

## THE NEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT A SINO-BRITISH COOPERATIVE UNIVERSITY IN CHINA

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### ABSTRACT

*The number of international students around the world has risen sharply in recent years. In China, more and more programmes are suitable to attract students from different regions of the world. Among them especially programmes at a Sino-British Cooperative University are popular as they allow the students to study in English rather than Chinese. Nevertheless, Chinese is necessary for daily and social life. The purpose of this paper is to investigate this situation where the students are part of both worlds. Even if the international student body is very heterogeneous, there are many common issues and concerns they all deal with. This paper aims to name differences and similarities and how support needs can be addressed in this setting.*

**Keywords:** International students, China, cooperative university, support priorities

### INTRODUCTION

In the last years, since the number of international students in higher education all around the world started to rise sharply, research has been conducted to learn more about the situation of these international students, what special needs they have and how they can be supported. The main focus of this research is usually on international students studying in an English-speaking environment but who are not English-native speakers (Andrade, 2006; Bartram, 2008; Coates, 2004; Pelletier, 2003). As one of the biggest groups of international students is the group of Chinese students, there are also many articles available that deal with the situation of Chinese students in English-speaking countries (Coates, 2006; Edwards & Ran, 2006; Kingston & Forland, 2008). But the common assumption of all this research is that the biggest proportion of the students is English-native speaking and that there are comparatively few international students among them.

This article deals with the situation of international students at a university with English-taught programs but where almost all students are non-native English-speakers. In this setting, two different scenarios are possible. Firstly, the international students are non-native English-speakers as well and have almost the same or even a weaker command of English. Alternatively, the level of English of the international students is higher than the level of the host students. Beside the language needs for the academic part of the students' lives, the international students need Chinese language knowledge to manage their daily lives and to increase interaction with the host students which can have a positive effect on their learning experience. As English and Chinese differ substantially this is a very special situation the international students are in. Given this background, the research conducted under the assumption of English-native host students is no longer valid and results need to be updated with new insights.

To close this gap in the current literature the situation of international students at a Sino-British cooperative university in mainland China is analysed and compared to the findings of the literature on international students. The focus lies on the needs of the international

students and how they can be addressed. The remaining part of this paper is organized as follows. First, the current situation and numbers of international students and especially Chinese students around the world is summarized. This is followed by a short introduction to the development of international students in China. In the main section, the special situation of international students at a Sino-British cooperative university is studied and results from a survey conducted among them are presented. Finally the support priorities are identified and possible solutions discussed.

### **International Students around the World and In China**

In the last decades, and especially in the most recent years, the number of international students around the world has risen sharply. Starting from 2000, the increase was more than 75% in the last decade (Chien, 2010). The figures from Unesco's Institute of Statistics reveal an annual increase of 12% with 2009 as the year of reference. The number of international students has risen from 2.96 million to 3.43 million including all students in all countries around the world (Coughlan, 2011). The main destination of international students are the United States that host around 691,000 overseas students (Coughlan, 2011). The impact on the U.S. economy can be estimated to be U.S. \$20 billion (Coughlan, 2011). The second biggest destination is the UK and the third is France (Chien, 2010). The largest single group of overseas students is from China with more than 440,000 students abroad. The second largest group is from India, followed by the third largest group from South Korea (Chien, 2010).

For Chinese students, there are two main reasons for studying abroad. Firstly, the number of places for high-quality degree courses is relatively low in Mainland China (Choudaha, 2012). Secondly, there is a very high pressure to have an overseas qualification when applying for jobs as having an international degree is a big advantage when competing with other Chinese applicants (Coughlan, 2011). As studying abroad is still expensive for Chinese families, Sino-British cooperative universities offer an international degree without spending several years abroad which explains why these universities are so successful in recent years.

According to the plan of the Chinese government as part of the country's drive to internationalize its economy and to become a knowledge power, the number of international students in Mainland China should rise to 500,000 (Xinhua, 2010). In the early 1950s the entire overseas student population consisted of 20 East Europeans (Xinhua, 2010). But already in 2009, there were around 240,000 international students in China who come from around 190 countries and regions around the world (Xinhua, 2010). In 2011, the number exceeded 290,000 international students for the first time (People's Daily Online, 2012). The biggest group of the 2010's intake of overseas students comes from South Korea, the second largest from the U.S., the third from Japan, the fourth from Thailand, and the fifth from Vietnam (Coughlan, 2011). For these international students, cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin are the main destinations when choosing a university (Xinhua, 2010).

### **The Situation of International Students at the Sino-British Cooperative University**

In comparison to the overall figures the numbers of international students at the Sino-British Cooperative University [called UNI afterwards] are small. One reason is that UNI was founded less than a decade ago and that in the first years to attract Chinese students was the priority objective. After intake numbers are stabilized the new ambition is to increase international students to internationalize the student body. The distribution by continent of origin of the last two years shows that around half of the international students comes from other Asian countries and Oceania. The other half is divided into almost equal fractions from Europe, Africa, and America including North and South America. Compared with the general

figures for China, the distribution of UNI can not reflect the nationwide trend where the second largest group comes from the U.S. Further, we can conclude that the international student body is very diverse and heterogeneous.

To investigate the situation, the motivation and the needs of the international students at UNI a survey was conducted that got 39 completed answers. Further, three international students were interviewed to get more profound insights. The remaining part of this section presents the results of this study that deal mainly with the situation of the international students. Their needs and how these needs are addressed are discussed in the following sections.

Firstly, to learn more about the motivation of the international students the main purpose of their studies at UNI is summarized in Figure 1. The majority of the students with 84 percent want to finish the complete degree program which is in most cases a bachelor's degree. This means that they stay for three to four years at UNI which is a relatively long time horizon that should give many opportunities to the students to adjust to the host country. The purpose of 8 percent of the students is a short term stay that is usually shorter than one year. The remaining 8 percent are at UNI mainly to learn Chinese.

This purpose can be used to define the success of the international students. They are successful when they can achieve their objective why they decided to start with their studies where some adjustments could be done while studying. All support should aim to overcome any problems and drawbacks that arise because of the special situation the international student have in comparison to host students. In this paper, adjustment or adopting the home culture and university culture, which can be different things in our context, is meant to be necessary as long as it serves the purpose. According to this, Kingston and Forland (2008, p. 211) write "Surely one of the aims abroad is to immerse oneself in, and gain experience and knowledge of, another culture, rather than in adopting that culture". This should be the view of adjustment to the host culture in the following, "a view that has led to the idea of cultural synergy, in which both cultures are equally valued and grow and adjust together to successfully integrate and gain reciprocal benefits" (Kingston & Forland, 2008, p. 211).

The duration how long the international students have already studied at UNI is also presented in Figure 1. The distribution is useful as international students at the beginning of their studies, in the middle and at the end took part in the survey that assures different levels of experience.

Former studies on international students revealed that the language is one of the key issues for successful international students. On the one hand, the language is the key to the academic content and assessment that determines the academic success of international students. On the other hand, the language is also the key when international students want to adjust to host students and the host country that determines the success in daily and social life. As at UNI, English and Chinese is needed for these different purposes, the first questions presented in Figure 2 are related to the level of language.

The histogram in Figure 2 shows that 13 percent of the students have a level of English like a native speaker, 46 percent are proficient, 38 percent are intermediate and 3 percent have a poor level. As the Chinese host students have a level between intermediate and proficient, the majority of the international students have a better command of English than the host students. So it should be easier for them to follow the academic content, to study, read and write. But there are still a high percentage of international students with a weaker command of English that needs to be addressed. Otherwise the academic results and the learning experience will be affected negatively.

The results for the question about the level of Chinese tell us that there are 20 percent with a level of a native speaker, 3 percent are proficient, 36 percent are intermediate and 41 percent poor. This bimodal distribution supports the assumption that the 20 percent stated to have a native level have Chinese as a mother tongue and that the other 80 percent are Chinese learners. To reach a proficient level of Chinese for learners is comparatively more difficult than reaching the same level in English.

Using the rank correlation coefficient of Spearman for ordinal-scaled data, it can be analyzed whether the same students are poor in English and are poor in Chinese at the same time. The rank correlation is equal to -0.23 which shows a negative relationship between the knowledge of English and the knowledge of Chinese. For example if a student has a good level of English then this student has a weaker level of Chinese or the other way round. With a p-value of 0.17 this rank correlation is significantly different from zero until a significant level of 83 percent which is acceptable given small sample sizes.

Beside the language level former studies point out that the duration a students spent in higher education before this student became an international student matters how much and what kind of support he or she needs. For example Bartram (2008, p. 662) states that “Regarding age, data ... and interviews suggested that younger students who enrolled straight from school would often require greater guidance and practical advice”. In Figure 3, the answers to the question how long the students have studied at the university level before they came to UNI are summarized. Almost 80 percent answered that they studied less than one year before which means that the majority came directly after high school and that their stay here is their first experience with higher education. We can conclude that this group of students usually needs a higher support level than more experienced students who can compare procedures, styles and techniques with their home university and can adapt faster to a new system.

In the literature, it is described that the adjustment to the new environment is easier if interaction with host students is given. Coates (2004, p. 2) writes that “In the case of culture learning through communication, effective interaction with members of the host culture is seen as the key to adjustment”. How the international students at UNI describe their interaction with Chinese students in general and in the special case when group work is requested is shown in Figure 4.

For the first part, around 10 percent reported that they have frequently interaction with Chinese students, 26 percent often and the majority with 61 percent rarely and 3 percent never. These numbers are interesting as 20 percent of the international students have a native level of Chinese, but still only 10 percent interacts with Chinese students frequently. So the reason for less interaction with host students can't only be language barriers. Apart from the fact that the language used for academic purpose should be English anyhow. To investigate this question further the interviewees explained that the Chinese students are not so open when working with international students. Edwards and Ran (2006, p. 10) report similar findings when exploring the interaction with Chinese students as international students in British higher education: “The first (theme) concerned the belief that working collaboratively in groups is a culturally challenging concept for Chinese students.”

Whether international students usually work with Chinese students, co-nationals, or other international students when group work is required by the instructor is also presented in Figure 4 and summarized as follows: 39 percent work usually with Chinese students, 32 percent work with co-nationals and 29 percent with other international students. Beside preferences this result depends mainly on the number of co-nationals or other international students in the class as the interviewees clarified. When the requested group size fits the number of students from one nationality, to stay in a group with co-nationals is preferred. The

interviewees further explained that when Chinese students are members of the group, the language used in the group is Chinese. As the language of instruction is English, group work should be done in English, too. If this is not the case and even not the case when working with international students, it is understandable that interaction with Chinese students is relatively low. However it is also difficult for the Chinese students to join a group of international students as the interviewees admitted that they use their own language instead of English when the group size matches their numbers. The same situation was observed by Edwards and Ran (2006, p. 11) who write that “the tendency of Chinese students to use Chinese rather than English was perceived by some as unhelpful”. Behavior like this can support the statement of Andrade (2006, p.137) that “findings indicated that this group of students (international students) preferred to work alone, which supports a common view that international students dislike group work.” As a conclusion interaction between the Chinese host students and the international students should be improved and English as a working language when doing group work should be more strictly requested and enforced by the instructor to give all students the same chance for participation.

Whether an international student is satisfied with the choice of becoming an international student at a specific institution is mainly determined by two factors. Firstly, it is important that the student is satisfied with his or her academic results. Secondly, the satisfaction with the social life in the new environment is also a key point for the overall experience. Figure 5 shows the distribution of answers to questions about the satisfaction of international students in these two areas. With the academic results no one is very happy, 59 percent are happy, 38 percent are barely satisfied and 3 percent are not at all satisfied with their academic performance. In comparison with the results for the satisfaction with the social life, we have 18 percent who are very happy, 54 percent who are happy, 26 percent barely happy and 3 percent are not at all satisfied with their social life. The majority describes themselves as happy, however the fraction of international students who are barely or not all happy cannot be neglected.

The rank correlation of the two factors is 0.34 with is significantly positive up to a significant level of 97 percent. This means that when a student is satisfied with the academic results this student is also satisfied with the social life or the other way round. The assumption that a better interaction with host students increases the satisfaction of international students can be supported by the rank correlation at least between the interaction and the academic performance (Figure 4 left and Figure 5 left). The rank correlation is 0.28 and it is significantly greater than zero up to a level of 92 percent. The rank correlation between the interaction and the social life is not significantly different from zero to any acceptable level instead. It seems that a happy social life is uninfluenced by interaction with the Chinese host students. In the literature, it is agreed that satisfaction is important for the overall experience of being an international student, but correlation results between satisfaction and other variables are reported to be not constant (Coates, 2004).

What can determine the happiness of the social life of an international student? Findings in the literature indicate that the number of close friends is an important factor, but not necessarily the number of close friends from the host country, as Coates (2004, p. 6) affirms that “it is the number of friends per se, rather than the number of host friends, that affects life satisfaction”. Figure 6 presents the answers about how many close friends across countries and nationalities the students have and how many of these close friends are Chinese. The majority of the students with 61 percent state that they have five or more close friends, 18 percent have three to four, 18 percent have one or two and 3 percent have none. The number of close friends that are Chinese should be the same or smaller. Indeed, 18 percent have five

or more close Chinese friends, 36 percent have three or four, 26 percent have one or two and 20 percent have none. Given that almost all international students stay at UNI for the whole degree program which are three or four years and given that many are already in China for a relatively long time period, one fifth of them have no Chinese close friends. These findings are in line with the literature where for example Andrade (2006, p.136) writes that “Only a small percentage of international students reported having close friendships with domestic students”.

The rank correlation between the last two questions is 0.26 with a significance level to 90 percent. This implies that a higher number of close friends per se is related to a higher number of Chinese close friends and the opposite. Recalling the question about the interaction with the host students the rank correlation of 0.43 and a level of 99 percent means that having close Chinese friends influences the frequency of interaction with Chinese students.

An issue that can influence the students' experience is whether the students feel that the teachers treat them differently in comparison to host students. The distribution of the answers is shown in Figure 7 where 8 percent state that they feel regularly being treated differently, 8 percent often, 51 percent a few times and 33 percent never. Although the number of students who feel regularly or often being treated differently is relatively small, the number is too big to ignore as this should theoretically never occur. Why this happens is explainable as international students with a Caucasian, African or any other non-Asian background are easier to identify sitting in a lecture theatre filled with Chinese students. Teachers tend to recognize unintended missing international students or when they ask or answer questions. But when the international students are from other Asian countries usually the situation described is different and they are less noticeable among their class mates.

Finally, the age distribution of the international students is investigated and summarized in Figure 8 and as follows: 46 percent are younger than 20 years, 41 percent are between 20 and 22, 8 percent are between 22 and 24, and 5 percent are older than 24. The age distribution supports once more the hypothesis that the international students have no or very few experience with a higher education system even in their home countries. This should be kept in mind when creating support facilities for them.

Furthermore the rank correlation between the age and the academic satisfaction is -0.26 and significantly negative up to a level of 89 percent. The meaning of the negative correlation is, the younger the student is, the less satisfied is the student with his or her academic results, or the other way around, the older the student is, the more satisfied is the student with his or her academic results. Investigating the same assumption according to the social life satisfaction, the rank correlation is not significantly different from zero. Gaining more experience over the years can increase the satisfaction with their academic performance, but satisfaction with the social life is uninfluenced by this.

### **Support Priorities of the International Students**

A variety of approaches to examine international students' needs are presented in the literature. In the following, three classification systems are presented. The first one uses a seven-fold grouping of students' needs (Pelletier, 2003, p. 9f) with the groups of

1. Practical needs
2. Emotional needs
3. Cultural and integrational needs
4. Language needs

5. Pedagogical needs
6. Curriculum and assessment needs
7. Needs associated with performance outcomes.

As some of these groups seem to belong to the same category, the four-fold classification from Stier (2002, p. 4f) defines the categories as follows:

1. Academic needs
2. Social needs
3. Intellectual needs
4. Emotional needs.

A classification system with three categories of student support needs was introduced by Bartram (2008, p. 661) with

1. Social needs
2. Academic needs
3. Practical needs.

In the following, the system by Bartram (2008, p. 661) is used to identify the support priorities of the international students at UNI. The students were asked to complete two statements relating to their support priorities:

1. I feel that international students at UNI need most support with: \_\_\_\_\_
2. The most important support issue for me is: \_\_\_\_\_

Firstly, the students should give a statement in general what they think is valid for all international students. Secondly, the students should name their situation in particular.

The summary of the numbers and nature of answers according to the three-fold classification system can be found in Table 1. For example, there are three statements dealing with interaction and group work with Chinese students, two statements that there should be more events in English, etc. In total, there are eight answers within the category of social needs which is the second rank. For academic needs, there are seven statements which is the third rank. Finally, 14 comments belong to the category of practical needs which is rank number one.

Comparing the results of Table 1 with the findings of Bartram (2008, p. 661) who asked the same two questions, international students ranked academic needs in first position, practical needs second, and social needs only in third place. Reasons why results from this study differ from previous studies can be that when coming to China as an international student the practical needs are much more urgent and much more complicated to solve than academic needs and social needs. Earlier questions already revealed that the majority has a better or at least equal command of English as the host students, but on the other side the majority has a much weaker knowledge of Chinese. Many daily life problems can be really cumbersome and overshadow the experience from being an international student in China.

In Table 2, the answers of the students are summarized according to the second statement. Practical needs are ranked in first position again, followed by academic needs as second and social needs as third rank. Bartram (2008, p. 661) reports that “responses to the second statement reflected similar priorities and social needs were again conspicuous by their absence”. In this study social needs are on the third rank, too, but their weight in comparison with the other two is not negligible. A reason why social needs have a higher priority for international students in China is that the Chinese culture is very different from the culture in

their home countries. The foreign community is continuously growing in China and especially in the province where UNI is located, but local Chinese are still not used to seeing foreigners living among them. So they react firstly with curiosity and scrutiny, but without the knowledge of Chinese a deeper contact or to socialize is usually not possible. Lonesomeness and isolation is a very common experience of foreigners in China independently of the purpose of their stay. This is reflected by ranking practical and social needs higher than academic needs.

To support the needs of the international students, the university should cover all different aspects and levels of the categories. Given the heterogeneity of the international student body there cannot be the one and only approach. Rather many different ways should be provided according to the individual situation. What kind of successful support solutions could be offered is elaborated in the next section.

### **How the Needs of International Students can be addressed**

To support the international students during their stay in the host country and at the host university, many approaches are feasible. First of all there should be a central unit within the university like an office or center for international students that centralizes and mainly organizes the support activities. The support should start before the arrival in the host country and should be available during all phases of the students' stay. In the very early stages support to address practical needs is mainly necessary. This deals for example with pre-arrival information, information on accommodation, visa issues, financial advices, a language guide to the most important phrases for travelling, etc. Social needs could also be addressed before the arrival of the students. For example, contacts to peers could be established or access to a social network could be gained.

Right after the arrivals of the international students, a "Buddy Programme" can help to overcome difficulties at the beginning (Andrade, 2006, p. 139; Bartram, 2008, p. 662). These buddies could be host students from the same or higher year, or international students from a higher year. Allocating the students to a personal tutor who is a staff member is also seen as a supportive element. Edwards and Ran (2006, p. 662) call this approach "Teachers as bridges" and suggest that teachers with a similar background or origination tutor a group of international students and organize small group discussions (Cosh, 200x, p. 2). The university could offer cross-cultural training (Andrade, 2006, p. 142) to reduce barriers between cultures and language courses, both in the language needed for academic purposes and in the language needed for daily life conversation (Edwards & Ran, 2006, p. 14).

After a certain period of time after the arrival, family networks or a home stay could be organized to facilitate socialization with host students (Edwards & Ran, 2006, p. iv; Andrade, 2006, p. 142). In terms of accommodation, international students are usually separated from their host class mates. Here shared apartments or even shared dorms could increase interaction with host students as Coates (2006, p. 5) reports for Chinese students as international students in the UK: "Those students who were sharing with other Chinese students spoke of the difficulty of practicing English. ... Those who shared with English students spoke of the interaction, friendship and support this brought". Additionally, an extensive social programme with events all around the year can continuously prevent isolation of international students (Bartram, 2008, p. 662).

One important area that is easily forgotten is the provision of health service or of support to visit local medical facilities. International students tend to avoid local hospitals or doctors as they are either not familiar enough with the specific vocabulary to express their medical needs or they have no trust in the medical system, local medicine or treatments or they are

afraid of the related costs when their medical insurance is not sufficient (Edwards & Ran, 2006, p. 6). Reasons like this can affect the health status of international students. Thus the university should be aware of this issue and provide at least an up-to-date list with medical facilities offering service in different languages and inform students before their arrival what kind of medical insurance contracts they need.

At UNI, many of these approaches are implemented in different depth. Firstly, an office for international students exists and provides a lot of information and services. Among others, they offer pre-departure briefing with checklists and key dates, scholarship possibilities and other financial related supports, accommodation arrangement, visa application support, traveling from and to UNI, a welcome week, a buddy programme with host students, and support when registering at the police station. Further, they provide some warnings, dos and don'ts when coming to China and useful Chinese expressions in Pinyin and characters. A concept called "International Student Ambassador" nominates one international student from each country as an ambassador for co-nationals and should act as an intermediary between UNI, the host students and this specific group of international students. Last but not least, the international office helps to arrange language courses in English and Chinese.

What they usually don't offer at the moment is for example shared accommodation. The majority of Chinese students stay in dorms with an average of four female or male students as this is the cheapest way of living. In contrast, international students prefer to have at least a bedroom for themselves and share maybe living room, kitchen and bathroom with usually a higher standard than the local dormitories. Living apart however, can reduce the possibilities of interaction and of practicing local language skills.

In the survey, the international students at UNI were asked whether they were satisfied with the level of provided information and support from the university when they started with their studies at UNI. The answers are shown in Figure 9. In opposite to the statement of Edwards and Ran (2006, p. vi) that "in the early stages, students are likely to be overloaded with information", no students replied that the information was too much and overloaded. The majority with 61 percent state that the information and support was just right, 36 percent thinks too less, and 3 percent tell that no support was provided. The results are not bad but leave still some room for improvements. To find out what approaches can support an easier adjustment, students are asked to label several options as "very helpful", "helpful", or "not helpful". The possibilities and answer frequencies are listed in Table 3.

For almost all approaches, there is a certain number of students who think that this method is "very helpful", but there is a similar number of students who think the opposite that this way is "not helpful". A very good example is the helpfulness of an English language course. Here, 13 students answer that it is "very helpful", 13 that it is "helpful" and 13 "not helpful". From survey results like this, we can conclude that there are no clear preferences. The sole support method that helps all international students does not exist. These findings stress once more the heterogeneity of the international students at UNI. The term "international student" is misleading as it suggests a homogenization of a very diverse group (Coates, 2004, p. 7). There is no specific solution that can support them equally. For the international student office implies this that they have to approach each international student or at least each group with similar backgrounds individually and focus on their specific support needs.

As the list in Table 3 with possible approaches is limited, some answers of my interviewees can provide more insights in their specific needs. All agreed that the most difficult part at the beginning of their stay was the Chinese language that they had to use in their daily lives to get settled. They reported further that this changed after some time when they got more familiar with the language. They learned the language through courses offered by the

university, but also through listening and conversation outside the university. The interviewees supported the findings from Figure 9 that they are satisfied by the support they got from the university like help when searching a suitable accommodation. As very helpful they mentioned the Chinese language course and the buddy programme.

Beside positive things they made some comments about areas where they would like to see more support. They named extracurricular activities for example and reported that many of these events are in Chinese and that they wish to see more activities in English. Further, the internship programme was mentioned. In the summer holidays before their last year, the students usually do an internship at a local company. This is especially hard for the international students. In many cases, they need to find a job offer in English first and eventually a place in an English-speaking environment which are still rare in China at the moment. The interviewees reported that when they can find internship opportunities, then they are mostly not in their field of academic interest. This is an issue that needs more support from the university to assure that all students have a similar useful experience from the internship programme. Finally, they addressed that some lecturers used Chinese in class instead of English when they got the impression the students have problems with the expressions in English or when they answered questions that were asked in Chinese. This is obviously a disadvantage for international students. But some lectures, especially in early years of the university, were not aware that there could be some international students in class. This issue can be easily addressed in the departments to inform all teachers that there might be some international students in class and that all explanations and answers should be delivered in English to assure that no one is left behind.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, the situation of international students at a relatively new Sino-British cooperative university in China was analyzed and compared with insights from the literature dealing with international students around the world. The comparison was done by evaluating survey and interview results and linking them to similar studies. It was revealed that the setting that uses English in academic life and Chinese in daily life is very special and poses an extra challenge in comparison to the usual situation where academic language and daily language is the same or at least more similar.

The analyses of the situation of the international students have shown that the international student body is very heterogeneous, for example in terms of language levels. But there are some similarities as most of the students stay at UNI to complete the whole degree programme. This means that the students spend several years locally which give enough time for many different support approaches and stages. Further, they have in common that they are inexperienced with studies at university level which increases their demand for support by the university. Moreover, the majority report to have interaction with host students in very few occasions. As interaction is seen to be one of the key factors for a successful adjustment this needs to be increased eventually.

The whole presented context is responsible that most concerns of the international students deal with practical needs and social needs rather than with academic needs. As the term international student is a very broad description, more information about the background is needed to support them successfully. The support offered by the university should cover many different and sometime even opposed support approaches without losing a common direction. Beside this, there are many minor problems that can be easily solved by making administrators or staff members aware of these issues like using English in group work tasks or avoiding answering in Chinese.

The history of having international students at UNI is short at the moment, and the numbers in comparison to the whole numbers of students are still small. But as it is an objective of university management to raise this number sharply in the next years, the support of the university has to be increased and improved, too. Future research is needed to provide more insights then and to address the needs of international students as best as possible.

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## Appendix

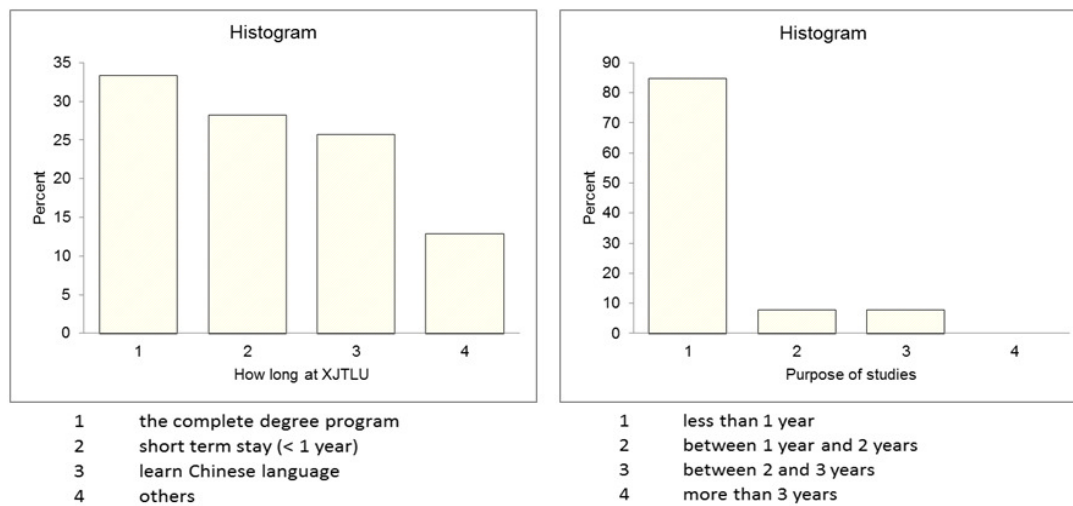


Figure 1. Purpose and duration of studies

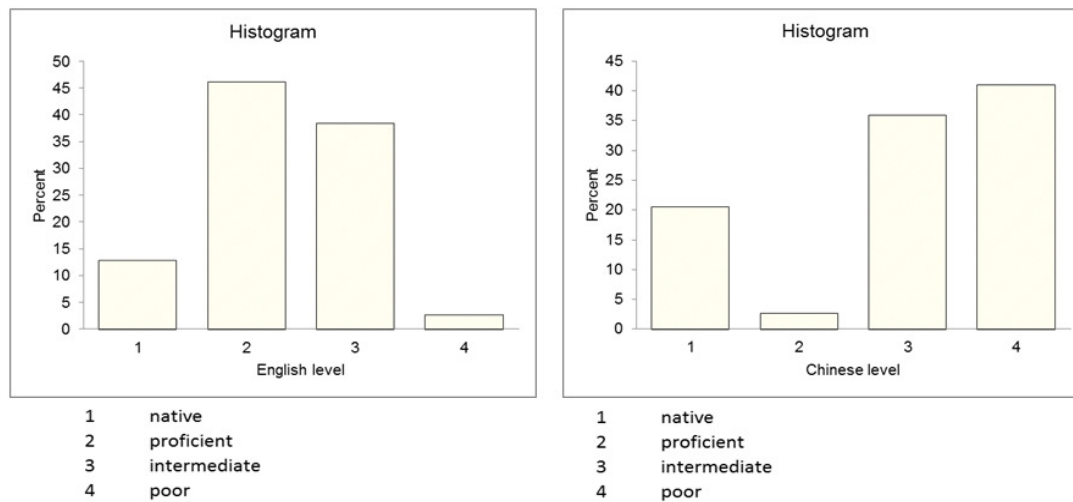


Figure 2. English and Chinese levels

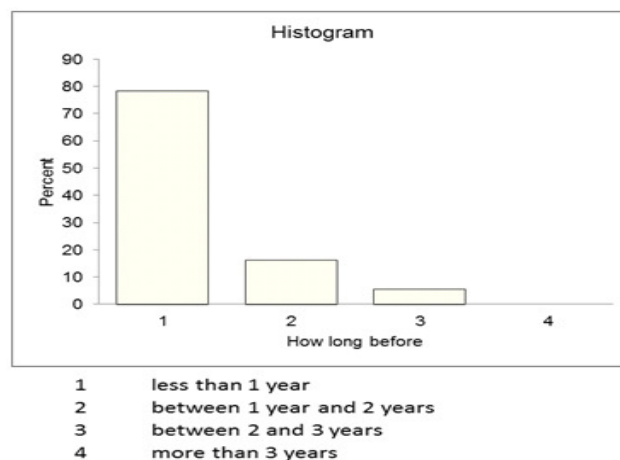


Figure 3. Studies at university level

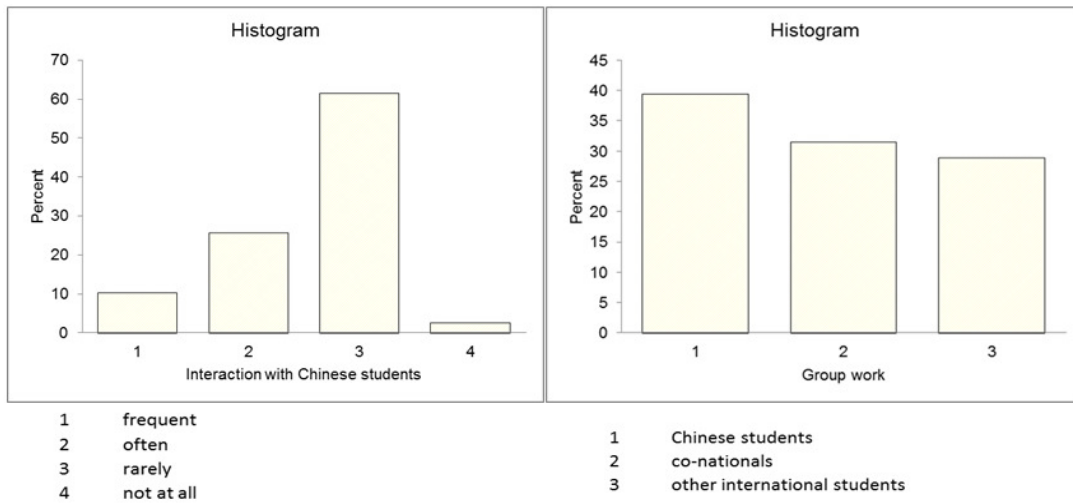


Figure 4. Interaction with Chinese students and group work

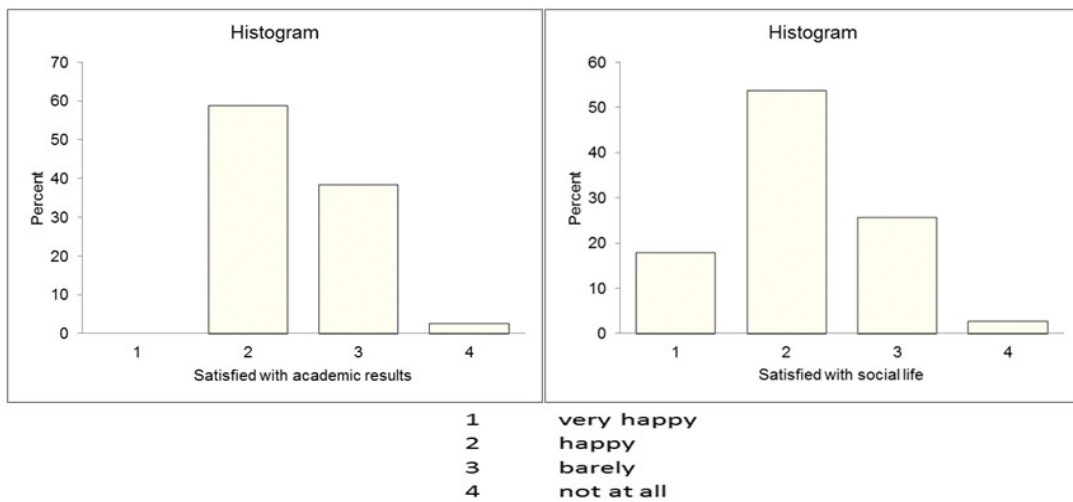


Figure 5. Satisfaction with academic results and with social life

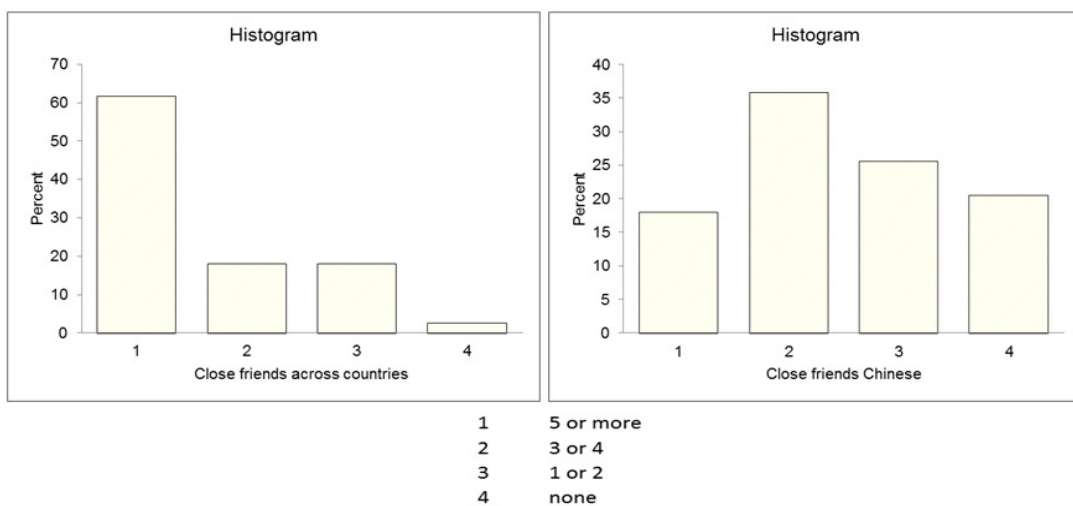


Figure 6. Number of close friends across countries and Chinese close friends

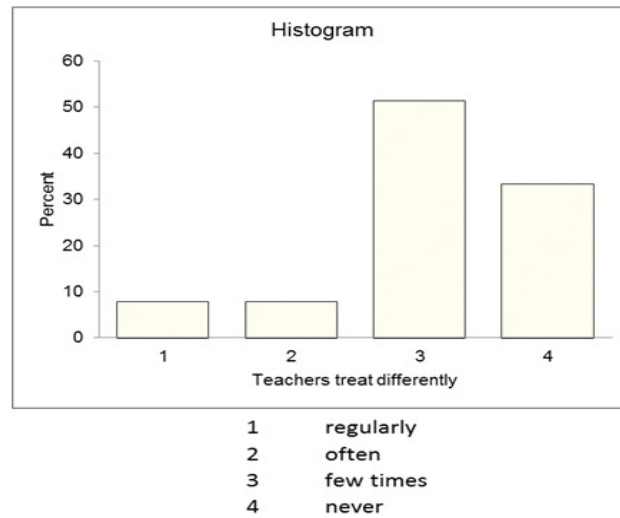


Figure 7. Feeling treated differently by teachers

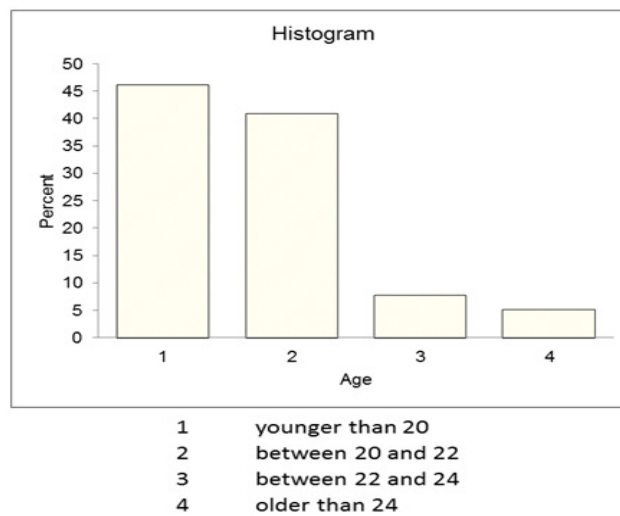


Figure 8. Age distribution

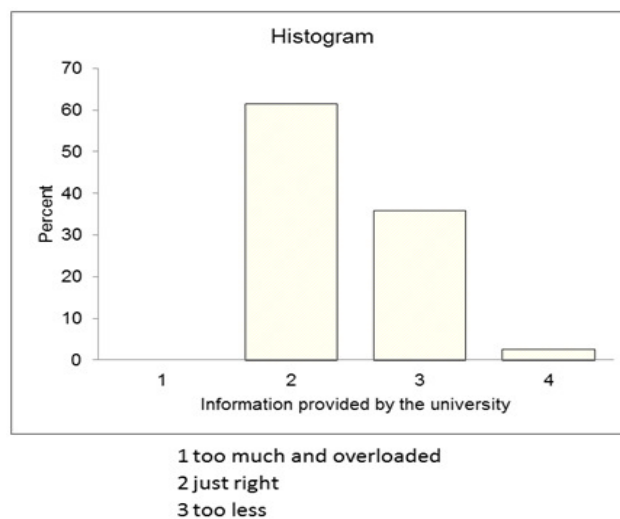


Figure 9. Satisfaction with information provided by the university

**Table 1. I feel that international students at UNI need most support with**

Social Needs	Academic Needs	Practical Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•     (Interaction, group work with Chinese)</li> <li>•    (Events in English)</li> <li>•   (Integration)</li> <li>•   (Socializing)</li> <li>•   (to be treated the same)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•    (Teachers' English)</li> <li>•    (Learning issues)</li> <li>•   (University organisation)</li> <li>•   (Placement, Start in year 2)</li> <li>•   (Tutor support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•      (Chinese Language)</li> <li>•      (Accommodation)</li> <li>•    (Daily problems)</li> <li>•   (Internship)</li> <li>•   (Tuition fee)</li> <li>•   (Health)</li> </ul>
8 in total 2. rank	7 in total 3. rank	14 in total 1. rank

**Table 2. The most important support issue for me is**

Social Needs	Academic Needs	Practical Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•     (Interaction, group work with Chinese)</li> <li>•    (Events in English)</li> <li>•   (Few European students)</li> <li>•   (to be treated the same)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•    (Teachers' English)</li> <li>•    (English Language)</li> <li>•    (Study, Grades)</li> <li>•   (Support by professors)</li> <li>•   (Teaching method)</li> <li>•   (Tutor support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•         (Chinese Language)</li> <li>•   (Accommodation)</li> <li>•   (Visa)</li> <li>•   (Internship)</li> <li>•   (Tuition fee)</li> <li>•   (Health)</li> </ul>
7 in total 3. Rank	9 in total 2. rank	12 in total 1. rank

**Table 3. Support possibilities and answer frequencies**

	Very helpful	helpful	Not helpful
Peer support program with Chinese students who are in the same year	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>
Program with international students in a higher year	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>
Personal tutor (a staff member)	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>
Home stay at a Chinese family	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>
Share apartment/dorm with Chinese students	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>
Cross-cultural training organized by the university	<b>8</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>
Language support English	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
Language support Chinese	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
"Teachers as bridges" - teacher with the same background	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>
Individual tutorial classes	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>
Extensive social program with Chinese students organized by the university	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
Health service offered by the university	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>