



# Walsh University Faculty & Staff Guide on International Students



## Introduction

In this era of globalization, rapid change, and flow of people, higher education in the United States has become more internationalized. Most campuses nationwide are integrating commitment internationalization into their overall mission, and Walsh University is no exception: “Walsh University is an independent, coeducational Catholic, liberal arts and sciences institution. Founded by the Brothers of Christian Instruction, Walsh University is dedicated to educating its students to become leaders in service to others through a values-based education **with an international perspective** in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” (Walsh University, 2016) It stands to reason that part of this mission of dedication to international perspectives is a focus on international students as they can certainly add an international perspective to the classroom. Additionally, the number of international students are increasing. In 2015, the number of international students in the United States increased by nine percent from 2014 to a total of 1.05 million students (Hookstead, 2015). This number is projected to increase in the coming years, and Walsh University has experienced similar growth. In spring of 2015, there were 73 international students attending Walsh University, and in spring of 2016 there were 84 students attending Walsh University, a growth of 15%.

International students are almost always highly capable and motivated to achieve their academic goals while studying in the United States. Most international students also have families who are supportive emotionally and financially. However, international students face a number of challenges when they arrive to the United States and Walsh University: forging friendships, becoming accustomed to different foods, language comprehension (in most cases), and overcoming differences in classroom dynamics and academic expectations between their home country and the United States. This, therefore, presents a challenge to faculty at Walsh University with respect to teaching and advising international students, particularly new, first-year students.



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## Purpose

Faculty across the country have faced issues integrating international students, and, given the ever-changing nature and increasing enrollments, this is not a surprise. Faculty at numerous institutions have noticed issues relating to language barriers, discussion and group work, cultural knowledge, expectations, and plagiarism (Redden, 2014). The purpose of this guide is to address the instructional challenges faculty across disciplines face with respect to international students at Walsh University. This guide aims to ensure that knowledge of international student issues are disseminated so that faculty across all disciplines are best able to teach and advise international students. The information presented in this guide is gathered from current research on international students as well as interviews with international students at Walsh University.

This guide is not intended to be an exhaustive resource for faculty on international students. However, it should provide a basic guide for issues relating to international students in the classroom and the college in general. It should provide some thoughts and ideas for faculty as they experience international students in their classroom, and will hopefully provide a basis for ways in which faculty can adapt the classroom to the needs of international students.

Walsh University's international students build a foundation at Walsh University for the rest of their career. The hope and mission of the Office of International Student Services, along with faculty, is to foster a solid foundation for students to achieve future success whatever their goals may be.



## International Students in the Classroom: Cultural Diversity, Recognition, and Involvement

As mentioned in the introduction, the number of international students is projected to increase. For this reason, addressing issues relating to international students in the classroom requires attention. Integrating international students into the classroom is often listed as a concern for faculty nationwide (Redden, 2014). A survey of international students conducted by Ohio State University's Office of Student Life and International Student and Scholars Office indicated that international students desired more guided social interactions, additional academic support, and more preparation regarding the culture and expectations of the American classroom (Redden, 2014). Two out of the three of these relate to issues in the classroom, and faculty can provide some guided social activities (discussions, group work, etc.) in the classroom. Therefore, faculty can have a profound effect on the experience of students at Walsh University, and such a profound effect has been noted by Walsh international students. Also, the intention of this guide is not to prescribe teaching or classroom methodologies but to provide suggestions or ideas.

In interviews with international students in English-speaking countries, many described the formative role of the classroom, meaningful classroom encounters, and how these encounters had a profound impact on their development as a student (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015). The key figures in orchestrating these encounters are professors who demonstrate a commitment to cultural variation in the classroom, and create contexts that embrace and utilize this variation (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015). This is especially true as many international students indicate feeling more comfortable with the formal demeanor of professors as opposed to the perceived informality of students (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015). This was noted among Walsh international students who were interviewed as well.

There are several ways in which faculty can implement meaningful classroom encounters and social activities which are based on interviews with Walsh students and research on international student experiences. While being interviewed, many Walsh students mentioned professors who were supportive, and included elements relating to their culture in course curriculum. A common theme was that students feeling a greater connection to the class and the instructor when they have an opportunity to share some aspect of their culture which has a relation to the course. For some students, this even extends into issues that may be intense and focus on identity and culture. Research has shown that discussing such issues, while intense and sometimes difficult, has resulted in students feeling more open and included in the academic environment (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015). One more way to shape meaningful classroom encounters and facilitate guided social interaction is having students sit at different seats each class. This approach resulted in apprehension from international students at first. However,



students felt a greater sense of belonging at the end of the course (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Buus, 2015). This could also be applied to group work or lab work in which students have different group members at different points in the semester (if possible). It may also be advisable to take note of trends in interactions among students, particularly between international and domestic students. While such activities may create cohesion, there is also a risk of power dynamics between international and domestic students manifesting in troubling ways. As domestic students are usually not marginalized, international students could be marginalized. Therefore, in such encounters and interactions, dominant group members may have a tendency to control access to social roles and activities (DeTurk, 2001). Also, if dominant groups subordinate non-dominant groups/identities, this may result in subordinates expressing more stereotypically “submissive” (DeTurk, 2001).



Though these encounters are transitory (as classes typically last one semester), students demonstrated increased resilience, more diversified social networks, and were able to develop their own voice as a result of such classroom encounters (Glass, Wongtrirat, & Bus, 2015). Diversifying social networks of importance as nearly 40 percent of international students report having no close American friends (Redden, 2014).

Beyond guided social interactions and encounters, there are a couple of things to keep in mind in order to better involve and recognize international students in the classroom. For one, Walsh international students also mentioned in interviews that they sometimes lack the cultural knowledge of their domestic peers, and sometimes faculty are unaware that international students may not always have the same cultural frame of reference that domestic students do. This occurs with respect to knowledge of history (especially U.S. history), literature, popular culture, and brand names and items. A number of students also mentioned that they desired to have more sharing of notes with other students at the beginning of their time at Walsh. Perhaps more interaction with domestic students can obviate this, however, a number noted differences in classroom expectations and testing styles between their home countries and the United States. A number of Walsh students noted that instructors periodically stopping to make sure everyone understands, giving examples using simple analogies (e.g. animals, fruits, etc.), and Power Point were helpful in helping them comprehend course material.

Given all of the aforementioned challenges international students face, there is a risk in viewing international students as deficient or in need of constant and/or substantial support. However, international students are not merely students with deficiencies and in need of support. It is important to leverage and tap into their strengths as well. International students have a great deal of insight and perspective to offer to the classroom despite the unique challenges they face.

## The Classroom Environment: Differences and Dynamics

Classroom environments differ from country to country. Though some international students attended high school in the United States, many have not. The educational environment from which they come has an impact on how they transition and perceive their classroom, professors, and classmates at Walsh University.

In order to gain some understanding of classroom dynamics and expectations in other countries, a chart on the following page (page 7-8) outline some information on classroom dynamics and expectations. These graphs include countries from varying regions of the world in an attempt to allow for understanding of educational systems from a wide range of differing cultures (Eckstein et al., 2003).

A number of themes were notable when interviewing Walsh students. Many of these relate to English language abilities, particularly with respect to expressing themselves in English. For many, this was their first time writing a lot of papers or essays, and several mentioned they are unfamiliar with the format of an essay. It may be helpful to provide students with a basic guide on the outline of an essay and how to write one. Additionally, reminding them of support available in Academic Support may be helpful as nearly all students who mentioned issues with writing stated that Academic Support helped them greatly. Concerns regarding language issues extended into speaking as well as oral presentations and class discussions. Specifically, students noted anxiety when presenting orally. Therefore, it may be advisable for instructors to appear as non-judgmental as possible while students are presenting, and to consider the fact that English is not their native language when providing commentary on such presentations. Additionally, it may be helpful for class discussions to be more guided and/or structured so as to provide less anxiety while students have a discussion or perform group work in or for class. Also, any students mentioned that, at first, they were not as participatory in discussions as they were accustomed to a strict lecture format, and a classroom that was very teacher-centered.

Another common theme that emerged was the fact that many students were not accustomed to reading widely in classes for comprehension and learning. One student mentioned that in their home country books were basically a “decoration”, and teachers give notes and lectures which the students memorize on which they are tested later. This relates to English-language comprehension as well, however, it is more of an issue of learning style. Such students emulated the style of studying of their domestic peers. However, it may be helpful to mention that the style of American higher education is such that note memorization is generally not sufficient for success, and study methods or ideas to deal with this should be provided.



### Saudi Arabia

- Classrooms are teacher-oriented and highly formal.
- At first, learning is done by rote. Students are encouraged to share their opinions.
- Students deeply respect teachers and accept the teacher's role as a knowledge giver.
- Students are permitted to help their friends answer when questioned by a teacher.



### China

- Teachers are authority figures with high respect. Students try to emulate their teachers.
- Classes are very strict and difficult. Students readily accept the work given to them.
- Group problem solving and participation comes naturally in the classroom.
- Students are hesitant to offer opinions or reactions.



### Mexico

- Classes are teacher-fronted, and students participate only when asked to do so.
- Structure is preferred, and learning style usually involves a lot of memorization as testing is mostly multiple choice.
- Teachers are viewed as a source of knowledge, not as friends.



### Russia

- Teachers lecture and classes focus on the teacher. Classrooms are very formal.
- Rote learning is common, and questioning the teacher is not typically encouraged.
- Teachers are respected and relationships with students are cordial yet formal.
- The system is becoming less rigid than in the past.



### Côte d'Ivoire

- Classrooms are quiet, and students ask for permission to stand and speak at all times.
- Students often work alone. Sometimes they work in pairs or groups depending on the class.
- Teachers are highly respected, and students show respect through punctuality. Lateness is not tolerated. Teachers are considered the authority in the classroom.



### Brazil

- Public schools are teacher-fronted while private schools may be more learner-centered.
- Pair work, group work, and games are common. Visual aids are frequently used.
- The teacher-student relationship is most like a counselor and sometimes like a disciplinarian. Students are taught to respect and obey their teachers.



### Korea

- Korean teachers are considered givers of knowledge and stand in front of the classroom.
- Being a student is equivalent to a full-time job. Rote memorization is the learning style.
- Teachers try not to embarrass students by pointing out mistakes in class. Students are taught to be respectful to teacher, and eye contact with them is considered inappropriate.

Information in the chart was gathered from *Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide* (Eckstein et al., 2003).



### Spain



- Classrooms are teacher-oriented and informal. They call the professors, "Prof"
- At first, learning is done by rote. Students are encouraged to share their opinions.
- Students deeply respect teachers and accept the teacher's role as a knowledge giver.
- Students are permitted to help their friends answer when questioned by a teacher. Cheating is common
- Teachers move from one classroom to the next, the students stay in the same classroom

### Canada



- Teachers are authority figures with high respect. Students try to emulate their teachers.
- Classes are very strict and difficult. Students readily accept the work given to them.
- Group problem solving and participation comes naturally in the classroom.
- Students are hesitant to offer opinions or reactions.
- Universities in Canada require classes only within their degree (no core)

### Haiti



- Classes are teacher-fronted, and students participate only when asked to do so.
- students are called on by their last names to answer questions
- Teachers do not help their students learn to analyze and synthesize information
- Students speak only when asked questions
- A formal relationship exists between the teacher and the student, and the teacher has total authority.

### Taiwan



- Teachers adhere to the content, exercises, and activities in textbooks.
- Students prefer to learn by watching and listening to the teacher and doing written assignments from their textbooks.
- Often described as field-dependent and structure-oriented, children thrive in well-managed classrooms and quiet environments. Students need a little longer wait-time to give answers to oral questions than do their American peers.
- Students stand and bow when the teacher enters the room

### Japan



- Classrooms are lecture format
- Students do not share opinions, and typically attend larger lecture classes.
- Teachers are highly respected, and students show respect through punctuality. Students bow as the teacher enters and leaves the room.
- Shame and humiliation are often used to get students to conform to group rules
- The teacher is expected to visit the home of the student at least once a year.
- Students often arrive at school before the teacher does, and they use the time interval to clean and prepare the classroom for the teacher.

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

It is common knowledge among faculty and staff that plagiarism and academic integrity are problems among all college students. Organizations such as the Center for Academic Integrity have found that more than 70 percent of students surveyed in large-scale inquiries admitted to some form of cheating (East, 2010; Gillespie, 2012). Some recent research has revealed that plagiarism is on the rise in Western countries (Gillespie, 2012). Students plagiarize for a number of reasons such as academic pressures, poor planning,

*Students plagiarize for a number of reasons such as academic pressures, poor planning, poor preparation, excessive or mindless workload, opportunity, cultural background, and prominent bad examples (Gillespie, 2012).*

poor preparation, excessive or mindless workload, opportunity, cultural background, and prominent bad examples (Gillespie, 2012). These reasons are even more acute for international students.

It is important for faculty to reiterate the importance of academic integrity as well as what constitutes plagiarism. Information should be provided on Academic Support so students can consult with them if they have any questions. If an instructor is unavailable or if the student feels more comfortable approaching Academic Support instead of an instructor, this should be encouraged. This is particularly important in courses in which many first-year international students are enrolled. It is possible that the concept of plagiarism is new to these students, and they are, therefore, unaware of what defines plagiarism. Gillespie (2012) notes that:

Perceptions of plagiarism are based on historical and cultural assumptions. This is especially true for international students who did not grow up in Western society. Given that international students have left their homes and travelled many miles to pursue their academic dreams, they often feel enormous pressure to be very successful. This pressure combined with differing cultural assumptions of plagiarism and students' lack of knowledge about plagiarism policies can potentially lead to scholastic disaster.

As international students may be unaware of the consequences of plagiarism, it may be beneficial to also explain the consequences of plagiarism. It is important to preface these conversations by stating that every country has its own ideas regarding scholarship and cheating, and none of these are necessarily superior or inferior. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that there are standards in the United States and at Walsh University that are expected, and will help them succeed as a student during their time here (Gillespie, 2012).

## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The Western style of citing sources isn't universal: Greenblatt points out that many Asian students, for instance, come from educational systems in which the norm is to repeat back a textbook or a professor verbatim (without a citation), as a sign of respect to the source of knowledge. In collectivist cultures, adds Petra Crosby, director of international student programs and a lecturer in the cross-cultural studies concentration at Carleton College, knowledge is often viewed as a shared endeavor, so "copying" doesn't always encapsulate the same connotation. Not to mention that knowledge itself can be defined differently, at least as far as what's common and doesn't need to be cited: What's common knowledge in Indiana can, after all, be substantially different than what's common knowledge in India. (Redden, 2007)

## More to Learn!

### Brazil

- Brazilians value informal, outgoing, pleasant, tolerant, warm, and spontaneity.
- English is required in the curriculum, but there are not enough English teachers available. Other languages taught include Spanish, German, and Italian.
- Public universities are considered to be the best universities in Brazil and, consequently, have the most difficult vestibular exams (entrance exams).
- A kiss or two on the cheek is common way to greet a friend or even a new acquaintance.
- Brazilians stand closer when talking face-to-face than do North Americans or Europeans; physical touch is acceptable, and eye contact is more prolonged.
- Direct personal confrontation is avoided.
- Arriving late to an appointment or dinner party is expected behavior.

### Columbia

- Colombians tend to be more conservative in interpersonal dynamics, appearance, protocol, and philosophy. Some claim Colombian culture to be one of quiet elegance. Colombians are a warm but not particularly effusive people whose trust and friendship is won in little time.
- Students are expected to stay quiet in class and to listen politely. Little participation is given.
- Public yawning is considered extremely rude.
- By in large, Colombian students are not taught critical-thinking skills. They are expected to reproduce what has been presented, and they memorize content with great determination.
- Many students work in pairs. Make sure students know the benefits of generating answers independently and show them how to develop critical-thinking skills.

### Cote d'Ivoire

- There is a great respect for age and status in the culture, age taking precedence over status and over gender.
- In some private and public schools, students spend one hour a week doing community service, such as cleaning.
- There are very few school-sponsored activities.
- Teachers are considered the authority in the classroom. Students are, however, free to disagree with a teacher or dispute a grade if they do so in a respectful manner.
- Direct eye contact is common between friends. Direct eye contact with someone who is older or holds a higher-ranked position may be seen as disrespectful.

## Haiti

- Common law marriage is considered normal, and having more than one in a lifetime is acceptable.
- Students speak only when asked questions.
- Corporal punishment is permissible both at home and at school.
- When students have to leave class, they hold up an index finger until they are out the doors. This is not necessarily meant to call attention but is seen as polite, almost as if it makes the student invisible while slipping out of the class
- Eye contact with elders is avoided.
- Haitian students may feel embarrassed by the “refugee” label, and may therefore be keeping to themselves to avoid rejections.

## Japan

- The concept of group or community is highly valued in Japanese culture, to the extent that most Japanese feel uncomfortable when singled out for either praise or criticism.
- Students are hesitant to share their opinions openly in large classrooms or in public but will share their opinions in small groups or outside the classroom.
- The educational environment is strictly supervised. Such things as bicycle parking spaces and shoe style are predetermined for the student.
- Direct eye contact is sometimes seen as rude behavior.
- The hand gesture used by many English speakers to mean “ok”, means “money”
- Japanese students are taught that mistakes are serious and that the consequences of mistakes are too embarrassing to risk. Therefore, they consult each other when questioned by the teacher.

## Mexico

- In Mexico, family comes first.
- Students are accustomed to working both individually and in groups. There is more group work in the higher grades.
- Cheating in the classroom is not tolerated
- A handshake is appropriate when meeting someone for the first time. Kisses on the cheek may be exchanged between women friends or between a man and a woman, but Mexican men do not kiss each other on the cheek.
- Smoking is quite common in schools or higher education and in the classroom.
- The teacher is considered their superior in knowledge, and the student’s role is usually to take notes and to ask a few pertinent questions.



## China

- Students sit up straight. They are expected to sit and listen, and they read or write only when instructed to do so by the teacher.
- Chinese students show respect and affection for their teachers by erasing the blackboard after class.
- Students do not maintain eye contact with the teacher while he or she is lecturing. They tend to keep their eyes down and to concentrate on the lecture.
- Red, not white, is the color for weddings.
- Laughter in the classroom is frequently a cultural response to a topic that is embarrassing or inappropriate.
- There is no such thing as plagiarism in China. Using the words of experts is an acceptable way of completing an assignment and getting a good grade. Students feel there is no better source than the author.

## Russia

- Russians are people of deep feelings and emotions. When a Russian opens his or her heart, the listener must be prepared for a long conversation filled with opinions, philosophies, literary quotations, personal revelations, and so forth.
- There is an emphasis on oral production. Students are expected to sit for oral exams at some point in their studies.
- Russians greet guests either inside or outside of their homes. It is considered bad luck to greet guests in the doorway.
- Russian students face extremely high academic expectations back home. Teachers pile on the homework and demand that students come to class prepared to recite, not to express their opinions or learn from anyone other than the teacher.

## Saudi Arabia

- To understand the culture, one must understand Islam and its history. There is a seamless relationship between religion and culture, on the one hand, and the way Arabs conduct every minute of their lives, on the other.
- Saudi men and women are totally segregated outside of the home and family. Foreign men should not shake hands or speak with Saudi woman. Females are not permitted to be alone with a strange man.
- Women must wear the traditional abaya and hijab on the street. This is considered a form of protection against male sexual harassment.
- Saudi schools are segregated by gender
- Cheating is often regarded as sharing or helping a friend or a brother
- Students will leave a room to pray
- Male Saudis' will hold hands in public, without feeling self-conscious. Saudi men kiss each other three times on the cheek in greeting.

- During Ramadan, they have to fast from dawn to dusk for 28-30 days. They may have been up late each night praying.
- Saudi Arabia has a deeply embedded oral culture, and may be reminded that others may speak and to take a turn with their answers.

## Taiwan

- Formal education is highly valued both for economic improvement and family honor. Because of filial piety, parents will sacrifice family resources on education for their sons and daughters to obtain the highest educational level possible.
- Memorization is highly relied on as a tool for learning in all grades. Since students are accustomed to rote memorization and drills, analytical thinking and creative writing may need special encouragement.
- Students are given 30 minutes to eat their lunch and 40 minutes to nap with their heads on their desks. Napping is mandatory, even in high school.
- A student's smile might not mean the student is pleased; instead, it may represent embarrassment or confusion.
- Direct eye contact is discouraged.
- Both feet are to be kept flat on the floor in public. Only at home do Taiwanese cross their legs or assume other comfortable positions.

## Vietnam

- Due to economic situation in Vietnam, there is a shortage of qualified teachers, and in some districts, teachers without the desired qualifications are hired out of necessity.
- It is rare for Vietnamese students to ask questions during class. It is more common for them to ask questions after class has finished, if at all.
- Attendance and punctuality are very important in Vietnam. Notes of excuse are expected for absences and sometimes for tardiness. Some teachers, however, may excuse a student who is needed to work at home.
- Women do not shake hands in Vietnam, neither with women nor with men. Men may shake hands when greeting each other.
- Vietnamese prefer to avoid confrontation, a request to see the teacher after class is an intimidating and embarrassing occasion.

Information with More to Learn gathered from *Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide* (Eckstein et al., 2003).

## Visa Issues

At Walsh University, international students must obtain an F-1 visa before they come to the United States to study. Walsh University is certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) which is a requirement to receive a Form I-20 following acceptance to Walsh University. This form allows international students to schedule an interview with a local US embassy or consulate in order to be granted an F-1. They must demonstrate official residency in a foreign country and intentions to return home after studying in the United States, admission to an SEVP-certified school, sufficient financial support, and ties to their home country. Once international students begin their studies at Walsh University, their visa issues are handled by the Office of International Student Services, and, in particular, a Designated School Official (DSO). DSOs are certified by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to deal with immigration issues. Only DSOs can provide advice regarding immigration. However, as a faculty member and advisor, you may encounter students asking for signatures on paperwork for Curricular Practical Training and Optional Practical Training. Since there are required internships in most majors, ALL international students must have approval BEFORE they start off-campus employment, whether it is a paid or un-paid position, they must apply for work permission with ISS.

### *Curricular Practical Training*

- CPT allows for an F-1 student to engage in off-campus work (e.g. internship) that is required by the F-1 student's degree program, allows optional training, or earns credits for the F-1 student's degree program.
- There is no cumulative maximum time for part-time CPT (20 hours or less) as indicated by USCIS. However, CPT can only be approved before completion of the academic objective.
- Full-time CPT (over 20 hours per week) is only possible during vacation periods or with part-time enrollment. More than 12 months of full-time CPT eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### *Optional Practical Training*

- The purpose of OPT is for students holding an F-1 visa to engage in temporary employment in their major area of study.
- F1 Visas and OPT are administered by Walsh University and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).
- Students are eligible for a total of 12 months of OPT.
- Students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) may be eligible for a 5-month extension of OPT (17 months total).
- Work can include unpaid or volunteer positions.
- Students do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.

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