have any problem with, such as shopping or using public transport, opening of a bank account or registering with the local doctor, are all practical aspects that some international students may struggle with and that are addressed in this module.

The programme has a dedicated system of personal tutors and support staff so that students benefit from high levels of pastoral care. The University guarantees accommodation for the year of study, and students gain access to all the facilities and services available to undergraduate students including computing, library and resource centres, as well as the welfare, social and sporting facilities.

International students wanting to study Economics who attend the International Foundation Programme at the Cardiff Business School have a variety of choices for Undergraduate Study ranging from BSc in Economics, to BSc in Economics and Management Studies, BSc in Economics and Finance, and joint honours degrees.

With the anxieties relating to being in a new country essentially resolved, and equipped with a good understanding of the UK cultural and academic practices and expectations, international students completing this International Foundation Programme should be well prepared to succeed in their undergraduate degree. In addition, they should be in a position, very much like their UK counterparts, to participate equitably and contribute fully to the variety of academic, social and career opportunities supported by their institution.

6. Supporting International Students of Economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

6.1 Background

LSE is a world leading university, specialised in the social sciences including economics, politics, accounting, finance, geography, sociology, philosophy and anthropology. LSE has an outstanding reputation for academic excellence with a total of 16 of its alumni or staff having been awarded Nobel Prizes to date, 12 of which are in Economic Sciences.

The level of competition for places at LSE is very high, which makes it the most oversubscribed university in London. Because of its reputation, LSE draws some of the very best students in the world with 150 countries represented. Whilst there is no doubt that LSE is privileged in its ability to attract funding, it can be argued that many effective approaches used in practice to support

international students are due to the lively engagement of staff rather than to the availability of funds for particular initiatives.

6.2 Diversity at LSE: a tradition

LSE has traditionally attracted a very high percentage of international students, both at the undergraduate and taught and research postgraduate level. This is comparatively new for many other HE institutions teaching and researching in Economics in the UK.

LSE is described as being a multi-lingual institution, and there are probably more Mandarin native speakers than English native speakers amongst its students. The culture of supporting international students is so embedded in the practice of staff at all levels, that it is sometimes difficult for staff to identify and articulate what it is that they do that so effectively supports international students.

At the undergraduate level, the intake at LSE is approximately 1,000 students, of which the Economics cohort is around 200. Many degrees offered at LSE have an Economics component, so that some of the subjects have a very eclectic mix and large numbers of undergraduates. The primary focus of some of the students in such mixed cohorts may not be Economics and they may choose not to study any other Economics courses whilst at LSE.

The first year course 'Economics B', typically attended by 800 undergraduates, is a relatively technical introductory course that provides a foundation to undergraduates who do not necessarily have a background in Economics, but who anticipate to have more Economics components in their degree. It tends to be compulsory for those on more technical degrees, such as B.Sc. Economics and B.Sc. Mathematics and Economics. In contrast, 'Economics A' is a non-technical introductory course for undergraduates who are unlikely to take further courses in Economics. Courses with Economics that include a Philosophy, Anthropology or Politics core, make classes very interesting and give Economics core students the ability to broaden their horizons. This is because of the type of questions and observations that such a diverse cohort can elicit. Adding the international experiences to this environment can really make some of these mixed courses very rewarding intellectually for students and staff alike.

6.3 Avoiding the domination of the mono-culture group

One of the attractions for international students is that LSE is within walking distance of the financial centre of London, which is known to recruit heavily from LSE. Students from all over the world who apply to study Economics at LSE tend to be very highly career focused. In Economics there is a focus on developing technical and human skills that are transferable to such highly competitive work environments. Therefore, LSE students do not have any problems in being offered internships in their country of origin followed by job opportunities, as LSE is a very sought after institution worldwide.

LSE encourages all students to mix and widen their horizons as part of their employability skills. Because of the very high number of international students at LSE, it is usual to have several people from the same country, or who share the same native language, in the same classroom. Students are made aware of the importance of learning from each others' cultures for personal enrichment and because of the value that that represents for their careers, as economists tend to work in very internationally diverse environments.

Students come to understand that in future they are likely to work with a diversity of people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and that at LSE they can all contribute to a cultural learning

environment. The awareness that people from different cultures have culture-related perspectives and needs, and the willingness to embrace that, entails the development of understanding and skills very much appreciated in the international fast-moving workplace. These skills include specific knowledge of different cultures, cross-cultural communication skills, resourcefulness, openness and adaptability.

During orientation week, there are many activities organised to encourage international and UK students to mix, including games run by the Economics Network, which are very well received by all students.

Another related issue is to ensure that international students use English to communicate with their peers in class rather than other common languages at LSE including Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, French or Spanish. An approach is to make it very clear to all students that the easiest option for them is indeed to speak the language they are most fluent in, but that by doing so they are missing out on opportunities to develop their English language skills.

Working in highly competitive environments, LSE graduates will need to be comfortable speaking in English with people from different international backgrounds, with different accents, and different ways of expressing themselves in English. So the more they practise speaking in English during their degrees, the better chances they have when applying for jobs to show such skills, and the better trained they will be when they start their professional careers. Making all students aware of this, and reiterating it during the first few classes, tends to be enough to encourage the use of English alone during class time and also, frequently, outside class.

6.4 Supporting international students to participate in class

With the large sizes of international student cohorts in some Economics subjects, clarity of what LSE expects from all the students is absolutely essential. So during orientation week students attend lectures that explain precisely what the teachers expect from the students and what the students can expect from the teachers. One of the important topics discussed at length is that LSE expect students to participate in class. For international students in particular, it is essential to support the development of skills that enable them to participate in class. This includes asking questions in general, or simply asking for clarification of points they have not understood; to propose alternatives to the arguments; to express agreement and disagreement; and more generally to contribute with their insights to a discussion. All these communication skills are absolutely fundamental for the success of international students at LSE and for their future careers in international professional environments.

Many international students come from cultures where interrupting the lecturer and questioning what is being said is not the norm, and is even considered rude. Understandably, for such international students to get used to a system where they are being encouraged to do something that would be impolite in their countries of origin, can initially be very difficult. Other international students may be very worried about the consequences of getting their answers wrong in class, or asking questions and making comments that may be considered stupid in front of their lecturer and peers. This may be compounded by the worry of not being able to articulate their answers in clear enough English. Students who are not understood will typically apologise profusely for their bad English and never dare participate again!

Furthermore, international students can easily feel that they are somehow responsible for not understanding their teachers and that their English should be better. For many international students in particular, it is also difficult realising that they might have been the best students in their

class before, but that at LSE they are average. This can truly be a culture shock in itself. Many of these students are very reluctant to ask for help as they always managed to achieve very good results without needing any support, so at LSE staff aim to change this attitude from the beginning. Emphasising that the students who get the best marks are the ones who ask for help encourages students to change their behaviour as it reassures them that they too should seek support.

Teachers at LSE are very experienced in teaching international students and are fully aware of the particular anxieties that international students may have in contributing in class both due to cultural conditioning but also due to insecurities relating to the level of English language. Staff know that it is very easy to erode the confidence of international students and discourage them from participating in future classes. So the issue of participating in class has to be reiterated a number of times, and LSE staff are keen to ensure that international students feel comfortable in contributing in class. One of the approaches that staff adopt is to explain how students are expected to contribute, including hand-raising and waiting for their turn to talk. This is important as when they first attempt to contribute some international students interrupt whoever is speaking without first indicating that they wish to talk. Students cannot quite understand why their contribution is not welcomed, and experience frustration and confusion.

Another approach that is very helpful initially in supporting international students is to give all students a set of possible questions that may be asked during the class, so that they can get used to the type of questions and prepare their answers in their own time. When asking international students new questions it is good practice to give them time to think, to write down some notes and to discuss their thoughts with a colleague before asking them to share their answers with the whole class. It is sometimes the case that international students do not immediately answer questions because they simply do not understand the question itself. So teachers need to be sensitive and aware of the language used to address and question students, as frequently what a native speaker may think is a perfectly clear comment or question is not at all clear to international students who then miss the point.

6.5 Stretching exceptionally high-ability international students

LSE staff have an important role in preventing stereotypes and expectations from dominating the discourse as they may impact negatively on the achievement of very high-ability international students. Some international students that come to LSE are not only outstanding in mathematics and quantitative subjects in general, but they can also develop superb written skills and are able to advance very sophisticated arguments in writing. With students that achieve such promising results, LSE staff know how important it is to be very specific in the feedback given about what areas these students can develop to make their work even stronger.

Staff are very keen to stretch the very top students, and to prevent that such students become bored by assignments that they do not find particularly challenging. An approach that can be very effective is the introduction of a notional 'top amongst the top' mark for those who are prepared to engage with the subject at a much higher level, and who work and research further. Such students then tend to follow the lectures by asking questions that really stretch their knowledge. Bringing in additional incentives to perform well in written assignments is particularly important for international students for whom English is not their native language.

6.6 LSE100

LSE100 is a compulsory, interdisciplinary, two-term course that gives undergraduate students an opportunity to gain from the wide-ranging expertise at LSE. The approach to teaching and learning

adopted is particularly suited to support international students as the teachers are trained to engage these students and support their active learning. To complement the lectures, LSE100 has small, interactive, task-based classes, where students are encouraged to learn from collaborating and debating with peers from other disciplines and cultural backgrounds. International students in particular gain from the new learning technologies and web resources used as they can access them at their pace, in their own time. LSE100 also invites experts from all over the world to contribute.

LSE100 is taught in the second term of the first year, and the first term of the second year and it is organised as an integrated programme across departments comprising 20 lectures and 20 classes. It aims to expand the intellectual grounding and experience of all students, and their understanding of their own discipline. Students are challenged to engage with six grand themes in three-week modules each using evidence, explanations, concepts and models from different social sciences. The course enables students to develop skills at the basis of social scientific thinking and research including methodological, information and communication skills.

The communication skills training provided, including that on planning and producing structured, well researched, logical and engaging arguments orally and in writing, is particularly relevant in supporting international students as they have to engage with their peers to draw conclusions, develop arguments and debate the positions taken.

6.7 Student Union Societies at LSE

There are over 150 careers, academic, national and cultural student societies at LSE, which play a very important role in supporting international students. Student societies offer many opportunities for international students to develop employability skills that support or complement their academic skills. Training includes team building, applying for jobs and interview skills, leadership and networking.

In addition, the LSE is possibly unique in the UK in the extent to which student societies facilitate for students to meet employers from all over the world. Student societies have very close links with international high-profile employers and are fundamental in enhancing career opportunities for international LSE graduates. Societies organise exchange programmes around the world, and provide career and internship opportunities in countries such as Russia, China, Poland and more extended geographical areas, such as Africa and Asia. These societies are very active at negotiating sponsorships from companies and at inviting speakers to give lectures. The lectures have a social networking component, and students have the opportunity to gain highly specialised insights and to meet and interact with very interesting people who are doing the jobs students want to get into.

International students in particular also have the opportunity to develop networking skills, including how to introduce themselves to people they consider important and how to maintain a conversation in a very competitive environment, since many students are similarly trying to get noticed. The experience of asserting themselves, of asking questions in public and of representing their interests is very good training for real-life situations, particularly at interviews. For many international students this is all very new, and they gain from the highly intense peer environment.

Student societies promote diverse aspects of international cultural awareness at LSE. There are a number of international student-led clubs and events, and one interesting outcome is the collaboration between LSE catering and international student societies, whereby the caterers learn cuisine from different countries and then offer international menus on specified days. The students collaborate with caterers about the menus, in the decoration of the canteens and in choosing background music. This really encourages international students to feel they are not guests of the

institution, but that they are very much active participants and are fundamental in supporting the whole LSE community in learning about everyday cultural aspects of other countries.

The Economics Society is the largest academic society and is supported by the Economics Department. It organises talks, lectures, social events and debates and invites world leaders to share their views. It also runs homework help sessions. Students who get firsts in Economics B, can teach first year students. Several graduates of the Economics Society tutoring scheme have gone on to teach Economics B. These are often international students which add to the international feature of LSE, as the faculty and GTAs are equally a diverse group. From the perspective of the international students who have the chance to teach, this is a fantastic opportunity as they experiment and develop their teaching personality and language skills, as well as creative, alternative ways of explaining complex material to first year students. From the perspective of the students who are being taught, this can support retention, in particular of international students who initially may find it difficult to ask more senior teaching staff questions directly and may feel more comfortable asking questions in the more informal environment of these classes.

6.8 International Organisations Day

International Organisations Day allows LSE students to learn about leading multinational organisations, including the UN, the OECD and international development, investment and finance corporations. Senior recruitment and Human Resources staff give talks on career opportunities and the profile employers look for in international staff. Students can apply beforehand to be considered for interviews, with the possibility of being offered internships. This event supports international students at LSE in practising their communication and networking skills, as well as enabling them to widen their horizons in relation to future career opportunities.

7. Top Tips

1. Design induction programmes and published materials with international students in mind.
2. Clarify differences in the approach to learning and assessment in the UK early on and emphasise what is expected of students.
3. Consider the need for administrative roles specific to the support of international students (e.g. a Librarian or Advisor dedicated to international students).
4. Mentoring by more experienced students, or 'buddy' schemes, can help international students integrate into university life and makes it easier for them to resolve simple issues.
5. Actively aim to mix international and UK students for example when creating groups for projects and presentations, and highlight to students the potential gain in complementary and transferable skills.
6. When designing courses, take care to select diverse examples suitable for an international audience.
7. Use terms consistently, highlight subtle differences in the meaning of key words and take care to explain Latin terms.
8. International students, who tend to be reluctant to ask questions in class, are likely to benefit if teachers make themselves available for a few minutes after class.
9. Diversify course assessment to balance the use of language and numeracy skills; innovative practices, such as a peer-reviewed student presentation, can motivate and harness expectations, develop key skills and build confidence.
10. Provide access to support services and training opportunities, such as language support, a proof-reading service, training on how to prepare and deliver a presentation, and academic writing.

11. Incorporate aspects of learning and teaching relating to international students when designing training for new staff or graduate teaching assistants.
12. Actively engaging with international students can allow programmes to evolve in ways that enhance the student experience, for example offering training opportunities with local firms.
13. A pre-degree foundation year, focusing in English for Academic Purposes, may be valuable for departments with very large cohorts of international students; similarly, academic English for economists might be provided in-house by departments.
14. Drawing from the experiences of alumni and social events can be a valuable means of facilitating the integration of international students.
15. Encouraging the creation of national student societies can offer useful networking opportunities for students with similar backgrounds who may face similar challenges.

Websites of interest

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english-language/>

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english-language/eap/content.html>

<http://www.wun.ac.uk/about/members/university-bristol>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/international/studentsupport/meetstaff/>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/findinginfo/library-jargon-buster/>

<http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/ws/learningcontent/economics/index.html>

<http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/>

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/studentskills/content/ilitskills/tutorials/>

<http://wok.mimas.ac.uk/>

<http://www.ebscohost.com/academic/business-source-complete>

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/library/using/international/>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/library/support/subjects/economics/>

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/for/prospective/inter/ifp/coursestructure/business/index.html#economics>

<http://learning.cf.ac.uk/resource-support-for-postgraduate-students-in-carbs/>

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/language/Home.aspx>

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/study/informationForInternationalStudents/Home.aspx>

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/LSE100/Home.aspx>

<http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/archive/lamaison/>

<http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/teaching/exams/principlesgeneral.htm>

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25. <http://www.bized.co.uk/learn/economics/maths/index.htm>

26. <http://www.mathcentre.ac.uk/students/courses/>