

Best Practices for Working with International Students

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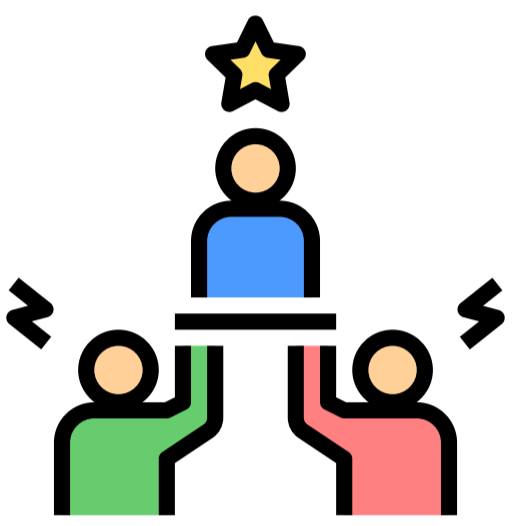
Language Barriers



While all our students can speak, read, and understand English, please keep in mind that English is likely their second language. Early on you may want to make sure they can follow you and your lectures. This may include speaking one-on-one with the student(s) to ensure they are able to engage with the lectures and learning materials, as well as touching base throughout the semester to check on their progress. You may also consider peer-to-peer collaborative learning or connecting them with a tutor for extra support and development.

2

Be Patient and Willing to Help



Especially with first-year international student, being patient with their cultural adjustment can be very instrumental to their academic success. Many of them are coming from a completely different culture, social, and academic experience. For example, many may come from a culture where asking for assistance is not the norm, while some may come from a culture where persistence is the norm. Set expectations and boundaries and exercise patience and willingness to help within them as student grow and adjust culturally.

3

Learn Students' Names



Learn to pronounce the names of international students based on their preference. Do not expect the students to choose an American based “nickname” or shortened version of their name. Some may prefer to be called by their full name, while some may like to use an adopted moniker. This simple gesture will go a long way in making the students feel comfortable here on campus and in the states.

4

American Jargon



Be observant to the usage of American jargon when addressing international students. For example, while some may study U.S. culture and gain familiarity before arriving in the country, other international students may not understand phrases common colloquialisms or their proper context. While these idioms are common to American students, international students may have no frame of reference to these phrases.

5

Plagiarism



In many countries plagiarism generally does not exist. Citing sources in papers, speeches, and other academic works is not expected. While that is standard procedure, and the expectation in the United States, understand that some of these students will struggle with mixed messages from previous educational practices. The process of citing early on can help alleviate students from unintentionally plagiarizing, in turn causing them unintended academic issues.

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Other Important Considerations



There are other considerations that will help international students, including creating inclusive learning and social environments, demystifying assignments and assessments, understanding cultural norms around mental health and fostering a sense of belonging, and focusing on professional development and occupational norms in the United States. This brief from the American Council on Education is a valuable resource for these considerations.

For valuable techniques and information, consider this comprehensive resource from Vanderbilt University and this page from Cornell University.