

International Students Mentoring Programme

Information for mentors



Edge Hill University



The following sources were used in the development of this guide:
Pro- Active Mentoring Project Pack, Brunel University.

Throughout the programme you will be contacted by the Mentoring Programme Officer to check on the progress of your partnership. If you have any queries or concerns during the course of the Programme, please do not hesitate to contact:

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This guide can be made available in alternative formats on request, please contact Monira Ahmed on Monira.Ahmed@liverpool.ac.uk for further information

This is a pilot project to help international students enhance their university experience and opportunities through mentoring relationships with employers or other experienced international students.

> SECTION 1: Guidance on mentoring

1.1 What is mentoring?

There are numerous definitions of mentoring. We have chosen the following, which has proven useful in the past.

“Mentoring is a learning and developmental relationship between two people. It depends on essential human qualities such as commitment, authenticity, trust, integrity and honesty. It involves the skills of listening, questioning, challenge and support.”

Practical Mentoring: Grass Roots Guide to Mentoring Issues (Published by Mentfor)

Mentoring is...

Encouraging independence	Facilitating
Giving support	Providing advice
Building confidence	Positive guidance
Motivating the mentee	Confidential
Using knowledge	

Mentoring isn't...

Imposing your own model	Having power over someone
Dictating	One-sided
A way of making yourself look good	Rigid
Not justifying/explaining yourself	Imposing strategy
Imposing ideas	An imposition of your values
Working in isolation, without purpose	Counselling
Judging	

1.2 The mentoring process

Both mentors and mentees have rights and responsibilities toward the mentoring relationship.



Responsibilities of the mentor include:

> Discussing and agreeing boundaries	> Listening
> Attendance	> Being honest
> Wanting to be there	> Being realistic
> Giving constructive feedback	> Supporting the mentee
> Enabling the mentee to achieve their aims	> Respecting the confidentiality of the mentee
> Knowing when to ask for help	> Following any policies/procedures within the scheme
> Keeping promises	> Evaluating

Responsibilities of the mentee include:

> Discussing and agreeing boundaries	> Attendance
> Respecting the mentor	> Listening
> Wanting to be there	> Being honest
> Making the most of the opportunity	> Following through on any agreed action points
> Taking part in the feedback process	> Taking part in the evaluation process

Rights of the mentor include:

> To gain experience through mentoring	> To be listened to
> To feel valued	> To feel comfortable within the relationship
> Not to be relied upon	> To have a mentee who is equally committed to the mentoring relationship
> To be supported by the mentor co-ordinators	> To be respected

Rights of the mentee include:

> To be valued	> To be listened to
> To be safe	> To feel comfortable within the relationship
> Not to be judged	> To have a mentor who is committed and interested in what they are doing
> To be supported	> To be respected

1.3 Further guidance for mentors

What does a good mentor do?

Overview

The simple answer might be that a good mentor helps the mentee identify and define their own needs and helps the mentee to achieve them. These needs will be different for each mentee, but common features of good practice that mentees have regularly commented on include the following;

The mentor

- > listens fully and actively to the mentee and strives to see their viewpoint
- > finds out at the initial meeting what the mentee hopes to gain from being mentored and helps the mentee to set out an agenda for future meetings or communications (not necessarily a formal one)
- > makes a priority of giving up sufficient time to have a thorough discussion /communication i.e. does not rush the mentoring session or allow for interruption/distraction
- > regularly checks that the mentee is getting what they had hoped for from the mentoring sessions
- > is open about their own experience, including their personal successes and mistakes
- > gives honest constructive feedback to the mentee
- > shows a willingness to learn from the knowledge and perspectives of the mentee

The first meeting

Once you have agreed to become a mentor and have been matched with a mentee, how should you proceed? Your first meeting is important and it should be used to establish rapport with your mentee.

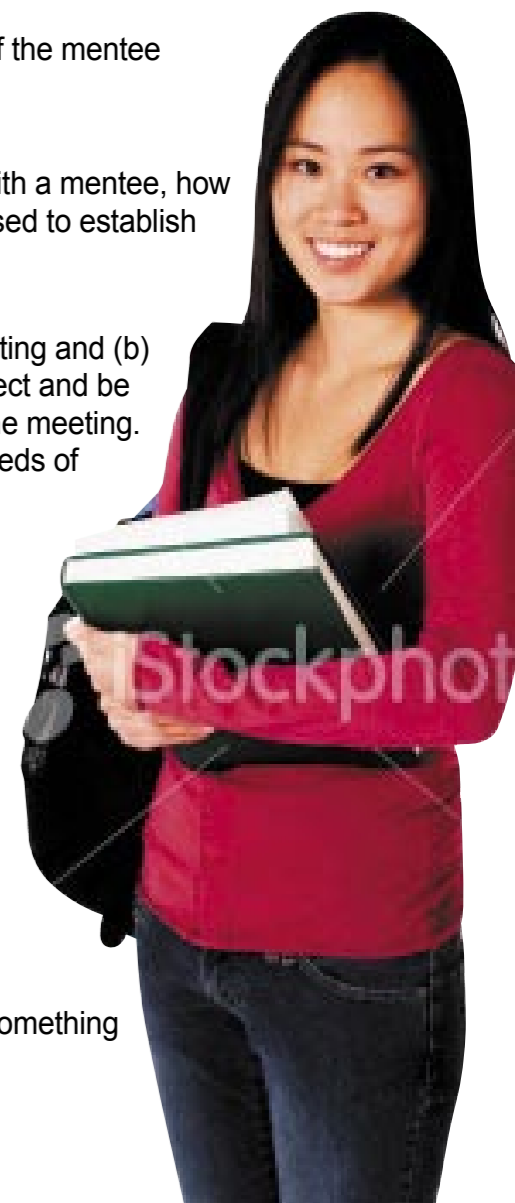
You could suggest factors to the mentee to consider (a) before the meeting and (b) at the meeting that will help you both to establish mutual trust and respect and be at ease with one another while maintaining a focus on the purpose of the meeting. Not all the factors listed below may be relevant; it will depend on the needs of your mentee.

(a) before the meeting:

- > get any available information about your mentee, e.g. a CV, degree programme, year of study
- > plan the questions you wish to ask
- > plan the structure of the meeting
- > agree a mutually convenient time and a suitable place that has a relaxed atmosphere and is free from noise and interruptions

(b) at the meeting:

- > discuss expectations
- > break the ice by saying something about yourself and trying to find something you have in common
- > perhaps ask why they chose their particular degree



- > describe the mentor and mentee roles and the mentoring process
- > ask the mentee what they want to achieve at this meeting and the purpose of any records that you will be keeping
- > be open and friendly
- > ask what areas and skills the mentee wants to develop
- > use open questions and listen actively
- > encourage conversation and questions from your mentee
- > recommend confidentiality ground rules
- > agree and record the main points from the meeting and an action plan
- > agree personal contact arrangements and the date, time and venue for your next meeting
- > end the meeting on a positive note

Future meetings

You will have agreed when and where the next one will take place at your initial meeting and your mentee should have gone away with an action plan.

- a) What is the purpose of these next and future meetings?
- b) What should you do to prepare for them?
- c) How will you conduct them?

a) Purpose:

- > to review your mentee's progress
- > to find out and help to resolve any difficulties faced by the mentee
- > to offer guidance, support and encouragement

b) Preparation:

- > review the objectives set at the previous meeting
- > confirm meeting details with your mentee
- > plan questions and the structure of the meeting
- > ensure the availability of appropriate paperwork

c) Conducting the meeting:

- > review the action plan and progress made towards meeting objectives
- > emphasise successes achieved
- > establish areas for further development
- > discuss any specific issues or problems faced
- > offer support and guidance
- > consider any necessary amendments and/or additions to the objectives
- > agree a further action plan
- > encourage conversation and questions from your mentee
- > get mentee's feedback on your own performance
- > agree and record the main points from the meeting
- > agree the date, time and venue for your next meeting
- > end the meeting on a positive note



Eventually your mentoring role with a specific mentee will come to an end.

Your final meeting will necessarily be different from the others. In what way? What should you include in this meeting?

Final meeting:

- > establish the total progress made by your mentee by comparing the initial objectives set at the first meeting with their achievements to date
- > ask your mentee to review and evaluate the whole experience
- > find out what your mentee thinks could have been done better
- > ask for feedback on how you could be a better mentor
- > review and evaluate your own performance
- > establish the good points
- > record the findings
- > explore any future options for your relationship
- > end on a positive note

> SECTION 2: Practical information for mentors

2.1 How many meetings should I have with my mentee?

2 meetings before December 2008. However, you can meet more often if you and the mentee want to and even continue beyond December. The number of meetings that take place will vary according to the needs of your mentee.

At your first meeting, you should aim to arrange provisional dates or particular times you can meet if this is possible. This will ensure that the momentum of the mentoring partnership is not lost.

2.2 Where should the meetings be?

Ideally at your place of work/study. If this is not possible, then the mentee's university, or another place of mutual convenience. Meetings should be in places that are accessible for both parties.

Mentors are not expected to cover travel costs that have been incurred as a result of mentees attending meetings.

2.3 How long should the meetings be?

Each meeting should be approximately 1 hour, but it will also depend on what you and your mentee have planned for the session.

2.4 What format should the meetings be?

You should meet with your mentee face-to-face, although in addition to this, e-mail and telephone discussions can be used.

2.5 How can I assist and support my mentee?

This will depend on their personal goals and objectives and your background and areas of expertise. Below are a number of suggested topics for discussion with your mentee. Mentors and mentees are not expected to cover all of these topics and not all information will be applicable to all mentors.

Development of personal skills

- > Improving self-confidence
- > Developing communication skills (oral and written)
- > Time management
- > Leadership skills
- > Teamwork
- > Flexibility/adaptability
- > Commercial awareness
- > Problem solving
- > Interpersonal skills

Look at ways the mentee can develop some of these skills such as:

- Mock interviews
- Delivering a presentation
- Group discussions, meetings, or events they can take part in
- Exercises or tasks

Job application and recruitment process

- > Improvement of CV and written job application forms
- > Developing interview techniques e.g. through mock interviews or looking at common interview questions
- > Sharing your experience of applying for jobs and going through interviews

Self-reflection and awareness

- > Review mentee's strengths and achievements to date
- > Identify skills areas that they need to develop
- > Review learning they have gained so far from studies and/or work experience- what worked well, what did not work well

Acquisition of knowledge and job opportunities

- > Providing information on careers/jobs that are of interest (paper and web-based)



- > Offering information and advice on which skills, qualities and experiences are required for success in a specific career
- > Job and work experience opportunities within your organisation
- > Tips on how to find part-time employment

Experience & observation of work activities

- > Tour around your place of work or work shadowing you/other colleagues
- > Tour around other places of work

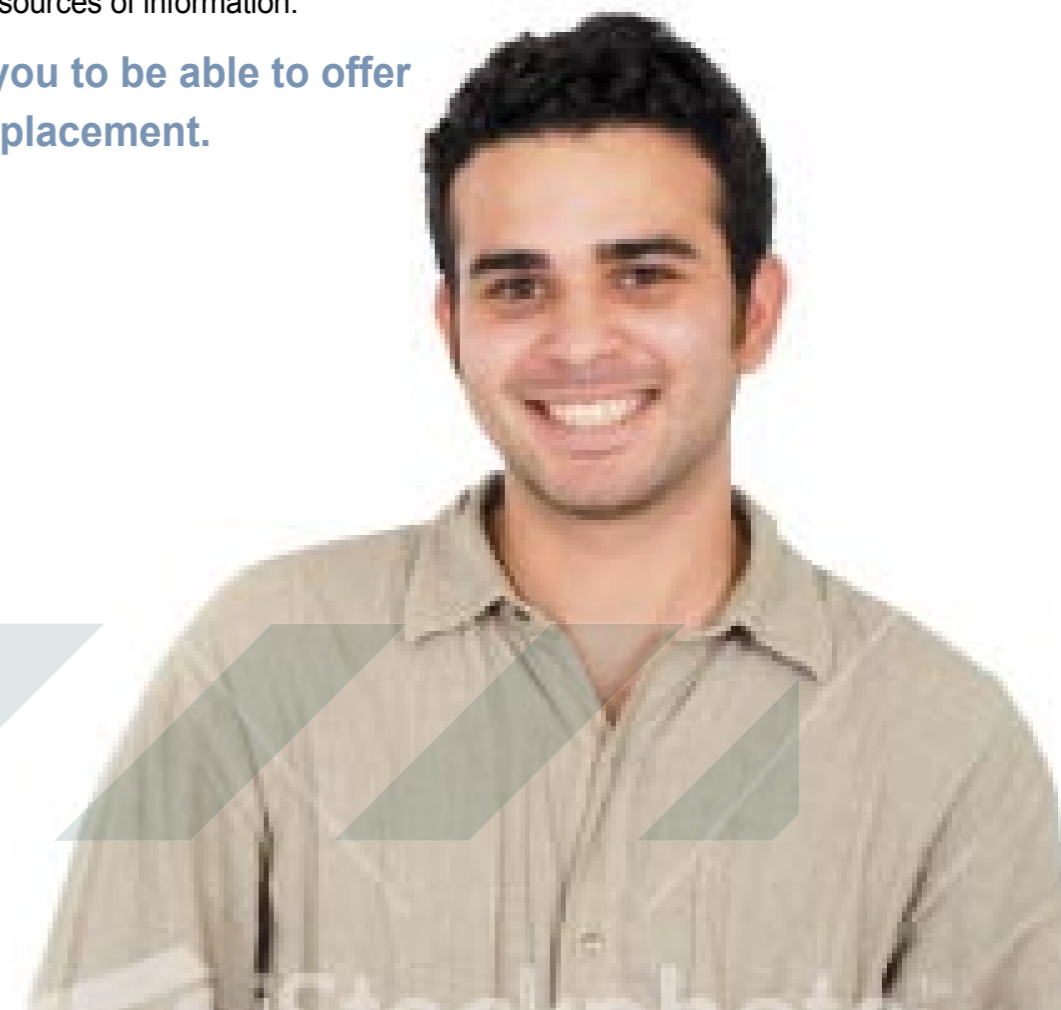
Increasing access to contacts, networks and information sources

- > Develop specific contacts through you and your organisation
- > General techniques for expanding networks of contacts

2.6 Limitations of the programme

- > Please note for legal reasons mentees cannot discuss work permits and immigration issues with you. If this is a concern, you must refer them to their University's International Student Office/ Adviser.
- > You may or may not be able to offer work experience; you should make this clear to your mentee. Mentors and mentees can discuss ways of gaining work experience or you can refer them to other organisations and sources of information.

We do not expect you to be able to offer your mentee a job/placement.



> SECTION 3: Additional information and resources

3.1 Dealing with problems and issues

ISSUES OR PROBLEMS THAT MAY OCCUR	SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
You don't "get on"	- If you really cannot make progress, contact the Mentoring Programme Officer about discontinuing or changing mentee
Lack of trust	- Talk to your mentee and try to work out where there is a problem - Talk to the Mentoring Programme Officer
Different expectations of each other	- Go back to the drawing board and agree your joint objectives
You can't meet your mentee's objectives	- Are their objectives reasonable? - Can anyone else in your organisation/ institution assist? - Can they be met by some other means? - Be aware of the limitations of your role
Loss of opportunity for either you or your mentee to continue (due to a change in your role/employer or personal circumstances for both)	- Contact the Mentoring Programme Officer as soon as possible
Clash of activities and timetable	- Rearrange the mentoring session - Extend the time between meetings - Meet outside working/lecture hours
Mentee does not make contact or you cannot get hold of mentee	- Mentee may be away or a problem may have arisen - If you are not able to establish contact by e-mail or phone, inform the Mentoring Programme Officer
Mentee unreliable and does not show commitment or interest	- Talk to Mentoring Programme Officer
Raising issues of a confidential and sensitive nature (for example declaring a disability)	- Refer mentee to an appropriate service at their University - Speak to the Mentoring Programme Officer

3.2 Other resources and networks of support

It is important to remember that mentors are not expected to deal with every query, and in fact with some queries or issues raised, it may be more appropriate to refer mentees to other sources of support within their University. Below is a list of other services available to support mentees.

- > A member of the Project Team at their University
- > Mentees on the programme are encouraged to make full use of their own University Careers Service, where a wide range of information and other support and advice is available. They can access information on vacancies, work experience, working abroad and particular sectors.

University of Liverpool Careers & Employability Service www.liv.ac.uk/careers
 Liverpool Hope University Career Development www.hope.ac.uk/careers
 Edge Hill University Careers Centre www.edgehill.ac.uk/careers

- > University Disability Advisers
- > University International Students Advisor (regarding work permits and working in the UK)
- > Personal tutors (for academic problems)
- > Student Welfare & Counselling Services

3.3 Useful web-sites

National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES) www.nases.org.uk/internationals

NASES is the professional representative body for practitioners from all styles of Student Employment Services, including those in students' unions, careers and personnel offices.

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) www.ukcisa.org.uk

UKCISA is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

British Council www.britishcouncil.org

British Council connects people with learning opportunities and creative ideas from the UK to build lasting relationships around the world.

> SECTION 4: Research into experiences and issues facing International students studying at a UK university

Researched and written by Sue Aigelsreiter, University of Liverpool Careers & Employability Service, August 2007.

The aim of this research is to investigate particular cultural, social and academic issues facing international students studying at a UK university. For the purposes of this research, international student groups include: Chinese, Indians, Koreans, Greeks, Africans and other ethnic groups.

This research is purely for information and awareness- raising purposes; some of the information will be useful for people mentoring an International student.

INTRODUCTION

Each year sees an ever increasing influx of international students coming to the UK to study at university. According to a report in 2007 by Universities UK, 80,594 international students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) came to a UK university to study.

Some of these students have already had experience of western culture and life, have enough funds to live comfortably and are informed about and prepared for aspects of student life, such as coping with British teaching methods, visa problems, part-time employment and English language ability. Those who have had little or no experience of the western world will find it more challenging to navigate themselves throughout their stay in the UK.

A survey of 5000 international students studying in the UK published by UKCISA in 2004 revealed that 89% were content with their overall stay. However, the main issues of concern that international students face, and which came to light for this research to inform other university mentoring programmes, were finance, social/cultural awareness and language difficulties.

Finance

Funding is a serious issue for some international students before arriving in the UK to study, whilst others who are so desperate to study in the UK, or are uninformed about the cost of living and university tuition fees, arrive in the UK without sufficient funds. An international student has to satisfy UK visa regulations and the university they have chosen of their financial eligibility before they arrive in the UK. However sometimes they start their stay unaware that:

- > they have to pay for fees (£8000 to £17000)
- > the cost of living in the UK is approximately £7200 in northwest, £11000 in the south. For example, those who come from countries where there is no central heating might not know how to budget for it. Trying to get information from the internet about cost of living might be difficult to retrieve when they have never lived here and are unaware what to look for, or some might not be so IT literate
- > they may expect they can do a gap year and then start their university course

- > they may find it difficult to find part-time employment (up to 20 hrs per week during term-time, but universities recommend that students work a maximum of 15 hrs per week) because of underlying cultural discrimination or barriers and/or language difficulties
- > they might not understand British banking procedures and thus incur debts or financial complications (transfer of funds from home country to the UK can be problematic)
- > they might not be aware of all the grants, bursaries, awards and loans available to them, and those that are aware might not understand the conditions that go with them. Additionally, there are accommodation vouchers (university accommodation), NUS card discounts on transport, books and materials.

Additionally:

- > some international students, mainly postgraduates, might have family or childcare responsibilities, which may involve them having to send money back home or support a family here on a single person's allowance
- > if there is a change of government or coup in the student's home country, then that could obliterate their scholarship funds/money transfers rather suddenly
- > if private funding is decreased or ceases abruptly due to family business failure, illness or other reasons, this leaves the student with little or no financial support
- > some students might not wish to take up part-time work, even if it is necessary because of the shame it could cast on the family within that particular community back home. It would be regarded as a failure by the family to be unable to support the student.

Social/Cultural Awareness:

Not only does studying in the UK involve academic learning for international students but it means learning about British cultural life too. Many students who have done this agree, as one student from Malaysia pointed out,

“My country sent me to gain experience. If the UK were similar to Malaysia, there would not be much point in being here.” British Council, ‘Cultural Connections’, 2007 (p.12)

The following are some cultural differences and their explanations which could prevent greater social interaction between international students and people from the western world:

- > when greeting it is advisable not to shake hands unless offered a handshake, and then use the right hand only as the left is used for other purposes. If offered a handshake, it will be a soft one not a firm one as practised in the western world
- > students from some cultures may avoid direct eye contact. It is advisable to avoid too much eye contact with those that appear uncomfortable with it
- > some students can be very shy with strangers and may not show any emotion
- > some international students may be formal and avoid using first names upon meeting (using Mr or Ms instead), having been taught to respect people in authority or their elders. Many prefer to address a stranger formally even if they are invited to address informally

- > when interviewing, or meeting in public it is advisable to keep a respectable distance from the student, especially female students. If meeting in an office or room, it is advisable to leave the door ajar so as to avoid making them feel intimidated
- > when having a discussion with a student, some nod politely to agree with the questioner's view so as not to appear impolite, even if they disagree in thought
- > Some students may not like to express their opinions or question someone directly as this may cause the student to 'lose face' or feel humiliated.
- > It is important to make clear that in British society, men and women are of equal status. Male international students from a different culture where women are subordinate to men may not wish to accept this.

General:

- > When they first arrive in the UK, students miss their strong family ties and interaction, such as the family gathering at mealtimes which is typically more of a social bonding experience than in the UK. Many students lead more structured home and family lives in their own country because of their religious or cultural customs
- > Punctuality is not of the same importance to some international students as it is to people in the UK. Students need to be informed that arriving on time for appointments in the UK is necessary
- > Apologies for lateness are not generally expressed as they are in Britain, but students will appreciate being made aware of the need to be punctual
- > There are those international students who experience homesickness due to being apart from their families which they are not able to admit to due to 'losing face', feeling a failure and disgracing their family name
- > British humour – is unique but could be misunderstood or give offence to a person from another culture who is not acquainted with it
- > 'thumbs up' sign is considered obscene in some cultures (e.g. Bangladesh)
- > Cultures can vary from country to country, e.g. a Nigerian Muslim will have different traditions to an Arab Muslim
- > British weather, particularly in winter, can affect those who come from hot climates. Some students even return home as they are unable to cope.

Language Issues:

In the MORI Poll of 2003, language competence presented the main difficulty for international students while the UKCISA study of 2004 found that international students had differing views depending on their country of origin. For those international students for whom English was a foreign language, over 50% were concerned about this before arrival. Many Chinese students were concerned about their English both socially and academically, whilst 45% of Thai and 29% of Taiwanese students worried about their academic English. One student from China said that she found English a struggle initially because not everyone speaks or explains clearly (Prospects website on International Students Case Studies-China).

Issues to be aware of:

- > International students may find it difficult to cope when group interaction is required (which would increase their need to speak English) because of cultural observance (no eye contact, close proximity to others)
- > 'yes' and 'no' meanings. International students get confused as how to answer positive questions with a negative, e.g. "It's a sunny day, isn't it?"
- > Indicating 'yes' and 'no' – in the UK nodding means 'yes' and shaking the head from side to side means 'no'. In other cultures, this can mean the opposite
- > Regional accents and colloquialism can be confusing
- > Different tones of voice have different meanings/hidden assumptions which an international student may not grasp
- > 'please' and 'thank you' is not used in some cultures because it sounds so exaggerated the way it is used in the UK. On the other hand, a polite way of asking for something in another language might sound like an order when it's translated into English
- > Saying 'sorry' in English to apologise for so many different things is bewildering to those not from the western world
- > 'going for a coffee' – in the British way of life means 'going for a chat/getting to know someone better'. As some international students do not drink tea or coffee they may misunderstand and therefore refuse this invitation
- > Some students just need polite but firm responses in discussion with them as they may be persistent in discussing their point of view. They might not also understand the British way of answering indirectly and politely, e.g. "I really don't think we could do this....." so it is better to say "We are unable to do that, but we could offer this...." to make it quite clear.

CONCLUSION

Here are some quotes from international students who came to the UK to study on what they liked or disliked about living in the UK (British Council, 'Cultural Connections', 2007):

"I liked the multicultural nature of the UK- you meet with such great diversity. It is one of the strengths of the UK – it is an eye-opening experience"

"People don't understand my need for privacy due to the greater conservatism of my culture"

"Living here has given me my independence, something I'd never have had back home, where girls move from their father's to their husband's home"

"If I was telling a friend about the UK I would definitely tell them about the weather"

"The UK has made me into a person of confidence and rigour. I want to succeed and it is the UK which has given me my ladder to success. My life is now beautiful".

International students will have diverse experiences as they are different just like all UK students are different.

