

Final Dissertation 2015-2016 (Re-sit)

**The Adaptation Process in a New Socio-Cultural Environment for
International Students who Follow the ES Program at THU**



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Executive Summary

The research was designed for international students who followed the European Studies four-year English program at The Hague University, as an increasing number of international students are coming to receive their higher education in the Netherlands. Foreign students need to adapt socially and academically to their host country, and the degree to which they are successful in adjusting and adapting will determine their stress levels. The purpose of the research was to identify the degree of help that the European Studies program at The Hague University contributed in the adaptation process for full-time international students with a non-Dutch cultural background, and whether or not there is a gap or missing points between what foreign students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students to deal with internationalization difficulties. The research started with the central question: to what degree is the European Studies program at The Hague University equipped to deal with the adaptation process of the full-time international student who has a non-Dutch cultural background? In order to present a deeper understanding of the central question, sub-points were made afterward and divided into two chapters, and the answer to the research questions was formulated by providing clear definitions of the key terms in help with literature and analyzing the outcomes from both questionnaire and interviews.

Results first show that different cultural contexts and Dutch language are considered to the factors that mostly affect non-Dutch students in ES program when entering the Netherlands, and students show different outcomes and levels of adaptation socially and academically. These dissimilarities are likely to be linked with the divergence of two cultures, that is, individualism and collectivism. Following the role of local students, it could be argued that Dutch students are inclined to help their foreign peers with non-academic related problem, while if there is a problem related to the study, school and study programs have shown their value. It appears that the majority of students are satisfied with the service provided by school. Also, the ES program has not only organized a wide range of intercultural events for both domestic students and foreign students to interact, thereby making new friends and learning different culture, but also assigned a supervisor for each class and offered Dutch language courses, helping non-Dutch students academically. The report concludes that overall the European Studies program did a good job in assisting international students during the adaptation process, even though there are still some activities that cannot meet international students' expectation. The recommendations for the European Studies program are: to build a 'mobility office' for all international students; to provide Dutch language courses throughout the four years of study; and for international students it is suggested to improve their intercultural learning competence, as learning

positive features from another culture could be a feasible approach to better adapting to the new environment.

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ES – European Studies Program

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Preface

International students are an important element of society, influencing schools and domestic students in various ways. And they will always have some challenges to face, in spite of their bravery in coming to a foreign country to study. An international environment is one of the key factors for the European Studies Program, and this is why I am interested in investigating the adaptation process of foreign students who have a non-Dutch cultural background. Two aspects need to be discussed in terms of the adaptation process: one concerns the academic needs of foreign students, with particular attention given to the degree of English language proficiency that is appropriate for successful participation in university studies, as well as the degree of getting used to a new educational system or academic approach. The other aspect looks at students' psychosocial needs, from making friends with the natives to the ability of finding a work placement.

I have received support from many different people while conducting this research. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Mrs. Peeters, and the second marker, Mrs. Gabrovska. As a supervisor Mrs. Peeters has offered me helpful feedback and supervision while writing this report. As the second marker Mrs. Gabrovska has given me great support in designing the questionnaire. Moreover, I would like to thank Mrs. Schuurmans and Mrs. De Louw, who have given me very useful information during the interview. Finally, I would like to thank all the 70 students who agreed to complete the questionnaire and be part of the research, for all the respondents have presented their thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and great ideas.

Introduction

Background

An increasing number of international students are coming to receive their higher education in the Netherlands. During the period 2014-15, there were over 700,000 students enrolled in the Netherlands for higher education, with 250,000 students registered at 13 research universities and 450,000 students registered at 39 universities of applied sciences (Nuffic, 2015). Foreign students are an important element of the Netherlands ecosystem, influencing schools and domestic students in various ways. The number of foreign students (2014-15) in the Netherlands has reached 90,000, and nearly 50% of them have enrolled at the university of applied sciences; the top three countries of origin are Germany (24,000), China (6,600), and Belgium (2,007) (Nuffic, 2015). What is more interesting is that during the last decade, the year-to-year growth rate for international students has been increasing steadily between 4 and 7%, and the combined share of German, Chinese, and Belgian students has been decreasing. Therefore, the international student population is simultaneously becoming bigger and more diverse (Nuffic, 2012).

Research Question

Currently, there are over 1,200 students studying at the European Studies program (ES) at The Hague University (THU), and they come from different cultures, have different backgrounds, and speak different languages. International students will always have some challenges they need to face, in spite of their bravery in coming to a foreign country to study (Todman & Topping, 2008). A focus for the research is that whether there is a mismatch between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students to deal with adaptation difficulties. The central research question being asked is: to what degree is the European Studies program at The Hague University equipped to deal with the adaptation process of the full-time international student who has a non-Dutch cultural background?

Overview

To make the central question clearer, there are two terms that will be explained: the international student and the adaptation process. On the one hand, the term 'international student' refers to students crossing borders for the specific purpose of studying (Clark, 2009). In this report, the focus group is the students who followed the four-year ES program at THU with a non-Dutch cultural background. Soon after the 1960s, new waves of immigrants started to arrive at the Netherlands; since then, the country has become more diverse and multicultural. 50 years later, the number of low-skilled

workers has declined while the number of foreign students has been rising amongst immigrants (Focus Migration, n.d.). The higher institution, as part of the society, has the responsibility to help foreign students to adapt to the new culture by working closely with the study program. On the other hand, in terms of the 'adaptation process', it could be divided into two aspects. The first area concerns the academic needs of foreign students, with particular attention given to the level of English language proficiency that is appropriate for successful participation in university studies, as well as the degree to get used to a new educational system or academic approach. The second area looks at students' physical and psychosocial needs, from making friends with the natives to the ability of finding a work placement (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009). This report places emphasis on both areas since both academic success and psychosocial needs are equally important.

Research Objective

Apart from analysing the adaptation process for international students in the ES program, the roles of the school and the study program will be discussed as well. The research aims to discern the gap between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students, to deal with adaptation difficulties. Afterward, the possible solutions will be addressed which can serve the international students better during their academic life. Although the program may aware that the duration of adaptation for international students takes longer than for domestic students, foreign students sometimes still have to solve many problems alone. "To be successful, international students must adapt socially and culturally to their host country and their new academic situations. The degree to which the international students adjust is key to minimizing their stress and helping them, more readily adapt" (Misra & Castillo, 2004).

A study from Ferguson has already described the issues that international students face once they have entered a foreign country. Presently, students who decide to study in a foreign country will endure a range of additional and different challenges; international students find it difficult to look for help outside the university, due to language barriers (Ferguson, 2012). In the Netherlands, English is not the official language, and it is hard for foreign students to read the letters or emails in Dutch; in addition, finding a suitable apartment in a big city can difficult for the non-Dutch students after the first year¹. Yet, there is only limited help offered from the program or the school regarding non-

¹ House agency 'DUWO' will assign the apartment only for first year students, students from year two and above will be put into waiting list (Interview 2, ES professionals, 2015).

academic related issues. It can be questioned whether there is a missing piece concerning the help offered by the school or the study program.

Limitations

Since the scope of the research is only focusing on the international students in the four-year European Studies program at The Hague University who have a non-Dutch cultural background, one limitation could be the case that not all issues in the adaptation process will be revealed. Also, since there is only a limited amount of time to conduct the report, qualitative research was not contributed as much as quantitative research, and so the report will put greater emphasis on the results from the questionnaire instead of the interviews.

Methodology

The chosen research methods conducted are justified in this section. As this paper analyses the adaptation process of international students in THU, a simple and clear academic definition is required for each term. For example, the meaning of the adaptation process could be different and the explanation varies among scholars and institutions, for this reason it is essential to select one concept to avoid misunderstanding.

To begin, the literature search was first utilized for the report. Both scholar.google.com and LexisNexis databases were used as primary tools to find relevant reports and journals, as well as the book *Intercultural Communication* (Neuliep, 2009) and *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Kate, 2013). Key words included: adaptation process, culture context, culture shock, higher institution, intercultural communications, international students, teacher, university, and school. Also, there are several reliable sources that were found on the internet, including the Nuffic (the organization for internationalization in education in the Netherlands) and HHS (THU official website). All the desk research was selected as a basic method to obtain a result, as well as to define the key terms and to bring a visual and broader view of the report.

Next, both qualitative research (the interviews) and quantitative research (the questionnaire) methods were conducted. The scope of research has its focus on the international students in the ES program, as all non-Dutch students with non-Dutch cultural backgrounds are the subjects of this topic. When doing the questionnaire, the sample of 70 students was carefully selected, based on the total number students in the ES program. According to statistics from the European Studies office (see Appendix 4), there are 1367 students in total, with the number of female students (961) more than twice that of men (396); additionally, there are 293 total international students. Although the exact number breakdown (for international students) of males and females is unobtainable, in order to get a precise outcome, the gender division of the sample of 70 students was closely matched to the ratio of total number of students, with 46 males and 24 females. Notably, not just the gender element, the students' nationality and study duration of 70 students were selected based on the total number of students as well, as the sample of 70 students is very representative. Apart from respondents, there are 20 questions in questionnaire, as attached in the Appendix 1. The use of questionnaire is more suitable when gathering information from students since the student group is relatively big.

Interviews were conducted while gathering information from students. The interviews were semi-structured, consisting of 7 questions as attached in Appendix 2. The first part of the questions (1-2) presented the basic information of interviewees, while the second part (3-7) provided a broader and helicopter view that was based on his or her experiences. Two European Studies professionals with Dutch nationality were interviewed. These subjects were selected because both teachers have had long experience in dealing with international students and have been in charge of many intercultural events. The aim of these interviews was to deliver a more accurate result since it is a good way of learning different perspectives from the teachers' point of view and it could be compared with the results from students. Moreover, a face-to-face talk is one of the most efficient ways of letting the interviewees elaborate their thoughts (Kate, 2013), and in talking to the experts directly, there were a number of follow-up questions related to the topics that could be discussed as well.

All the answers or recordings gathered from the questionnaire and interviews is strictly confidential and any sensitive personal information will not be used without the consent of the respondents.

Literature Review

The interaction of international students on domestic students and host institutions

“Although studies converge in the finding that the incidence of intercultural interactions is low, greater contact is expected and desired by international students. However, despite the findings that domestic students hold relatively favorable perceptions of international students, most investigations have concluded that domestic students are largely uninterested in initiating contact with their international peers” (Ward, Bochner, & Fumham, 2001).

The University of Victoria in New Zealand conducted research regarding the relationship between international and local students. Based on the results, the amount of cross-national interactions has shown a downward trend while the number of international students has been increasing in the last five years (Ward, Bochner, & Fumham, 2001). Often, local students play a major role in the adaptation process, influencing international peers in several ways. The degree of communication between the two types of students is generally low, while international students desire and want greater contact in a new environment, because that interaction with domestic students is closely connected with the academic and psychosocial needs of the international students. However, the findings from the report indicate that local students hold an opposite view. Although domestic students present positive perceptions of non-local students, in most cases they are not interested in starting contact with their non-local peers (Ward, Bochner, & Fumham, 2001). For instance, as long as there is a group assignment to team up with, local students prefer to work with someone who has the same cultural background, not because the language or race, but because they can share the common values, beliefs, and behaviors (Ward, Bochner, & Fumham, 2001).

The phenomenon that happened in New Zealand could be suitable for most higher institutions of learning. At The Hague University in the Netherlands, for example, there are many foreign students enrolled at the ES program of different nationalities, and the program aims to offer an international academic environment for every student. Hence, in the results section, it is essential to identify whether the school promotes enough intercultural interaction for ES students. Additionally, it is important to know whether the school is able to provide help for the non-Dutch students when there is an academic or social need during their studies.

The ways of adaptation

“The adaptation process can be divided into two areas, the first concerns the academic needs of international students, and the second broad area concerns students’ physical and psychosocial needs” (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009).

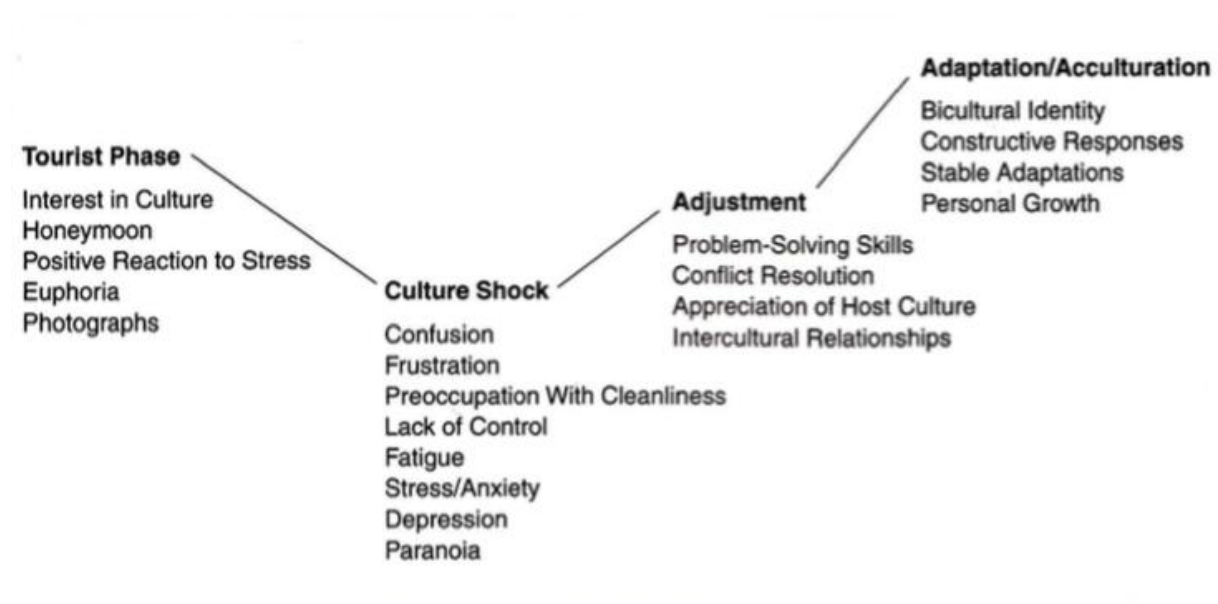
The literature includes much discussion of the series of problems that foreign students face in their effort to live and study successfully within an unfamiliar culture in a foreign country (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009). The most common problems consist of (1) homesickness and loneliness, (2) insufficient support system from the school, (3) lack of meaningful relationships with host nationals, (4) language difficulties, especially in non-English speaking countries, (5) culture shock, mostly the students from Asia, and (6) unfamiliar academic approaches and unrealistic self- expectations (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009). All these factors may have a huge impact on the adaptation process. The reviewed sources illustrate that the adaptation process consists of two parts: academic needs and psychosocial needs. Noticeably, these two sectors are interlinked; in other words, if one shows a negative trend, the other cannot be positive. For example, a Chinese student who might be performing very well in the academic side; however, after he/she came to the Netherlands, because of differences in academic approaches, the student may not be able to get used to the new pattern in a short period of time (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009). In China, the majority of tasks involve individual work, while in western countries higher institutions focus more on group projects, especially when conducting a research report or organizing an event. To this point, a Chinese student may be less likely to acquire a high mark in certain subjects; consequently, unsatisfied results may lead to depression, thereby affecting student’s social life as well (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009).

Generally, the ES program should be closely associated with the school in order to assist international students and to enable them to cope with the various obstacles that exist from both perspectives. Through the interviews and questionnaires, the degree of help that the institution offers will be analyzed. Similarly, a number of factors that may affect the adaptation process will also be discussed.

Acculturation, culture shock, and intercultural competence

“When people move to a new culture, they take with them the values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors of their old culture. Often, depending on the degree of similarity between the old and the new culture, the values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors of the native culture clash with those of the new culture. This can result in disorientation, misunderstandings, conflict, stress and anxiety. Researchers call this phenomenon culture shock” (Neuliep, 2009).

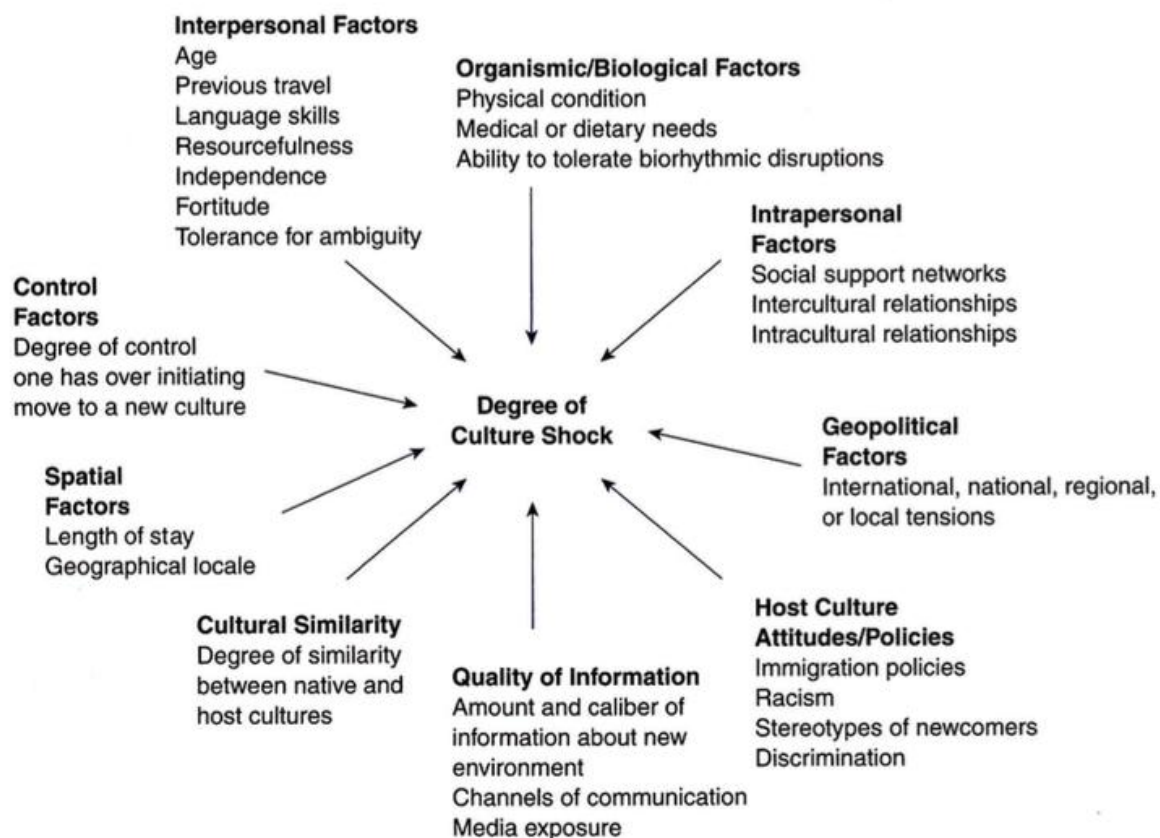
Figure 1 – Stages of culture shock



(Neuliep, 2009)

The graph above describes the stages and components of culture shock, containing four different levels from 'Tourist Phase' to 'Adaptation Acculturation.' The initial stage of culture shock, commonly named the tourist stage, is a phenomenon that is usually linked to the individuals who enter other countries/cultures temporarily during holidays or business trips (Neuliep, 2009). Since the first phase is not related to the subject of the topic, the emphasis is on the next three steps. During the culture shock phase, people feel confused, stressed, and frustrated. The degree to which one experiences culture shock varies from person to person (Neuliep 2009). Figure 2 presents a visualization of the second stage, and the reason to expand the concept of 'Culture Shock' is that it could be the initial stage for foreign students when they come to live and study in the Netherlands. Therefore, the questionnaire was made to focus more and try to relate to the factors in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Factors that affects culture shock



(Winkelman, 1994)

Returning to figure 1, part of this report seeks to identify the most typical problems that hinder the process of adaptation for the non-Dutch students who are studying at the ES program, and how the school and study program is equipped to deal with these difficulties. Hence, the third phase, usually labeled the adjustment, is the key to discover the weaknesses and thereby make the right solutions. “At this stage, individuals begin to develop a positive attitude about solving their problems” (Kim & Ruben, 2001). Likewise, this phenomenon is suitable for the foreign students in the same way. After experiencing the culture shock, students begin to accept the host culture based on their own understanding; nevertheless, the adjustment phase is gradual and relatively slow, and it could last for months or even years. The last phase of culture shock is called the adaptation. When individuals acculturate to their new culture, the cultural transformation is the first fact they need to face. “They process a degree of functional fitness in which the external demands of the host culture are met with appropriate and consistent internal responses. Moreover, they develop a level of competency in communicating with the natives” (Kim & Ruben, 2001).

Two types of cultural context: individualism (low-complex culture) and collectivism (high-context culture)

“While interacting with Japanese persons, Americans often notice behaviors that are widely misunderstood by non-Japanese (see Figure 3). However, the Japanese person has perceptions of American behavior that may be misinterpreted as well” (Brett & Okumura, 1998).

Figure 3 – American perception and Japanese reality

<i>American Perception</i>	<i>Japanese Reality</i>
1. The Japanese are really shy.	1. As a high-context culture, the Japanese do not feel a need to talk. They are comfortable with silence.
2. Japanese fall asleep a lot during class or presentations.	2. Many Japanese close their eyes when they are deeply concentrating.
3. Japanese say yes even when they mean no. Why can't they just say what they mean?	3. To save face (yours and theirs), Japanese will agree with you in principle.
4. It takes Japanese forever to make decisions or even to respond to a fax or written correspondence.	4. Japanese will not make a decision without first consulting relevant others to reach a consensus.
5. Japanese will never look you in the eye.	5. Indirect eye contact is a sign of deference in Japan.
6. When Japanese talk, they seem so ambiguous. I never know what they're trying to say or what they really mean.	6. Japanese language is vague. But even more, to the Japanese, communication is a two-way process. The burden of understanding rests with the speaker and the listener. Often, the speaker will only hint at what is meant. The listener must be an active participant.

(Brett & Okumura, 1998)

In Figure 3, Americans belong to an individualist culture while Japanese belongs to a collectivist culture. To be clear for further research, those two terms will be explained separately. Individualism is usually associated with low complex culture, meaning individuals can challenge authority to encourage a reduction of power between the management and the employees and encourage the use of legitimate power (Rothwell, 2010). Moreover, according to Triandis (2001), "low complex cultures have heterogeneous population and economies based on occupational specialization where individuals do different jobs. Cultural complexity also occurs in cultures where people are separated from one another either geographically or through migration patterns." Also, individualism can be derived from competitiveness, as the methods used to measure individualism often include factors that tap into

one's competitive nature, and therefore people in individualistic cultures like to show their personal value in front of others (Triandis, 2001). In contrast, collectivism is linked with high complex cultures, where there is a strong sense of duty to the group, enabling them to work in harmony, interdependent on each other (Triandis, 1995). This is more common in Asian cultures that have a low racial diversity. High complex cultures, where the group or community is valued over an individual, promote in-group culture as well as facilitate group support (Rothwell, 2010). Triandis (1995) argues that in collectivist societies, group goals have precedence over individual goals; people are not seen as isolated individuals, rather responsibility is shared and everyone is made accountable, and a person's value or identity is derived from his or her group memberships.

The four points discussed above give a theoretical framework of the report, as theory and concepts will be used continually in the following sections; In addition, this leads to and emphasizes the key terms of the research, including the role of school, the role of local students, factors in the adaptation process, and different cultural contexts.

Research Questions and Sub-questions

This section is designed to specify what was studied in the report in view of the problem statement by presenting the research question and sub-questions. As in Introductory part, the central question has been addressed, that is: *To what degree is the European Studies program at The Hague University equipped to deal with the adaptation process of the full-time international student who has a non-Dutch cultural background?*

In this research report, answers for the main question and the relevant sub-questions have been formulated.

1. What is the role of the study program, school, and local students in the adaptation process for international students at the European Studies program?

To identify the role of the study program, school, and local students (highlighting the pros while not ignoring the cons), and to analyse which elements benefit international students most in which areas.

2. What are the most common problems of studying and living in a new socio-cultural environment for international students at the European Studies program?

To identify the most common problems for non-Dutch students in both academic and non-academic areas based on the outcomes from the questionnaire and interviews.

3. What elements are missing in the assistance that the study program offers the international students during the adaptation process?

To identify the gaps and missing points in terms of the help offered by the European Studies program.

Results and Findings

Chapter 1. Adaptation Process of International Students

1.1 The factors in a new socio-cultural environment which influence the adaptation process of international students in the ES program

The cross-analysis was conducted throughout Chapter 1 using the SPSS tool, as well as with support from interviews and desk research. Section 1.1 consists of two tables (1.1.1 and 1.1.2). Among these 2 tables, the invariable is question 5, and variables are questions 1 and 4. In doing this, it not only gives a clear view about which factors influenced foreign students the most in adapting to the new culture in the Netherlands, but also presents several interesting findings when comparing two different elements together.

Table 1.1.1 – Connection between the factors in a new socio-cultural environment and students' age group (Row question 5; column question 1)

		Factors					Total
		Different cultural context	Geographical distance between home country and the Netherlands	Length of stay	Dutch Language	Others	
Age	Below 17	1	0	1	2	0	4
Group	17-20	9	0	1	12	1	23
	21-24	10	8	4	14	2	38
	25-28	2	1	0	0	0	3
	Above 28	1	0	0	1	0	2
Total		23	9	6	29	3	70

Table 1.1.1 shows the relationship between different factors (question 5) and their age group (question 1). As mentioned in the methodology section, there were a total of 70 students who did the questionnaire. On the one hand, when looking at the factors only, 'Dutch language' and 'Different cultural context' took the first and second place, listed by 29 and 23 respondents respectively. They were followed by 'Geographical distance' (9), 'Length of stay' (6), and 'Others' (3). Students who chose others included weather (2) and food (1) as factors. On the other hand, when looking at the age groups only, there were 38 people aged 21-24 and 23 people aged 17-20, with four people below age 17, three people aged 25-28, and two persons above age 28. When comparing the two elements together,

Dutch language still is as the biggest issue for students who are between 17-24 years old (26 out of 61), followed by different cultural context (19 out of 61). Since there are only seven people below 17 or above 24 years old, the result might not be considered as a representative sample.

Table 1.1.2 – Connection between the factors in a new socio-cultural environment and students' study duration (Row question 5; column question 4)

		Factors					Total
		Different cultural context	Geographical distance between home country and the Netherlands	Length of stay	Dutch Language	Others	
Study Duration	Less than 1 year	12	0	1	1	0	14
	1-2 years	6	1	3	2	1	13
	2-3 years	4	4	1	12	1	22
	3-4 years	1	3	1	13	1	19
	More than 4 years	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total		23	9	6	29	3	70

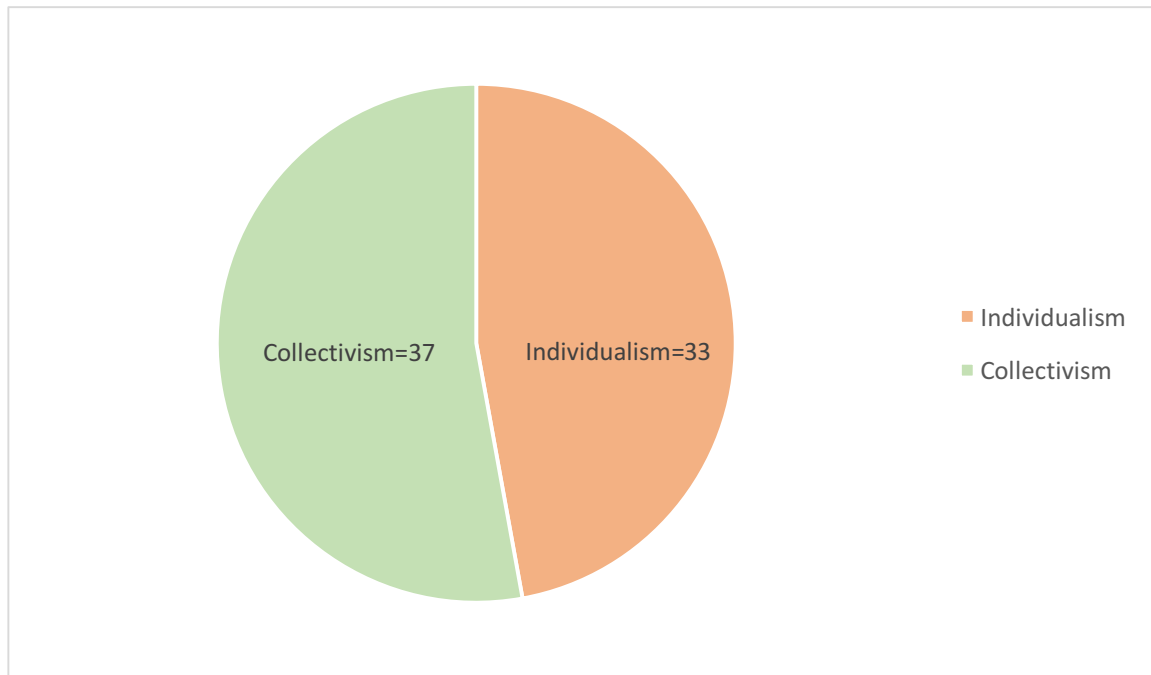
Table 1.1.2 describes the connection between different factors (question 5) and study duration (question 4). Among 70 students, 14 studied in the ES program less than a year; 13 between 1-2 years; 22 between 2-3 years, 19 between 3-4 years; and finally 2 students studied in the ES program over 4 years. When combining the two elements together, two interesting results are found: first, the longer the study duration is, the fewer problems students experience regarding the different cultural contexts. The number decreased from 12 from below 1 year to 0 above 4 years. Secondly, the Dutch language is an obstacle for students within 2-4 years, where 25 out of 29 listed it as a problem, but in the other three groups only 4 out of 25 listed it.

1.2 How different cultural contexts (individualism and collectivism) benefits or impacts the adaptation process for international students in the European Studies program

Since different cultural contexts are an important factor in the adaptation process, Chapter 1.2 aims to go deeper into this factor and try to analyze whether different cultural contexts (individualism and collectivism) have a positive or negative impact on foreign students. The definition of those two terms have been presented in the literature review.

What needs to be mentioned here is that Table 1.2.1 has been moved to the Appendix 3, as the table is too long, presenting the nationality of all 70 students in relation to their cultural context. Also, in order to make the cross-analysis clearer, a pie chart (Chart 1.2.1) was made. In that chart, green stands for individualism with 33 respondents, while orange represents collectivism with 37 respondents. As a result, the ratio is close to 1:1.

Chart 1.2.1 – Distribution of individualism and collectivism for 70 respondents



Following the pie chart, Tables 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 are first presented in Chapter 1.2, where the invariable is question 17 and variables are questions 5 and 15. Table 1.2.2 shows the outcome of the cultural context (question 17) and different factors (question 5). When comparing these two elements together, students who from individualist cultures have fewer problems in a different cultural context than those who are from collectivist cultures. The results show that 14 out of 37 (38%) students who are from a collectivist culture list “different cultural context” as a factor, compared with 9 out of 33 (27%) students who are from individualistic cultures. Next, students who are from individualist cultures have fewer problems relating to geographical distance than those who belong to collectivist cultures, listed by 7 out of 37 (19%) students who are from collectivist cultures but only 2 out of 33 (6%) students who come from individualistic cultures. Again, language is a problem for everyone, regardless of the cultural context of the students, listed by 14 (38%) and 15 (45%) students respectively.

Table 1.2.2 – Different cultural context in relation to non-school related factors (Row question 17; column question 5)

		Cultural Context		Total
		Collectivism	Individualism	
Factors	Different cultural context	14	9	23
	Geographical distance	7	2	9
	Length of stay	2	4	6
	Dutch Language	14	15	29
	Others	0	3	3
Total		37	33	70

Table 1.2.3 presents the connection between cultural context (question 17) and level of cultural adaptation (question 15). In contrast to previous questions, question 15 is displayed as a scale from range of 1 to 5, where 1 means students think it was easy to adapt the Dutch culture and 5 means students think it was difficult to adapt the Dutch culture. When looking at the range or scope, half of the students (50%) choose 1 or 2, which means they think it was easy or very easy to adapt to Dutch culture, while 21 students (30%) choose 4 or 5, meaning they think it was hard or very hard to adapt to Dutch culture, with the remaining 14 students (20%) keeping neutral. When combining these two elements together, students from individualist cultures seem to adapt easier than those from collectivist cultures, with 22 out of 33 (59%) people from individualist cultures choosing 1 or 2, while only 13 out of 37 (35%) people from collectivist cultures chose 1 or 2.

Table 1.2.3 – Different cultural context in relation to level of adaptation (Row question 17; column question 15)

		Cultural Context		Total
		Collectivism	Individualism	
Level of	1=Very easy	2	8	10
Adaptation	2=Easy	11	14	25
	3=Neutral	11	3	14
	4=Hard	9	7	16
	5=Very hard	4	1	5
Total		37	37	70

(Where 1 means easy to adapt and 5 means hard to adapt)

Tables 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 indicate the interaction between cultural context and non-academic-related factors. However, as mentioned in the literature review, the adaptation process includes not only the non-academic aspect, but also the academic aspect. Therefore, Tables 1.2.4 to 1.2.7 aim to find out whether there is an interaction between cultural contexts and academic-related factors. The cross-analysis results from those tables relate to questions 17 and 6, where question 17 is the invariable and question 6 is the variable. Question 6 is multiple choice with 6 options, where students choose 'yes' to mean that he or she thinks this factor is a problem during their academic life, and students choose 'no' to mean that he or she does not think the factor is a problem during their academic life. The first four options of question 6 were chosen and compared with question 17, to easier identify the differences between students from two different cultural contexts; and the last two options for question 6 will not be discussed here, since the outcome is not relevant to this chapter.

Table 1.2.4 to 1.2.7 – Diffident cultural context in relation to school-related problems (Row question 17; column question 6)

		Cultural Context		Total	Cultural Context		Total
		Collectivism	Individualism		Collectivism	Individualism	
Table 1.2.4	Academic approach Yes	22	15	37	59.5%	40.5%	100%
	No	15	18	33	45.5%	54.5%	100%
	Total	37	33	70	52.9%	47.1%	100%
Table 1.2.5	Educational system Yes	20	11	31	64.5%	35.5%	100%
	No	17	22	39	43.6%	56.4%	100%
	Total	37	33	70	52.9%	47.1%	100%
Table 1.2.6	Finding an internship Yes	16	15	31	51.6%	48.4%	100%
	No	21	18	39	53.8%	46.2%	100%
	Total	37	33	70	52.9%	47.1%	100%
Table 1.2.7	Interaction with Dutch students Yes	16	7	23	69.6%	30.4%	100%
	No	21	26	47	44.7%	55.3%	100%
	Total	37	33	70	52.9%	47.1%	100%

From Tables 1.2.4 and 1.2.5 there is one fact to be found, that students who were perceived to be from a collectivist cultural experience had more difficulties in adjusting to the academic approach and educational system studying in the ES program. Seeing that 22 out of 37 (59%) and 20 out of 37 (54%) respondents from a collectivist culture had trouble in adjusting to the new academic approach and educational system. Conversely, only 15 out of 33 (45%) and 11 out of 33 (33%) respondents from an individualist culture had trouble with those two factors. Nevertheless, from Table 1.2.6 there are not many contradictions, for both groups of students agreed that finding an internship could be a challenge during their study. For the last table, Table 1.2.7 shows this contradiction again, as students

from a collectivist culture experience more difficulty when interacting with Dutch Students than those from individualist cultures. The number of people from a collectivist background who select 'yes' is more than as twice the number of people from an individualist background, with 16 (43%) and 7 (21%) 'yes' responses respectively.

1.3 The role of local students

After analyzing the connection between the cultural context and factors in both academic and non-academic-related aspects, the role of local students will be discussed here, since they play a big part in foreign students' lives, not just in class, but outside of class as well. Although the two key subjects from the central question are international students and the ES program, local students serve as a bridge between those two subjects, and it is necessary to define and analyse their position in the adaptation process. Chapter 1.3 includes outcomes from both students and experts. From the students' point of view, Table 1.3.1 presents the percentages of where the international students look for help if there is a non-academic-related issue regarding the 6 factors shown below; Table 1.3.2 presents the percentages of where the international students look for help if there is an academic-related issue regarding the same 6 factors.

Table 1.3.1 – Where do international students look for help if there is a non-academic-related problem (Question 9)

	Number	Percentage
Dutch students	26	37.1
ESCM office	7	10.0
Enrolment center	2	2.9
International office	23	32.8
Supervisor	9	12.9
Others	3	4.3
Total	70	100.0

Table 1.3.2 – Where do international students look for help if there is an academic-related problem (Question 7)

	Number	Percentage
Dutch students	10	14.3
ESCM office	15	21.4
Enrolment center	7	10.0
International office	11	15.7
Supervisor	25	35.7
Others	2	2.9
Total	70	100.0

Although there are 6 independent factors in those two tables, since the focus here is about the role of local students, the only point that will be compared is ‘Dutch student’, which is highlighted in orange. The remaining factors will be compared in Chapter 2. When there is a non-academic-related issue, about one-third (37.1%) of foreign students will primarily select Dutch students for help, while the remaining 5 factors together account for 62.9%; In contrast, when there is an academic-related issue, the number of foreign students who ask for help from Dutch students decreases dramatically from 37.1% to 14.3%, only ranking number four after ‘Supervisor’ (35.7%), ESCM office (21.4%), and International Office (15.7%).

From the experts’ points of view, both of them argued that host students do not always provide a positive effect (Interview 1, 2). “Local students would like to interact with international peers outside of the classroom; however, the situation was altered whenever there is a group project or assignment that has to be finished” (Interview 1, ES professional, 2015). “Dutch students sometimes make it very hard for the international students, because they speak in Dutch and exclude foreign students from what they are discussing, some of the host students are actually not aware of this situation” (Interview 2, ES professional, 2015). Dutch students tend to provide less value on the academic side of things than the psychosocial side; the way of understanding the role of local students is different from a teacher’s angle, as the primary objective of a student is to learn instead of socializing (Interview 1, 2).

1.4 Sub-conclusion

The goal of Chapter 1 is to identify the key elements that exist in the adaptation process, as the phase 'adaptation process of international students' is considered to be one of the core ideas throughout the entire report. To begin, the Dutch language and different cultural contexts were chosen by students as the two most influential factors when entering the Netherlands, and the gender of the students does not matter. However, as the research went deeper, a correlation was subsequently found between the degree of adaptation and the cultural context of foreign students. Whether they belong to individualist or collectivist cultures shows different outcomes when facing certain circumstances. Examples of this are the efficiency in adapting to the new culture, new academic approaches, and the new educational system. After the comparisons, the chapter ends with the role of the local students, as it was evaluated from the perspectives of both foreign students and ES professionals. A majority of international students ask Dutch students for help when there is a non-school-related issue, since they are easier to approach, and ES professionals confirm this as well. However, ES professionals claimed that domestic students are not inclined to help their international peers on school-related issues, with evidence and facts to support their argument.

Chapter 2. The Role of European Studies Program

2.1 Common problems while studying in a new social-cultural environment for foreign students in the European Studies program

As in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will continue to use the SPSS tool to describe the outcome, with the support of interviews and desk research. Chapter 2.1 contains results of both students and experts. Notably, outcomes from students only relates to question 6, and it has listed all the potential problems that foreign students might experience while studying in the ES program, as in Tables 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 as shown below. Although question 6 was partially discussed in the previous chapter, this time without comparing cultural context, gives a clearer view of which problems were most faced by foreign students, as well as paving the way to further research.

As explained earlier, students who choose 'yes' indicate that he or she thinks this factor is an issue during their academic life, while students who choose 'no' means that he or she does not think this factor is an issue during their academic life. First of all, Table 2.1.1, 2.1.3, and 2.1.5 will be discussed, since the percentage of students who select 'yes' is above 50%. In Table 2.1.1, 37 people (52.9%) selected 'yes'; in other words, the majority of international students could not get used to the different academic approach of the ES program. For Table 2.1.3 below, 27 respondents who have not started to find an internship selected 'no' (year 1 and 2 students). In order to avoid misunderstanding, the valid sample for this table should be 43 instead of 70, for among those 43 students, 31 of them (72%) think finding an internship is hard during their academic life. And Table 2.1.5 shows the biggest contradiction, with the percentage of 'yes' twice the percentage of 'no,' with 65.7% and 34.3% respectively; two-thirds of international students have experienced issues not related to the academic side while studying in the ES program. However, the figures from the remaining two tables are relatively positive: from Tables 2.1.2 and 2.1.4, it can be seen that more than half of the students chose 'no', with 55.7% and 67.1% respectively.

Table 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 – Problems for international students while studying in ES program (Question 6)

		Total number	Percentage	
Table 2.1.1	Academic approach	Yes	37	52.9%
		No	33	47.1%
	Total	70	100%	
Table 2.1.2	Educational system	Yes	31	44.3%
		No	39	55.7%
	Total	70	100.0%	
Table 2.1.3	Finding an internship	Yes	31	44.3%
		No	39	55.7%
	Total	70	100.0%	
Table 2.1.4	Interaction with Dutch students	Yes	23	32.9%
		No	47	67.1%
	Total	70	100.0%	
Table 2.1.5	Non-academic related problems	Yes	46	65.7%
		No	24	34.3%
	Total	70	100.0%	

(In Table 2.1.4, among 70 respondents, 27 of them have not started to find an internship yet and they choose 'no', that is why the number of 'no' is higher than 'yes')

Next, two experts give their opinions as well. One mentioned that the different types of academic approaches could be a problem for foreign students who are unfamiliar with the Dutch educational system (Interview 1, ES professional, 2015). "Dutch education contains certain values, teachers want students to show initiative and be creative during the lecture or workshop, which is not the type of education that is adopted by Asian students. Besides, at the beginning of the mind-shift process, international students may not be familiar with many matters, and The Netherlands is not a service-orientated country. Therefore, it could be a challenge for international students to find the right person or place to solve their problems" (Interview 1, ES professional, 2015). Another argued that the opportunity for natives and non-native students is unequal (Interview 2, ES professional, 2015). "Even though the ESCM program is fully taught in English, and the school is trying to build an international learning atmosphere for all students. Still, after completing the four-year study, Dutch students are more likely to find an internship or work placement when compared to foreign students" (Interview 2, ES professional, 2015).

2.2 How the school and the European Studies program assist foreign students to deal with the problems in a new socio-cultural environment

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.1 have discussed both academic- and non-academic-related issues among international students in the ES program. Then, Chapter 2.2 starts analyzing the role of the school and the ES program in relation to those problems, and how they dealt with these issues. In other words, the objective is to find out the degree of help offered by the school and the study program. There are 8 tables in total and will be divided and discussed in 4 different sections. Tables 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 will be presented first, followed by Tables 2.2.3 and 2.2.4, then Tables 2.2.5 and 2.2.6, and finally with Tables 2.2.7 and 2.2.8.

Table 2.2.1 – Not knowing Dutch is a barrier in the Netherlands (question 11)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	11.4
Agree	41	58.6
Neutral	9	12.9
Disagree	9	12.9
Strongly disagree	3	4.3
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.2 – Dutch elective course could benefit non-Dutch students during the adaptation process (question 12)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	10	14.3
Agree	34	48.6
Neutral	17	24.3
Disagree	7	10.0
Strongly disagree	2	2.9
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.1 describes an issue that is noted by foreign students, while table 2.2.2 presents how the school and the ES program dealt with this certain problem. Chapter 1.1 has mentioned that understanding the Dutch language is one of the key factors in influencing the adaptation process. In addition, as shown in Table 2.2.1, 70% of those questioned (49 out of 70) agree or strongly agree that not knowing the Dutch language is a barrier for them while living in the Netherlands. In Table 2.2.2, more than 60% of the respondents (44 out of 70) believe that the Dutch elective course which was

provided by ES program was helpful and influenced their adaptation positively, while less than 40% of respondents were neutral or disagreed.

Table 2.2.3 – Interaction with local students is important for non-Dutch students (Question 13)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	15.7
Agree	40	57.1
Neutral	10	14.3
Disagree	5	7.1
Strongly disagree	4	5.7
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.4 – The ‘Borrel’ could facilitate students to interact with others (Question 14)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	15.7
Agree	30	42.9
Neutral	18	25.7
Disagree	7	10.0
Strongly disagree	4	5.7
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.3 describes the importance of interaction with local students, while Table 2.2.4 presents a reflection from foreign students regarding what they think of the events offered by the ES program to help them to interact with local students. From Table 2.2.3, more than 70% of respondents feel that making new friends with local students can benefit them during the adaptation process, while only around 10% respondents held the opposite perspective. Looking at table 2.2.4, nearly 60% of the respondents feel that the ES program did a good job of interaction with local students by offering 'borrel'² regularly, which also verifies the result from table 2.1.4 that interaction with local students is not the priority issue.

² A cocktail party (borrel) usually start in the early evening, and the concept is different from other parties. One distinctive feature of the event is that it provides a platform for people to communicate and interact while offering drinks (Ayto, 2006).

Table 2.2.5 – Field trip could help non-Dutch students to know more about Dutch culture (Question 16)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	8.6
Agree	24	34.3
Neutral	21	30.0
Disagree	15	21.4
Strongly disagree	4	5.7
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.6 – Working with Dutch students in a group project could benefit non-Dutch students during the adaptation process (Question 18)

	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	4	5.7
Agree	13	18.6
Neutral	24	34.3
Disagree	24	34.3
Strongly disagree	5	7.1
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.2.5 presents the reflections from students about the field trip activities organized by the ES program, while Table 2.2.6 shows the overall experience from students about working with local students in group projects in the ES program (e.g., Europe 21). The first one focuses on the non-academic side of adaptation and the second one focuses on the academic side of adaptation, and the outcomes from these two tables are completely different. In Table 2.2.5, despite 30% of the respondents remaining neutral, among the remaining respondents, over 40% believed that attending the field trip could help them to get more involved in Dutch culture. However, in Table 2.2.6, apart from around 30% who kept a 'neutral' attitude, over 40% of respondents claimed that working with Dutch students had a limited impact in learning and adapting to the new culture.

Table 2.2.7 – Finding an internship could be challenging in the Netherlands (Question 19)

	Number
Strongly agree	3
Agree	18
Neutral	11
Disagree	7
Strongly disagree	4
Answered	43
Not answered	27
Total	70

Table 2.2.8 – Internship day is useful for non-Dutch students to find a work placement (Question 20)

	Number
Strongly agree	3
Agree	7
Neutral	7
Disagree	20
Strongly disagree	6
Answered	43
Not answered	27
Total	70

The last two tables were only designed for students who are year 3 or above, with a valid sample of 43 students. Table 2.2.7 is about the feeling of foreign students in finding an internship in the Netherlands; among 43 respondents, almost half of them (21 out of 43) agree that finding an internship could be a challenge during their academic career. Table 2.2.8 shows the opinions of students regarding the event provided by the ES program, which facilitates foreign students in finding an internship in their last year. More than half of students (26 out of 43) agree that the ‘internship day’ organized by the ES program did not benefit them when they were looking for a work placement.

2.3 The degree of help that foreign students seek in the European Studies program during the adaptation process

After analyzing the event and activities provided by the school and the ES program, this chapter starts with identifying the value and popularity of the services offered by the school and the ES program in both academic and non-academic aspects, as presented in Tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. There are 5 factors in total, as the factor 'Dutch students' will not be included, having been previously discussed in Chapter 1.3. Then the level of satisfaction regarding the services will be discussed. Before comparing the data, there are four elements that need to be interpreted, and the information is quoted from THU official website and interviews

- Enrolment Center: The Enrolment center is responsible for the processing of the student registration and enrolment and the payment of the tuition fees by students of The Hague University of Applied Sciences. It also registers the granting of diplomas and the termination of the enrolment of students who have finished their studies or who have dropped out (HHS, n.d.).
- International Office: Students can contact the International Office for general advice about work placements and studying abroad, as well as provide information regarding grants, applications (bachelors, masters, prep courses), and resident permits. For foreign students who have just come to the Netherlands, there is information available, including bank accounts, insurance policies, and housing (HHS, n.d.).
- ESCM office: The office is especially designed for students from the ES and ICM programs, where students are able to ask for information regarding the class timetable, schedule of events and activities, and office hours for teachers (Interview 2, ES professional, 2015).
- Supervisor: The supervisor is not just a teacher, but more like a study consultant. Each class is assigned one supervisor, and students need to arrange a meeting with their supervisor at the end of each semester to discuss their study progress. As long as there is an academic-related problem supervisor is the first person that students should contact (Interview 1, ES professional, 2015).

Table 2.3.1 – Where do international students look for help if there is an academic-related problem (Question 7)

	Number	Percentage
ESCM office	15	21.4
Enrolment center	7	10.0
International office	11	15.7
Supervisor	25	35.7
Others	2	2.9
Total	70	100.0

Table 2.3.2 – Where do international students look for help if there is a non-academic-related problem (Question 9)

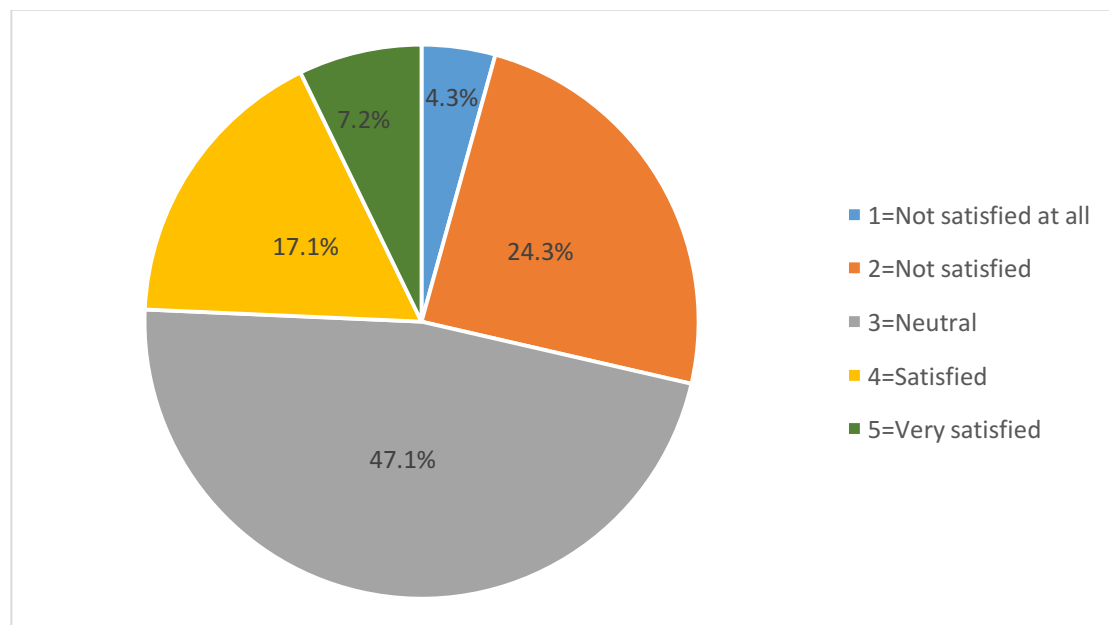
	Number	Percentage
Dutch students	26	37.1
ESCM office	7	10.0
Enrolment center	2	2.9
International office	23	32.8
Supervisor	9	12.9
Others	3	4.3
Total	70	100.0

From Table 2.3.1, apart from 'Dutch students,' when foreign students face an academic-related program, 'supervisor' was chosen most, by more than one-third of respondents (35.7%), followed by the ESCM office (21.4%), and the International Office (15.7%). However, when the issue is non-academic problems, as shown in 2.3.2, except for 'Dutch students', the top three selected factors are 'International Office,' 'Supervisor,' and 'ESCM' office, by 32.8%, 12.9%, and 10% respectively. When comparing the two tables together, 'supervisor' has most value on academic side for international students while 'international office' has most value on the non-academic side.

Chart 2.3.1 is extracted from question 8, where students need to rate the level of satisfaction regarding the services that the school or the ES program gave them to solve the problems on scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means students are not satisfied at all and 5 means students are very satisfied. Based on the results, since the satisfaction is combined from the previous Tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 together, apart from students who chose neutral (47.1%), the ratio of students who choose satisfied and very

satisfied to students who choose not satisfied and not satisfied at all is nearly 1:1, with 24.3% satisfied and 28.6% not satisfied.

Chart 2.3.1 – Degree of satisfaction in terms of assistance offered by the school and the ES program



(Where where 1 means not satisfied at all and 5 means very satisfied)

2.4 The missing elements regarding the assistance provided by the school and the European Studies program

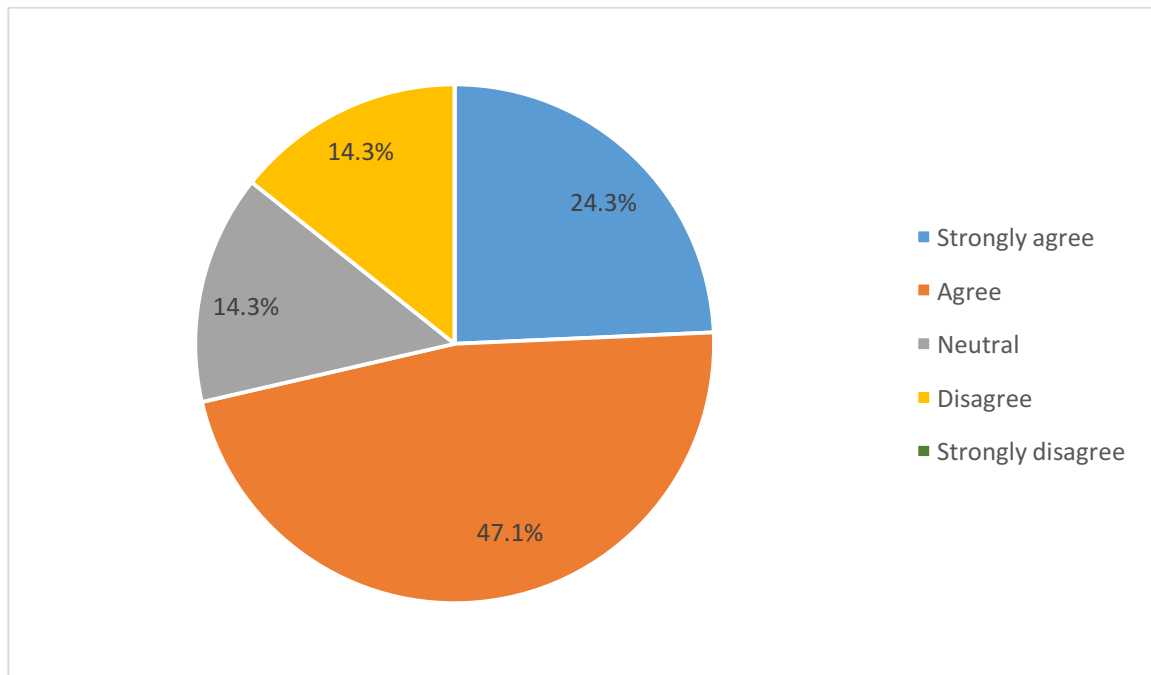
This chapter focuses on the role of the school and the study program, and the goal of this chapter is to identify the missing elements concerning the help offered by the programs. The results include the views of both experts and students, where the outcome of the experts is from interviews and the outcome of the students are from the questionnaire.

According to the interviews, both respondents mentioned that foreign students can only learn Dutch during the first year as an elective course. From the second year, there are not many options available if someone would like to learn the language continually (Interview 1, ES professional, 2015). “Students from the ES program should be equipped with professional intercultural communication skills and the ability to learn foreign languages, as learning a new language would benefit them from daily life to social life” (Interview 2, ES professional, 2015).

Returning to the questionnaire, the pie chart (2.4.1) reflects the expectation from international students, with more than 70% of the respondents claiming that there is a need to build a ‘mobility

office' for all students in the ES program. The total percentage of people who select strongly agree (24.3%) and agree (47.1%) almost five times the number of people who think there is no need to build the office (14.3).

Chart 2.4.1 – Necessity of setting up a mobility office for all students in the ES program



2.5 Sub-conclusion

Chapter 2 tries to analyse the degree of help in terms that the ES program provided after listing the problems that international students used to experience or are experiencing at the moment, since another core idea of the report refers to the role of study program. On the one hand, a number of course modules and activities organized by the ES program show positive outcomes among non-Dutch students, including Dutch courses, cocktail parties, and field trips. On the other hand, the internship day and group projects did not meet the expectations of the international students. Although there is still room for the ES program to improve, in general it has provided a wide range of assistance for international students, not only socially, but also academically. As long as there is a school-related problem, the majority of foreign students contact their supervisor or go to the ESCM office for help, instead of seeking assistance from Dutch students.

Discussion and Analysis

The purpose of the study was to investigate the degree of help that the European Studies program at The Hague University contributed in the adaptation process for full-time international students, who have a non-Dutch cultural background. Furthermore, to see if there is a gap between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students to deal with internationalization difficulties. Therefore, this chapter will outline the most notable outcomes and discuss similarities and contradictions with the help of literature and findings.

When talking about the factors in the adaptation process, different cultural context was considered to be one of the most influential factors for non-Dutch students. The first interesting fact that related to cultural context is that seems like the longer the study duration is, the fewer students who perceive this different cultural context to be a problem for them; however, the results could be argued that those two elements (study duration and cultural context) might be correlations instead of causal relations, because a case could be made that students who are not able to adapt a different culture may choose to quit the program after the first year.

Then dividing cultural context into individualist and collectivist cultures, both groups of students claim that studying or living in a new (cultural) environment could be a challenge at the beginning; nevertheless, students with individualist characteristics seem to adapt faster than students with collectivist characteristics, and this phenomenon could be caused by certain values within the respective individualistic and collectivist cultures. Individuals look after themselves and emphasize personal value in individualist societies as opposed to collectivist societies where people belong to 'in groups' that will look after them in exchange for their loyalty (Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998). Dutch culture is perceived to be individualistic as well, which tends to focus on "I" value, not "we" (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.), and that could be the explanation as to why students from individualistic cultures adapt easier than students from collectivist cultures.

There is another finding which verifies that whether international students belong to an individualist or collectivist culture will have a positive or negative effect during their adaptation process, not only socially, but also academically. Apart from levels of adaptation that may vary from two groups of students which was mentioned in last paragraph, results from the questionnaire indicate that it seems like the number of students from collectivist cultures have experienced more difficulties than students

from individualist culture in terms of the Dutch educational system and the academic approach of the ES program. Similar to most higher education institutions in western countries, teachers in the ES program want students to show initiative and to be creative during class. In addition, some of the course modules (e.g. advanced research skills) were conducted in the form of group work. As a result, students from collectivist cultures do not get involved as much as students from individualist cultures, as they may not be familiar with this type of education. The hypothesis was verified by Dr. Deardorff, who has studied intercultural competence for years. Students who perceived to be from collectivist cultures prefer listening rather than speaking whenever there is a group discussion, not because they are afraid or are being introverted, but because they would like to show respect to others, as they treat the 'group' as priority instead of the 'individual' (Deardorff, 2006). Some characteristics that exist in collectivism may not actually benefit students in adapting into a new or opposite cultural environment. Yet, Individualism and collectivism are not mutually exclusive, even if sometimes they sound like they are from opposite dimensions of cultural variability; that is, they can coexist within a person of any culture (Deardorff, 2006). As an international student in the ES program, learning positive features from other people's cultures could be a possible approach to better adapting into the new environment socially and academically.

School and study programs, as the key subject in this research, plays a crucial role in the adaptation process. The job of these facilitators is to guide international students at the very first stage and to inform them who or where they can go to if there is any problem in their studies. "Foreign students show more issues than host nations in some circumstances that they need greater attention from the institution when use of school service" (Ward, 2001). From the results it is able to see that more than half of students hold positive or neutral attitudes concerning the assistance provided by the school and the ES program, and the option 'supervisor' was mostly selected by students if they are in an academic-related program. Teachers put more effort into the adaptation process, according to Betty Leask (2001), as the teaching staff need to modify and adapt their teaching and guidance style to suit the needs of different groups of students.

In addition, the ES program has held a number of events and courses to facilitate international students to adapt to a new environment socially and academically, such as providing Dutch language courses, organizing field trips and cocktail parties, holding an internship day, and offering group projects through the four-year study program. Based on the outcomes from the questionnaire, students gave positive feedback on Dutch language courses, field trips, and cocktail parties. The reason for this could be that by providing Dutch courses in the first year could help international

students to decrease the level of culture shock, since language skills are considered to be one of factors in culture shock (Neuliep, 2009). In addition, offering the field trips and cocktail parties could also facilitate foreign students in lightening the degree of culture shock, since the field trip is about introducing the Dutch culture and a cocktail party provides a platform for international students to interact and make friends with local students.

In contrast, majority of international students gave negative feedback regarding the internship day and the group projects. The goal of internship day is to provide an opportunity for all students in the ES program to find a work placement by inviting a number of companies to school. However, most of the companies are Dutch companies and only a limited number of international companies were present. Consequently, for international students it could be hard to find a proper internship here, since most Dutch companies require fluent Dutch speaking abilities. It could be the case that school do not have enough budget to invite international companies such as Shell, Heineken, and Unilever; but the ES program may not aware that 'Dutch companies require fluent Dutch' is part of host culture attitudes, which may influence foreign students negatively (Neuliep, 2009).

Next, for international students, the overall experience regarding group projects is not as good as expected. An example of this is the Europe 21 Project, where teachers constantly encourage Dutch students to work with their non-Dutch group mates to maintain an intercultural learning environment, thereby helping foreign students to know more about Dutch culture and way of thinking. However, in some cases, domestic students are relatively uninterested in initiating with their international peers (Zimmerman, 1995). In other words, it may be the case that without the help of teachers, local students would not prefer to work with non-Dutch students, since the two groups of students share different cultural backgrounds. From the questionnaire it also shows that local students tend to place less value on the academic aspect of student life. As a result, it is not clear whether the international students are benefiting from these kind of intercultural projects.

Conclusions

An increasing number of international students are coming to receive their higher education in the Netherlands. Yet, despite their bravery in coming to a foreign country to study, there are always some challenges they need to face. To be successful, foreign students need to adapt socially and academically to their host country, and the degree to which they are successful in adjusting and adapting will determine their stress levels. These statements could lead to the central question: *To what degree is the European Studies program at The Hague University equipped to deal with the adaptation process of the full-time international students who have a non-Dutch cultural background?* In order to answer the central question three sub-points were discussed: (1) role of the school, the study program, and local students in the adaptation process for international students at the ES program; (2) the most common problems of studying and living in a new socio-cultural environment for international students at the ES program; (3) the missing elements in the adaptation process for international students at the European Studies program. Sub-conclusions were made after each chapter in order to provide a clearer picture of the results obtained from the questionnaire and interviews.

Outcomes from the first chapter indicate a number of factors that influence the adaptation process, as the Dutch language and different cultural context were mostly chosen by international students in the ES program. When the research went further, a phenomenon was found that the degree of adaptation for foreign students is related to the cultural context to which they belong. Whether students are from individualist or collectivist cultures present different outcomes while living or studying in a new environment. In Chapter 2, since the main question aims to find out the degree of help offered by the ES program, after listing the problems that students are facing or used to face, it could be concluded that the study program has made many efforts in assisting foreign students during the adaptation process both socially and academically. Since the Dutch language and different cultural context can be considered to be the problem suffered by the majority of foreign students, a Dutch language elective course was provided in the first year. In addition, the ES program has held many interesting events and activities to let international students know more about Dutch culture (field trips) and interact more with Dutch students (cocktail parties). However, there are gaps or missing points between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students to deal with internationalization difficulties. One is internship day, as it does not meet non-Dutch students' expectations, since most companies presenting that day are Dutch enterprises and Dutch language is required. Another one is the mobility office, since now it is exclusively designed for incoming exchange students, but there is a demand for the rest of the

international students as well. Even though the results seem to be not perfect yet, there is still room to improve, overall the European Studies program performs quite well in helping non-Dutch students to adapt to a new cultural environment.

Recommendations

According to the results and findings it is suggested that there is a gap between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students in dealing with internationalization difficulties. It is not expected that the school and the study program should provide help with all of the student's issues; however, it would go a long way if the school would provide them with practical guidance and information.

First of all, one of the practical recommendations that could be formulated from this research is that the ES program should build a 'mobility office' for all international students who study in this program. According to Chapter 2.4, the mobility office is exclusively designed for incoming exchange students in the ES program, the rest (except the exchange students) have no right to use this service. As mentioned in the conclusion, the ES program tends to be less focused on the psychosocial-related issues of international students; therefore, it would be nice to build a mobility office for all international students in the ES program. The role of this office is to settle all kinds of difficulties among the exchange students, including both academic and psychosocial issues, as long as students have certain problems that others cannot help with, they can go to this office to look for help. The office could post news such as information on available student apartments or provide assistance with reading Dutch documents, since a number of new foreign students find it challenging to find apartments in a big city due to their limited knowledge and find it challenging to read Dutch material. In addition, the people who run the office have to be patient and have a great interest in different cultures. Dutch students are also welcome to become a member of the mobility office, by helping out others they are able to earn credits for the LWE program.

Second, Dutch language classes should be available to the ES program throughout the four years of studies. The Dutch language, as mentioned in Chapter 1.1, was one of the main issues that accompany the adaptation process. Foreign students can only learn Dutch during the first year as an elective course. From the second year, there are not many options available if someone would like to continue to learn the language. If foreign students are able to learn Dutch in addition to their main course of study, this might make it easier for them to adapt to the new culture, and other Dutch classmates may be more willing to talk with foreign students or work with them, since they see foreign students trying to learn their culture. Students could be offered to teach these classes to other students, and a buddy system could be set up, either one-to-one or as a group, so the international students have plenty of people to ask questions.

Finally, since whether students belong to an individualist or collectivist culture presents different outcomes during the adaptation process in both social and academic aspects; as discussed earlier, certain values within cultural contexts may hinder students to adapt. From the students' perspective, it is recommended for them to enhance the awareness of others' culture, as well as to improve their intercultural competence. Even though individualism and collectivism sound like completely opposite terms, they are not mutually exclusive, and can coexist within an individual of any culture. While the school and the study program have already built a platform, as an international student, learning positive features from other people's culture could be a possible approach to better adapting into the new environment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of my final research project to gain a better understanding of the adaptation process for international students in the European Studies program. The questionnaire should take you about 5 minutes to complete. Please answer the questions in the spaces provided or choose an answer that fits best. The information you provide will be strictly confidential and sensitive personal information will not be used without your consent. Thank you in advance for contributing to this research.

1. How old are you?
 - A) Below 17
 - B) 17-20
 - C) 21-24
 - D) 25-28
 - D) Above 28
2. What is your gender?
 - A) Male
 - B) Female
3. What is your nationality?

4. How long have you been studying in the ESCM program?
 - A) Less than 1 year
 - B) 1-2 years
 - C) 2-3 years
 - D) 3-4 years
 - E) More than 4 years
5. What factor influenced you the most while adapting to the new culture in the Netherlands?
 - A) Different cultural context
 - B) Geographical distance between home country and the Netherlands
 - C) Length of stay
 - D) Dutch Language
 - E) Others

6. Which of the following problems, if any, did you experience while studying in the ESCM program? (Multiple answers are possible)
- A) Different academic approach
 - B) Different educational system
 - C) Finding an internship
 - D) Interaction with Dutch students
 - E) Non-academic problems outside the school (e.g. dealing with Dutch documents)
 - F) Others
7. Where do you look for help as an international student if there is an academic-related problem?
- A) Dutch/non-Dutch classmate
 - B) ESCM office
 - C) Enrolment center
 - D) International office
 - E) Supervisor
 - F) Others
8. If you had a problem, rate how satisfied you are with the help school or ES program gave you to solve your problems. Please rate the level of satisfaction for you on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you are not satisfied at all and 5 means you are very satisfied.
-
9. Where do you look for help as an international student if there is a non-academic-related problem?
- A) Dutch/non-Dutch classmate
 - B) ESCM office
 - C) Enrolment center
 - D) International office
 - E) Supervisor
 - F) Others
10. Should there be a mobility office for international students in the European Studies program?
(Now the mobility office is only designed for exchange students in European Studies program)
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree

11. Not knowing the Dutch language is a barrier for me while living in the Netherlands.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
12. The Dutch elective course is helpful for my studies and daily life.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
13. Making new friends with local (Dutch) students can influence my adaptation process positively.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
14. The 'borrel' (cocktail party) is a good way to interact with other students and make new friends.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
15. The Dutch culture may differ from your own culture. How difficult was it for you to transition from being surrounded by people with your own culture to mostly people with the Dutch culture? Please rate this difficulty for you on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means it was easy to adapt and 5 means it was difficult to adapt.
-
16. Field trips can help me to know more about Dutch culture.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree

17. Do you perceive yourself being as from an individualistic or collectivist culture?
- A) Individualistic
 - B) Collectivist
18. Working with Dutch students in a group project can help me to learn and adapt a different culture.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
19. *For year-3 and above only. Finding an internship could be a challenge for me during the last year.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree
20. *For year-3 and above only. Internship day is useful for me to find a work placement.
- A) Strongly agree
 - B) Agree
 - C) Neutral
 - D) Disagree
 - E) Strongly disagree

Appendix 2 - Interview Questions

1. What is your nationality?
2. How long have you been teaching at the European Studies program?
3. What factors do you think may influence the adaptation process for international students?
4. What is the role of school, study program, and local students in the adaptation process for international students?
5. What are the most common problems of studying and living in a new socio-cultural environment for international students?
6. Where do international students look for help if there is an academic or non-academic related problem?
7. How can the European Studies program improve the help regarding adaptation for the international students? Do you have any suggestions or ideas?

Appendix 3 - Table 1.2.1

		Cultural Context		Total
		Collectivism	Individualism	
Nationality	American	0	1	1
	Brazilian	1	0	1
	British	0	1	1
	Bulgaria	3	0	3
	Cameroon	1	0	1
	Chinese	5	0	5
	Ecuadorian	1	0	1
	Estonian	0	2	2
	Finnish	0	2	2
	French	0	2	2
	German	0	3	3
	Ghanaian	1	0	1
	Greek	1	0	1
	Hungarian	0	2	2
	Indian	1	0	1
	Indonesian	3	0	3
	Irish	0	2	2
	Italian	0	4	4
	Japanese	1	0	1
	Latvian	0	3	3
	Lithuanian	0	3	3
	Luxembourg	0	1	1
	Mexican	2	0	2
	Norwegian	0	1	1
	Polish	0	2	2
	Portuguese	5	0	5
	Romanian	4	0	4
	Russian	1	0	1
	Slovak	6	0	6
	Spanish	0	3	3
	Swiss	0	1	1
	Ukraine	1	0	1
Total		37	33	70

Appendix 4 - Total Number of Students in European Studies 4 Year Program

From: Schrijn - van Heckers, E.

Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2016 11:27 AM

To: Huang, J. (10082921)

Subject: RE: Information regarding international students in ESCM program

Dear Jianan,

The total number of ES4-students is 1.367

Men: 396

Women: 971

Nationality: see attachment, per year the nationalities have been noted. Please pay attention to the fact that there is overlap in years.

Kind regards,

Emmy Schrijn-van Heckers

Management Assistant European Studies-4 Year 1 and 2

Faculty of Management and Organisation

The Hague University of Applied Sciences | Johanna Westerdijkplein 75 | 2521 EN Den Haag | Room: Ovaal 4.35

E-mail: e.schrijn@hhs.nl | Phone: 0031 (0)70 445 8675 | Monday-Thursday (08.30-15.00 hrs) | Office hours: 14.00-15.00

Website: www.thehagueuniversity.com

Appendix 5 - Student Ethics Form

Your name: Jianan Huang

Supervisor: Mrs. Margo Peeters

Instructions/checklist

Before completing this form you should read the APA Ethics Code

(<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>). If you are planning research with human subjects, you should also look at the sample consent form available in the Final Project and Dissertation Guide.

- a. Read section 3 that your supervisor will have to sign. Make sure that you cover all these issues in section 1.
- b. Complete sections 1 and, if you are using human subjects, section 2, of this form, and sign it.
- c. Ask your project supervisor to read these sections (and the draft consent form if you have one) and sign the form.
- d. Append this signed form as an appendix to your dissertation.

Section 1. Project Outline (to be completed by student)

(i) Title of Project:

The adaptation process in a new socio-cultural environment for international students who follow the European Studies program at The Hague University

(ii) Aims of project:

The project aims to find out whether there is a mismatch between what international students expect in terms of support and what the European Studies program actually offers students to deal with internationalization difficulties. Based on the results and findings from both desk research and field research, recommendations and suggestions were made in the end.

(iii) Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, internet surveys etc. (Note: if you are using data that has already been collected by another researcher – e.g. recordings or transcripts of conversations given to you by your supervisor, you should answer ‘NO’ to this question.)

YES / NO

If no: you should now sign the statement below and return the form to your supervisor. You have completed this form.

This project is not designed to include research with human subjects. I understand that I do not have ethical clearance to interview people (formally or informally) about the topic of my research, to carry out internet research (e.g. on chat rooms or discussion boards) or in any other way to use people as subjects in my research.

Student's signature _____

Date _____

If yes: you should complete the rest of this form.

Section 2 Complete this section only if you answered YES to question (iii) above.

(i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):

Information was gathered in two ways. 70 European Studies students were selected to answer the questionnaire as listed in Appendix 1 based on their age, gender, study duration and nationality; while 2 European Studies professionals were chosen to do the interview as presented in Appendix 2. Each interview is around 20 minutes, and there might be some follow-up questions if the respondents would like to elaborate their thoughts. More importantly, all respondents are agreed with the statements on the 'Informed Consent Form' before recording.

(ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?

Overall, 70 students and 2 European Studies professionals participated in the research. The scope of the research is only focus on international students who study at ES four-year English program. Besides, 2 European Studies professionals were selected because both of them have experience in dealing with international students.

(iii) What sort stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to, tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below?

Questionnaires [X]; Pictures []; Sounds [X]; Words [X]; Other [].

(iv) Consent:

Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. Either verbally or by means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. A standard informed consent form is available in the Dissertation Manual.

(vi) What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' data? Personal data (name, addresses etc.) should not be stored in such a way that they can be associated with the participant's data.

All information will be strictly confidential and sensitive personal information will not be used without consent by respondents. Interviews were recorded by iPhone with password and I am the only one who have the permission to access it. While there is no personal data included in questionnaires since anonymity has been adopted, only the age, gender, and nationality were presented.

Student's signature:

Date:

Supervisor t's signature (if satisfied with the proposed procedures):



Date: 24-05-2016