

University Foundation Study

Academic Culture

Course Book

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Skills Map

Unit 1

Understanding academic culture

Familiarise yourself with key terminology related to academic life.

Unit 2

The transition to higher education

Identify and discuss important issues in this transition.

Unit 3

Expectations of higher education institutions

Examine both your own expectations of the teaching staff and the institution as well as the expectations placed on you as a student.

Unit 4

Critical incident analysis

Discuss issues relating to potential misunderstandings and miscommunication in academic life.

Unit 5

Cross-cultural communication

Evaluate and participate in effective and appropriate communication techniques for academic situations.

Unit 6

Philosophy of teaching and learning

Examine your attitudes to and beliefs about what both teaching and learning involve.

Destination: Academic Culture

Understanding academic culture

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- understand key terminology and concepts relating to academic culture.

Task 1 Defining academic culture

When people go overseas to live and work, it is necessary for them to get used to a culture that they may not be familiar with. It is the same when you go abroad to study.

- 1.1 Discuss the words in the box with another student. Decide what they mean to you, which ones have a similar meaning and how they relate to the topic of academic culture.

attitudes beliefs culture regulations research rules
philosophy study thinking values

- 1.2 Read and complete this definition of academic culture using some of the words you have discussed. Compare your completed definition with another student.

Academic culture refers to the ① _____, values and ② _____ that exist in higher education institutions, particularly universities. Such a ③ _____ exists alongside the culture of the rest of the country. Academic culture includes among other things the rules and ④ _____ for appropriate behaviour on the part of teacher and student, and the ⑤ _____ that underlies teaching and learning at this level. It is also about the beliefs held by those working within such an institution, such as a belief in original ⑥ _____ and critical ⑦ _____.

- 1.3 Use the definition of academic culture to help you discuss the differences between the learning culture where you were previously with that of the institution you are attending.

Task 2 Important words in academic culture

- 2.1 What do you think is happening in the three photographs?



2.2 Match the terms below with their definitions. Check your answers with other students.

- a) further education
- b) undergraduate
- c) personal tutor
- d) teaching assistant
- e) seminar
- f) core course
- g) social sciences
- h) plagiarism
- i) formative assessment

- 1 a student-focused class with two-way dialogue involving students
- 2 a person who may conduct tutorials or seminars after the lecture and mark students' essays
- 3 the use of other people's ideas or research without appropriate acknowledgement
- 4 an academic staff member assigned to students for support and guidance
- 5 coursework that provides feedback and helps students do well in summatively assessed coursework and exams at a later date; it is not given a grade
- 6 courses of study or training, usually not at university, that some people take after they have left secondary school
- 7 a compulsory course essential to your degree
- 8 the study of people in society, which includes politics, economics, law, etc.
- 9 the first level of study after leaving school, usually lasting three or four years

2.3 Complete the gap with the correct word from the pair of words supplied.

- a) lecture/seminar

The _____ was very crowded, so it was difficult to hear everything.

- b) lecturer/teaching assistant

Xavier stayed on at university after finishing his MA and worked as a _____ while studying for a PhD.

- c) research/plagiarism

It is tempting to copy things straight from the Web, but _____ is absolutely forbidden.

- d) tutor/personal tutor

If you have a problem with choosing your modules, you should make an appointment to discuss it with your _____.

- e) formative assessment/summative assessment

This course uses _____. The grades will count towards your final degree.

- f) higher education/further education

My mother left school at sixteen without many qualifications, but she went back into _____ in her twenties to do a photography course.

- g) core course/optional course
Jens has decided to take a(n) _____ in Spanish as well as his other subjects. He doesn't need the extra credits, but he wants to go to Spain in the summer.
- h) Humanities/Social Sciences
Anna is a _____ graduate. She has a degree in English and Drama.
- i) undergraduate/postgraduate
Leon worked in Australia for a year after he finished his first degree. Now he has gone back to university to study a(n) _____ course.

2.4 You have now worked with the following nine pairs of words. Discuss with another student or in a small group the differences between them.

- a) lecture/seminar
- b) lecturer/teaching assistant
- c) research/plagiarism
- d) tutor/personal tutor
- e) formative assessment/summative assessment
- f) higher education/further education
- g) core course/optional course
- h) Humanities/Social Sciences
- i) undergraduate/postgraduate

Reflect

Think about the following points:

- How does academic culture vary from country to country?
- How is the academic culture where you are studying different from the educational environment you are used to?

Student notes for Unit 1

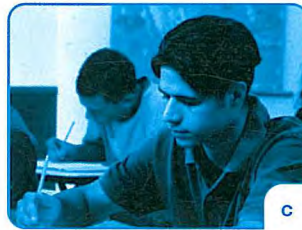
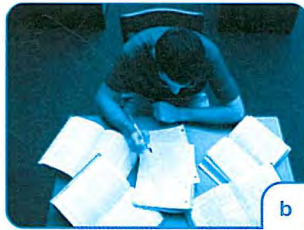
Unit 2 The transition to higher education

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- identify common challenges for students in the early stages of higher education;
- offer useful advice to these students.

Task 1 Identifying challenges

- 1.1 The photographs below show the challenges facing students studying at university for the first time. What do they represent? Discuss your ideas in groups.



- 1.2 Rate the challenges from 1 to 5 (1 = not challenging, 5 = most challenging). Add any other challenges you can think of.

- a) _____ making new friends
- b) _____ becoming a more independent learner
- c) _____ organising one's own time
- d) _____ doing research and writing original essays/reports
- e) _____ participating in seminars and tutorials
- f) _____ attending lectures and taking notes
- g) _____ sitting three-hour exams
- h) _____ participating in teamwork activities
- i) _____ adapting to the different expectations of teaching staff
- j) _____
- k) _____
- l) _____

- 1.3 Discuss your rating with another student, giving reasons for your choices. Explain your five most and least challenging things to the class.

Task 2 Offering advice

- 2.1 Read comments made by four undergraduates after their first term at university. Which ones are similar to your own experiences? Write something about yourself at the end.
- 2.2 Compare your experiences with another student or discuss in a group. How similar/different are you?
- 2.3 Discuss the best advice for the students below with another student. Present your advice to the class and note down any advice you had not discussed.



“ I did not organise the time very well, and this ”
led to not finishing my written assignments.



“ Like all overseas students, I need to find ”
ways of increasing my vocabulary.



“ The reason for my poor performance is that I haven't put in enough ”
effort. I think many of us have had similar problems because we were not
sure what the tutors expected from us and what the module required.



“ I felt really nervous the first time I had to participate in a seminar. Even though ”
I wanted to contribute, I couldn't find the right words. And some of the other
students talked so much and so quickly that I found it difficult to interrupt.



Task 3 Asking for help

- 3.1 Discuss in groups things you would like to discuss with your personal tutor but have not yet asked. Identify several common issues in the group. Note down these issues below and discuss how you would express them to your tutor.



- 3.2 Discuss as a class some of the issues you raised in Exercise 3.1.

Reflect

Think about how you have adapted to higher education. If there are any particular problems you managed to overcome, think about how you did so. If there are ways in which you have still not managed to adapt, think about why and try to find strategies that might help you.

Student notes for Unit 2

3 Expectations of higher education institutions

At the end of this unit you will:

- be more aware of expectations about teaching and learning in English-medium universities.

Task 1 General expectations

The expectations you have when you start your course of study will affect the outcome. You may be disappointed by certain aspects as well as motivated by others. You may be shocked or surprised at the way things are done, and this can be upsetting if you are not prepared.



- 1.1 Think about anything that has surprised you about your course of study so far.
- 1.2 Decide if these statements are true (T), false (F) or depend (D). Compare your answers with another student.
- a) _____ Lectures are likely to have 100 or more students in attendance.
 - b) _____ Examinations are normally multiple-choice.
 - c) _____ A mark of 60% or over is considered very good.
 - d) _____ Libraries are poorly stocked, with most books held in the reserve section.
 - e) _____ Students are very serious and have little time for relaxation.
 - f) _____ Coursework is more important than examined work.
 - g) _____ Most students are living away from their families.
 - h) _____ Staff address students by their family names.
 - i) _____ Attendance at lectures is compulsory.
 - j) _____ A first-class degree is hard to obtain.

Task 2 Expectations of lecturers



2.1 Decide what you think are the main duties of a lecturer. Discuss your ideas with another student.

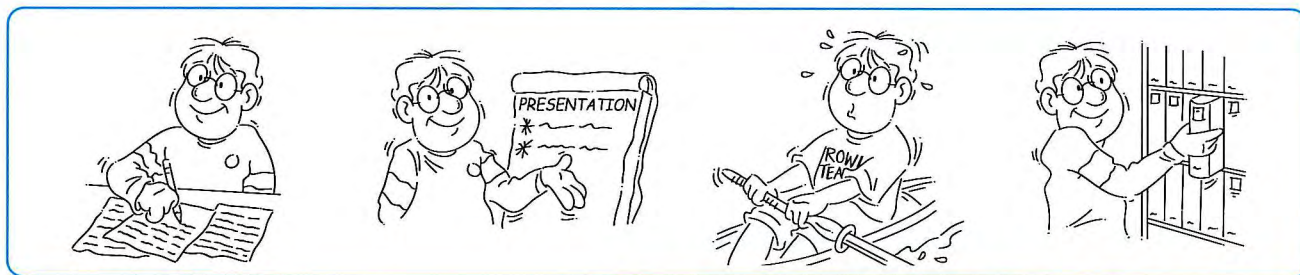
2.2 Discuss and decide which of the following you would expect of a lecturer in a higher education institution. Why or why not? Compare your choices with other students.

- a) give interesting lectures
- b) supply handouts about the lecture before or afterwards
- c) be available at any time to answer queries
- d) check assignments for language errors before submission
- e) set and mark assignments
- f) organise social events for the class
- g) know students' first names and use them
- h) be known by his/her first name
- i) help students to find jobs after graduation
- j) be flexible about submission deadlines

2.3 Change the statements in 2.2 so that they reflect exactly what you would expect from a lecturer. Explain your statements to the class.



Task 3 Expectations of students



3.1 Read these statements describing what lecturers may expect from students in a higher education institution. Discuss with another student which column you would put them in and why. Add anything else you can think of.

- a) attend all lectures, seminars and tutorials punctually
- b) let the lecturer know if they are going to be absent
- c) take notes from the lecture
- d) read around the subject matter of the lecture
- e) participate in seminar discussions and answer questions
- f) give presentations
- g) use the library for research
- h) participate in group and teamwork activities
- i) help the lecturer by cleaning the board or carrying books
- j) speak to the lecturer if they have a personal problem
- k) join a university club or society
- l) get a part-time job to help with finances
- m) buy small presents at the end of the term/semester to thank the lecturer
- n) _____
- o) _____
- p) _____

Students are expected to ...	Students aren't expected to ...

ut life as a student in higher education. These
ve made you pleasantly surprised. Think about
your attitude has changed towards them as

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ve made you pleasantly surprised. Think about
your attitude has changed towards them as

4 Critical incident analysis

At the end of this unit you will:

- be more aware of differences between behaviour in your own cultural environment and the academic culture in which you are studying;
- be better able to handle communication in potentially problematic situations.

Task 1 What is a critical incident?

The term **critical incident** was originally applied to any serious event that interrupted the ability of an individual to cope with his or her everyday life. The term has typically been applied to events such as illness and bereavement.

More recently, the term has been extended to more commonplace events such as cultural misunderstandings. Although some incidents might not appear 'critical' in themselves, they might nevertheless result in a critical outcome.

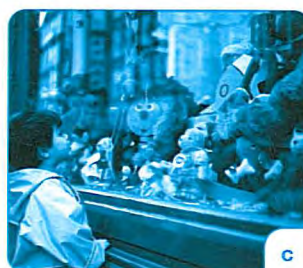
- 1.1 Discuss with another student whether you agree that small incidents can have a big impact on our lives. Try to come up with some examples from your own experience.

Task 2 Reflecting on personal experience

Most people remember events in their lives that have left emotional scars or caused changes in their behaviour. Many of these will have happened during childhood, where the cultural mismatch is between childhood and adult values of behaviour.

- 2.1 Think about an incident in your childhood that had a big effect on you. If possible, try to think of small events that had a big impact. Discuss the incident with a partner and try to reach a conclusion as to why it had such a big impact on you. For example:

- Being told you were behaving inappropriately in public.
- You made a big effort to do something well but were told you were not good at it.
- You were criticised for doing something wrong when you thought you were helping.
- You were forbidden from having or doing something, but could not understand why.
- Your reasons for doing something were misunderstood.



2.2 Look at the following cultural features that might affect the way others interpret your behaviour. Identify any that you feel have caused misunderstandings. Add other features you can think of to the list.

gestures

facial expressions

presentation of self: hair, dress, etc.

concept of beauty

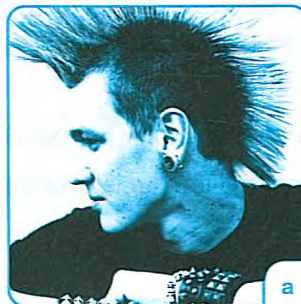
concept of time

concept of self

eating habits

work ethic

attitude to family



2.3 Discuss your conclusions with a partner. Then share the results of your discussions with the rest of the class.

2.4 How do the cultural features above transfer to an academic context in a new environment? Think about your attitude to the following. Are they things you would or wouldn't do in a seminar?

- use the tutor's first name
- disagree openly with other participants
- accept without question the instructions of the tutor
- ask to work with a different student from the one you were assigned to
- agree with the general consensus even though you strongly disagree
- make sarcastic or ironic comments during discussions
- wait to be asked before speaking

Task 3 Critical incident analysis

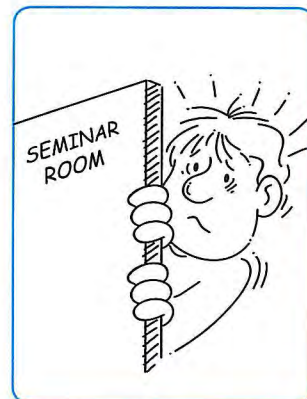
Studying critical incidents will help you move beyond the individual response and develop an understanding of the bigger picture. In the context of overseas studies, an inappropriate individual reaction is usually the result of a cultural misunderstanding. By analysing the different scenarios and reflecting on the causes of actions, you will be able to gain a more objective view and adapt more easily to the new environment.

3.1 Discuss the following four situations with another student. Choose the most appropriate solution from choices a) – d). Justify your ideas with reference to your own experience. Note that more than one answer may be acceptable in each case.

- 1) You are 20 minutes late for a lecture. When you arrive, you can see from the door that the lecture has already started. What would be the best thing to do?

- a) Go in, walk up to the lecturer and apologise.
- b) Wait outside until the lecture is over and then apologise to the lecturer.
- c) Knock and wait to be told to enter.
- d) Enter quietly and take a seat, trying not to be noticed.

Note: Do you think class size makes a difference?



- 2) You are given some coursework to complete in two days' time. This is very difficult for you because your parents have just come to visit and expect you to show them around. What is the best solution?

- a) Explain the situation to your tutor and ask for an extension.
- b) Be absent from class when you have to hand the coursework in.
- c) Go to class without the coursework and say nothing.
- d) Tell your parents they will have to entertain themselves.



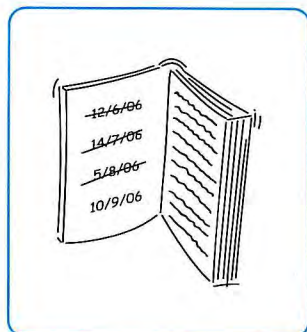
- 3) You need to ask for an extension to your coursework submission date because you have not finished an important essay for another subject. What would you be most likely to do?

- a) Say you were sick and have a medical certificate.
- b) Say you had problems with your laptop and lost your work.
- c) Say you had too many assignments due in at the same time.
- d) Say you had relations visiting you.



- 4) Your personal tutor has asked to see you urgently and has suggested it is about a disciplinary matter. Which of these options is most likely to be the problem?

- a) You haven't returned a library book due a week before.
- b) You lent your lecture notes to a friend who was absent.
- c) You handed in an identical essay to a friend, as you were told to work together.
- d) You broke a test tube in the chemistry laboratory.



- 3.2 Think of any other similar incidents you have heard of, or that happened to you. Tell a partner/small group and make up your own multiple-choice options like 1) – 4) above. Swap these with another pair/group for them to discuss.

Reflect

This unit should have raised many issues that you have not thought about in any depth before. Think about what you have learned, and continue to reflect on how your attitude to critical incidents will affect your studies.

Student notes for Unit 4

5 Cross-cultural communication

At the end of this unit you will:

- be more aware of reciprocal speech styles common in English-language academic contexts;
- be better able to participate in academic situations such as seminars.

Task 1 Feeling at ease when you speak

You are judged in universities both by what you say and by what you write. More importantly, you will probably be awarded marks for participation in seminars.

When you write, you have more time to compose your thoughts, whereas participating in class discussions requires more rapid responses and can be stressful for both native and non-native speakers.



As speaking can be stressful, it is worth thinking about how to put yourself at ease before speaking. An important aspect of this is to feel confident about conventions of speaking, especially in a different cultural environment.

1.1 One source of uncertainty is the correct form of address. Which of the following titles have you used with academic staff you have worked with? Discuss with other students.

- a) first name, e.g., Mike
- b) academic title, e.g., teacher, doctor, professor
- c) academic title with surname, e.g., Doctor Giddings
- d) surname, e.g., Mr, Mrs or Ms Chedzoy
- e) madam or sir
- f) dear, mate, etc.
- g) other

1.2 Your lecturer is called Dr Meadows. Your class is a large one and it is the second week of term. You pass Dr Meadows in the corridor one day. How would you greet her?

- a) Good morning, doctor.
- b) Good morning, Doctor Meadows.
- c) Good morning, madam.
- d) Good morning, dear.

- 1.3** Talk about your experiences and conclusions as a class and establish a few criteria for addressing staff. Write your criteria below.



- 1.4** True or false? Discuss the following with another student, giving reasons.

- a) The way you address someone in a hierarchical relationship (such as between teacher and student) should be negotiated by the person in the higher position.
- b) You should never address a lecturer by his or her first name.
- c) Academic staff may ask to be called by their first names, especially in smaller groups.
- d) You won't offend academic staff by addressing them incorrectly. They will understand if you make a mistake.
- e) You should ask how someone would like to be addressed if you aren't sure.

Task 2 Reciprocal speech style

Uncertainty about how to express your thoughts can also inhibit your contribution. In a seminar, you are expected to listen to the tutor and other members of the group, but also respond immediately (in words) to what they say. This style of exchange can be termed reciprocal speech style.



- 2.1** The following extract is a typical exchange that you might hear in a seminar. The exchange involves asking and answering questions and adding comments. Identify this pattern in the conversation below by matching 1) – 3) with their functions a) – c).

Student: Do you think the recent climate changes can be attributed to global warming?

Tutor: 1) No, I don't actually. _____

2) I think they are part of the normal pattern of climate change. If you look at recorded weather charts kept over the last 200 years, you'll see that in 1857, there were extremely high temperatures in the UK. _____

3) What about you? Do you think global warming exists? _____

Student: Well, ...

- a) Ask
- b) Answer
- c) Add

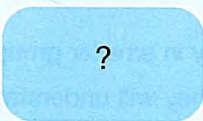
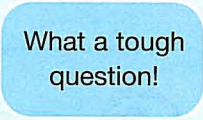
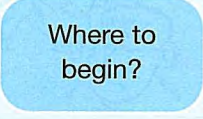
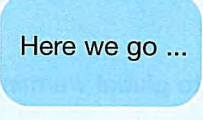
- 2.2** Discuss with another student the problems you might have in finding an immediate reply.

Task 3 Giving yourself thinking time

As already discussed, speaking can be stressful, especially in front of others. One reaction to stress is a blank mind. This then adds to the stress, as you feel under pressure to say something. One way of helping to solve this problem is to look for ways of finding stress-free thinking time.

3.1 Match each technique for buying yourself time with the correct picture. Check your answers with another student. In your pair, evaluate the techniques a) – d), trying to find an advantage and disadvantage for each one.

- a) _____ Pretend you haven't heard.
- b) _____ Repeat the question.
- c) _____ Use delaying noises.
- d) _____ Begin speaking by saying: 'It depends ...'

		“ Sorry? ”	1
		“ What were the main effects of the Industrial Revolution? ”	2
		“ Umm, err, hmm ... ”	3
		“ It depends whether you are talking about short- or long-term effects ... ”	4

3.2 Think of other ways you can play for time. Write a list below and discuss your ideas with another student.

Task 4 Applying discussion techniques

4.1 What opinions do you have related to the following five questions? Think about each one and then write *Yes* or *No*. Then exchange views with another student.

- a) Do you think capital punishment is a good idea?
- b) Should we ban laboratory testing of cosmetics on animals?
- c) Is it a good idea for tuition fees to be free for all local university students?
- d) Ought we to make it compulsory for all students to learn at least one foreign language?
- e) Do you think the terminally ill should be able to end their own lives?

4.2 Think about the 3-As reciprocal speech style you looked at in Task 2.1. Your answers to the above questions are the first A (Answer). Which of the following could be the second A (Add)?

- 1) Mistakes are possible.
- 2) The financial implications would be very important.
- 3) We need to consider who would gain what.
- 4) All life is sacred.
- 5) The decision should depend on what is best for society.

4.3 Think about the following five questions. Which could be the third A (Ask)?

- i) What about the consequences?
- ii) Would that deter people from committing crimes?
- iii) How would this be determined?
- iv) What might the advantages and disadvantages be?
- v) Who would benefit?

4.4 Choose one or more of the questions a) – e) and construct a discussion with another student using the 3-As reciprocal speech style. Use any of the ideas in 4.2 to help, and add your own thoughts.



4.5 Repeat the above. This time try to give your own opinions. Give yourself time to think, using tactics discussed in Task 3.

Reflect

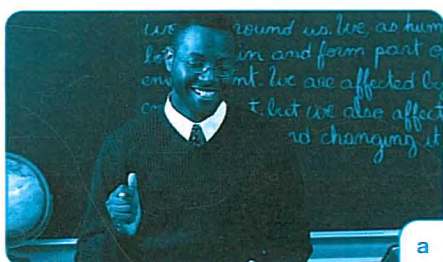
Student notes for Unit 5

Unit 6 Philosophy of teaching and learning

At the end of this unit you will be more aware of:

- what constitutes good teaching;
- what is involved in learning a subject.

Task 1 A good teacher?



a



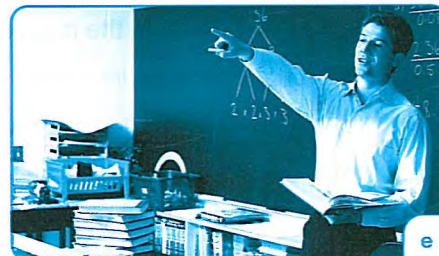
c



d



b



e

- 1.1 Discuss the different teachers in the photographs. What kind of teacher would you like to have, and why?
- 1.2 Read the following list of features that you think should be found in a good teacher. Rank them from 1 to 10 (1 = most important, 10 = least important), giving reasons for your choices.

A good teacher ...

- _____ explains clearly.
- _____ takes responsibility for a student passing or failing a course.
- _____ knows his/her subject very well and is able to answer any questions students may ask.
- _____ does not make mistakes.
- _____ is neat, well-groomed and smart in appearance.
- _____ has a clean and tidy office.
- _____ gives regular tests to check students' understanding.
- _____ sets exams only on what has been taught in class.
- _____ makes learning fun.
- _____ encourages learners to be independent and take risks.

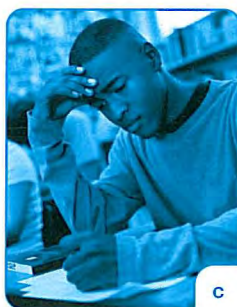
Task 2 The good student



a



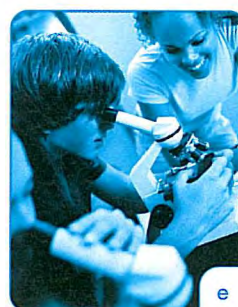
b



c



d



e

2.1 Discuss the different students in the photographs. What are they doing that is good for study?

2.2 Work in pairs. Read the following list of features that you think should be found in a good student. Rank them in order of importance from 1 to 11 (1 = most important, 11 = least important), giving reasons for your choices.

A good student ...

- a) _____ knows the answers to a teacher's questions.
- b) _____ enters into discussion with the teacher if he/she disagrees.
- c) _____ is willing to answer in class.
- d) _____ is cheerful and popular.
- e) _____ previews and reviews lectures.
- f) _____ goes beyond the textbook in the pursuit of knowledge.
- g) _____ is able to assess the quality of his/her own work.
- h) _____ helps other class members.
- i) _____ gets high marks.
- j) _____ is able to think critically and creatively.
- k) _____ is modest.

Task 3 Teacher-student contract

Your success as a student is something you can decide. Complete this section with this fact firmly in mind.

3.1 Think about the discussions you have had in this unit. Then discuss with another student how you can be successful in your studies. How similar are you? Be ready to tell the other students about your decisions.

3.2 Bearing in mind the discussion you had in 3.1, complete the following written undertaking.

I, _____ undertake that I will:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Signed _____ On this day _____ 20____

I, _____ undertake that I will:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Signed _____ On this day _____ 20____

Reflect

You have made an undertaking to behave in a certain way during your stay at the university. Over the next few days, think about what this means and how it will affect you.



Different pond, different fish

Review

Task

This site includes a forum for discussion. Go to the forum and reply to one of the entries as well as posting a comment of your own.

Classroom culture

Review

Task

Read the section titled *Value of Student Perspective*. Then write one or two paragraphs describing how the classroom culture described here differs from that in your country and/or in the country you are studying.

Extension activities

Activity 1

Poster presentation

Prepare a poster presentation that gives some advice on academic culture for a student who is going to be studying in your country for six months.

Activity 2

User guide

Prepare a user guide on academic culture for new students to be posted on the university website.

Glossary

Academic culture (n) The values and *beliefs* that exist in academic institutions, particularly those which inform and influence academic conventions.

Assignment (n) A piece of work, generally written, that is set as part of an academic course and is normally completed out of class and submitted by a set date to be assessed.

Belief (n) Something that is accepted to be right, often by a collection of people, even if it has not been (or cannot be) demonstrated as true. For example, many vegetarians hold the belief that killing animals is wrong.

Core course (n) A course that must be completed as part of a programme in order to gain a qualification such as a degree.

Coursework (n) Work that is done as part of a course and that is normally assessed to form part of a student's final grade.

Critical incident (n) A problematic or challenging event that may not appear to have an impact at the time, but subsequently has a critical outcome, i.e., an outcome that is insightful and/or changes the views or behaviour of those it affects.

Essay (n) An analytical piece of academic writing that is usually quite short in length. Students are

required to write essays as *assignments* and in exams so that their learning can be assessed.

First-class degree (n) The highest classification of bachelor degree award that an undergraduate can achieve at a British college or university. Students generally receive a first-class degree (a first) if they score high overall marks (of 70% or over) in exams and/or *coursework*.

Formative assessment (n) Tests or unassessed *coursework* that does not count towards a final grade, but instead provides feedback and help for students in preparation for assessed *coursework* and exams at a later date.

Further education (n) Post-compulsory education at pre-degree level, for example at a vocational, technical or art college or institute. It may offer students the chance to take qualifications also available at the level of compulsory schooling and/or *tertiary* and degree courses.

Handout (n) Paper-based information that is given out by the lecturer or speaker in a *lecture*, *seminar* or *tutorial*. It usually gives a summary, bibliography or extra information connected with the *lecture* topic. It may also be a worksheet.

Higher education (n) *Tertiary education* that is beyond the level of *secondary education* and that

usually offers first and higher degrees. A university is an institution of *higher education*.

Humanities (n) Arts subjects that are concerned with human thought and culture, sometimes known as the liberal arts, such as: philosophy, literature, languages and history of art. These departments are normally grouped together to form a faculty in a university.

Independent learning (n) Where learners take responsibility for their own learning, and are able to develop their personal *learning styles*. It allows learners to make decisions and set goals that meet their own needs.

Key concepts (n) Important ideas and *beliefs*. For example, in modern British *academic culture*, *independent learning* is a key concept.

Learning style (n) A style of thinking about, processing and remembering information that you have to learn. Different styles can be classified in a variety of ways. For example, you may have an analytical learning style.

Lecture (n) A formal talk or *presentation* given to inform or instruct people. In *tertiary education*, lectures are usually delivered by academic staff to large groups of students.

Multiple-choice (adj) Describes a question or task where students are given a set of several possible answers, normally only one of which is correct. They are required to choose the correct answer.

Optional course (n) A course that is not compulsory for the completion of a degree. Students may be asked to supplement their core courses by choosing one or more optional courses.

Participate (v) To get involved or take part in something. For example, it is important to participate actively in *seminars*.

Personal tutor (n) A tutor who is assigned to a group of students to provide advice, guidance and support on personal and study matters within their experience and expertise.

Philosophy (n) A system of values or set of *beliefs* that affect how someone lives his/her life.

Plagiarism (n) Presenting someone else's work, i.e., written text, data, images, recording, as your own. This includes:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without a citation;
- presenting other people's ideas without a citation;
- working with others and then presenting the work as if it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not always deliberate, and it is important to adopt the academic conventions of always indicating ideas and work that are not your own, and *referencing* all your sources correctly.

Presentation (n) A short *lecture*, talk or demonstration given in front of an audience. The speaker prepares his or her presentation in advance and will often use visual aids or realia to illustrate it.

Postgraduate (n) (adj) 1 (n) A student who has completed a university degree and is studying a higher-level course at post-first degree level. 2 (adj) Used to describe such a student or his/her studies.

Reciprocal speech style (n) A description of the speech style where the listener is required to respond immediately to the speaker using a similar style. This is expected in situations such as seminars where, for example, a student may respond to a speaker's comments, add information and pose questions.

Reference (n) (v) 1 (n) Acknowledgment of the sources of ideas and information that you use in written work and oral *presentations*. 2 (v) To acknowledge or mention the sources of information.

Research (v) (n) 1 (v) To gather information from a variety of sources and analyse and compare it. 2 (n) Information collected from a variety of sources about a specific topic.

Secondary education (n) Compulsory education between the ages of 11/12 and 16 at a secondary school.

Seminar (n) A small group discussion led by a tutor, lecturer or guest speaker. Students are expected to take an active part in the seminar.

Social sciences (n) Science subjects that are connected with the study of people in society, including politics, economics, history, anthropology, law, etc. These departments are normally grouped together to form a faculty in a university.

Summative assessment (n) Assessed *coursework* and/or tests taken at the end of a course to see how much a student has learned and which counts towards a final grade.

Teaching assistant (n) *Postgraduate* student employed to perform teaching duties such as conducting *seminars* and *tutorials* and marking *assignments*.

Tertiary education (n) Formal non-compulsory education that comes after secondary education and is usually for students aged over 18. It may involve a university course or other *higher* or *further education* course.

Title analysis (n) The process of breaking an essay title into parts in order to identify and highlight *key concepts* and ideas that need to be considered in the essay.

Technique (n) A method or way of doing something that involves skill and/or efficiency. For example, it is possible to learn useful techniques for answering exam questions.

Time management (n) The ability to organise your time so that you use it more effectively and efficiently.

Toolkit (n) In academic life, this is a collection of resources, *techniques* or aids that help you to do something, for example, prepare for an exam.

Tutorial (n) A small group discussion or one-to-one meeting with a tutor.

Undergraduate (n) (adj) 1 (n) A student who is studying for his/her first degree. 2 (adj) Used to describe a first-degree course.

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