

# International Student Support at the University of Brighton

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International Student Support Officer



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# What we will cover

## Support for International Students at the University of Brighton

- Support from with your school
- Central support including International Student Support and Advice
- Wellbeing support

## Adjusting to life in the UK

- Challenges of starting at university
- Culture shock and cultural dimensions
- New international student checklist

Questions?



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# How you will be supported at the University of Brighton

## Support within your academic school

- Personal academic tutor
- Student support and guidance tutors (SSGTs)
- Brighton Skills Hub

## Central support services

- International student support and advice
- Wellbeing services



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# Personal academic tutor (PAT)

- + Will be assigned at the start of your course.
- + Academic from your school.
- + Support you with all academic aspects of course that are not related to specific module content.
- + Will meet them during induction week, and then one or two other scheduled meetings each
- + Help you identify the skills you wish to develop to make the most of your degree, offer guidance on how to act on feedback from modules, and will help you identify how you can enhance your future career prospects. [More details.](#)



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# Student Support and Guidance Tutor (SSGT)

- + Support with any issue affecting your studies, your wellbeing or your student experience.
- + Work closely with Personal Academic Tutors and Course Leaders, but will only share information with your permission.
- + [Contact details](#).
- + Issues they frequently deal with include:
  - health, wellbeing and self-care
  - anxiety and stress-related issues
  - motivation, procrastination and time-management
  - isolation, loneliness and homesickness
  - difficulties with your course and additional considerations.



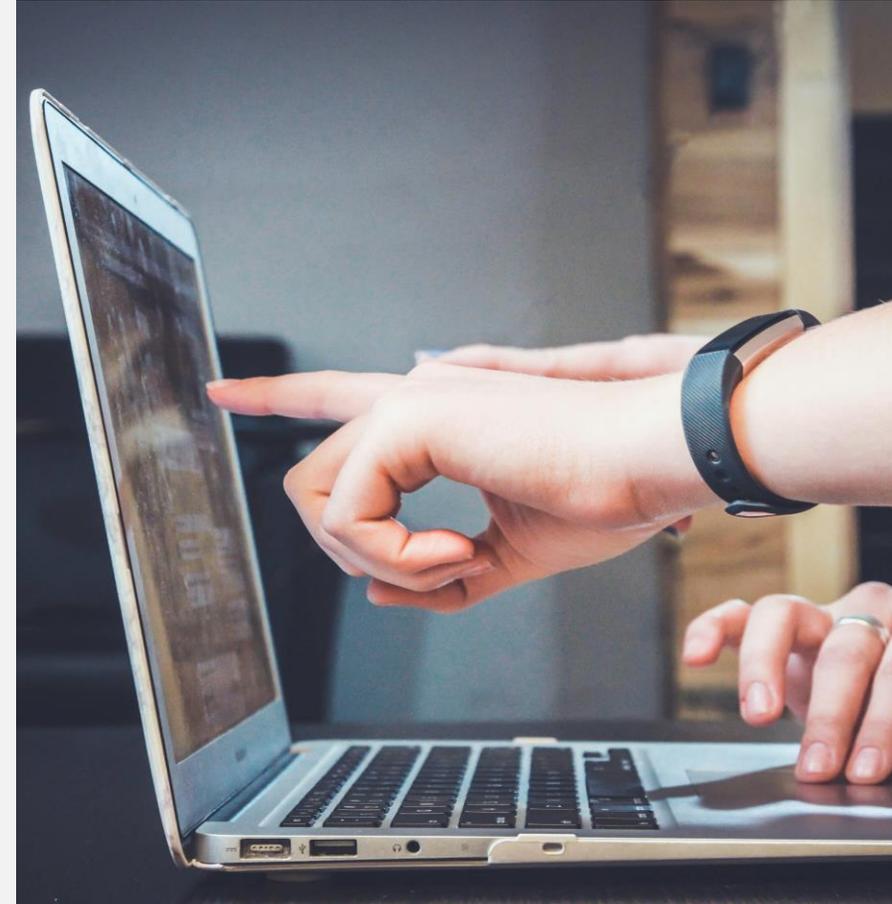
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# Brighton Student Skills Hub

Resources and support to help you develop the necessary skills for university study.

## + Academic writing and development

- + Writing advisory service.
- + Academic skills support.
- + One-to-one tutorials with study skills tutors for all foundation and Level 4 students.
- + Advice on clarity, structure or style of academic writing.
- + Speaking practice.
- + [More details](#).



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# International Advice and Support Team

- + Designated team to support international students.
- + Provide information and advice on life in the UK, life at the university, and on visas and immigration.
- + We have all lived and worked or studied overseas.



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# Advice on visas and immigration

- + Student visa applications to study at the university.
- + Applications to extend visa for additional or further study.
- + Information and advice on working during and after studies.
- + Advice on changing course, intermitting, withdrawing, financial issues.



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# Advice and support adjusting to life in the UK

- + Information, advice and support adjusting to life in the UK and at the university.
- + Common queries: healthcare, bank accounts, mobile phones, getting involved in university life.
- + Advice on financial difficulties.
- + Organise main orientation and welcome events (September/ January/ February).



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# Our orientation events

- + **Online orientation** sessions before you arrive
- + If you will be living in University of Brighton managed halls of residence: our **orientation ambassadors** will be on hand during the main move in weekends to answer your queries and welcome you to your new home.
- + **International Hub Drop-In** in the Cockcroft Hall from Monday 18 to Friday 29 September. Members of the International Student Advice and Support team will be here to welcome you, tell you about some of the activities taking place during the first term, and help with any queries you have.
- + We deliver welcome talks during the first few weeks of term as organised by your academic school or course team. These will be on your induction time tables when these are released.
- + We will be running a series of events for new international students during September and October.



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# Our orientation events

- + We will be running a series of events for new international students during September and October.
  - + Welcome tea party
  - + Fish and chips on Brighton Pier
  - + Ceilidh (traditional Irish dance evening)
- + Our In It To Win It competition rewards you for joining the existing social events and activities taking place across the university during welcome week and beyond. The more events you take part in, the greater your chance of winning from range of prizes!
- + You will hear about some of these events during the next presentations from Sport Brighton and Brighton Students Union.

For details of all our orientation events check our [web pages](#).



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## Support and Guidance

You can make an appointment to meet us in person or online, email us at [orientation@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:orientation@brighton.ac.uk), call us on 01273 642888.

Keep up-to-date with news and events on [Instagram](#) or via our [blog](#).

Our key links are on:

<https://linktr.ee/uobinternational>

## Visas and Immigration

You can make an appointment to meet us in person or online. You can also call us on 01273 642888.

Or use this [web form for queries about visas and immigration](#)



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# Wellbeing Support

- + Faith and spirituality
  - + Faith advisers, opportunities for worship, discussion groups.
- + Residential wellbeing
  - + Student Residential Advisers (SRAs) – social events, live in staff residential advisers for overnight support.
- + Disability and Dyslexia
  - + Adjustments to move work is assessed, access to support from mentor or support tutor.
- + LGBTQ+ support
  - + Brighton Students Union representation and student-led society, information and resources.
- + Counselling
  - + One to one assessment then up to three follow on appointments.
- + Wellbeing Champions
  - + Programme for students who want to learn more about building and maintaining their wellbeing, and that of others.

For more information see the wellbeing service webpages:

[Wellbeing \(brighton.ac.uk\)](https://www.brighton.ac.uk/wellbeing)



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# Challenges of starting at university and culture shock

## Challenges of starting at university

- For all students
- Additional challenges for international students

## Culture Shock

- What is culture shock?
- Common causes
- Top tips



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# Challenges of starting at university

All new students face challenges when starting at university, not just international students!

- Adjusting to a new environment to live and study
- Missing home, family and friends
- Balancing your studies with your social life
- Pressure from family to do well
- Managing your finances
- Finding part time work



# Additional challenges for international students

- Time difference between UK and home
- Language barrier (in some cases)
- A new academic system and expectations
- Working out everyday life: shops, transport, banking, mobile phones.
- Adjusting to many aspects of a new culture.
- Understanding 'unspoken' rules of how things work.



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# What is culture?

## A dictionary definition

The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.

The attitudes, behaviour, opinions, etc. of a particular group of people within society.

Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>



## A cultural hypothesis

‘Groups of human beings in separate locations across the world each developed their own cultures over thousands of years, in isolation. Culture was the result of each group’s attempts to solve the ten basic problems of: food, clothing, shelter, family, social organisation, government, war/protection, arts/ crafts, knowledge/ science, and religion.’

Kohls (1985)



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# Some ideas about culture

‘Culture controls behaviour in deep and pointed ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control...’

Hall (1974)

‘[Culture is]...the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others’.

Hofstede (2012)

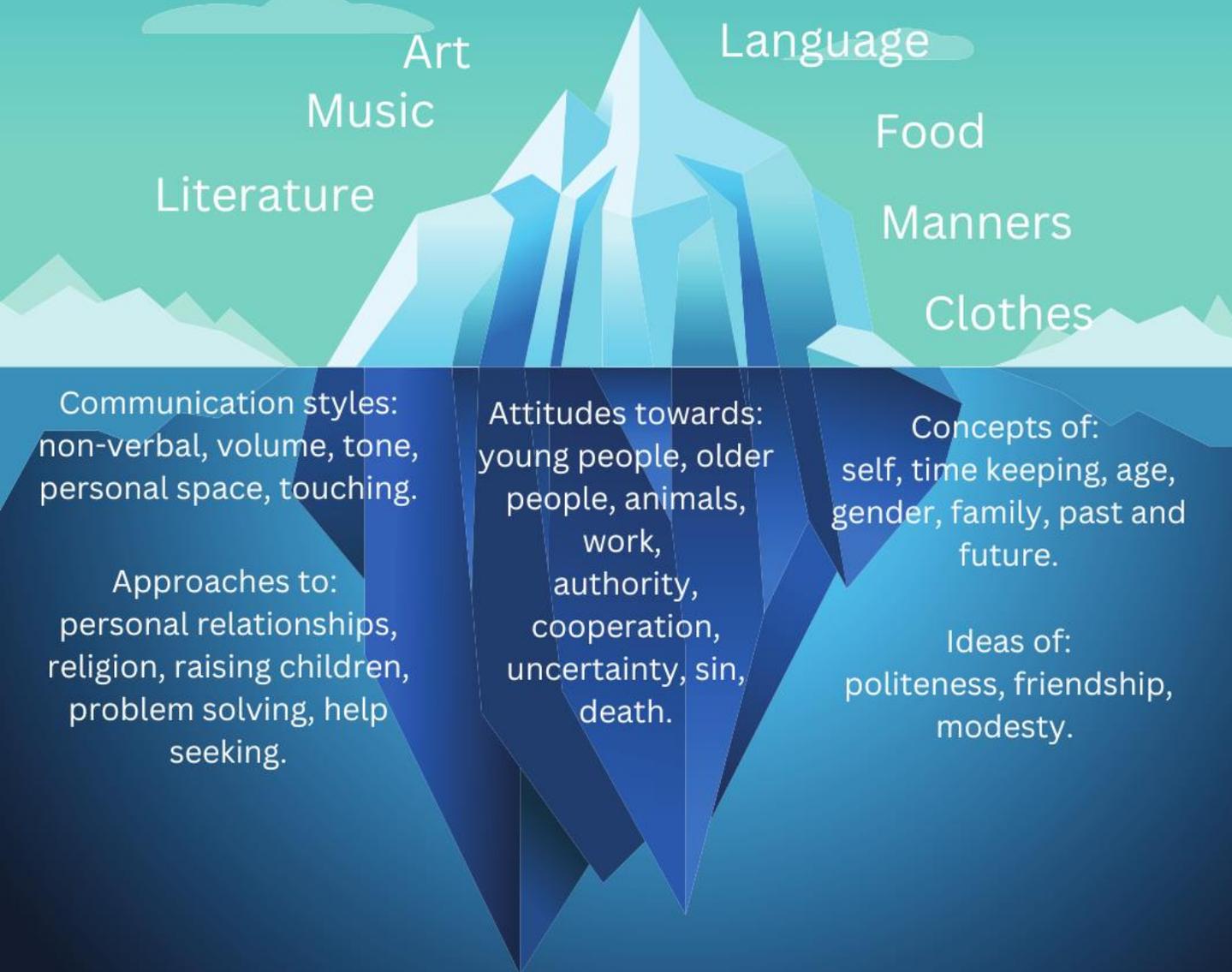
Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own.

Hall (1974)



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# Surface Culture



# Deep Culture

## Iceberg model of culture

The idea that we can prepare for the obvious aspects of culture, but many aspects of culture are invisible; we will not realise they exist until we run into them.

It is impossible to prepare for every cultural difference you will encounter when moving somewhere new. Allow yourself to make mistakes and accept that you cannot know everything.

It is still useful to anticipate that you will encounter differences. This allows you to plan how you will deal with any problems you have and how to build your support network.



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# Culture Shock

Canadian anthropologist - Kalervo Oberg (1901-1973) first developed theory of culture shock to map the process of cultural adjustment experienced by visitors to a new country.

It has been developed since then to into various models.



# The stages of culture shock

## The honeymoon stage

Everything is new and exciting! Differences are intriguing and you may feel excited, stimulated and curious. At this stage you are still protected by the close memory of your home culture.

## Distress

Differences in the culture may make you feel confused, isolated or inadequate as cultural differences intrude and familiar supports (eg family or friends) are not immediately available.

## Reintegration

You may reject the differences you encounter. You may feel angry or frustrated, or hostile to the new culture. At this stage you may be conscious mainly of how much you dislike it compared to home. Don't worry, as this is quite a healthy reaction. You are reconnecting with what you value about yourself and your own culture.

## Independence

Differences and similarities are valued and important. You may feel full of potential and able to trust yourself in all kinds of situations. Most situations become enjoyable, and you are able to make choices according to your preferences and values.

## Autonomy

Differences and similarities are accepted. You may feel relaxed and more confident as you become more familiar with situations and feel able to cope with new situations based on your growing experience.



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# Elements of culture shock

How language is used: formally, colloquially (slang), academically, regional accents, speed, physical process of speaking another language.

Climate: rain, wind, cold, short daylight hours.

Dress: heavy winter clothing, different ideas of fashion.

Food: flavour palette, meal times, British versions of familiar dishes.

Social roles: more or less friendly than you're used to, relationship between men and women, how the young and the old are seen.

'Rules' of behaviour (often unspoken): physical proximity, volume of speech, time keeping.

Values (deeply embedded norms, assumptions and beliefs): we are so used to the values we have been brought up with we often consider them to be universally held.



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# Examples of politeness

- + The British have a reputation for being polite and expecting politeness from others.
- + But notions of 'politeness' vary widely across cultures. Consider some of these behaviours and whether or not they would be considered 'polite' in your home country.
  - + Making and maintaining eye contact when speaking to someone regardless of social status.
  - + Saying please when asking for a coffee or tea in a café.
  - + Saying 'hello' and 'thank you' to a bus driver when you get on, and off the bus.
  - + Arriving at someone's house unannounced.
  - + Attending a dinner party at someone's house and bringing a dish of food with you.
  - + Holding a door open for someone.
  - + Talking about money with someone you do not know well.



# Dimensions of national culture

Hofstede & Bond (1984) used research carried out over 10 years with IBM employees across the world to identify some of the key factors in cultural distance.

These are national cultural preferences, not individual ones.

Research is not saying all nationals of a particular country think or feel a certain way, but that the culture of that country tends to follow these preferences.



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# Dimensions of national culture

## Collectivism/ individualism

The extent to which societies are integrated into groups and how they perceive obligations and dependence on groups.

- Individualism: importance of attaining personal goals. Self-image is defined as “I.”
- Collectivism: importance placed on the group’s goals and well-being. Self-image is defined as “We.”

## Power distance

Extent to which less powerful members of a society expect and accept an unequal distribution of power.

- A high power distance index: culture accepts power differences and inequity, tends to be bureaucratic, and people in authority are respected.
- A low power distance index: culture encourages less hierarchical structures, and decision making involving others (not just the most powerful members).



# Dimensions of national culture

## Femininity/ masculinity

Not about individuals, but expected gender-roles.

- Masculine societies: more openly gendered, focus on winning, wealth accumulation, and men being 'tough'.
- Feminine societies: genders are emotionally closer, winning is not the focus and there is overall sympathy with the less successful.

## Uncertainty avoidance

How a society deals with uncertainty and ambiguity. Concerned with anxiety about the unknown future, and the wish to have fixed habits.

- High uncertainty avoidance: unknown is minimized through strict rules, regulations.
- Low uncertainty avoidance: unknown is more openly accepted, and there are lax rules, regulations.



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# Dimensions of national culture

## Long-term / short-term orientation

Concerns how a society sees change. This dimension is seen most in ideas about educational achievement, religious ideas, and philosophies of life.

- Long-term orientation: the world is seen as in a state of flux, where you must constantly prepare for the future. Focus on delaying short-term gratification to achieve long-term success.
- Short-term orientation: the world is seen as remaining fixed, with the past providing a good moral compass. Focus on delivering short-term success or gratification, and places a stronger emphasis on the present than the future. Quick results and respect for tradition.

## Indulgence/ restraint

How a society sees enjoyment verses obligations.

- Indulgent society: focus on being free and enjoying the good things in life: following your impulses, valuing your friends.
- Restrained society: central idea is that life is hard, and the most important thing is duty, not freedom; gratification is suppressed through social norms.



Hofstede institute website has a [country comparison tool](#)

Allows you to look at descriptions of how these dimension tend to present in different national cultures.

This can be a good starting point for thinking about some of the differences and similarities you may encounter.



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# Dealing with culture shock: what helps?

Research into lived experiences of culture shock has indicated:

- Culture shock is common and to some extent inevitable.
- The more international students interact with students and others from the host culture, the greater they are able to adjust to that culture;
- The less interaction there is with students from the host culture, the greater the extend of the culture shock experienced;
- No impact pf previous experiences of living in other cultures on effect of culture shock.
- Importance of forming a community with other international students, nationals of the same country, but stressed the importance of also prioritising interactions with students from the new culture.



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# Dealing with culture shock: some tips

- Recognise it is normal and inevitable part of moving to a new country. Do not start from a place of deficit – there is nothing ‘wrong’ with you for feeling this way.
- Try to accept it is okay not to know everything straight away! It will take time to adjust to life in the UK and at the university, but it will happen.
- Make a plan for ways to meet both UK and international students to build a new support network – BSU societies, sports, other opportunities. Do not rely on making all your friends on your course or in your accommodation.
- Try to eat well, get at least 30 minutes exercise a day, and spend some time outside during daylight if possible.
- Make the most of university support services - ask for help if you need it!
- More information [UKCISA - international student advice and guidance - Facing culture shock](#)



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# Our culture shock toolkit



**Culture Shock Toolkit**

**Course Staff**

 Sarah Herbert  
INSTRUCTOR

**Course Content**

 **Part 1: welcome and intro**

Welcome to the culture shock toolkit! We hope this online resource will help you plan for your arrival in the UK, and anticipate some of the cultural difference you may encounter in your first few months. It will also help you think about ways to get involved in life at the University of Brighton, and help you understand what services there are to support you.

**Details & Actions**

 Class register

On My Studies via My Brighton.

Interactive self-help guide to culture shock and setting into life in the UK.

Bring launched next week.

Email [orientation@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:orientation@brighton.ac.uk) or DM me to be enrolled.



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# Questions?



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