

Experiences and Reflections from International Doctoral Students

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MPhil/PhD Programme

International Student Support Workshop

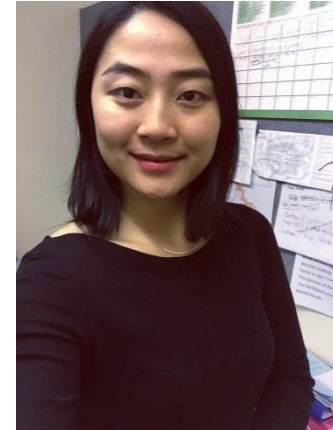
Presentation overview

1. Overview of the current International Doctoral Students
2. Current support provided
3. Student experiences and reflections
4. Summary and suggestions for the future



1) Overview of current International Doctoral students

- Growing number of International Doctoral students within the Faculty
- Currently 39 International doctoral students from 14 different Countries
- International students account for approximately 30% of the PGR community within FoHS



Where do our students come from?



2) Current support provided

- Faculty English Language support
- PGR Drop-in session
- Informal events and celebrations
- PGR forums
- Pastoral support
- Global Cafe
- SUSU International groups and activities



Student experiences and reflections: helpful support received?

- The importance of good support from outside of the faculty, such as library support, Gradbook, SUSU and Enabling Services:

“I have received support in learning materials such how to use the University data base to get most recent and relevant articles and books to the study area by Librarians staff who were very willing to do so, I would like to have more support in SPSS as I am going to book a course for that very soon.”

- Support from the supervisory team and regular supervision:

“One of the support I received was my supervisory team encouragement and guidance. They are amazing supervisors.”

- Support during difficult times

“..when I experienced some personal circumstances during the last year. The programme lead was very supportive at that time and made it easier for me to pass that difficult period.”

- Importance of meeting other students, peer support and friendships

“PGR drop-in session is a very helpful way to discuss concerns and share experiences among PhD students”

“as an international student how to overcome the feeling of homesick by mixing to your colleagues who become my second family here and I am very happy to be one member of them.”

- Importance of induction events

“Overall, the Faculty has done tremendous work to provide appropriate and sufficient support to me. I'm thankful to you and your team for organising events from the beginning of our transition period, in between the programme and providing activities such as drop-in session, as platform for us to settle down quickly. These activities are worth continue to benefits not only international students but for all PGs.”

“During the first few weeks of my PhD journey, we were given a very excellent introduction to PhD by the programme. Since then, my motivation towards PhD is great! ”

Student experiences and reflections: things that would be helpful?

- Writing classes and proof reading

“I must admit our faculty is providing good support at present. However, if you arrange some 'writing skills classes' that may be very helpful. I know there are English support sessions and they are helpful but arranging more writing classes on top of these may be handy.”

“More support with academic writing and criticality will be really great. International students should be aware from the beginning about the importance of this academic skills.”

“As English is the second language for most of the International students, I wish the Faculty can appoint an outsource in Proof Reader Services and recommend students to use them. In my experience, there are so many of proof readers available from the web. But it often difficult to choose which one is the most appropriate and reliable.”

- Further financial support and understanding different financial situations

“If it is possible please could you provide some information related to financial aid for international students who have not received fund.”

“More financial support for PhD project i.e. conferences, data collection. Our students (health sciences) always compare the financial support between faculties...”

- Research and clinical experience

“I think it is helpful for international students to participate in research in the UK apart from their own research. Furthermore, for nurses and midwives it would be more helpful to let them enter the health care setting to be familiar about health care setting in the UK as they have their own experience from back home”

- Support though NHS ethics and gaining a research passport

“In case of conducting the research in the UK, it will be great if the international students get more support in gaining their research passport and NHS approval. In terms of coordination of the concerned organizations or clinics”

- Full inductions throughout the year

“I suggest, it will be fine if the January intake have full induction. This really affected my studies. It made me to be a bit confused for several months. This prompted me to join the successive group to do induction. I continued asking question from one person to another to enable me cope with university structure.”

Summary

- International students' experiences are very different...
 - Financial support received
 - Cultural differences and experience of western culture
 - With family or independently (can be positive &/or negative)
 - Study skills and adapting to the level of criticality required at doctoral level



- We seem to be providing a good range of support, but more can be done to ensure that we maintain a happy, vibrant PGR community
 - Informal and formal support sources working well
 - International students particularly appear to benefit from the new PGR Common Room
 - Areas for improvement include
 - support with English language
 - understanding financial issues
 - flexible start date is positive - but still need a full induction when they start the programme



