

Teaching International Students

Challenges & Opportunities



Countries of Origin

There are approximately 180 international students at Luther

They are mainly from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe

Africa	Angola, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Burundi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, eSwatini, Egypt, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan
Asia	Vietnam, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, S. Korea Thailand, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Myanmar
Europe	Georgia, Norway Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan
Latin America	Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Panama
Middle East	Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq

For Consideration

- There is tremendous diversity within the international student population with important differences in English language ability, family income, and educational goals.
- These students have the additional pressures of adapting to an unfamiliar academic environment, dealing with language barriers, culture shock, homesickness, financial pressures, and newfound personal independence.
- Some of the students arrive on our campuses with unrealistic expectations about work opportunities while studying on campus and following graduation.
- Some have no idea about the liberal arts education and its value
- Approximately 50% of the students come from UWC's
- Faculty have to be willing to use some intrusive advising strategies to help their students succeed.

Cultural Challenges

- Unfamiliar accents, names and pace of speech
- Understanding of academic integrity and cheating
- Understanding of continuous assessment vs one final exam/paper
- Responses to group work- individualism vs interdependence and collaboration
- Hesitancy to speak up when English is not their first language
- Limited understanding of US popular culture icons references
- Limited understanding of some terminology, humor and sarcasm
- Writing conventions/rules vs their previous writing experiences
- Formality vs informality in the classroom
- Limited familiarity with lab work and limited access to well stocked libraries

Cultural Challenges

- In some cultures, professors are the expert and it is presumptuous of a student to question them. Lectures are the standard mode of instruction
- In some cultures, the expectation is that students will not listen and not interrupt the professor. These students may see asking questions as disrespectful and embarrassing. This is not necessarily a sign that the material is not understood.
- Heated class discussions with interruptions by the participants can be difficult for them to understand and participate in.
- In some cultures, multiple choice questions are not a part of course assessment so they have no idea how to do this well. Extended writing assignments are the norm.
- In some cultures there is a stigma associated with mental health and so students can be offended and or refuse to get help.

Opportunities

- Create a classroom environment in which everyone knows what is expected, and the consequences of unmet expectations
- Work to keep language free of jargon, specific cultural references that only make sense to the American students
- Ask the student how to pronounce their names. Make this part of a getting to know you conversation. Explain that they may need to remind you more than once.
- Use the photos in the online directory to help differentiate between the students with similar physical appearance, names and accents.
- Make an effort to learn about their special holidays and find ways to acknowledge them
- Use CIES as one of your resources

Opportunities

- Exercise patience with the students. Their cultural norms are different and they come from different educational systems with different standards. Use these differences as learning opportunities for all the students and yourself.
- Language can create many barriers to clear communication and understanding for students for whom English is not a first language. Use visuals to help them (and others) understand what you are teaching. It will also help to expand their vocabulary.
- Encourage students to email ideas and questions to you if they are uncomfortable with speaking up in class.
- Look for ways to validate the value of seeking help, eg sharing something you learned from a student outside of class or thanking them for their honest feedback. You do not have to tell the class the name of the student.

Maintaining F-1 Status - Role of Faculty

- Check to ensure that advisees are registered for at least 12 credits each semester. Should a situation arise that requires a reduced workload, the CIES office must be consulted **before** any change is made.
- Students wishing to do an internship must get approval for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) from their **major** department, the Registrar and CIES. The process begins with the Career Center. The CPT is credit bearing and part of their immigration record.
- Students **cannot** work off campus doing any of these activities for payment—house sitting, caring for pets, and babysitting. Sometimes faculty/staff offer these for mutual benefit and to help a student in need but these activities are not allowed by the regulations governing the student's status.

Maintaining F-1 Status: Role of Faculty

- Offering classes online is temporarily allowed under the COVID-19 SEVIS guidelines. Normally, only one online class is allowed as part of the semester's course load for students who are physically present on the campus.
- Unsatisfactory performance, failing grades, incompletes, or lack of consultation with faculty advisors are not acceptable as reasons for failing to maintain one's student status. SEVIS requires that each student be registered each semester and this means verifying that they are making satisfactory progress towards earning their degree.
- Any decision to allow a student to take an extra semester in order to meet graduation requirements or to take less than 12 credits in a semester, must be discussed with the CIES office **before** granting the request. This ensures that the reason(s) for the extension or reduction meets SEVIS standards (language difficulty/verified medical condition/)

Maintaining F-1 Status:Role of Faculty

- CIES must be informed when majors and or minors are added to or removed the curriculum. The information is needed for certification (Form I-17)
- Always check with the CIES office whenever you are unsure about how a decision will affect the student's status. The persons to contact are:

Wintlett [Taylor-Browne \(brownewi@luther.edu\)](mailto:brownewi@luther.edu)

Clara Muggli-Toyloy (mugglicl@luther.edu)

We are the Designated School Officials (DSO) responsible for advising students and maintaining accurate immigration records. Failure to do this effectively may result in de-certification and the inability to continue recruiting international students.

Resources

[Things to Know About International Students – International Student Academic Support \(wou.edu\)](#)

[Homepage | Study in the States \(dhs.gov\)](#)