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IO5. SIAS China-EU Guidelines handbook for social inclusion and academic success of Chinese at European universities





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01 Social Inclusion and Academic Success of Chinese International Students

1.1 Justification, interest, and motivation

The project SIAS China-EU is an ERASMUS+ strategic association in the field of higher education, aiming to improve the European Union (EU) knowledge about Chinese students by generating a specific framework adjusted to the reality of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Thus, a model has been elaborated from an integral vision of higher education aimed to favour the reception, follow-up, permanence, and academic success of Chinese students at European universities under the premise of their social inclusion.

In this sense, it can be said that internationalisation is a complex and continuous process with several players. It is *"the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education"* (Knight, 2004).

But what are the obstacles for an internationalisation in higher education? It can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of personnel coping with internationalisation;
- Insufficient funding;
- Bureaucratic obstacles (e.g., recognition of work/degrees/credits abroad);

- Lack of interest of part of the teaching staff and researchers;
- Lack of strategies for implementing the internationalisation process;
- Language barrier.

Therefore, internationalisation involves transforming the management and organisation of higher education institutions so that they are in tune with the advance of economic globalisation and accompanying societal changes. In particular, the Erasmus programme, which started 30 years ago, is a major driver of European internationalisation, e.g. by creating the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) following the Bologna Process (Kelo et al. 2010).

Taking this idea as a premise, we aimed to achieve greater social and academic inclusion of Chinese students by increasing the awareness of local students, academics and administrative staff along the whole SIAS China-EU project. To this end, we have created several pieces of material including advisory, support and training materials for each actor involved in the process: the Chinese students themselves (IO1), local and other international students (IO2) and academics (IO3) as well as administrative members (IO4) of the university staff. These specific handbooks (from now and on named the Intellectual Outputs IO1 to IO4) were designed to address challenges and potential solutions in a comprehensive, but specific way (for contents, see Part 3).

Then, why is the integration of Chinese students so important? The [UNESCO statistics](#) show that around one million Chinese students are enrolled in tertiary education institutions abroad and the number of Chinese students abroad is growing each year. In fact, ca. 23% of this migratory flow corresponds to students going to Europe.



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Several reasons lead Chinese students to study abroad, some of them are the following:

- the high demand and qualifications necessary to access a small number of prestigious Chinese universities,
- the desire to allocate a large part of the family resources to the education of the only child in the family, and
- the governmental support gives great flexibility to all students who decide to go abroad for their Bachelor, Master and / or doctoral studies, given the lack of offer and the increasing demand for education in their own country. Moreover, in China, knowledge of foreign languages is of great importance whatever the sector in which one might work.

Regardless of which country and which studies Chinese students choose, there are common problems they face at all European universities, for example:

- difficulties to follow the study contents in a foreign language,
- problems to follow the lessons due to the different teaching-learning strategies applied in Europe and,
- difficulties to adapt to the new education system and the new and different ways to interact in the classroom with professors and with peers (Melguizo-Garde, M. and Yetano, A., 2021).



Source: @drobotdean freepik

Furthermore, there are other difficulties Chinese students face, which are not directly related to the academic environment, however, they can influence their academic performance. Chinese students coming to European universities usually come from single-child families where they have been looked after by six adults (parents and grandparents), so in many occasions they have always been told what to do, how to do it and when to do it (Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Students Studying Abroad 2020-2021). This attitude might lead Chinese students to consider life in a foreign country as a big challenge and might affect students' capabilities to lead their life independently.

In summary, Chinese students have had increased issues with bias, anxiety, and reduced social support during the adaptation process. Moreover, lack of language proficiency among Chinese or other international students is a significant issue, which may affect their academic performance and interactions with locals. The latter could impede students' assimilation into the host society and comprehension of the local culture. In fact, the third most frequent issue for Chinese students, like many other international students especially from Asian nations, is the culture shock they endure during the first few months of their studies abroad (Brown, L. and Holloway, I. 2008).



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1.2 Needs and problems detected in the social and academic inclusion of the Chinese international students

Analysis of needs and problems related to Chinese students overseas has moved away from the traditional view that attributed the cause mainly to the language barrier (Crawford & Wang, 2014). Studies on this issue have been able to identify specific variables that articulate the problem more effectively (Henze & Zhu, 2012; THøgersen, 2016). Most importantly, these studies point towards the need for the kind of support and advice that could be provided by European universities, guiding our practice towards a more sympathetic and inclusive approach (Edwards & Ran, 2006; Deardor, 2009). These variables include the following:

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■ **Pressure to achieve and succeed.** Going abroad to pursue an academic education is a huge undertaking in terms of financial investment. Invariably, parents and relatives bear the economic cost, seeing it as a way to boost the future professional career of their offspring. This is perhaps especially true in the case of China since educational and professional achievements are traditionally seen as belonging primarily to the family (i.e. a source of parental pride) rather than to the individual in question. Owing to the one-child policy (一孩政策, *Yi hai zhengce*, a population-planning initiative in China implemented between 1980 and 2015 setting a limit of one on the number of children per family), often the only son or daughter is the bearer of an entire family's hopes and expectations of social betterment. Therefore, it is easy to imagine that some Chinese overseas students may feel great pressure to succeed and overachieve. In some cases, all these expectations, added to the inherent challenges of living and studying abroad, may have a detrimental effect on the students' mental health and well-being.



Source: @upklyak freepik

■ An additional negative consequence of this situation (heightened parental hopes, significant financial investment) is the development of a **very pragmatic goal-oriented mentality focusing on obtaining an academic title** as the overarching objective, often to the detriment of appreciating and enjoying the experience of learning per se.



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■ **Study skills and learning culture.** It has been pointed out in numerous studies from a Western perspective that Chinese pedagogical methodology favours rote learning: it is repetitive and based on memorisation techniques. Consequently, Chinese students often find it difficult to adopt the critique- and debate-led approach so characteristic of European education in general. Indeed, our teaching methods and student-centred learning experience are among those aspects Chinese students find to be most novel (and challenging) during their time at European academic institutions.

At this point, it is important to realise that for some Chinese students, the mere fact of being in a European classroom can be a culture shock in and of itself.

In a survey carried out by the SIAS China-EU project (Table 1), Chinese students found every one of ten fundamental teaching and learning activities at their host institutions to be very different from their equivalents in China, although to local students, the activities in question would seem normal or expected. Paramount among them was “teaching methods”, with 92% of respondents finding them quite novel and different from what they had been used to back in China.

The reason for the aforementioned prevalence of rote learning in Chinese education could be found in the need to master the

thousands of different characters used in Chinese writing. The average Chinese person needs to know between 3,500 and 6,000 characters in order to read newspapers, textbooks and official documentation, while graduates need even more. It has also been argued that the Chinese writing system is at the root of the Chinese tendency to think in visual/spatial rather than verbal terms, and to emphasise particulars rather than universals (which may discourage abstract thought).

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Chinese students’ difficulty with critical learning could be ascribed to a single cause. As is often the case when comparing cultures, the perceived differences can also be due to elements found in one culture and lacking in the other (Biggs, 1996); for instance, the tradition of critical thinking in Western culture undoubtedly owes something to classical Greek philosophy, the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, none of which form part of Chinese history and culture.

Yet, although this difficulty with critical thinking and abstract thought seem to be real, caution should be observed when attempting to extrapolate it into a more

general realm: this cultural trait has not impeded China (and other culturally similar Far-Eastern countries) in mastering and excelling in the assimilation and application of Western science and technology, both of which activities are closely associated with Western critical thinking and abstract thought.

Table 1. Survey question: Select the aspects you find to be different between studying in China and your current European host university (SIAS China-EU project, 2021)

Activity	Percentage %
Teaching methods	92
Timetabling and lecture schedules	88
Behaviour in the classroom	86
Task allocation	85
Interaction with academic staff	83
Students’ leeway to shape their own studies	82
Extent of active participation expected from students	81
Evaluation methods	78
Room arrangement and space layout	76
Amount of work done in teams	76



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■ Lack of awareness of Chinese cultural expectations and assumptions among teaching and administrative staff.

Knowledge and experience are what Chinese students tend to appreciate most in teaching staff. However, owing to their strong sense of *respect for authority* and *reticence*, Chinese students are not used to asking questions to teaching staff, or asking for clarification, and still less to pointing out mistakes. This can often give the false impression that the students either lack interest or have understood everything. Similarly, the students' characteristic avoidance of expressing themselves in a direct and open way in their native language is bound to affect their usage of any foreign language, especially at the beginning of their stay. In some cases, needs and requests for help may not be articulated with the urgency required, while in other circumstances the opposite may be true: the language of their host country may appear too simple and not sophisticated enough to communicate a nuanced message, resulting in poor communication on both sides. It is thus important to start building clear communication around specific challenges, be they practical or academic, and to facilitate any help required to solve them. This requires patience and good judgement as well as empathy and, sometimes, a sense of humour to lighten any misunderstanding.

■ **Chinese students' understanding of the concepts of authorship, originality and plagiarism.** Often, Chinese students seem to have a weak perception of the role of individuals in the elaboration and production of intellectual work (in relation to matters such as copyright). This problem is by no means exclusive to Chinese international students, and has been also observed in other communities of overseas students at European universities (including, for instance, students from India). In the case of Chinese students, it may reflect the prevalent collectivist ethos of China's socialist system. It also manifests in a pragmatic and utilitarian attitude towards assimilating and appropriating Western scientific and technological developments, something observed in other Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. Be that as it may, this is an area where **clear, strong advice and tools** should be provided to make the students fully aware of the need **to avoid committing plagiarism** and risking academic penalties and disciplinary proceedings. Access to and training in applications such as **Turnitin** is highly recommended.

■ **Impact of cultural differences when working in teams.** Owing to the importance of **group acceptance** in Chinese culture, Chinese students may appear oversensitive to criticism when working in teams, or even when being asked for a clarifying comment. As a coping mechanism, students often adopt a passive, quiet, diffident stance, which in turn is susceptible to being mistaken for a lack of interest in the task assigned to the group. In general, it is advisable not to place a lone Chinese student within a working group: she or he may find this overwhelming. Additionally, in situations like this, local students may benefit from guidance and guidelines encouraging cross-cultural awareness.

■ **Perceived tendency towards isolation among Chinese students.** This is one of the most common traits observed among Chinese students and in overseas students' communities in general. Although the urge to stick together with one's fellow countrymen is understandable, this tendency can nevertheless have **very negative consequences**, affecting the students' learning and practice of their host country's language, depriving them of a more genuine and realistic knowledge of their host society, and impeding their acquisition of practical and social skills which could enrich their experience of living abroad.



Source: @upklyak freepik



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1.3 Objectives and intellectual products

Following all the challenges named above, the overall goal of the project’s outcomes is the integral conceptualization of material to improve social inclusion and academic success of Chinese students at European Higher Education Institutions (EHEI).


In order to minimise social and academic challenges for incoming Chinese students and thus enhance their integration process, some guidelines as a normative model for all EHEIs were produced. These guidelines aim for an integral vision for awareness of the current challenges from all actors including not only the Chinese students but also staff members of the European universities and local students. Awareness shall be built for the differences in the context of action, i.e. the specific education system in China and Europe, political framework, good practices etc.

The normative model will lay the base for a common European theoretical-practical conceptual framework for the integration and inclusion of Chinese students in EHEIs.



As stated before, the actors involved are defined as the Chinese students themselves (IO1), local and other international students (IO2) and academic (IO3), as well as, administrative (IO4) members of the university staff. For each of these actors a specific handbook was created to address the according challenges and potential solutions.



These handbooks, IO1 to IO4, according to the target groups, are designed to sensitise for common problems identified within the project, to give an overview of examples of good practices from different actors and to suggest programs to support Chinese students’ integration. Based on the intellectual outputs, self-education training should lead to better understanding and performance of fruitful international collaboration. Additional links and follow-up literature promote the self-education approach.



The final handbooks are provided within the EHEI as teaching material for all target groups. Multiplier Events from all partner universities distribute preliminary insights during the project among external education institutions in Europe as well as at a Chinese partner university. Sustainable implementation of the results is strived for.





Find out more:











02 The institution and the Chinese international students

2.1 The European university's interest in attracting Chinese international students

The importance of attracting Chinese international students is recognised by the Higher Education Institutions in Europe. In fact, all EU Member States consider attracting and retaining Chinese international students as a policy priority (Commission, 2019). Attracting Chinese international students becomes an important part of European universities' business and cultural diversity. In addition to academic relations, commitment to the international field offers valuable interaction, learning and research opportunities, creating mutual benefits for Europe and China.

European Universities are becoming more and more popular study destinations to host Chinese students each year. Some of the factors to this increasing number of Chinese students are related to academic reputation, mobility cost, security, welcome communities, quality of host institutions, and prevalence of the English language in the academic environment.

Chinese international students are considered important ambassadors to the European States in which they study and a potential resource for future international partnerships between different countries of the world. Attracting Chinese international students can reinforce and improve future investment, enhance economic growth, and develop new networks of R&D.

By embracing international collaboration, researchers bring complementary knowledge and information together. This leads to

new and far-reaching insights at a faster speed. Internationalisation is crucial to meet the needs of specialised research, as it requires strong international engagement and cooperation.

The European countries' economic competitiveness through human capital and/or technological advantage and the financial attractiveness associated with internationalisation activities, as well as the recruitment of brilliant scholars, international reputation and visibility also assume an important role.

Attracting international Chinese students should also be a key point intended to improve the quality of education and research for students and staff and add a contribution to society. On the other hand, Chinese international students can bring diversity and multiculturalism, helping towards building a stronger global community. These characteristics also can improve the development of new methodologies and procedures due to contact with students, teaching and non-teaching staff.



Internationalisation brings students into contact with other cultures. This experience stimulates students to reflect upon their own culture and traditions. For internationalisation in higher education, attracting Chinese international students becomes one of the key aspects since academic horizons are broadened, and society itself becomes more multicultural. The increasing number of Chinese students in Europe results from a common perception that a higher education degree from a European country can bring advantages to graduates' career development when returning to China.

In conclusion, different strategies to attract and retain Chinese international students must be prepared by each country and by the EHEIs themselves (deans of faculty, heads of department, teaching staff, and administrative staff). Attracting Chinese international students is a good strategy for developing a high-quality performance and standing out in the increasingly globalised higher education sector.

Source: @peoplecreations freepik



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2.2 Awareness and sensitization of the Chinese international student body

Different studies show that Chinese students coming to Europe face challenges that can significantly influence their academic performance (Mathou und Yan, 2012). Support from locals will facilitate orientation and enhance the sense of belonging and, thus, positively affect academic success. However, local support is often missed, which – as we state – is mainly rooted in a lack of awareness for the main challenges of Chinese international students. Hence, we aim to sensitise local staff and students towards challenges of incoming students and at the same time, the Chinese students themselves to be aware of the cultural difference they will face and potentially different behaviour they need to get used to.

Main practical challenges for Chinese students in Europe were identified to be the funding, as studies abroad are an expensive issue, language barrier, a lack of information at the welcoming institution, bureaucracy, and an overall lack of support for Chinese students (SIAS China-EU, 2022; Mathou und Yan, 2012).

In the project SIAS China-EU, we try to address these issues by providing guidance material, which aims to provide information on extra language courses, on which steps are to be taken before studies can start and especially which contacts are available for help at our partner universities. These aspects similarly occur for any international students moving in the world. China-specific challenges might arise from very different social and political



Source: @drobotdean freepik

backgrounds, which reflect in education and learning. Indeed, certain aspects of politics and society such as the view of authorities, the perspective of the individual and, thus, some ways of thinking differ due to the surroundings and educational background (Kantzara, 2016). Here, the aim is to raise awareness of both sides, the Chinese students themselves as well as European students and staff members of universities.

Analogous challenges in communication and teaching arise for the local staff at EHEIs facing international or specifically Chinese students, thus decreasing academic success. Hence, reciprocal understanding and awareness for the background of the other party are of utter importance for a fruitful collaboration and academic success (Loughran, 2005).

Find out more:

Chinese culture: traditions, customs and lifestyle

The Chinese education system and choosing to study in Europe

Besides, guidance of the cultural background and education system for both sides is provided to enhance the understanding. Main cultural differences that might lead to challenges in the teaching and learning of Chinese students in Europe are rooted in the social framework.



Source: Nottingham Trent University (NTU) Image Library



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China is a community-centred society where the collective has a significantly higher value than the individual itself. In Western society, quite the contrary is the case with the aim to achieve maximum liberty in lifestyle, opinion and actions (Chen Yulin, Thea Marie Valler, Liu Jiayan, Liu Jian, Marius Korsnes 2019).

This strongly reflects within education especially with reference to open questions and discussions, which are highly encouraged in courses at EHEIs but less so at Chinese institutions. Teaching methods in China and Europe, thus, differ widely as well. The Chinese teaching staff is seen as an absolute and inerrant authority; at EHEIs, hierarchy is flatter and teaching methods are often more collaborative such as team works and problem-based projects (Clarke 2010).

In China, education has a very high value as it is seen as a way to contribute to the country's welfare and to climb the social ladder. Although the legal education systems in China and some European countries are quite similar with compulsory education starting at elementary level by the age of 6 until the age of 15, focus of teaching and learning differs strongly. During Chinese classes, not only pure knowledge is imparted but courses also have the goal to promote love for the motherland, for socialism, the community and the work for the community (Hu und Szente 2009).

The European education system concentrates on humanistic education in scientific, linguistic, artistic and historical subjects together with the bases for a political and social understanding, however under the premise of political and religious neutrality.



Source: @master1305 freepik

The goal of European education is to promote independent thinking, an individual personality and critical views.

When Chinese students arrive at EHEIs, new methods of teaching and examination together with a completely new environment can be quite overwhelming. Thus, special care of European staff is crucial to integrate

Chinese students into courses and the academic and social environment. A preparation of Chinese students and familiarisation with culture, traditions and lifestyle in Europe before coming to EHEIs is also a good method to minimise cultural shock.

Here material for both sides is provided to enhance understanding of European culture by Chinese students and to support understanding towards Chinese culture and behaviour by European classmates and staff.



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2.3 Practical experiences and documents of interest that should be available for Chinese students

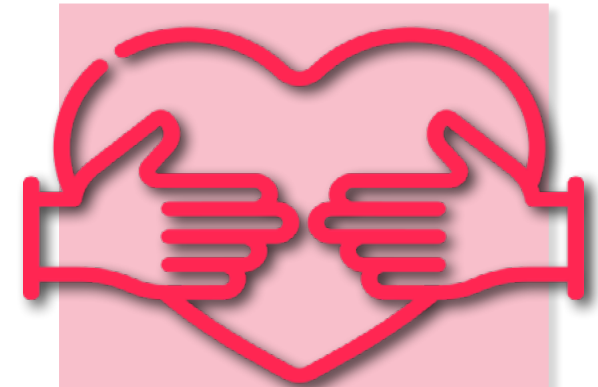
Some issues confront foreign and Chinese students for a short period of time and may be resolved shortly after arriving (search for accommodation, familiarisation with the institutions such as the library etc.), while others persist for a lengthy period (language barriers, cross-cultural interactions with domestic students, etc.). Thus, it is crucial for foreign Chinese students to understand the differences between culture and higher education in their home and the host country in order to develop effective strategies to make the necessary adjustments to meet the new challenge.

This is because they will be facing challenges that arise from transitioning to a new learning and living environment. Also, it is important to note that the Chinese students' academic support system has a big impact on their decision to use a certain learning style. As such help has a favourable impact on Chinese students' adjustment, it enables foreign students to locate additional resources for tackling the issue.

In this sense, it is of paramount importance to have the following information readily available for Chinese students. If feasible, SIAS China-EU project recommendation is to have these documents available in both Chinese and English:

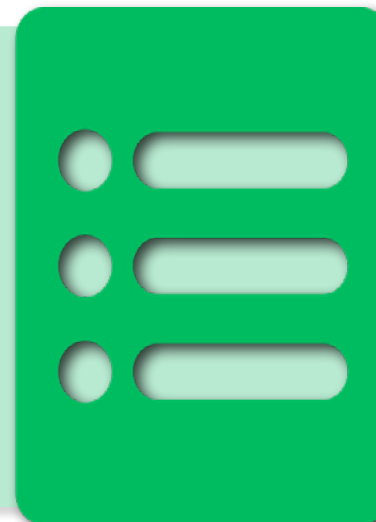


- **A welcoming document for the international students** summarising the main facts about the university, but also with information about main differences between Chinese and Western culture, psycho-pedagogical counselling and courses to improve study skills. The document should also impart the main differences between the higher education system in the EU and their home country, information on language improvement courses, information about transportation or accommodation (Urban maps, public transport system, university maps with classrooms, offices, access to pharmacy, supermarkets, banks, etc).



- **Documents on the reception protocol for international students**, with special mention of Chinese students including the programming of the reception days and the policies for Inclusion, Universal Learning Design, Internationalisation and Tutorial action plans or mentorship programs available in each faculty.

- **A list with the contact information** of international student associations and helping staff members, with a special emphasis on associations of Chinese students.



Sources: @flaticon freepik



02 The institution and the Chinese international students

Effective communication in a foreign language is the base for integration and academic success and requires studies of the grammar and vocabulary. Below, we are highlighting some general tips that the student should add to the day-to-day learning activities to develop their language skills (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Tips for developing foreign language skills

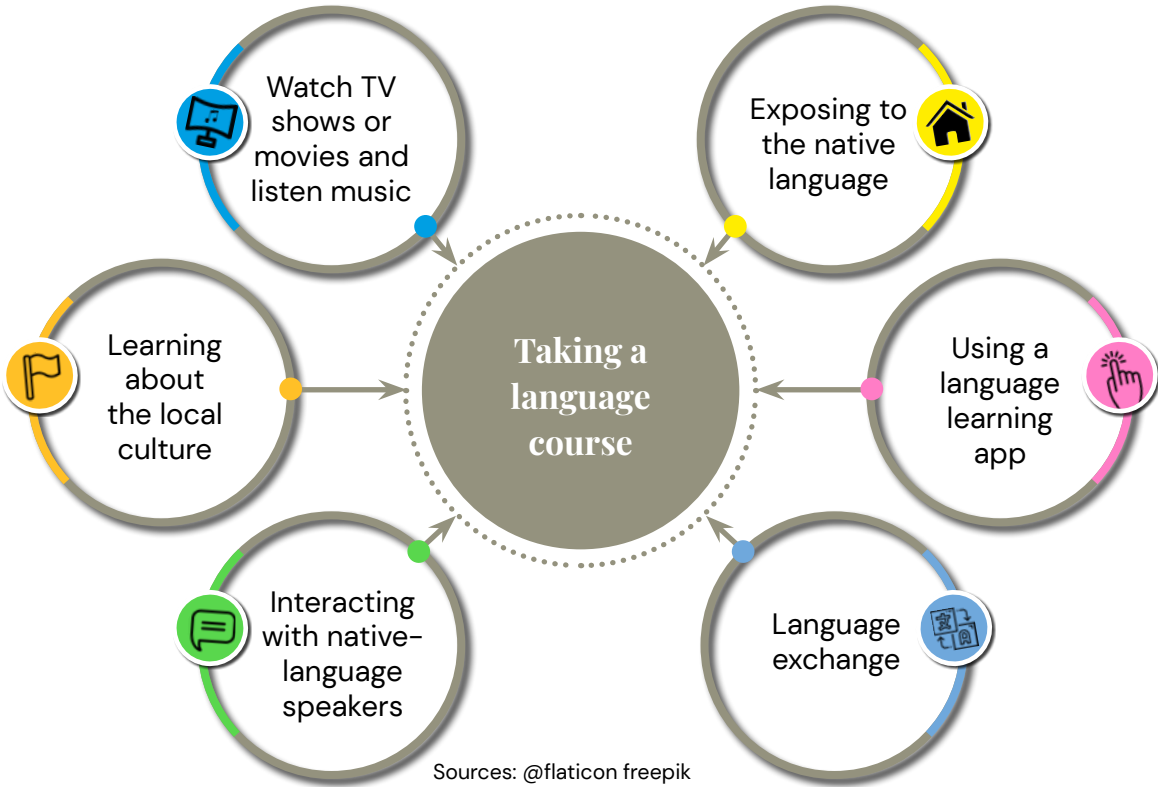
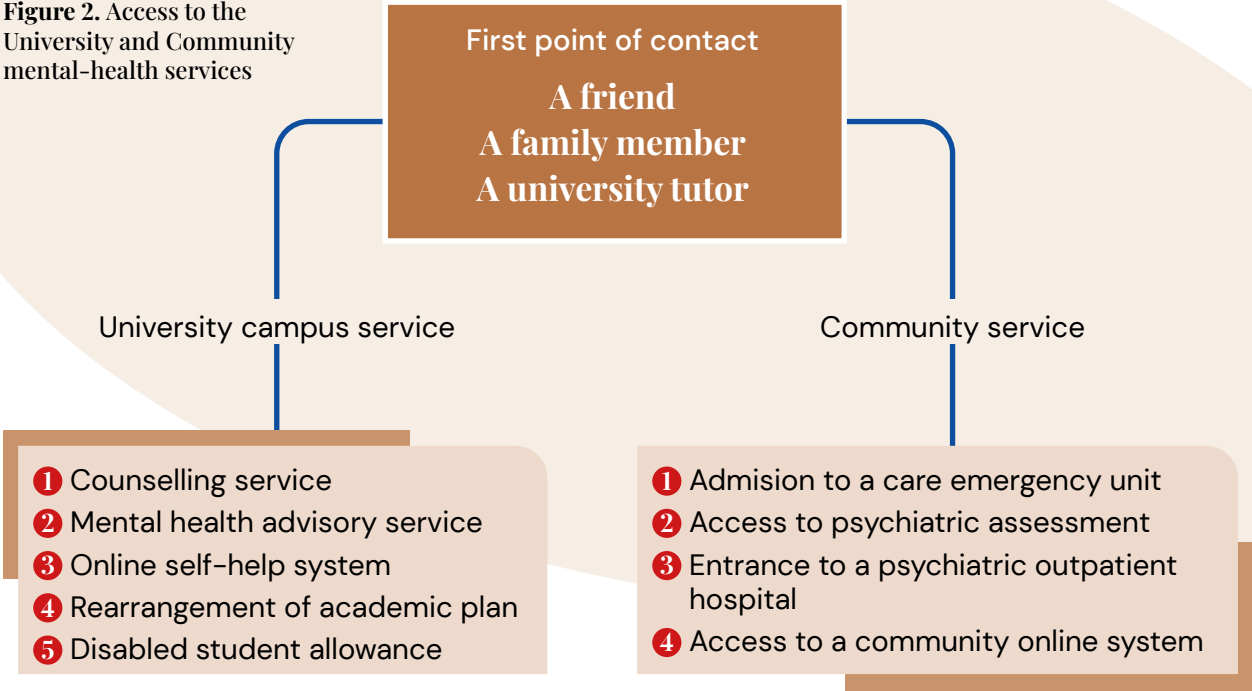


Figure 2. Access to the University and Community mental-health services



Good mental and emotional health is also important. Transition to a foreign University could be associated with a period of maladaptation including academic failure, mental health and emotional problems. The latter comprises issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety. It is important to realise that talking about feelings to another person could make a huge difference in terms of emotional health. That first point of contact could be a friend, a family member, or a university tutor. However, those students that prefer to talk to a professional person should recognise that European universities have a whole range of different support services (see Figure 2).



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In synthesis, some good practices could be the following:

Offering

Offering extensive language courses that help students to use a foreign language in an academic and social setting

Cultural awareness

Contributing to better academic integration of Chinese students by enhancing their linguistic proficiency and improving their cultural awareness

Organising

Organising more social activities with faculty members and students to promote social networking between international students, faculty members, and other fellow students, thereby enhancing international students' class communication, and facilitating their integration into the academic and social environments of the host country

Academic Mentoring

Providing academic mentoring is key to help the students to adapt to their new learning environments more easily

Peer mentoring

Establishing a Peer Mentoring Program where peer mentors among international and local, postgraduate and undergraduate students help international students on a voluntary basis. This can provide leadership and training opportunities and encourage interaction between international and local students, as students become familiar with the University and academic expectations and develop social networks in the University

Encouraging

Encouraging social interactions between local and international students through on-campus facilities using marketplace, library, sports courts, gardens, bars, and residential facilities as well as social activities. This gives international students the opportunity to experience sports, culture, and the lifestyle of their host country

Informing

Informing students about a list of events or regular meetings that they must or can attend

Enhancing

Enhancing communication with international students via social platforms (e.g., SMS, WeChat, WhatsApp) or any other social network

Telling

Telling students about associations they can make part of

Working in groups

Encouraging in-class interactions between local and international students by shared groupworks, i.e. projects or problem-based-learning approaches to enhance the exchange and make Chinese students familiar with European learning strategies

Developing soft skills

Providing workshops for students to develop curriculum vitae writing skills and job interview skills, further supporting students' ability to participate professionally within industry



02 The institution and the Chinese international students

2.4 Reflection and self-evaluation guide

European universities should promote its quality and reputation, updating flexible admission requirements and establishing more intercultural communication platforms for Chinese students, enhancing their educational experience to attract them more.

Moreover, to reflect the current reality, internationalisation needs to be understood at the national, sectoral and institutional levels. Including horizontal and/or vertical integration in the internationalisation strategy allows a harmonious functioning between the different services of the institution and makes it possible to take advantage of the contribution of the different sectors of the European University.

In this sense, we propose each university to follow a **Self-evaluation Guideline**, regarding:

University Policy

- Does my university define an international, internal and external strategy plan?
- Does my university work for a good reputation of the institution?
- Does my university clearly define academic entry requirements (cost, migration policies, information about the local community)?
- Does my university work for high-quality teaching?
- Does my university promote good academic practices to favour Chinese students' social and academic inclusion?
- Does my university establish intercultural communication platforms?
- Does my university develop a focus on activities that provide an understanding of international and intercultural skills?
- Does my university develop communication initiatives and improve socialisation activities?
- Does my university enable student and teaching staff mobility?

International Chinese Students Support

- Does my university provide a tutorial action plan (resources for the awareness and improvement of intercultural communication) for Chinese international students?
- Does my university support Chinese international students (psychological office, loneliness abroad)?
- Does my university provide Chinese international student's social connections (alumni students)?
- Does my university integrate Chinese international students in the universities with special welcome programs?
- Does my university help Chinese international students to integrate into the local community?



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Local Support: Internationalisation at Home

Teaching staff:

- Does my university provide training sessions about interculturality to teaching staff?
- Does my university support English training sessions for teaching staff to improve communication?
- Does my university give attention and time to the internationalisation of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process?
- Does my university facilitate strategies, resources, and theoretical and practical tools for fluent and high-quality cross-cultural communication between teaching staff and Chinese international students?

Administrative Staff:

- Does my university provide training sessions about interculturality to administrative staff?
- Does my university highlight the importance of communication in all actions carried out by administration and support personnel?
- Does my university facilitate strategies, resources and theoretical and practical tools needed for a fluent and high-quality cross-cultural communication with Chinese international students and administrative staff?

Local students:

- Does my university provide training sessions about interculturality to local students?
- Does my university optimise group cohesion among students in multicultural environments?
- Does my university develop initiatives to improve socialisation and enhance communication between local and Chinese students?

All these questions and according actions can lead to an improved and more integrative international learning and teaching environment, thus attracting international and in specific Chinese students to European universities and enhancing their academic success.



Source: @freepik



03 Actors involved in the inclusion of the Chinese international students

3.1 Tips and guidelines

Chinese students

The Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) contains information material intended for Chinese incoming students to European universities. We provide tips and advices on European culture and behaviour and potential adaptation to the new environment. We additionally provide the basic information about our partner universities that incoming students might need. All welcoming institutions should provide similar information to facilitate orientation for new students.



More information:



Source: @Drazen Zigic freepik

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TIPS FOR CHINESE STUDENTS

SIAS CHINA-EU

GETTING ALONG IN EUROPE

Choice of study program → Study application → Visa application → Course of local language → Enrollment → Accommodation → Local language course → Social activities → Learning groups → Academic success

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EUROPE

Goal: independent and critical thinking
Humanistic education: sciences, arts, history, ethics, politics (neutral)
Student-centred: interactive participation with the teacher as mentor

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

Discussion: open questions and challenging of teaching contents
Teamwork: combining strengths of a team with self-organisation
Problem-based learning: applying knowledge to a given practical problem
Peer-tutoring: presenting new or recited knowledge to classmates

COMMUNICATION IN EUROPE

1. Be polite and on time
2. Greet hello and goodbye when entering or leaving a room
3. Knock on doors if they are closed
4. Do not be afraid to ask questions or to admit lack of understanding
5. Look into the eyes and be empathetic during a dialog

TAKE HOME MESSAGES

Be prepared for an open and individual-centred community.
Learn the local language before getting to Europe and be open yourself.
Make yourself familiar with culture-specific behaviour.
Ask polite and honest questions and everybody will be very helpful!

PR.SIAS.CHINA.EU@UAB.CAT



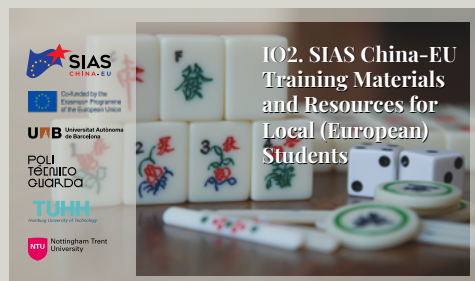
03 Actors involved in the inclusion of the Chinese international students

Local students

The Intellectual Output 2 (IO2) is an educational material intended for local students from European universities who share classes with Chinese international students. Its purpose is to provide resources and strategies to non-Chinese national and international students to promote the social inclusion and academic success of this group of students whose presence is increasing in European universities.



More information:



Source: @freepik

Co-funded by the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Union

* Principles for Good interaction *

To achieve social inclusion and academic success between national and Chinese or other international students, it is essential to have a good interaction between you and them. But, how to do it?

- 1. Respect and encourage diversity**
Our differences make us unique. Dealing with international students is an opportunity to know new cultures. Do not let them to escape!
- 2. Understand their ways of communicating**
Both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication differ according to origin and culture, be flexible, be patient
- 3. Do not be prejudiced and try to understand the other culture**
Forget prejudices and jump into the pool without hesitation. It is the best way to make friends!
- 4. Treat them like one more**
We are all in the same boat, and we face the same challenges. Make them feel like a partner and even a friend!

Ready to live the experience?
Put yourself in their place, be patient and don't give up!

* Other tips *

- Find what unites you!: Look for common interests, hobbies, etc
- Take advantage of teamwork: trust your classmates!
- Show them interest and willingness to help!

03 Actors involved in the inclusion of the Chinese international students

Teaching staff


The Intellectual Output 3 (IO3) is an educational material targeted at teaching staff at European universities who work with Chinese international students. The goal of IO3 is to enhance awareness and understanding of the teaching staff for specific challenges of Chinese students in class and give advice on how to integrate them better into the group and thus improve their academic performance.



More information:



Source: @ standret freepik



TIPS

SIAS CHINA-EU
TRAINING MATERIALS
FOR TEACHING STAFF

STEP 1

Enhance diversity and plurality

1. Explain the cultural differences among the students
2. Implement icebreakers activities
3. Learn students' names and use them
4. Encourage interaction and collaboration among students
5. Create a democratic environment
6. Build student confidence and motivation

STEP 2

Facilitate Communication in Classroom Environment

1. Develop and communicate codes of conduct
2. Explain idioms and cultural references
3. Support students' language development
4. Encourage students to speak and participate in class
5. Support students by establishing clear and effective communication

STEP 3

Create Inclusive Teaching Practices in Classroom Environment

1. Act more as facilitators of students' learning by encouraging them
2. Explain the subject description clearly: competences, objectives, grading policy, attendance policy, test and homework policy
3. Organize several teaching methods
4. Use active learning methodologies and techniques
5. Use innovative pedagogy
6. Give models and other examples of good work
7. Give examples of various kinds of plagiarism
8. Give precise and objective instructions
9. Give instructions verbally and visually with written support
10. Provide and favour written and clear (in a simple language form) instructions for assignments
11. Connect new information to students' prior knowledge & experience
12. Create interactive dynamics right at the beginning of the classes
13. Check comprehension by asking students to outline or summarize readings
14. Get to class early or stay late for individual questions

The UDL Guidelines

Provide multiple means of Engagement

Provide multiple means of Representation

Provide multiple means of Action & Expression



TIPS

SIAS CHINA-EU
TRAINING MATERIALS
FOR TEACHING STAFF

STEP 4

Have Good Practices in Classroom Environment

1. Develop didactic material
2. Include headings and methods to highlight important information
3. Allow the students to process the information
4. Enhance participation
5. Develop activities (exercises, tasks, case studies, business games)

STEP 5

Enhancement of Collaborative Learning

1. Encourage group work and cooperation and foster group dynamics
2. Integrate and exchange students in different workgroups
3. Encourage students to participate, demonstrating the added value of sincere and open communication
4. Allow them the opportunity to define their roles at the outset
5. Help each student feel like a valued part of the group

STEP 6

Develop Evaluation

1. Develop post rubrics for evaluation
2. Give interim due dates (drafts)
3. Make sure the intent of test questions is clear: give a chance for students to ask questions to clarify the question's meaning
4. Give ungraded quizzes throughout the term so students can be familiar with your testing style

STEP 7

Have an Effective Personal Tutoring

1. Promote tutoring to students
2. Develop and enhance pedagogical and individualized follow-up

The UDL Guidelines

Provide multiple means of Engagement

Provide multiple means of Representation


Provide multiple means of Action & Expression




03 Actors involved in the inclusion of the Chinese international students


Administrative staff

The Intellectual Output 4 (IO4) is an educational material intended for administrative and service staff. Its aim is to increase awareness about cross-cultural issues within the context of an ever-growing internationalisation of European higher education, and, specifically, those related to the Chinese students community. We provide customised introductions to China’s culture and education system as well as practical recommendations to support the learning and living experience of Chinese students.



More information:







TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF




Activities to welcome International Students


Appointment of tutors for international students

Promotion of and easy access to counselling support

Ongoing training in interculturality issues



TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



Academic issues:


Information on how to get to the academic campus

Understanding the university’s workings


Understanding academic modules’ workings

Understanding the virtual learning environment (VLA)

Finding the student support associations



TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



Practical matters:

Guidance on looking for accommodation

Information on where to go shopping

Help with opening a bank account

Information on obtaining any ID documents required for foreign nationals

Tips on interacting with locals



04 Transfer to other collectives of international students

"...it is not enough for universities and other higher educational institutions only to mention internationalisation issues in their mission statements; rather, regardless of their legal status and their current responsibilities in the field of internationalisation, all higher education institutions should look for the most appropriate solutions in line with their needs, and develop their own governance and planning structures together with channels for cooperation"

European Higher Education in the world.
The European Economic and Social Committee
and the Committee of the Regions (2013)

In recent years, we have witnessed a steady increase in the number of international students worldwide. In general, this is a direct reflection of a globalised world where communication and travel become widespread and young generations regard themselves as part of a truly worldwide community. Europe has traditionally been one of the top destinations for overseas students, owing to its education system's prestige and its well-established network of universities and research institutions. Countries like England, Germany, Spain and even Portugal have seen their international students grow beyond any expectations (see figures 3-7).

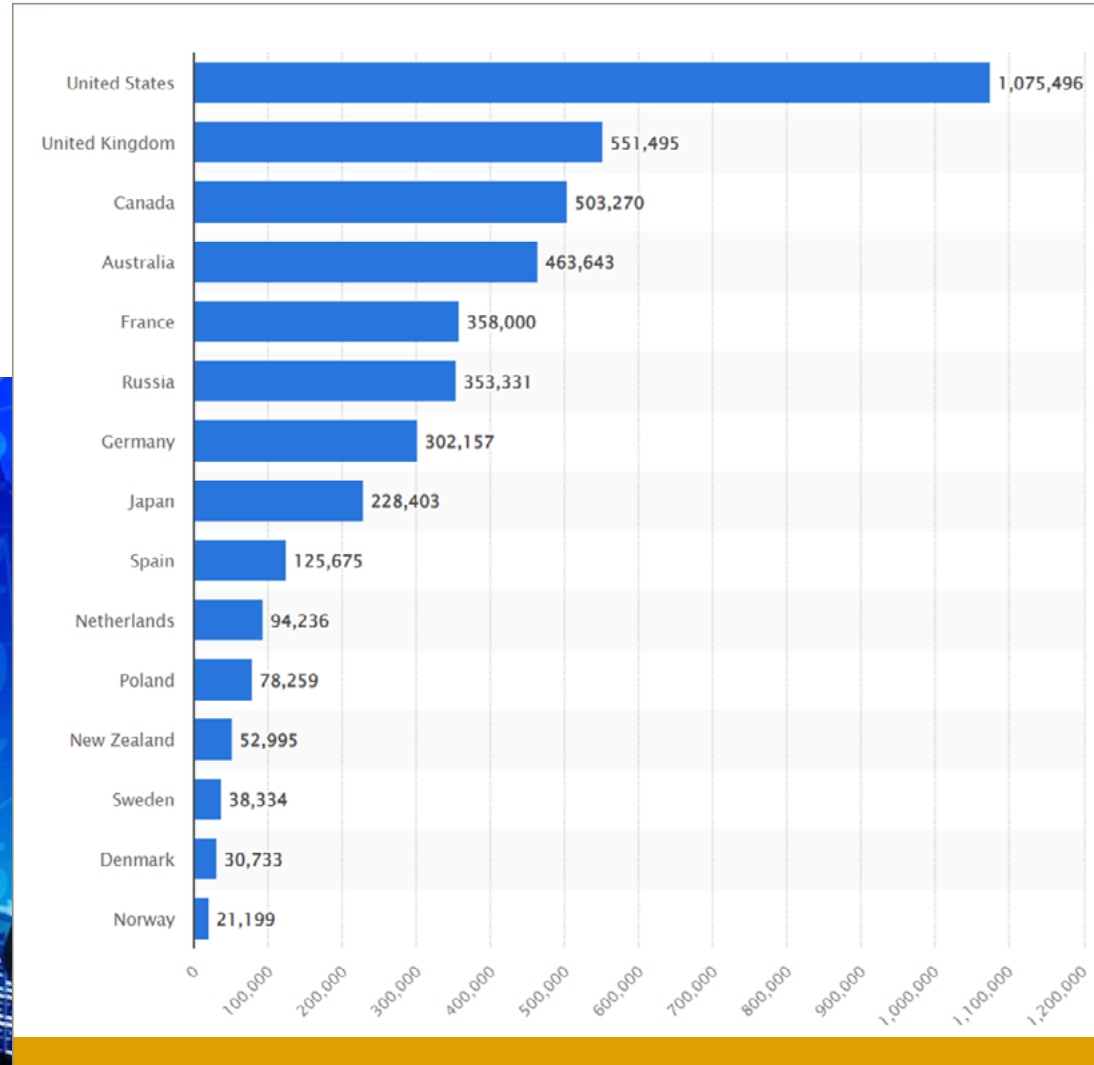


Figure 3. Top host destination of international students worldwide in 2020 (by number of students)

Source: Statista www.statista.com

Source: @rawpixel.com freepik



04 Transfer to other collectives of international students

Figure 4.
International students in the United Kingdom (UK) (2014 - 2021)
Source: Studying-in-the-UK.org. Creative Commons cc.



Figure 6.
International students in Portugal (2012-2022)
Source: Direção de Serviços de Estatísticas da Educação. Divisão de Estatísticas do Ensino Superior

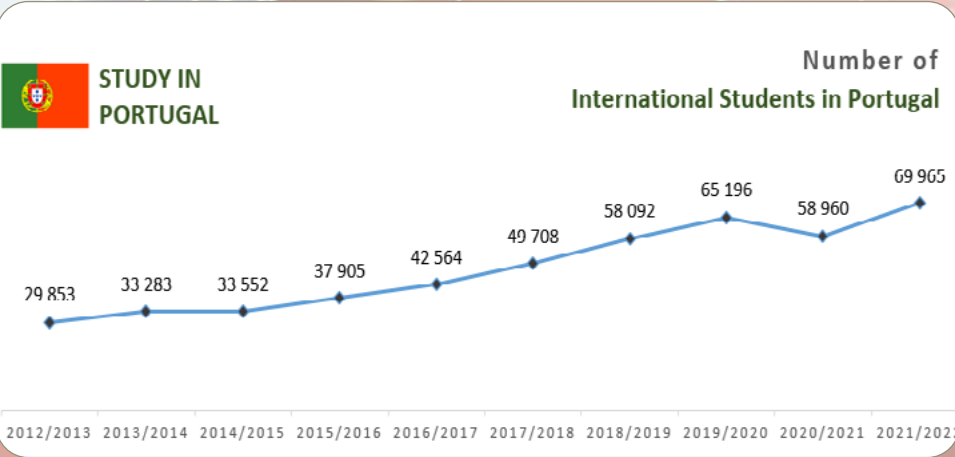


Figure 5.
International students in Germany (2014 - 2021)
Source: Studying-in-Germany.org. Creative Commons cc.

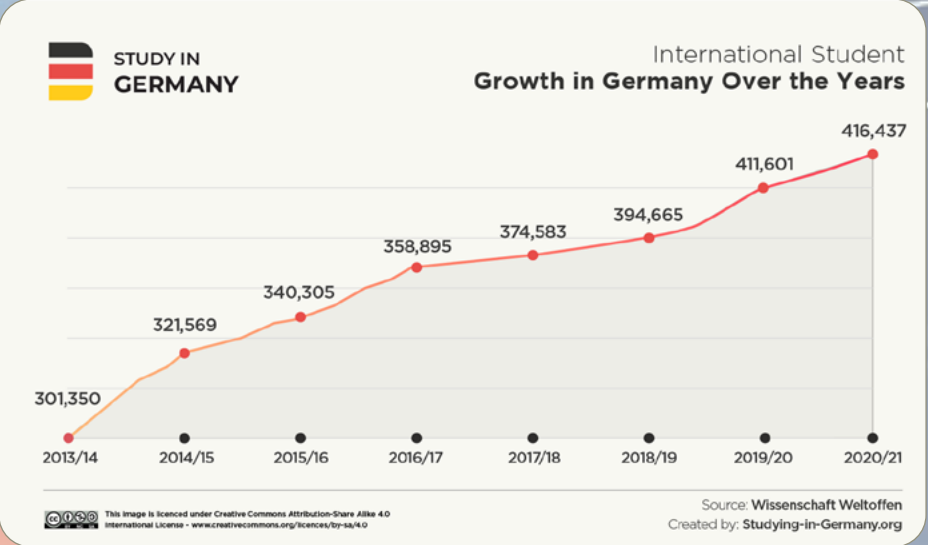
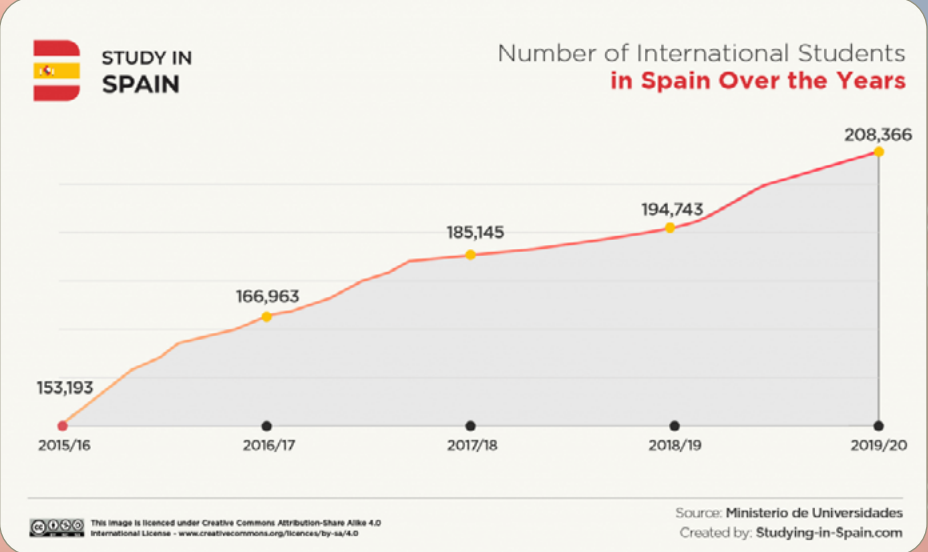


Figure 7.
International students in Spain (UK) (2014 - 2020)
Source: <https://www.studying-in-spain.com/spain-international-student-statistics/>
Creative Commons cc



04 Transfer to other collectives of international students

Although China is by far the main country sending students abroad (it is estimated there are currently over 1 million Chinese international students), the emergence of countries like India, South Korea, Vietnam, Nigeria and Brazil constitutes one of the key factors behind this observed trend. Economic development together with the consolidation of an aspirational middle class become the driving force for sending their students abroad (Figure 8).

Naturally, this results in an exchange of knowledge, skills and technological know-how. However, this exchange is not limited to the learning experience but rather encompasses a wealth of cultural and personal exchanges that have the potential to contribute to a better world, a globalised society where we all appreciate and value intrinsic cultural and historical differences.

Therefore, the current internationalisation of the higher education sector in Europe brings about the need for concerted institutional effort to develop cross-cultural professional skills in order to ensure overseas students can have a successful academic and personal experience.

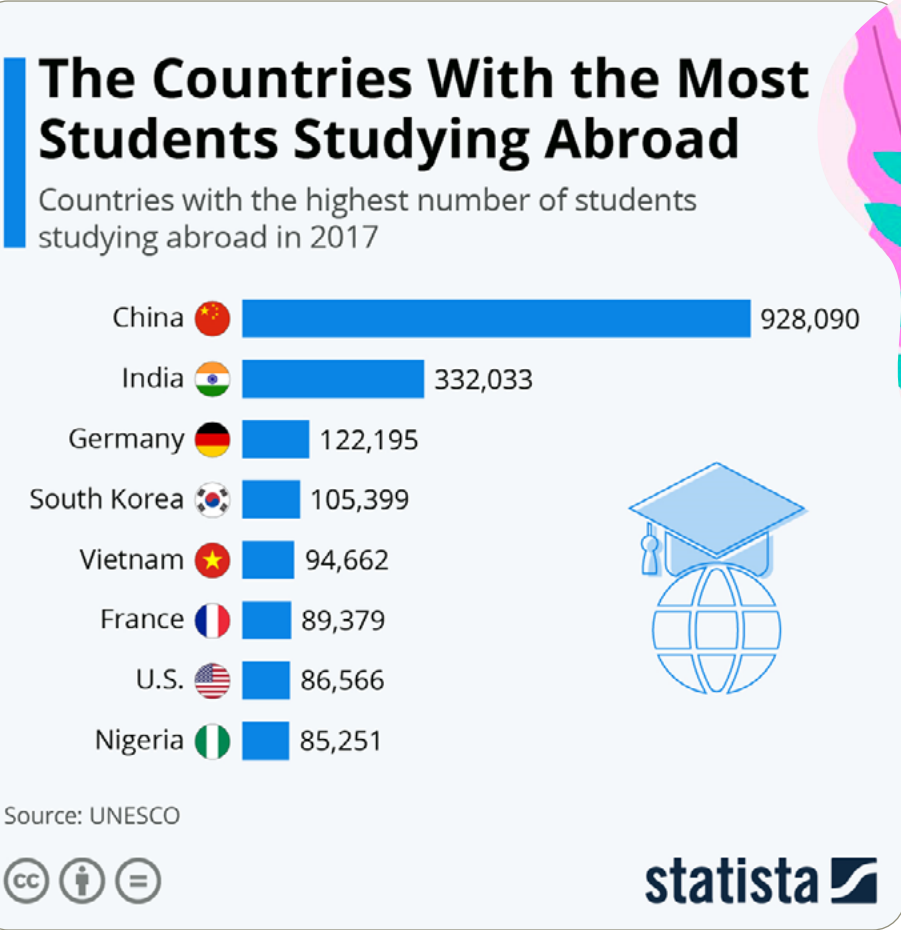


Figure 8. Countries with the highest number of students studying abroad (2017)
Source: Statista www.statista.com



Any institutional drive to raise cross-cultural awareness is more likely to succeed if it stresses personal dimensions. Empathy is required to ensure a genuinely inclusive environment. Often a genuine understanding of a different culture supposes the willingness to see some of our most important cultural tenets in a different light. The results of this personal process again go beyond purely professional skills: understanding others brings a new understanding of ourselves.

Although the young generations worldwide are bound to have a more globalised view, and be familiar with Western culture, cultural clashes are still likely to occur. These cross-cultural issues can affect students' ability to engage with academic studies and their overall sense of belonging.



04 Transfer to other collectives of international students

When reflecting about transferring the main findings and methodology deriving from our SIAS China-EU project to other international students' collectives, the key objective remains the same: to enhance our professional capacity (as a university community) to engage respectfully and communicate effectively in a cross-cultural context.

As it could be expected, some elements are bound to be common among international students regardless of their specific background (e.g. language barrier, social isolation, orientation in an unknown surrounding, non-familiarity with European administration).

Universities should aim to provide sound and effective help mechanisms to support them, especially during the initial stages. Nevertheless, this should be just the first layer when it comes to institutional policies: universities should embrace awareness and celebration of cultural diversity as one of their fundamental principles.

This would require a sustained and determined effort at institutional level.

Sources: @freepik



05 Synthesis

The development of the project aimed to achieve greater social inclusion of Chinese students, make them aware of the European Higher Education Area, facilitate them the acquisition of transversal skills that optimise their academic learning, bring them closer to the traditions and customs of the host country, increase the awareness of the teaching staff, administrative staff and European students towards Chinese culture, optimising group cohesion among students, developing a methodology of a didactic-organisational framework based on guidance and educational support, and facilitating intercultural communication between all the involved agents.

The project documents (IO1 to 4) provide integral information and practice-oriented handbooks for the specific target groups, the Chinese students themselves (IO1), local and other international students (IO2), teaching (IO3) and administrative staff (IO4). The present document shall only provide a summary of the sensitisation for Chinese and European culture differences and the reflection of cross-cultural issues referring to the detailed documents. Thus, we want to give a brief overview of how staff and student members of European universities can make a positive impact on the inclusion of Chinese students and the awareness of cultural challenges.

In IO1, we offer recommendations and suggestions about European conventions and manners to ease the adaptation to the new setting environment, including also information about the fundamental details of our partner institutions.

Similar material should be made available by all welcoming institutions to ease new students' orientation.

To encourage the social inclusion and academic achievement of Chinese students, whose presence is growing in European institutions, in IO2 we give some resources and initiatives and/or approaches to non-Chinese national and foreign students to avoid misunderstandings between them as much as possible.


The purpose of IO3 is to increase professors' and teaching staff's knowledge and comprehension of the unique difficulties faced by Chinese students in the classroom and provide guidance on how to effectively incorporate them into the classroom in order to boost their educational success.

Finally, IO4 is designed to raise public awareness of cross-cultural issues in the support and administrative staff, particularly those affecting the community of Chinese students.


+i

Find out more:


IO2. SIAS China-EU Training Materials and Resources for Local (European) Students



IO3. SIAS China-EU Training Materials for Teaching Staff



IO4. SIAS China-EU Training Materials and Resources for Administrative and Service Staff





05 Synthesis

A successful Higher Education Internationalisation will need continued work and development. Each institution must make an effort to find best practices to involve all the actors (students, staff, teaching staff, responsible and local community) in the academic environment.

The methodology developed by our project could be applied to other international student communities, especially those coming from a cultural heritage significantly different (e.g. India, Nigeria,...).

The project's findings indicate that any efforts in that direction should be articulated along two key practical concerns:

inclusivity as an institutional policy and cross-cultural awareness.

Therefore, it is fundamental that the first stage in any such pedagogical initiatives must be a genuine *listening and learning* process where the input from experts and practitioners in the field is paramount.

Although the immediate need for cross-cultural awareness derives from our profession in higher education institutions, this is nevertheless a personal process as well: often a genuine understanding of a different culture supposes the willingness to see some of our most important cultural tenets under a different light. The result of this personal process too often goes beyond a purely professional skill: understanding others brings a new understanding of oneself.



Source: @flaticon freepik



All these documents will be available on our web page <http://siaschinaeu.ipg.pt/> and an emailing campaign will be used to distribute the IOs among target groups. Also, the IOs will be available at the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform (E+PRP), a European Commission's database for the Erasmus+ programme.

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