Adjustment of International Students in a UK University: Reasons for Study Abroad and Subsequent Academic and Socio-cultural Experiences

Submitted by Chien, Yu-Yi to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in December 2013

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: Chien, Yu-Yi
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents and say thank you to them for their love and support to me and for a very good education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the very precious advice and support from my primary supervisor, Dr. Susan M. Jones, and secondary supervisor, Dr. B. Jill Cadorath. I also will not forget the supervision from my previous supervisors, Dr. William B. Richardson and Dr. Elias Avramidis. Comments from Dr. Judith K. Staarman and Dr. Michael Hughes were also beneficial in helping me complete this thesis.

I am also very grateful for the assistance, encouragement, and support from Dr. Ros J. Fisher, Dr. Keith C. Postlethwaite, Dr. James W. F. Theodosius, Dr. Wendy Robinson, and Mr. Michael J. Jeffries-Harris. I will always remember the support from the faculty and staff at the researched university for their help with the questionnaire distribution.

The voluntary participation and assistance from the interview participants and questionnaire respondents in the researched institution during the 2010–11 academic year allowed this research to be completed successfully.

I also appreciate very much the encouragement, support, love, and smiles from my colleagues, friends in the chaplaincy, staff in the Graduate School of Education, librarians, St. Luke’s IT staff, friends in the print room, and my best Exeter friends in St. Luke’s Porter’s Lodge.

The blessings that I have received are countless.
ABSTRACT

Research on international students contributes to our understanding of the internationalization of higher education. This study investigates the adjustment of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at a southwestern UK university through a mixed methods research design. The main focus is on reasons for studying abroad, academic experience, and socio-cultural experience. Twenty-six students participated in the qualitative interviews. 250 students responded to a quantitative questionnaire survey.

The results indicate that adjustment is a complex set of experiences and many factors may have an impact on it. The data suggest that value of overseas study, personal or family related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons are main motivators driving students to study abroad. Postgraduate international students tend to pay more attention to academic than socio-cultural adjustment because personal agency and cultural identity operate more explicitly in socio-cultural than academic adjustment. Additionally, the data reveal that both acculturation and hybridization account for the processes that inform students’ socio-cultural adjustment.

For theories explaining the findings regarding reasons for studying abroad, the push-pull model appears to be more applicable than the Theory of Planned Behavior, whereas Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory is found to be less relevant because international postgraduate students tend to have special characteristics, which differ from those of host country students, and their satisfaction perceptions regarding different needs are guided by various cultural factors. This study also suggests that the U-curve hypothesis is not supported by the research data, as methodological issues, different internal and external factors, cultural expectations, individual responses or attitudes, and technological and world development have the potential to impact on adjustment.
This research adds to theoretical knowledge associated with the adjustment of international students and, in practical terms, increases our current knowledge regarding student recruitment and international student support services.

Keywords: international student, reason, study abroad, adjustment, academic, socio-cultural, experience, mixed methods
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Universities have become increasingly international institutions; the aim of this study is to understand how this trend is experienced by international students themselves. This chapter focuses on the factors influencing the internationalization of higher education, the reasons behind my own research interest, the purpose of my research, and how this research differs from previous studies. I will also provide a description of the research context for this study and explain the organization of the thesis.

The context in which this study was undertaken is a university in South West England. I have used this university to illustrate issues relating to internationalization in the text below. To preserve its anonymity, this university will be referred to as University South West (USW) throughout the thesis.

1.1 THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
This research primarily studies what factors motivate first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students to pursue an overseas education in a UK university and their subsequent academic and socio-cultural experiences. Therefore, issues related to the internationalization of higher education and international postgraduate students’ reasons for studying abroad and their subsequent adjustment experience are vital to this study.

The internationalization of higher education is an important issue in this globalized era. Altbach (1991) maintains that internationalization will be a significant trend for research, science or scholarship, and will affect both political and economic changes in the future. Wit (2002) also indicates that political, economic, socio-cultural, and academic rationales influence the internationalization of higher education. Teichler (1996) states, “[w]e might consider internationalization of higher education as the next theme, which gives
rise to a new focus of both higher education policy and higher education research” (p.435). Therefore, research on international education and the experiences of international students is highly relevant to the higher education context.

Research (Healey, 2008; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010) indicates that more and more students prefer to study at an overseas institution. There were about 3 million students studying abroad in 2007. This number is almost three times higher than the number in 1990 (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2009). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the 2009–10 academic year, the United States (20%), the United Kingdom (13%), France (8%), Australia (7%), and Germany (7%), the five top long-established destination countries, hosted about half (55%) of the world’s higher education-level mobile students (about 3.3 million students). Based on information collected by the Project Atlas from Institute of International Education (IIE), China (7%) is now the fifth largest host country of international tertiary students (Chow & Bhandari, 2010). “Along with China, many other traditional and emerging host countries are ramping up efforts to internationalize their academic institutions and attract more international students” (p.42).

IIE defines an international student as an individual who enrolls and studies at a foreign higher education institution with a temporary student visa. This student must not be a citizen, permanent resident, illegal alien, or refugee of the host country (Institute of International Education, 2005). Based on this definition, the most updated information (Institute of International Education, 2013) showed that, in the 2012–13 academic year, about 819,644 international students studied in the United States, the world’s leading host nation. Most of them were from China (29%), India (12%), Republic of South Korea (9%), Saudi Arabia (5%), Canada (3%), and Taiwan (3%). Information from IIE (2008) showed that in the 2006–07 academic year, about 376,190 international tertiary students studied in public institutions within the United Kingdom, the second largest host nation. Most of them were from China (13.3%), India (6.4%), the United States (5.9%), Germany (4.6%), and France (4.5%). Finally, based on information
from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2013), among “2, 496, 645 students in higher education in the UK in 2011/12 ... 132,550 (5.3%) were from other EU member countries and 302,680 (12.1%) were from non-EU countries.” China, India, and Nigeria were the top three non-EU countries of origin. 13% of the entire first-degree undergraduates, 46% of the overall postgraduates, and 41% of the total research postgraduates were non-UK students. These students represented almost 12% of the total student population in the United Kingdom.

The internationalization of higher education has led to a number of benefits worldwide. These benefits include increasing the quality of education, contributing to the economies of the host countries, and fostering international communication and understanding. Husén (1994) defines international education as: “a cross-disciplinary study of international and intercultural problems in education … [it] refers both to the objectives and content of certain educational pursuits and to the internationalization of such activities (p. 2972). Because of the increasing needs to globalize, to improve competition in the world knowledge economy, and to better the international position, more and more countries and their higher education institutions have made a great effort to internationalize themselves (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp, & Woodfield, 2013). The internationalization of higher education in the United Kingdom generally can be seen through different approaches, including “international students and staff mobility, partnerships and collaboration in research and teaching, and teaching and the internationalization of curricula” (p. 3).

Concerning quality of education, Gardner (1990) points out that international education and opportunities for studying abroad are potentially significant. The opportunities for international education can increase the quality of education as a consequence of competition among students in the globalized markets (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008). Additionally, international students financially contribute to both the higher education institutions and the national economies of a host country (Davey, 2005). For instance, in the 2012–13 academic year, international students and their families contributed nearly $24.7 billion to the U.S. economy (Institute of International Education, 2013). The estimate of non-UK higher education students’ contribution to the UK economy, including tuition
fees and living expenses, was about £7.9 billion for 2009 (Universities UK, 2012). The future economic contribution is estimated to be approximately £16.9 billion by 2025.

The United Kingdom is one of the leading destination countries recruiting international students for its tertiary education. A report from Universities UK (2012) indicates that characteristics, including “an international reputation for education and research, the profile of its elite global higher education brands, historical trade and political links, the popularity of English language study and culture, [and] post-study employment prospects” (p.12), benefit Britain’s competition in recruiting international students for its higher education. Toyoshima (2007) states that “(1) the existence of a high standard of universities based on a national quality assurance system, (2) the short length of degree programs and (3) the UK’s long-standing history of solid higher education institutions (p.273)” are important features attracting international students to choose the United Kingdom as a destination for an overseas education.

The history regarding international students’ coming to Britain for education can be tracked back to the medieval period when multinational visitors or students studied in British universities (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp, & Woodfield, 2013). In more recent times, around the end of World War II, there were about 6000 non-UK students studying in Britain. The international student population then continued to increase. Because of concern about increasing the number of educational places for home students and doubts about subsidized fees for non-British students under the 1970s' financial circumstances, the policy of ‘full-cost’ fees, implying the ideas of a free market, was introduced for international students in 1981; however, this resulted in a reduction in the numbers of international students coming to the UK. The British Council then worked with relevant authorities to market British higher education and establish the UK brand in tertiary education. Different scholarships were also subsequently offered during the 1980s to support the targeted or selected overseas students, with the result that the numbers of international students gradually increased again. The 1991 Education Act, the 1999 Prime Minister’s Initiative (PMI), and
the PMI 2 program in 2006 are subsequent examples of educational policies that the British government implemented to enhance the development of the UK international higher education and the establishment of ‘the Education UK brand.’

Research from Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp, and Woodfield (2013) reports that the internationalization of the UK tertiary education benefits the British economy, the entire United Kingdom as a host, international graduates as alumni, and international students’ countries of origin. Further exporting Britain’s tertiary education through international alumni’s word-of-mouth recommendations to others, improving professional networks for future business or collaborations, increasing indirect economic advantages through business or trade with Britain after graduation, consuming more UK products or services because of alumni’s preferences, and attracting skilled human resources via migration are discovered as benefits contributing to the UK economy. Improving trust toward Britain via alumni with UK experiences, educating potential and future UK ambassadors, and strengthening the linkages between Britain and sending countries also benefit the entire United Kingdom. The advantages for international students of receiving a higher education in the UK include promoting career development or alternatives, improving English language, maturing personal growth via wider experiences, broadening networks through professional or social contacts, and developing cosmopolitanism and multicultural sensitivity. Finally, receiving an overseas education from the UK also contributes to the development of sending countries by returning more skilled and advanced human resources with impacts on the societal development, and broader personal impacts on family, education, or bigger national settings.

The relevant global issues can be further seen at work in the university where I conducted this study. According to the International South West Annual Report 2011–12 (The University of South West, 2013a), international student recruitment plays a very important role for every International Office at a UK university because revenues from the activity essentially and importantly contribute to the finances of all British universities. The success of international
student recruitment enables University South West to reinvest in more and wider activities related to the internationalization of higher education. Furthermore, international students benefit a host destination’s society, economy and education, as well as encouraging global communication, cooperation, and at its most ambitious, world peace (Barber, 1985; Gale, 1988; Goodwin & Nacht, 1983; Lamkin, 2000; McKnight & Turner, 1995; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2001; Potts, 1992). International learners also contribute to an increased global awareness of cultural difference and similarity, and therefore, at its best, education abroad can increase the possibility of international understanding and tolerance. International education is also important to economies, politics, and societies in both developing and developed countries. It benefits a host country’s competitiveness, security, and leadership of cross-cultural communication in this increasingly interdependent world (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2001).

Two areas of concern have been raised as the possible focus for future research attention: the student experience itself and the significance of economic motivations. First, the student experience begins with an initial motivation to study abroad, this may well be followed by a significant period of adjustment caused by culture shock and the need for academic and social adjustments. Students may experience feelings of both success and failure and may come to question and reassess the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad. All of these relevant issues should be investigated more systematically in the future in order to provide a comprehensive understanding and knowledge for relevant student support services. Second, the tendency for international learners to be motivated more by economic benefits than by social and cultural benefits should not be overemphasized, although it also should not be ignored. For instance, Beaver and Tuck (1999) suggest that educational institutions should also pay attention to the satisfaction, needs, and successes of international students in addition to the narrow short-sighted view of economic benefits from international learners. Burnapp (2006) draws attention to the adjustment or adaptation of international students and states that adaptation is an unavoidable process that the students have to experience while studying abroad. Additionally, a recent study (Bartram, 2005) that
examines ways and reasons for international student support indicates that international students especially need greater student support services than host students because of their unfamiliarity with the host country and culture. Sometimes student support mechanisms may be unrealistically evaluated as successful in dealing with student difficulties because of three possible situations: 1) an irresponsible but high level of goals to increase the moralization of higher education; 2) students’ evaluation of their educational satisfaction, and 3) a high level of funded research for improving the relevant services. Therefore, there is a danger that institutions may be less focused on human values and ignore important elements such as cultural understanding as a goal for international student support services.

Reasons for studying abroad vary and are related to the home country context and the students’ expectations about the host university. A recent study of why Swedish students at Karlstad University choose to study abroad reports that students are more interested in studying outside of Europe, and that it would be interesting to compare differences between the motivations of international students at English speaking and non-English speaking universities (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008). Chow and Bhandari state (2010) that various push-and-pull factors may make students leave their homes and go to another country to receive overseas tertiary education. For example, limited educational opportunity in one’s home country may push one out of that country in search of more opportunities available in another country.

Local and global events and economic factors also influence domestic education environments, pushing students out to other host destinations. National and institutional strategies implemented by traditional and emerging host countries create a competitive international environment for recruiting top talent from around the world. Pull factors include incentives created by national policies and higher education institutions, such as subsidized education programs, the quality of international degrees and employability after graduation (p. 42–43).

Based on IIE research in Africa (Nigeria and South Africa), Asia (Thailand and
students who are interested in study abroad chose the United States and the United Kingdom as their first and second most popular destination countries. This indicates that the UK education system has special characteristics that attract students to study abroad. These characteristics may be related to educational quality, historical heritages or connections, cultural circumstances, or geographical factors. For instance, in the discipline of Creative Arts, studies (Chen & Zimitat 2006; Gatfield & Chen, 2006) indicate that the reputation and quality of UK educational services and the merits of British tertiary education in that subject area may positively attract Taiwanese students to study in the UK.

In the light of this picture of the growing internationalization of academic institutions and a highly mobile student population, it is important to understand the impact of study abroad on international students themselves. In general, difficulties related to adjustment are issues that international learners often have to face while studying abroad. Because of learning or cultural differences, international students usually have more difficulties related to various adjustments than host students (Beaver & Tuck, 1999; Hechanova-Alampay, et al., 2002). An empirical, longitudinal study (Hechanova-Alampay, et al., 2002) on the adaptation of both domestic and international student sojourners at a mid-western US public university revealed that international students faced more difficulties than domestic students in adjusting to university life in the US. Additionally, the challenges of studying abroad and how educational institutions help international learners overcome various difficulties are often questioned, studied, and emphasized by educators and researchers. For example, Lacina (2002) studied the social challenges of international students and how an educational institution could assist their social success, and concluded that needs, successes, and social experiences of international students should not be ignored when Western educational institutions intended to increase international student enrollment. Furthermore, the host country can benefit from an understanding of how to adapt or implement change in order to assist the success of international students. Based on a focus-group interview study (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) on the difficulties of adjustment of international students to a host higher education institution, many issues related to pre-arrival
information, orientation, academic learning, and socio-cultural interaction or networking were discovered to importantly affect the adjustment of international students.

The preceding information confirms that this research will provide useful insights into the experiences of international students, which will help educators better understand students' lives and the potential contribution of international students. In addition, it will inform initiatives to improve the practical support services or resources for international students and contribute to the benefits for students and institutions alike as the internationalization of higher education proceeds.

1.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT
This research is conducted at USW. USW is chosen as the study site because the university has been dedicated to increasing its own international reputation; in addition, there is a large international student population at this institution. Recently the university faculty and staff have increased efforts to make USW become a world-leading university with a vision towards expanding the South West into a region of wider international concerns. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (for internationalization) at USW states:

> Universities are more likely to be successful if they have large numbers of international research collaborations. No one institution or country has all the answers to the global challenges we face. To be a leading university you need to have an international dimension to your work. If a university is not having a worldwide impact then it cannot claim to be leading (The University of South West, 2013, p.7).

USW is located in the southwestern region of England, in the United Kingdom. According to information provided by the University of South West (2013), the university was formally founded in 1955, and there were 17,952 undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at USW in the 2010–11 academic year. This southwestern region of England has better and sunnier weather than other
places in England. The region is primarily rural with areas of outstanding natural beauty and is very close to the coast. Many domestic and international students prefer USW for these reasons. The learning environment of USW is also safe and convenient. There were 884 international postgraduate students pursuing courses, 518 international postgraduate research students, and eight international Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) students studying at USW in the 2010–11 academic year. The aforementioned term “international students” refers to students studying in the UK with a student visa and does not include European students who can study at UK universities without applying for a student visa. The university’s international student population comes from over 140 countries.

USW is a member of the Russell Group of leading research-intensive universities. Today, the university’s vision is to be a prominent international university and to be recognized for the quality of its global research and the distinctive student experience that it offers. USW was ranked as one of the top 10 universities in the UK by the Sunday Times University Guide 2013, and noted for its outstanding student satisfaction results every year. The ambition of USW is to be recognized as one of the top 100 universities in the world by the year 2015, and to this purpose over £400 million has been recently invested to improve university facilities with world-class teaching and research environments through its new strategies for internationalization – International South West. These strategies are aimed at creating and providing inventive, visionary, and attractive opportunities for students and staff to experience the benefits of internationalization.

According to the university executive summary regarding the impact of international students on South West (The University of South West, 2003c), international students studying at USW are estimated to have contributed about £88.3 million to the GDP of the South West City in the 2011–12 academic year. This contribution generally supports nearly 2,880 jobs, which is about 2.8% of all employment in the city of South West. The total amount of the tuition fees that the international students pay to USW is about £55 million. The overall economic contribution of USW international students is about £104.4 million.
each year, supporting about 3,280 jobs across the southwestern region. This economic contribution mainly comes from three categories – international tuition fees, subsistence purchases from international students, and visits by friends or relatives from abroad to international students when they are studying at USW. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (for Internationalization) of the University South West states:

As a leading British and international university, USW is committed to attracting the brightest and best students from around the world. For our local and regional economies, it is essential that the United Kingdom continues to welcome international students to its shores … attracting such talent is having a positive and profound impact on us all (The University of South West, 2003b, p. 1).

In order to achieve internationalization, some goals and strategies have been set up and are currently in use by USW. The first strategic goal is to establish USW as a university of global standing. Creating inventive and attractive opportunities to progress student experiences in a learning environment that respects and welcomes diversity is also emphasized as an approach for internationalization. Increasing the number of international students at USW with an appropriate balance based on nationality, level, and study field, and developing lifelong relationships with international alumni are also of interest to the university. Furthermore, establishing and maintaining partnerships with international top-quality research-intensive institutions, providing university staff with an enriched working environment with increased international experiences, and implementing a successful global communication program to work efficiently with partner institutions, key stakeholders, and opinion-makers have also been adopted as aims and strategies for increasing USW’s role as an international university (University of South West, 2013).

The preceding information reveals the ambitious international goals and vision that have been set up to improve USW so that it can become a world-leading university. The recruitment of international students also plays a very important role as one of the mechanisms moving the university closer to its envisioned
future of an international South West. Therefore, increasing our knowledge and understanding of international students, including asking such questions as why they want to study abroad, what their life and adjustment look like, and how an educational institution can help them achieve their overseas educational goals will contribute to the university’s international ambitions and have a practical impact on the welfare of international students at USW whilst enhancing the performance of the university. In addition to the economic contributions that international students bring to a UK educational institution and its local community, international students may also influence the ecology, cultural values, and life styles of the local community. How international students and local people interact with each other may also reveal how issues particular to the South West region compare with these issues nationally. Therefore, this research can make a contribution to an understanding of this increasingly globalized academic era.

1.3 RESEARCH PURPOSE
Reasons for study abroad, academic adjustment, and socio-cultural adjustment are the main sections and research interests in this mixed methods research project. Various reasons associated with international students’ decision to study abroad, in the UK in general and at USW in particular, are first explored through a semi-structured interview and an online questionnaire survey. The academic and socio-cultural experiences of international students in their early months at a UK university are then investigated. Finally, the U-curve model (hypothesis) and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory are also reviewed and examined in order to see whether they can be applied to and explain the research findings in this study.

One of my main reasons for doing this research comes out of my personal interest and curiosity: the information from the study can help me to understand myself better during my own study-abroad experience. My experience as an international student is of course pertinent to this study. I decided to leave home and study abroad, informed by a belief that an international or overseas educational certificate would best benefit my career and future employment.
Over time I have developed an understanding of what a life created by studying abroad looks like. I have known successes, such as my friendship with international learners from different countries, and experienced difficulties, such as adapting to how local people socialize with each other. In this sense my own experience is very close to that of those I am researching. I also understand that international students form a very varied group and are likely to have a diverse set of personal experiences, successes, and difficulties, and it is this variety of experiences I seek to understand. The advantages I have personally gained during the course of my study, such as improving my English language skills and coming to understand a more international perspective, are various. There are, on the other hand, disadvantages, such as homesickness and struggling to meet the high costs of study and living expenses. These issues will be explored further in the methodology and findings chapters but are mentioned here to account for my own interest in and understanding of the issues of the investigation. Being an international student has made me curious about why international students want to study abroad and what their different life adjustments are, and this curiosity informs my intention to understand the motivations behind overseas education and to explore the process of adjustment.

The other reason for my choice to research this area is that international students are a very special and important population in the higher education system. International students occupy a unique niche in world communication and development, although they are the minority of students in the UK’s higher education system. International students bring benefits to both host countries and their countries of origin. Therefore, international students’ reasons for studying abroad and their adjustment to a host country’s learning and living environments should be explored because it will be detrimental both to students and to the institutions that host them if many international students cannot adjust well to their overseas lives and studies.

This research is intended to offer both academic and practical contributions to education. As previously mentioned, this project aims to contribute to academic knowledge in the relevant fields, to inform practical international student support
services, and to contribute to an understanding of the internationalization of higher education in the UK, in the context of an academic environment that seeks to foster global cooperation and communication.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
This study uses a multi-methodological research design to discover reasons or motivators driving international postgraduate students to study at a UK university and their academic and socio-cultural experiences. A systematic and comprehensive investigation is the assumed outcome of this multi-method research design. First, a mixed methods research approach is one of the special features of this study because most of the research in this field has adopted only one method for research investigation. The mixed methods approach, combining the qualitative interviews and a quantitative questionnaire survey, allows me to investigate and examine the research data and then explain the relevant findings from both micro and macro perspectives, which contribute to the more comprehensive understanding of the research findings and knowledge related to the internationalization of higher education. Second, this research studies postgraduate international students in a UK university setting, which is different from many relevant studies situated in the United States, Australia, Canada, or New Zealand. The research context located at this university in southwestern England is also unique, although some studies related to international higher education have been pursued in other regions of Britain. Third, this research comprehensively examines reasons for studying abroad together with both the academic and socio-cultural adjustments of postgraduate international students. Previous studies have tended to focus on separate issues related to reasons for studying abroad, choices of destination countries for overseas studies, and various factors related to the adjustment of international students. In contrast I aim to contribute to this body of knowledge by comprehensively investigating the sequence of these issues through a mixed methods research approach. Therefore, this research has significant contributions to academic knowledge related to international students and practical application for university support services or resources to the well-being of international students in the UK.
Furthermore, data collection through visual graph evaluation of adjustment processes, numerical evaluation on satisfaction of needs and adjustment situations, and interview participants’ monthly self-evaluation on adjustment progress enable the collection of empirical research data from more diverse time points and contexts. The visual graph evaluation on adjustment processes for examining the U-curve hypothesis is an original feature of this research design because it allows me to investigate the various adjustment processes that international students perceive. Finally, the U-curve hypothesis and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory are also re-examined in the light of the empirical data collected from this research project. Therefore, this research design and its findings contribute to a more complex and nuanced understanding regarding the application of relevant theories or hypotheses to a different research context or population.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS
In addition to the content of this introductory chapter, relevant literature and empirical studies will be reviewed in Chapter Two. How this study was designed, implemented, and analyzed is discussed in Chapter Three, the methodology chapter. Research findings regarding reasons for studying abroad and the consequent adjustment experiences are then reported in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Chapter Four draws on the first interviews and some questionnaire data to explore initial reasons for studying abroad and student expectations while Chapter Five draws on the second interviews and some questionnaire data to explore the process of adjustment. Chapter Six discusses the research findings based on the literature review and from different perspectives in order to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the research findings. The summary of the research findings, their implications for future research, policies, and practices, and their contributions to the relevant fields are then presented in the final chapter.
Studying abroad is an unforgettable experience for many international students. Reasons for studying abroad and expectations about overseas study may be associated with international learners’ adjustment to a host country. International students’ reasons for pursuing an overseas education may also change during their period of study abroad, and on arrival, when first impression may be significant in how they continue their stay in a host country. After arriving in another country for an overseas higher education, students usually experience cultural and academic differences and face a number of challenges ahead of them. Over time, there will be a period of adjustment. The degree to which each student is prepared to adapt, sees the need to adapt, and is successful in adapting or adjusting to the host environment may be determined by a number of factors, both internal and external to the individual. These are issues that this research is going to explore. In this chapter, the various aspects mentioned above will be reviewed in relation to ideas and theoretical concepts raised in the literature of previous research findings.

2.1 REASONS FOR STUDYING ABROAD

Today studying abroad takes place in a context of increased internationalization within the higher education sector. Additionally, reasons for studying abroad are complex and interconnected. In order to understand the field well, relevant issues and wider debates need to be recognized. In this section, the background for reviewing reasons for studying abroad, empirical research on reasons for studying abroad, and two key theoretical models that seek to understand the phenomenon related to decisions for an overseas education are reviewed and illustrated.
2.1.1 The Background for Reviewing Reasons for Studying Abroad

Education abroad benefits internationalization and education, and prepares individuals to become specialists and citizens in the modern globalized world (Jackson, 2008). Driven in part by technological advances and the sharp increase in global communication, familiarity with diversity and education abroad have become popular trends for many students (Tomich, McWhirter, & King, 2000). Wende (1997) illustrates internationalization as “any systematic effort aim[ing] at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets” (pp. 18–19). Wit (2002) states that the rationales for the internationalization of higher education include four categories:

- political (foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, national identity, and regional identity),
- economic (economic growth and competitiveness, the labor market, national educational demand, and financial incentives for institutions and governments),
- socio-cultural (cultural rationales and social rationales),
- and academic rationales (providing an international dimension to research and teaching, extension of the academic horizon, institution-building, profile-status, enhancement of quality, and international academic standards) (p. 85).

Additionally, research shows that a sending country’s links with a host country’s technical assistance and economic conditions (such as a currency exchange rate and world recession), and a host country’s foreign investment and trade influence students’ decision to study abroad. Safety or harassment concerns may hinder international students; for example, students from the Middle East found studying in the US intimidating after September 11, 2001 (Cummings, 2001). Therefore, some students consider the United Kingdom a safer place than US for their overseas studies (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Research (Shah & Laino, 2006) on whether expectations of prospective international students varied based on country of origin hypothesized that prospective students from different countries possessed different educational
expectations toward studying abroad. It then found that prospective students from Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan had similar expectations for an overseas education, whereas prospective students from Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Thailand held relatively similar expectations to each other. This situation might be caused by different cultural backgrounds, employment requirements, and educational systems in different countries. Based on their conclusions, the researchers suggested that schools authorities should use appropriate marketing or recruitment strategies to draw the attention of prospective international students from different countries and cultural backgrounds.

The United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia are the three leading English-speaking countries recruiting international students (Institute of International Education, 2008). Because of articulate national strategies and coordinated campaigns abroad for recruiting international students to the United Kingdom and Australia, the number of international students studying in the US started to decline after 1997 (Institute of International Education, 2004). Although the US still dominates the global market of international students, “with strong financial incentives, geo-political motives, and needs for immigrant labor in high-tech areas” (p. 24), growing support from other countries’ governments have increased their competitiveness in the market of higher education internationalization.

Generally, a prospective international student’s choice of a destination country for an overseas education is usually made based on the match of his or her personal needs, situations, networks, and factors associated with academic requirements, educational services, educational advantages or benefits, and living environment in a host country. Some studies (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008; Chen, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007) already investigated factors related to international students’ intention to study abroad, their choice of a study destination country, and the selection of an educational institution. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) also researched prospective international students and the relevant issues in four Asian sending countries in separate years. Other studies (Chen, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mattsson, 2008) further explored and focused on particular student groups. In order to systematically increase
knowledge regarding international education, this study weighs up the pros and cons of factors or reasons influencing international students' intentions or decisions to study abroad and illustrate them below in section 2.1.3.

2.1.2 Definition of International Student
The majority of the relevant research projects define international students as individuals studying in a foreign country with a student visa. Traditionally, researchers have defined an international student as an individual who enrolls and studies at a foreign higher education institution with a temporary student visa, in other words, a student who is not a citizen, permanent resident, illegal immigrant, or refugee of a host country (Institute of International Education, 2005). Some research defines the term based on special research needs or purposes. For instance, international students are defined as “individuals enrol[ling] in institutions of higher education who are on temporary student visas and are non-native English speakers (NNES)” in a relevant study (Andrade, 2006, P. 134). However, because of the special situation in the UK, as one of the European Union (EU) members, the definition in this study is adjusted to a definition different from the traditional one or from the definition used in research implemented in other countries or in different socio-cultural contexts. In this study the term ‘international student’ refers to any student who is not a UK citizen or permanent resident.

2.1.3 Empirical Research on Reasons for Studying Abroad
In this study reasons for studying abroad mainly indicate the factors that motivate international students' decision to pursue an overseas education. In the following literature review, empirical research on reasons for studying abroad is studied and described from seven categories (political, economic, personal, educational, cultural, informational, and environmental) in order to have a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the relevant issues.

Political Reasons
National policies or political situations in an international student’s home country
may influence the student’s decision to study overseas although these factors do not directly arise from their internal desires. These political factors often play a role in pushing students to receive overseas education from the reactive push-pull model discussed in section 2.1.4 (Chen, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Seyed Noorani, 1980), which will be introduced after reviewing the empirical research on reasons for studying abroad. From the viewpoint of national policies, international students might be seen as potential agents of changes in their home countries or societies (Atai, 1993). Government support, encouragement, and policies from a sending country developed in order to increase national prestige – such as intentions for educational, administrative, legal, and military reforms – could be factors or reasons for studying abroad (Atai, 1993; Austell, 1991; Dalili, 1986). For instance, ‘government-sponsored student missions’ were a common reason for Iranians to study in Europe several decades ago (Atai, 1993). Additionally, political turmoil or political instability or uncertainty, as was the case, for example, in some African regions, or referred to by Chen (2007) in relation to China, might push students to study overseas (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

**Economic Reasons**

Economic reasons related to the country of origin, or related to the individual (e.g. seeking a higher salary), and the costs of studying and living expenses may also drive international students to pursue an overseas education. Economic reasons related to the country of origin generally can be examined from the macro economic perspective, and pertain to such factors as a sending country’s economic situation, labor market, or salary structure. Economic reasons related to the individual usually are analyzed from the micro perspective, and include factors such as personal improvement for future employment opportunities, part-time work opportunities, and personal funds for studying and living (abroad) expenses. These reasons from macro or micro perspectives often integrate and become both pushing and pulling factors, which influence international students’ decision to study abroad.

Avoiding poverty may be another reason for students to study overseas. This could be linked with economic stagnation, as was the case of African students in
research conducted by Maringe and Carter (2007); a poor salary structure, as referred to by Syed, Khimani, Andrades, Ali, and Paul (2008) in relation to Pakistani students; or the more general preference of the labor market for foreign (e.g. British) educational qualifications (Maringe & Carter, 2007). The better economic situation of a host country could also increase the possibility of attracting people with better job skills to immigrate to a host country, as, for example, among Croatian university students (Sverko, 2005). On the other hand, economic growth within the home country might also enable students to study abroad (Davey, 2005).

Additionally, increasing opportunities for employment, income, career enhancement, and professional improvement via knowledge and skills trained and received in a host country, including improved language ability, could also influence a student’s decision to study abroad (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008; Brewer, 1983; Khoapa, 1987; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Okwudishu, 1983; Seyed Noorani, 1980; Sverko, 2005; Syed et al., 2008; Zeszotarski, 2003). Investment in long-term global employment opportunities via a broader perspective, a certified global language skill, and residence in an international setting might also affect the decision-making (Zeszotarski, 2003). For instance, increasing future employment opportunities in Sweden influenced Swedish students’ intentions to study overseas (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008). Better career opportunities derived from receiving an English language education also importantly affected the choice of Chinese postgraduate students for overseas studies (Mazzarol, Soutar, Smart, & Choo, 2001). Work provisions and opportunities for part-time work while studying abroad especially affected the selection of a destination or host country because financial incomes could importantly reduce the economic burden of an overseas education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mazzarol et al., 2001).

Furthermore, costs, funds, or financial support (scholarship) might likewise impact plans for overseas study (Austell, 1991; Blum, 1987; Brewer, 1983; Chen, 2007; Davey, 2005; Goodman, Jones, & Macias, 2008; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Woodhall, 1987). As an example, full-cost fees in Britain in 1980 decreased the number of international students, especially students from
developing countries; however, the scholarship policy in place from 1983 had importantly increased foreign student enrollments (Woodhall, 1987). Zeszotarski (2003) also discovered that the lower fees for quality education was an important reason affecting internationals to alternatively choose to study at a foreign educational institution. Additionally, familial financial support together with a host country’s economic growth beneficially contributed to the development and international education of a host country (Davey, 2005).

Finally, Gatfield and Chen (2006) also indicated that high study and living costs might hinder Taiwanese students’ desires for a British education. High study costs might also hinder the decision for education abroad and then cause Taiwanese learners to alternatively study in a US community college or an area with low (or less) living cost.

**Personal Reasons**

Personal improvement, immigration plans, significant others, and language acquisition are personal reasons that influence international students to pursue an overseas education. These personal reasons originate from individual internal needs or desires. Most of them play a role – either directly or indirectly – in pushing international learners to pursue their overseas education. Therefore, they are quite different from other reasons for studying abroad. In general, personal reasons include a number of aspects, which include such areas as personal development (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008), acquisition of new skills and self-challenge (Brewer, 1983), becoming more professional in one’s subject field (Kitsantas, 2004), enhancing independence and global competencies in adaptation (Zeszotarski, 2003), and experiencing different academic, social, and cultural challenges (Davey, 2005). Factors, such as self-satisfaction, prestige, fairness, and application of what one has learned, also possibly drive students to study abroad (Brzezinski, 1993). Psychological or motivational factors, such as perception of ‘value achievement probability,’ were also discovered as examples of students’ recent motivations for leaving Croatia for potential immigration or foreign work opportunities (Sverko, 2005). Personal or general academic goals, such as receiving a multifaceted education or a PhD degree, were also found to be motivators encouraging students to pursue an overseas education (Brewer, 1983; Klieger, 2005; Okwudishu, 1983).
Additionally, international learners might use a student or visitor visa as an indirect channel for a final immigration plan (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Akl et al, 2008; Davey, 2005). Altbach (1991) indicated that the complex consequences of study abroad, including brain drain, might come with as a contribution to the development of host countries in the form of ties with international learners' sending countries. For example, ‘second citizenship’ was investigated as a signal cause associated with the researched Lebanese medical school students’ potential brain drain to a host country after their overseas studies or training (Akl et al., 2008). Another study also discovered that an immigration plan to another country could attract Third Word students to study abroad (Khoapa, 1987). Chen’s research (2007) as well inferred ‘family (children)/spouse’ as a substantial factor motivating some married international students for overseas studies because of possible or potential immigration intentions.

Moreover, parental encouragement and family expectations could considerably increase students’ desires to study abroad (Davey, 2005; Klieger, 2005; Seyed Noorani, 1980). Parental support emotionally and morally along with funds, anticipation, information, suasion, or contention from Thai families were also examined as important motivators (Davey, 2005). Studies of students from Taiwan (Gatfield & Chen, 2006) and China (Mazzarol et al., 2001) found that finances, support, and recommendations from significant others (such as parents or family members), as well as the previous experiences of friends or relatives who had studied abroad influenced students’ decisions regarding the location for an overseas education. For example, the United States and the United Kingdom were grouped by prospective Chinese students as host countries with better alumni networks and stronger recommendations from relevant others. Graduate students without strong social links tended to decide to study in the United Kingdom. “Friends or relatives who had or were studying” in Australia tended to lead Chinese students to study abroad in Australia (Mazzarol et al., 2001, p. xiii). Additionally, encouragement from non-family, such as professors (Chen, 2007), or information 'by word-of-mouth' from students previously receiving an American education (Gatfield & Chen, 2006) were also found to be relevant. Interestingly, being single was also found to be
positively significant in research conducted with Lebanese medical students by Akl et al. (2008). Finally, in relation to the above, family commitments actually might hinder study abroad, as was the case with British nursing students in a study by Goodman et al. (2008).

Finally, social networks, such as contacts with professionals and host friends (Davey, 2005) and previous travel experiences or intention to travel (Brewer, 1983; Zeszotarski, 2003) were discovered as motivators for studying abroad. Alumni networks and interaction with native speakers as well inspired the goal for education abroad (Zeszotarski, 2003). Language acquisition for improving global competence was also found as another important reason (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008; Davey, 2005; Marcotte, Desroches, & Poupart, 2007; Rees & Klapper, 2005; Rohrlich, 1993; Zeszotarski, 2003). For instance, interest in foreign languages importantly predicted business school students’ participation in study abroad programs (Marcotte et al., 2007). Rees and Klapper (2005) discovered that residence abroad benefited language learning. Furthermore, intensive preparation for qualification in English ability by tests or exams importantly enabled many Chinese students to study abroad (Davey, 2005).

**Educational Reasons**

Educational factors, such as educational accessibility and quality may influence international students’ intentions to pursue an overseas education. The accessibility of study courses and programs and the approachability of the private higher education can also persuade students to opt for an overseas education (Chen, 2007; Davey, 2005; Maringe & Carter, 2007). For example, both a university admission from a host country and the dislike of the majors offered by universities in the home country might prompt Iranians to study in the United States (Seyed Noorani, 1980). Limited opportunities or approachability for university education and inadequate higher-education capacity in a home country might, likewise, push students to pursue education overseas (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Furthermore, the difficulty of the American university application process could pull some African students to study in the UK (Maringe & Carter, 2007). No requirement for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) also affected prospective
Taiwanese students to choose to study in the UK (Chen & Zimitat 2006; Gatfield & Chen, 2006).

Quality, reputation, and international qualifications also influenced students’ decisions to invest in overseas studies (Bernunger & Mattsson, 2008; Davey, 2005; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol et al., 2001). The United States and the United Kingdom were categorized by prospective Chinese students as destination countries with high quality education (Mazzarol et al., 2001), so Gatfield and Chen (2006) advised that the reputation and quality of British educational services should continue to be improved in order to better the marketing of the British tertiary education. Quality or excellence in a particular study field, a viva-voce report from a student with study-abroad experience, and a former study-tour abroad could also be potential motivators for an overseas education. For instance, British tertiary education in creative arts could positively attract Taiwanese students to study in the UK (Gatfield & Chen, 2006). Additionally, differences in educational training and methods, such as the flexibility and high quality of career training in a developed country, might encourage students to study abroad (Sverko, 2005; Syed et al., 2008; Seyed Noorrani, 1980; Zeszotarski, 2003). Better futures or visions for postgraduate education might also pull students to leave Croatia for overseas studies (Sverko, 2005). Finally, an excellent educational environment could further lead students to study abroad (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

**Cultural Reasons**

Cultural reasons, such as intercultural sensitivity, multicultural experience, and an international network or perspective are potential factors motivating students to pursue an overseas education. These culture-related reasons usually come from one’s internal desires and they play a role in pushing individuals to have more contact, understanding, or interaction with another country or culture. For instance, education abroad, especially a short-term study-abroad program, generally could increase students’ intercultural sensitivity (Jackson, 2008; Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006). Broadening multicultural experiences through cultural immersion could also be an important reason or factor for studying abroad (Anderson et al., 2006; Brewer, 1983; Davey, 2005;
Jackson, 2008; Kitsantas, 2004; Marcotte et al., 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007). Interests in globalization, international experiences, and intercultural contact were, moreover, found to be critical motivators driving students in business studies to study overseas (Chen, 2007; Marcotte et al., 2007). Additionally, gaining new perspectives and understanding a host country and culture (e.g., Western culture) could be another consideration for overseas studies (Brewer, 1983; Davey, 2005; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Mazzarol et al. (2001) examined Chinese students' selection of a destination country and found that the opportunity for learning and increasing knowledge or understanding of Western culture played the most important role in motivating students to study abroad.

**Informational Reasons**

Informational reasons, such as information availability, perception, and accessibility, usually play a role in pulling or encouraging students to study abroad, so impressions and informational resources importantly affect students' choices of where to receive an overseas education. Educators and policy makers in a host country should also pay attention to what educational information students can receive and how they can receive the relevant information if more international students are expected to be recruited. For instance, "[i]nformation availability (a measure relating to the ease with which the student was able to obtain information on the education programs in the host country)" (Mazzarol et al., 2001, p. xiii) impacted most Chinese prospective students' choice of an overseas educational destination country. Information accessibility regarding study programs, followed by the knowledge and perception of a foreign environment associated with weather and security, was the most important pull factor for a host country to attract Chinese learners to study abroad. The United States and the United Kingdom were grouped as similar destination countries based on prospective Chinese students' perception of increased information and understanding of the host societies and educational systems (Mazzarol et al., 2001). Furthermore, imperceptible impressions about British education gleaned from the mass media, the perception regarding UK weather or living conditions, and inactive alumni networks with the UK universities were found to be negative concerns that hampered Taiwanese university students' plans for a UK higher education.
In general, Mazzarol et al. (2001) and Gatfield and Chen (2006) conducted studies in which they found that insufficient information might hinder overseas education application, while, on the other hand, plentiful information clearly enhanced overseas recruitment. For instance, insufficient information sources regarding the Canadian educational system might have obstructed Chinese students from studying in Canada, so education fairs and educational agencies sponsored by host governments were advised as important information resources (Mazzarol et al., 2001). Relevant authorities were also recommended to improve Taiwanese students’ information perception and impression about the educational quality and academic research accomplishment of Australian universities.

**Environmental Reasons**

Environmental reasons, such as a comfortable climate and safe or low-crime areas, also importantly influence some international students’ choice of a destination country. Environmental reasons generally play a role in pulling students to study in a host country. Usually, except for cold weather or low temperature, environmental reasons in a host country are the same or better than those in a student’s home country. Few studies have recently researched relevant environmental reasons or issues. For instance, Mazzarol et al. (2001) reported that “Environment (a measure of the perception of how quiet and studious the host country was, whether it possessed a ‘comfortable’ climate and what part-time employment opportunities were available)” (p. xiii) was an influential criterion related to Chinese students’ choice of a destination country. Environment was also discovered as a critical reason for prospective Chinese students’ choice of New Zealand as a study destination. A relative safe educational environment was found to significantly and positively contribute to prospective Chinese students’ consideration of Canada as a study destination. Finally, a safe or low crime environment was explored as a positive and significant reason associated with prospective Chinese students’ choice of Australia as a host country.
2.1.4 Reasons for Studying Abroad – The Push-pull Model

The ‘push-pull’ model and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are hypotheses often applied to explain international students’ reasons for studying abroad. In this and the next sections, these two theoretical viewpoints are reviewed with support from some empirical studies.

In general, theories related to consumer behaviors and the ‘push-pull’ model are commonly adopted to interpret issues regarding internationalization of higher education and international student mobility. The push-pull model states that various influential factors may ‘push’ and ‘pull’ international learners to leave their home country and go to another country for an overseas education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). ‘Push’ elements usually “operate within the source country and initiate a student’s decision to undertake international studies;” ‘pull’ elements often “operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students” (p. 82). The consideration regarding different ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors usually results in a decision for an overseas education.

For instance, research by Mazzarol et al. (2001) regarding how Chinese students selected a destination country showed that ‘push’ (the economic, social and political forces within China) and ‘pull’ (characteristics within a host country) factors importantly affected Chinese to study overseas. Additionally, increasing knowledge and understanding of the Western culture, followed by the consideration regarding the better quality of an overseas education, played the most important role to pull Chinese students to study abroad. The study also revealed that considerations of a safe environment, financing sources or opportunities, and study completion mainly pulled international students to study in Australia. Friends or relatives with study experience in Australia also encouraged the same decision. Positive “[s]ocial [[l]inks and [r]eputation “pull” factors” (Mazzarol et al., 2001, p. xiv) with negative environmental push factors influenced Chinese students to choose the US as a destination county. Students without strong social links – a pull factor – tended to make the decision to study in the UK. A relatively safe educational environment positively led students to choose Canada but deficient information resources on Canadian
educational system could obstruct it. Finally, the decision for studying in New Zealand was importantly associated with its environmental pull factors.

2.1.5 Reasons for Studying Abroad – The Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior in this research is used to explain how international students make their decision for studying abroad from the perspective of a rational consumer. The theory supposes that one’s decision making or intentions are composed of three elements, which are also associated with six factors regarding contextual considerations.

TPB is often used to explain that there is a link between human behaviors and beliefs, attitudes, or intentions. From Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), TPB was well applied to explain the research findings of studies (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Gatfield & Chen, 2006) regarding the motivations behind Taiwanese students’ choices of overseas studies and their intended behavioral consequences. TPB, viewing students as consumers in a tertiary education marketing context, states that examining attitudes and their following intents or objectives is the prerequisite for understanding individuals’ choice behaviors. Three main components: Attitudes towards Behaviour (AB), Subjective Norms (SN), and Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), constitute individuals’ attitudes in the multi-attribute model of TPB. The basic TPB structure and the relationship between the different attitudinal variables are delineated in figure 2.1 (Gatfield & Chen, 2006, p. 82).

Research from Gatfield and Chen (2006) defines Attitudes toward Behavior (AB) as the degree of one’s attitude regarding positive or negative belief toward a certain behavior. Subjective Norm (SN) is the referent belief perceived based on the social pressure related to what significant others think about performing certain behaviors. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is the control belief regarding one’s perception of performing a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Research findings show that different factors affect different choices of future overseas education destinations among Taiwanese international students and reflect the research findings: AB – beliefs of an action and its consequences
mainly influence the desires of Taiwanese international students to study abroad; SN – considerations of obedience and others (family and peers) mainly affect the future plans of Taiwanese international students for an overseas education in America (Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

Figure 2.1 The Basic Structure of the Theory of Planned Behavior

According to the basic structure of TPB shown as figure 2.1 (Gatfield & Chen, 2006, p. 82), attitudes towards Behaviors (AB) are associated with beliefs about the consequences of behaviors and the evaluation of those consequences. Subjective Norm (SN) is related to the normative beliefs about perceptions of others and the motivations to comply. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) is correlated with the belief about behavioral control and the strength of control influence. Chen and Zimitat (2006) discovered that the intention of Taiwanese students for an overseas education in Australia was importantly related to their attitudes and perceptions towards a host country’s higher education. For study abroad in America, influences from family and parents played a more important role than the consideration of the resources available in motivating research participants’ decisions.
Additionally, research (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Gatfield & Chen, 2006), applying TPB to investigate the motivations and choice criteria of Taiwanese students for an overseas education in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, showed that different factors affected different destination choices for a future overseas education among Taiwanese college students. No requirement for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), the reputation and quality of the UK educational services, and the merits of British tertiary education in creative arts positively attracted Taiwanese students to study in the UK; however, imperceptible impression about British education from the mass media, perception regarding the UK weather and living conditions and inactive alumni networks with UK universities, and the high study and living costs were negative factors hampering Taiwanese students to study in the UK. Support from significant people, such as parents (especially for financial support), family members, and friends and the impact of word-of-mouth from other students previously experiencing American education were important motivators (regarding summative SN in TPB) encouraging the decision of Taiwanese students to study in the US; whereas, high study costs hindered similar decisions and caused Taiwanese learners to alternatively study at a US community college or in the area with a lower living cost. Finally, Australian universities were advised to improve Taiwanese students’ impressions about the educational quality of Australian schools and to increase prospective Taiwanese students’ understanding of the academic research accomplishment of Australian institutions. The research finally suggested that the influence of past experiences, such as study tours, on students’ intentions to study abroad should be further investigated.

2.2 ADJUSTMENT
After arriving in a foreign country for an overseas education, international sojourners often need to adjust to life and cultural differences. These differences may relate to both academic and socio-cultural adjustments. Important key concepts related to this research, empirical research and theories in relation to both academic and socio-cultural adjustments, and factors
associated with international learners’ adjustment are reviewed in the following sections. Additionally, this research also qualitatively and quantitatively evaluates the satisfaction of international students’ needs so Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory is also introduced and illustrated in this section.

Within this review of the literature on adjustment, various empirical studies are looked at from two different perspectives. Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 relate to empirical research on both academic and socio-cultural experiences and adjustments so the literature review in these two sections is designed to be studied from a more horizontal perspective based on different empirical research cases. Through this perspective, the similarity and dissimilarity of various different empirical studies are shown. However, in section 2.3.3, factors related to international students’ adjustment is reviewed from a more synthesized and systematical perspective. It can perhaps be described as a vertical way of linking different empirical cases based on common themes. There are advantages and disadvantages to these different approaches. Using the more holistic and horizontal perspective to review the literature helps this research to consider the whole story of how, why, and what is done in an individual empirical research case; whereas, viewing the common themes of many empirical cases from the more systematical and vertical perspective enables this study to review and synthesize the key points more easily.

2.2.1 Concepts
In this section, a number of key concepts, which are used throughout the thesis, will be reviewed and defined. These key concepts include: adjustment, academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, acculturation, hybridity (hybridism), social identity formation, and agency.

Adjustment. Pedersen (1995) states that adjustment implies the concept of ‘change.’ Hannigan (1990) defines adjustment as a changing process:

Adjustment can be conceptualized as a psychosocial concept which has to do with the process of achieving harmony between the individual and
the environment. Usually this harmony is achieved through changes in the individual’s knowledge, attitude, and emotions about his or her environment. This culminates with satisfaction, feeling more at home in one’s new environment, improved performance, and increased interaction with host country persons. (p. 91)

Based on this reference, adjustment in my research is delineated as a process of change or adaptation in response to the situation or environment a person finds themselves in.

**Academic Adjustment.** Both Yebio (1967) and, more recently, Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, and Kommers (2012) indicate that adjustment within the academic arena is the degree to which a person adapts to aspects of the educational context such as “motivation, application, performance and satisfaction with the academic environment” (p. 687). Additionally, Andrade (2006) describes adjustment as the fitting process that individuals use in accommodating to circumstances. After referencing the preceding information, in this study, academic adjustment is interpreted as the fitting process of how students conform to an academic environment.

**Socio-cultural Adjustment.** Studies (O’Reilly, Ryan, & Hickey, 2010; Ward & Kennedy, 1999) define socio-cultural adjustment as a person’s ability to ‘fit in’ to “acquire culturally appropriate skills and to negotiate interactive aspects of the host environment” (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 660). Generally speaking, the term, ‘socio-cultural’ implies denotations of both ‘social’ and ‘cultural.’ Rienties et al. (2012) describe social adjustment as “how well students deal with the interpersonal-societal demands of a study, such as making friends, being part of social activities or being able to work in groups” (p. 687). Cultural adjustment is defined as the procedure of how individuals cope with and learned the behaviors, customs, and values of a new culture or environment (Udoh, 2000). Sometimes, cultural adjustment also means cross-cultural adjustment, referring to how a sojourner fits into or adapts to a new cultural environment (Kim, 1988) and it often relates to culture shock, psychological adaptation, and interactional effectiveness (Ruben & Kealey, 1979). Therefore, Barker (1999) defines socio-
cultural adjustment as “culture-specific skills, the ability to negotiate the host culture and general behavioral competence” (P. 6). Based on previous research (Barker, 1999; Kim, 1988; Udoh, 2000), socio-cultural adjustment in this research is defined as the fitting process of how individuals get used to a new culture or society (a new social and cultural environment).

**Acculturation.** Acculturation is a concept different from hybridity or hybridism in relation to a sojourner’s adjustment process. I define acculturation for this study as the adjustment of a person or group living or experiencing a different culture, based on the relevant information. For instance, the American Heritage College Dictionary (2000) defines acculturation as the process in which a culture is gradually inculcated into a society member since birth. Zhou, Jindal, Topping, and Todman (2008) define acculturation as “the process of intercultural adaptation” (p. 68). Intercultural adaptation mainly includes two dimensions: psychological and socio-cultural adjustments. With good stress-coping strategies and relevant social or cultural learning skills, individuals usually make a better cross-cultural transition or adaptation. Acculturation is an important concept in this research because it enables the discovery of whether a sojourner’s adjustment process includes a complete cultural inculcation or if another possibility may be included.

**Hybridity (Hybridism).** Hybridity (hybridism) is the mixture of various cultures or traditions (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). It is a concept different from complete acculturation (Burnapp, 2006). Burnapp (2006) and Fougère (2003) indicate ‘hybrid’ (third space) as an option or alternative for temporary sojourners to adjust to a new environment by creating a new space, including insiders and outsiders, and allowing the sojourners to develop and discover themselves and have their own space. Hybridity is a continuous change process, allowing and encouraging international students to use all available resources and strategies (such as reflective learning) to create their own adjustment space. Accordingly, it is different from thorough acculturation. The potential synergy of understanding advantages of other cultures may provide different insights and perspectives for relevant people or researchers.
**Social Identity Formation.** Social identity formation refers to the construction of an individual’s social identity, especially the recognition of personal characteristics shaped through social interaction. It can be explained via the social identity theory originating from social psychology (Tajfel, 1981). Identity formation is a common and basic task for cross-cultural sojourners. “Broadly, identity can be defined as the ways in which the self is represented and understood in dynamic, multidimensional and evolving ways” (Ecclestone, 2009, p. 14). Zhou et al. (2008), regarding culture shock and adaptation of international higher education students, state that identity is usually shaped during the cross-cultural transition through local social interaction, which may “lead to anxiety-provoking change in perceptions of self and identity” (p. 67).

Identity is influenced and shaped mainly by individual attributes (such as gender and age), group characteristics (such as constancy of resettlement in a different cultural environment and desires to move), and social contexts (such as monism, multiculturalism, and discrimination). Knowledge of the host culture, mutual perceptions between hosts and sojourners, and cultural difference or similarity may affect cross-cultural sojourners’ establishment of self-esteem. For instance, a ‘cultural synergy’ mutual adjustment framework – emphasizing the mutual understanding of cultures both from learners and teachers and the explanation of mismatched expectations between learners and teachers – is proposed by researchers to investigate the interrelationship of factors associated with the adaptation of international higher education students.

**Agency.** The meaning of ‘agency’ can be abstract, inconsistent, and changeable, depending on the purposes and contexts of the academic discussions (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Empirically, agency has been described by notions such as planful competence (Clausen, 1991, 1993), self-efficacy (Gecas, 2003), and free will or the ability to initiate self-change (Thoits, 2003). Life course analysts view human agency as “an individual-level construct, fundamental for social action” (Hitlin & Elder, 2007, p. 172). Intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness are characterized as the four features of agency (Bandura, 2001). Giddens (1976) defines “action or agency as the stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of
corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world” (p. 75). Ahearn (2001) sees agency as “the socioculturally medicated capacity to act” (p. 112). Loyal and Barnes (2001) state that agency is “contrasted with that of social structure wherefrom it derives its meaning rationally” (p. 507). It emphasizes individual freedom but stands against structural constraints. With agency, human beings may act independently and oppose structural constraints. They may also (re)set up social structures through acting free choices. Without agency, human beings have no choice for their actions and instead follow the guiding principles of social structure (Loyal & Barnes, 2001). Finally, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) define agency as “the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations” (p. 971); thus, human agency is a temporal social engagement, enlightened by past habitual attributes and directed toward the present and future. Based on the preceding information, I define agency as the capacity or social engagement of an individual actor’s responses or choices in response to problematic social contexts.

2.2.2 Empirical Research on Academic Experience and Adjustment

Academic adjustment is one of the transition processes that international students definitely must undergo while studying in a foreign country. For any individual, moving from one learning context to another can be unsettling. Research suggests that this adjustment is especially difficult for international students. For instance, education in a host country was found to be an important and unavoidable adjustment challenge for international students (Parr, Bradley, & Bingi, 1992; Zhai, 2002). An investigation (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005) on Iranian international students’ adaptation to Scottish universities discovered that Iranian students usually faced challenges related to their academic studies. International students often faced more and greater adjustment difficulties than domestic students (Andrade, 2006; Beaver & Tuck, 1999; Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & van-Horn, 2002). A longitudinal study (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002), surveying issues regarding the adaptive hardship, stress, and adjustment of 294 foreign and American students during their first six-month study at a mid-western American
public university, also reported that international students had more difficulties adjusting to university life than Americans.

The different ways that this adjustment may be demonstrated vary according to the cultural learning norms of the student and those of the host university. For example, an investigation (Yan & Berliner, 2009) on Chinese international students' academic stressors in the United States reported that academic stress was very high for most of the international students in the study because "[c]ulture and education disparities between China and America, together with Chinese students' language deficiencies, ineffective interactions with American faculty members, and their high motivations to achieve contribute[d] to their academic stress" (p. 939). Research (Yan & Berliner, 2011) regarding Chinese international students' adjustment challenges in the United States discovered that Chinese international students were usually expected to develop considerable self-management and self-discipline in the American academic setting; however, it was not so easy for them to do so because American educational and learning styles were different from the learning styles, which emphasized strict direction and rigorous discipline, that they were used to in their home country. Chinese students were usually hesitant and unwilling to start a conversation with their professors because they were unsure and unfamiliar with the norms of behaviors regarding how to interact with their professors and how to build a teacher-student relationship. Additionally, an inquiry (Wang & Shan, 2007) into the academic adjustment experiences of Chinese international students in Australia, employing qualitative interviews with ten Masters coursework students from Mainland China at two Australia universities, found that Chinese international students in Australia faced difficulties or issues regarding English language proficiency, class participation, assessment approaches different from previous experiences in their home country, and different academic conventions. The Australian academic practice required students to be more independent and self-responsible, which was different from the previous experiences of Chinese international students. Concerns regarding inadequate language, losing face and different previous learning practices might hinder students’ class participation in questioning, debate, and discussion. Chinese students were used to exam evaluations and
individual assignments, rather than group work; nevertheless, assessment approaches in Australia were quite diverse. Issues regarding plagiarism, referencing, and time management also affected Chinese students’ adaptation to Australian academic experiences. Additionally, because of cultural differences, research indicates that international students need to adjust themselves to various academic issues, including writing or learning styles. For instance, a case study (Tran, 2007), researching the academic writing skill adjustment of five Chinese and Vietnamese Masters international students studying in education and economics at an Australian university, found that the adjustment of international students to disciplinary writing was diverse.

A key issue in managing academic adaptation is language. Inadequate language competency (Choi, 2006) or language proficiency (Andrade, 2006; Gourlay, 2006; Wang & Shan, 2007) was discovered as one important factor associated with the academic adjustment of international students. Language difficulties or hindrance substantially affected the adjustment of international students (Zhai, 2002). Students with better academic performances generally showed both better language ability and overall adjustment, so English competence significantly and positively predicted the academic achievement of international students (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). A regression analysis showed that English ability was the only significant and negative predictor of academic stress. Asian international students usually had more difficulties than European international students in language competence, academic performance, and overall adaptation. International students more frequently lacked confidence in their English abilities and feared making mistakes, and this situation hindered their class participation (Andrade, 2006). A survey (Beaver & Tuck, 1999), examining concerns and anxieties, competence or self-efficacy in academics, and preferences of learning strategies, also uncovered that Asian students showed less confidence in their language ability, especially in oral and written English, than Pakeha students. Importantly, Asian students needed more assistance in language improvement. Additionally, language barriers and communication problems were associated with the academic adjustment of Chinese international students (Yan & Berliner, 2011). “[L]ack of contextual knowledge or cultural background, infrequent chances to practice English, and
inadequate language training were the most significant factors” (p. 180). Another study (Bacon, 2002) revealed that socially and academically learning the rules of a language benefited mostly the application of this language within its socio-cultural setting. Informal experiences were generally more important than formal experiences in language learning. However, experiences both inside and outside academic contexts particularly influenced each other and improved overall foreign language proficiency. Therefore, expressing personal experiences through writing and speaking was importantly advised to improve adjustment and language skills of learners within a foreign culture.

In addition to language proficiency, cultural factors (Andrade, 2006) and unfamiliar and deficient cultural knowledge in the host history (Choi, 2006) were also found to be key factors facilitating student adjustment. Other various factors or demographic characteristics were also found to significantly contribute to the academic adjustment of international students. For instance, a survey study (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), researching the relationship among academic performance (GPA), marital status, race, and adjustment stress of international students, found that several demographic characteristics (such as English language ability, ethnicity, and degree of study) were associated with the academic adjustment of international students. In addition to English language ability, study degree (masters or doctoral) significantly and positively predicted academic achievement: Masters students had more difficulties in language and academic performance than doctoral students. Additionally, females usually showed more stress with issues regarding accessing lectures, class discussion or questioning, and learning strategies (Beaver & Tuck, 1999). Duration of residence also affected adjustment, although gender differences in the same study were uncovered not to be associated with both adaptive barriers and adjustment strategies (Choi, 2006). Additionally, self-efficacy was also discovered to be positively associated with the adjustment of both domestic and international students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Pre-arrival information regarding academic studies, interaction or relationship with supervisors, and learning strategies or approaches were also found to importantly affect the academic adjustment of Iranian students (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005). Academic or study skills, motivation, and academic background
characteristics (such as age and years of study), language (TOEFL) scores and writing skills were discovered to significantly contribute to both student learning outcomes and the academic adjustment of international students (Andrade, 2006). Furthermore, a study (Ladd & Ruby, 1999) regarding learning style and adjustment issues of international MBA students showed that the match and adjustment between students’ learning styles and instructors’ teaching styles benefited the success of the researched international MBA students in the US. Its quantitative survey investigation via the Canfield Learning Styles Inventory (Canfield, 1992) showed that the international MBA students liked to work independently through direct contact experiences. They were more interested in objectives directly relevant to their special interests and studies, or particular occupations associated with people and human behavior. Finally, Choi (2006) also reported that academic preparation or practices, social interaction with teachers or classmates, the gap between individual expectations and study requirements, insufficient faculty support, pressure, and institutional rigidity or inflexibility were difficulties associated with the academic adjustment of international Asian students in the US.

Institutional support and awareness of issues related to adaptation importantly contribute the adjustment of international students to a host environment (Choi, 2006). In order to help international students have better academic adjustment and succeed academically, language is frequently the focus of support in the host institution. Language support workshops (Zhai, 2002), content-based ESL courses (Andrade, 2006), or special language courses (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), and opportunities or resources for English improvement (Yan & Berliner, 2009) were commonly suggested as support mechanisms for language improvement. In addition to more knowledge and insights into adaptation issues, more mutual respect and cultural understanding between instructors and learners, and more strategies adopted by teachers or professors for supporting and easing the efficient adjustment of international students were advised by Wang and Shan (2007) to improve international students’ academic adjustment. Andrade (2006) also recommended that teachers should try to understand more about international students’ various adjustment challenges and make pedagogical or teaching adjustments to support the needs of
international students. Lecturers’ clear explanation of academic requirements and understanding of students’ difficulties and values or perceptions in writing practices were suggested for improving the writing discipline of international students (Tran, 2007). Developing knowledge about special needs and problems of international students, being familiar with the life and adjustment issues of international students, and helping international students use the available resources for academic successes were also recommended by Yan and Berliner (2009) for professors to help international students with better academic adjustment. Support from a mentor (Choi, 2006), faculty guidance and support (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002), and interaction or communication between students and instructors (Ladd & Ruby, 1999) were also advised as beneficial approaches for improving academic adjustment. Peer study partnership in academic settings (Andrade, 2006; Zhai, 2002), workshops or support groups (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), learning communities (Andrade, 2006) and advice or assistance from experienced cohorts (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002) were also found to contribute to the learning of international students. Effective orientation services (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Yan & Berliner, 2009) and academic orientation for introducing academic requirements (Ladd & Ruby, 1999; Zhai, 2002) were also suggested for improving adjustment. Others, such as more pre-departure information about life and study in overseas and good preparation for the upcoming learning adjustments (Yan & Berliner, 2011), building up sufficient background knowledge in study fields (Choi, 2006; Yan & Berliner, 2009), support courses or comprehensive programs (Andrade, 2006), suitable interventions (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), and publicizing the university counseling services to international students (Yan & Berliner, 2009) were also recommended as beneficial approaches. Finally, Choi (2006) reported that self-improvement, assistance from various people, allowing oneself some time for transformation, search of available resources, rejoicing in life or oneself, “[f]inding a mentor, working hard, managing stress, finding focus, learning language and culture, persevering, [and] communicating need” (p. 57), were coping strategies that led to better academic adjustment.
2.2.3 Empirical Research on Socio-cultural Experience and Adjustment

International students from different demographics usually face and experience different issues related to their socio-cultural adjustment while studying abroad. For instance, Beaver and Tuck (1999) researched the adjustment of overseas students at a tertiary institution in New Zealand and found that Asians and Pacific Islanders had more positive attitudes toward heterogeneous classes with students from diverse cultural backgrounds than Pekeha students. Asian students possessed stronger concerns regarding making friends. Females showed more stress around issues of health and family. Furthermore, research (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), investigating whether and how marital status, race, and academic performance (GPA) were associated with the adjustment stress of international graduate students at five US universities, found that single foreign students needed more support or assistance for social adjustment. A study (Leung, 2001) on the psychological, social, and academic adjustment of 382 international, migrant, and Anglo-Australian university students in Melbourne, Australia further discovered that students with different ethnic backgrounds showed different degrees of “loneliness, social self-efficacy, locus of control, and academic satisfaction” (p. 251).

In addition to academic experiences, international students also have to adjust to many socio-cultural challenges in a host country. International students often face language barriers and cultural differences (Wu & Hammond, 2011) in their socio-cultural experiences. Research (Parr et al., 1992; Zhai, 2002) showed that cultural dissimilarities were important adjustment challenges for international learners. Adjusting to new cultural norms, increasing cultural understanding, and improving community inclusion were socio-cultural challenges that international students had to face while studying abroad (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Other issues, such as financial support, upkeep of full-time visa status, social networks or interconnection, and narrow life experiences, were also related to studying abroad experiences (Choi, 2006). Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) reported that the first three months of study abroad were usually the most difficult time for international students. Adjustment experiences of each international student varied because of differences in “self-efficacy, social support, and cultural novelty [cultural dissimilarity between a
host and a sending home country]" (p. 458). Yan and Berliner (2011) found that Chinese international students experienced high levels of culture shock and difficulties in life adjustment to a host country or culture. They “often felt disappointed with their experiences, particularly if their expectations about life in the United States had been high” (p. 181). These difficulties in socio-cultural adjustments often resulted in frustration and anxiety. Additionally, Mehdizadeh and Scott (2005) investigated adjustment problems of Iranian international students in Scotland and found that cultural differences, the Scottish language or accent, recreational or social activities, living facilities, and raising children in a foreign culture were common obstacles challenging their cultural adaptation: “The greatest cultural problems for the students were bringing up children in a different culture and also participation in social or leisure activities” (p. 488). Additionally, personal and spousal employment and (pre-arrival) information regarding financial support, accommodation, living facilities, childcare, health, medicare, and insurance were discovered to be unavoidable issues impacting and influencing their overseas life adaptation.

Among many issues related to socio-cultural adjustment, social networking and interaction are essential issues and should not be ignored in international students’ socio-cultural experiences. An investigation (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002) on whether international students faced more adaptation difficulties than domestic students reported that social networks played an important role in international student adjustment to American college life whereas the number of close friends did not successfully predict the social networking satisfaction of the researched international students. The number of friends a student had was also not related to the adjustment of both international and American college students. Wu and Hammond (2011) found that interaction with host students or nationals seldom happened to international students “[u]nless contact was facilitated through shared accommodation or structured encounters in social or academic setting” (p. 436). East Asian Masters students’ cross-cultural adjustment was related to the satisfaction levels of their social participation with other international students. They experienced “an ‘international postgraduate student culture’ rather than integration into local culture” (p. 423). This international postgraduate student culture was “defined
by its widespread use of English; participation of students from a range of national backgrounds; and a focus on achieving academic success” (p. 435). Within this culture, students connected with students from the same or similar culture background and had constant interests in or contact with issues or events in the sending country through technology such as ICT. Additionally, Yan and Berliner (2011) found that Chinese international students tended to have more frequent interaction with co-nationals. It was usually difficult for them to start social contact or interaction with host students or nationals, even though they wished to have greater socio-cultural interaction. The researched Chinese international students also indicated that their social and emotional needs were best met through interacting with students or people from the same home country. However, this situation made them more isolated from the host culture. Moreover, research (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998), quantitatively investigating how factors associated with ethnic communities influenced individual adaptation of foreign students at an American state university, mainly found that ties and social relationships with cohorts from the same country or a similar culture, including ethnic communities within an American university, importantly contributed to the personal adjustment or adaption of international students to American life.

It is very important to gather knowledge regarding the socio-cultural needs and adjustment of international students in order to provide various available resources or services to improve their experiences. Social support mechanisms especially play an important role in the socio-cultural adjustment of international students. Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) found that foreign students usually obtained less social support than the host students. Because of differences in language ability and cultural background, international students especially need special social support that differs from that of domestic students (Lacina, 2002). The type of social support is more helpful than its amount to international students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Especially, contact, interaction, and friendship with host nationals can best benefit students’ adjustment. Research (Zhai, 2002) found that international students hoped to increase and improve their interaction with host students, although they often sought assistance from friends and family members. Leung (2001) also indicated that
relevant support services in social custom acculturation were very important for a better host adjustment. For instance, improving social networking (Ladd & Ruby, 1999), interaction with domestic people (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), and socialization or participation in the host culture (Yan & Berliner, 2009) were also suggested as approaches for improving socio-cultural adjustment and transformation. “Many international students [got] the impression that any experiences of social isolation [were] due to their own deficiencies in the English languages” (Sherry et al., 2010, p. 44), so enhancing cross-cultural understanding, increasing and providing more opportunities for international students to get involved in the local university community, and improving opportunities or resources for international students to improve their language skills were recommended for bettering their socio-cultural adjustment. Additionally, “[a] social club could be established to enhance the links between international students and other students on campus, potentially focusing on informal social interactions and improving the verbal communication skills of international students” (p. 45). Consequently, counseling services (through various approaches) and language support workshops or partnership in daily life settings were commonly suggested for higher education institutions to better international students’ adaptation (Zhai, 2002). International student services, various student clubs or societies, and English conversation groups or clubs to meet with native speakers were also approaches often strongly advised to help international students have better and more positive socio-cultural experiences (Lacina, 2002). However, Lacina (2002) indicated that for some misunderstanding, international students might also have concerns regarding counseling services, although they often faced more life stress or difficulties in social experiences and needed more assistance than native students. Therefore, the question of how to encourage international students to use the official counseling services with more open and healthy attitudes is another challenge for relevant university support staff. Finally, it was also found that “technology eased the networking of students on campus and facilitated a sense of connection with family and friends back home and indeed across the world” (Wu & Hammond, 2011, p. 436). Therefore, it is very important for educational institutions to provide convenient IT services to help international
students maintain their connections with friends globally as well as maintain family communication.

2.2.4 Factors Related to International Students’ Adjustment

In general, international students’ demographic backgrounds and personal characteristics are factors often investigated by researchers for increasing knowledge regarding international students’ adjustment. Other factors, such as attachment to home culture, reasons and motivations for transition, cultural similarity or dissimilarity, interaction with host members, host environment receptivity, length of time spent in a host country, school services, and miscellaneous factors are also studied by researchers as elements associated with international students’ adjustment to a host country.

Among the miscellaneous factors suggested by researchers, the following are perhaps of greatest interest to this study. A balanced life, health, proper food, enough sleep or rest, time for relaxing, and exercising were found to help international students have strength or energy to succeed in postgraduate study (Badke, 2003). Lee (2002) reported that academic records, social-personal issues, health services, and admission-selection influenced international students’ adjustment to the learning environment of the host country. Health also composed the main problem for international students (Hamed, 1985). Indian international students’ “anxiety and depression were positively correlated with homesickness, whereas financial aid, course load, and the intention to look for a job in the US after graduation had the opposite effect” (Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010, p. 677). Country of origin was found to be one influential demographic characteristic associated with adjustment of international students (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Engagement or participation in extracurricular activities was found to benefit the adjustment of international students and reduce the acculturative stress (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Yeh & Isone, 2003). Students with parents who had accomplished seven or more years of formal education usually adjusted better than international students with less educated parents; however, employment and travel experience did not significantly influence their adjustment to a host learning environment (Surdam,
1981). Galloway and Jenkins (2005) also discovered that the amount of time spent studying at a university was related to international student adjustment. Students with a longer time period studying in the university usually showed better adjustment than those with a shorter period.

The following discussion illustrates issues related to international students’ adjustment to a host learning environment. These influential factors associated with international students’ adjustment are grouped into six categories: personal factors, academic factors, cultural factors, factors related to a host country, residential factors, and factors related to student support services.

**Personal Factors**

Gender, age, personality-related issues, marital status, ethnicity, motivation for transition, finance, religion, and social support compose the personal factors that influence the adjustment of international students. Most of these personal factors are related to individuals’ background characteristics or internal motivations. Studies may or may not support the impact of each personal factor on the adjustment of international students; however, they do contribute to an understanding of the relevant issues. For instance, gender is still an arguable variable in the discussion of foreign students’ adjustment to a host learning environment. Surdam (1981) reported that gender was not significantly associated with international students’ learning adjustment. Moffett (2006) discovered that both male and female international students faced a similar intensity of challenges. However, research (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005) uncovered that gender was related to international student adjustment. Studies (Fong & Peskin, 1969; Hill, 1966; Porter, 1962; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991) showed that female students experienced more stress or difficulty in adjusting than their male counterparts. Additionally, female international students tended to feel more depressed (Dao, Lee, & Chang, 2007), face more educational, social, and psychological problems (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992), and be more subject to homesickness (Kwon, 2009) than their male cohorts. However, a study (Lee, Park, & Kim, 2009) regarding gender differences in international students’ adjustment reported that Korean female international students showed better adjustment than their male cohorts. Kim (1988) questioned whether this
gender difference in life or culture adjustment was caused by the acquired inequality in education or professional experiences between males and females. Therefore, more careful studies were suggested as necessary for evaluating the relationship between gender differences and sojourners' adjustments (Church, 1982).

Research on the relationship between adjustment and the age of international or domestic higher education students shows inconsistent results; hence, more research is still required. Research (Deutsch, 1970; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Hull, 1978; Ibrahim, 1970; Sewell & Davidsen, 1961) showed that younger foreign students usually had a greater amount of contact or interaction with people in a host country, therefore younger sojourners could adjust better than older foreign students. Additionally, age was found (Murray-Harvey & Keeves, 1994) as an important factor predicting students' academic success: older-aged students possessed characteristics benefiting their academic study and success. These traits included higher motivation, persistence, responsibility, independent learning skills, and adjustability to various learning environments. However, Surdam (1981) discovered that age was not a variable significantly influencing the adjustment of international students in a host country.

Moreover, attitudes, personal traits, and perceptions are also found to be personal factors associated with the adjustment of international students. Studies (Badke, 2003; Lee, 2002; Surdam, 1981; Kaul, 2001) showed that international students with more positive attitudes toward new learning environments usually adapted better than those with negative attitudes. Lee (2002) also suggested that international students should use more active and positive attitudes toward adjustment difficulties in a host country. In regard to personality, research on the relationship between personality traits and adjustment processes was mentioned to be still needed (Tomich et al., 2000). For instance, Badke (2003) suggested that international students usually needed to develop a different set of skills in order to study abroad successfully. Courage to try new things, to have new experiences, to interact with native students or speakers, to use experiences as learning opportunities, and to risk
embarrassment was very essential for international students when adjusting to a new learning environment. Intelligence, motivation, and endurance were also important elements that international students needed for academic success since a postgraduate student usually was “expected to be a well-motivated student who [could] be trusted to do his/her studies with a minimum of prodding from the professor” (p. 144). Furthermore, research (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001) showed that five multicultural personality traits – emotional stability (the ability to stay calm), social initiative (the ability to start new relationships), open-mindedness (open attitudes toward new and diverse views), flexibility (the ability to adjust to changing things or environments), and cultural empathy (the ability to understand different cultural perspectives) – were positively related to sojourners’ adjustment to a host environment. A study by Yakunina, Weigold, Weigold, Hercegovac, and Elsayed (2012) further discovered that two of the multicultural personality traits, emotional stability and social initiative, directly related to the adjustment of international students to a host country. The other three multicultural personality traits, open-mindedness, flexibility, and cultural empathy, had indirect effects on openness to diversity: “[s]pecifically, students who were more open-minded, flexible, and empathic also demonstrated greater openness to diversity, which in turn led to better adjustment” (p. 533). Additionally, research (Wang, 2009) on resiliency in the adjustment of international postgraduate students at American universities reported that resilience (personal ability to cope with change) characteristics were “highly negatively correlated with adjustment problems areas, better correlated with adjustment problem areas than were background variables, and […] had the greatest effect on adjustment” (p. 22). Therefore, if an international postgraduate student possessed more and greater resilience aspects in their character, he or she generally would have a better adjustment to life in a host country.

In relation to how students felt themselves perceived, Surdam (1981) discovered that international students with a perception of discrimination significantly did not adjust as well as those who did not consider discrimination as a problem. Research (Kaul, 2001) on predictors of positive adaptation among international students showed that homesickness was the only
significant predictor of adjustment among non-European students. Research variables, such as perceived fear, stress caused by change and culture shock, and the relevant miscellaneous research categories, were also statistically significant predictors negatively related to the adjustment of international students.

Although married students may adjust better, most research findings show that marital status can play a negative role, or does not have any significant impact on international students’ adjustment to a host country’s learning environment. For instance, marital status was found to be one influential demographic characteristic associated with international student adjustment; married students reported fewer adjustment problems than singles (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) discovered that “married international students experienced lower levels of social adjustment strain than single students” (p. 767) based on the correlation and multiple regression analyses. However, Surdam (1981) found that marital status did not significantly influence international students’ adjustment. Locke (1988) indicated that married students were more dissatisfied with their interpersonal environments than other international cohorts. Hamed (1985) reported that spouses and children composed the main problems for international students’ adjustment to life in a host country. Additionally, single foreign students needed more support or assistance for social adjustment.

In general, most research discovers that ethnicity can be another personal factor affecting the adjustment of international students. However, researchers must exercise caution when they investigate issues related to ethnicity because ethnic issues may also relate to cultural similarities and dissimilarities. Studies (Smith, Bowman, & Hsu, 2007; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006) reported that Asian international students tended to experience more or greater adjustment difficulties than other international students. For instance, “Asian students experienced more overall adjustment strain, more specific strains related to education and English, and lower levels of English proficiency than European students” (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006, p. 767). European international students experienced less difficulty in adjusting to Western culture than non-
European international students from non-city areas (Klomegah, 2006). An investigation (Kwon, 2009) on factors affecting international students’ transition to higher education institutions indicated that Asian international students found they had relatively low English proficiency; “[h]owever, there were no significant differences in feelings of intimidation or isolation, homesickness and loneliness between different ethnic groups” (p. 1020). In line with other studies (Liang & Sedlacek, 2003; Maki & Kitano, 2002), Galloway and Jenkins (2005) found that Asian students showed fewer adjustment problems than non-Asians because of cultural reasons. For instance, students from Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan faced fewer problems with financial aid and placement services. Japanese students showed fewer concerns with student activities. Students from Hong Kong less worried about issues related to admission and selection. Finally, Rienties et al. (2012) also discovered that international students with a non-Western background had lower academic and social integration or adjustment than other international students, but they had similar study-performance results as international students with a Western mixed ethnic background. “The lack of fit for predicting long-term study success of non-Western students indicate[d] that their academic and social integration processes [were] more complex and non-linear” (p. 686).

Additionally, motivations for transition are found to be positively associated with the adjustment of sojourners. With strong or positive motivations for transition, sojourners tend to adjust better. Tomich et al. (2000) discovered that immigrants, refugees, and people seeking political asylum usually acculturated themselves more readily into the new environment because they saw the host country as a new home, and had a stronger desire to fit into the host living environment. However, international students, exchange students, tourists, and business travelers did not show strong desire for cultural assimilation because their final goal was to return to their countries of origin. In addition, research (Locke, 1988) on the nature of international students’ interpersonal environments and their satisfaction with these environments showed that students who stated that cross-cultural interaction was an important reason for them to study in a host country tended to more easily participate in such interaction.
Furthermore, financial concerns are a vital determinant in international students’ adjustment to a new host environment. For instance, financial aid was found to be the second most significant concern for international students’ adjustment to their learning experiences within a host country (Lee, 2002). These financial concerns included issues related to finding jobs with good payment, worries about insufficient money for living expenses, attention to the ratio of currency exchange, and opinions on immigration work restrictions. A study (Okwudishu, 1983) related to Nigerian students’ goals, objectives, and problems while studying abroad found that financial concerns were the most serious problems for these Nigerian students.

Most research verifies the positive function of religion on international students’ adjustment. However, more research on international students with different religious backgrounds is needed. Religion was discovered as the most important factor related to adjustment of international students (Sadrossadat, 1995) and religious services benefited students’ adjustment to overseas study (Lee, 2002). Mehdizadeh and Scott (2005) found that religion “was a source of spiritual support and help[ed] students overcome adjustment problems and be able to tolerate their situation better” (p. 490). International students with positive attitudes toward religion also adjusted significantly better than international students with negative attitudes (Surdam, 1981). Additionally, Roman-Catholic and Protestant international students were found to be more satisfied with their interpersonal environments than their international cohorts (Locke, 1988).

Finally, social support also plays an important and positive role in the adjustment of international students. Personal factors related to various social supports were found to be positively related to the academic achievement and psychological adjustment of international sojourners (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Hovey, 2000; Pedersen, 1991). Wilcox, Winn, and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) also discovered that social support from family and friends (social networks of students) were positively associated with the academic success of first-year international students. Therefore, social support should be recognized
and encouraged more to improve the adjustment of international students in the future.

**Academic Factors**

Academic factors such as academic preparation, language proficiency or acquisition ability, and learning skills or skills for success, may affect the adjustment of international students. In general, academic factors play a positive role in influencing the adjustment of international students. This means that students with better skills related to academics usually have better adjustment. Grade point average (GPA) and English proficiency are the common criteria used by higher education institutions or authorities for student admission and recruitment because sufficient requirements and better academic preparation tend to help international students achieve more academic successes (Byrd, 1991). Therefore, the requirement of a higher GPA from students and intensive language programs within the universities are strategies often used by higher education institutions to prevent international students from frustration while learning and improving their academic adjustment or achievements.

Better preparation usually results in better consequences. For instance, research (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Martin, 1987) showed that prior knowledge, understanding, and orientational training of overseas experiences were beneficial for individuals’ adaptation to a new environment because individuals with these preparations usually showed greater understanding of a host culture, willingness to interact with local host people, and a capacity for coping with acculturative difficulties. However, Surdam (1981) discovered that international students’ GPAs and their participation in orientational programs did not significantly influence their adjustment to the university life.

Among many academic factors, better English language abilities or skills are often discovered and expected to contribute to better adjustment for international students. Studies (Cui & Awa, 1992; Galloway & Jenkins, 2005; Kim, 1988; Lee, 2002; Verthelyi, 1995) discovered that language ability or
competence in the host language played the most important role in international students’ adjustment to overseas studies. With better language skills, international students had better adjustment and interaction with the host people. Research (Andrade, 2006; Lee et al., 2009; Nishida, 1985; Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001; Sewell & David sen, 1961; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Zhou & Todman, 2009) indicated that English proficiency was a positive factor influencing and predicting the adjustment of international students. Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) found that lower levels of English proficiency were associated with lower levels of academic achievement and higher levels of overall adjustment strain. Kaul (2001) also discovered that perceived English adequacy significantly correlated with international students’ responses in both measurements of acculturation stress and positive adjustment. Kagan and Cohen (1990) reported that speaking English at home was an important factor related to both personal or social, and cultural adjustments of international students. Research (Zimmerman, 1995) on international students’ adjustment and communicative experiences also showed that there was a relationship between both affective and behavioral ‘intercultural communication competence’ and ‘students’ satisfaction with their communication skills.’ ‘Talking with native students in a host country’ was the most significant factor deciding the researched international students’ perceptions of their communication ability and adjustment to life in a host country. Surdam (1981) also discovered that international students with the self-perception of adequate English skills upon arrival adapted significantly better than those who perceived their language ability as inadequate. Badke (2003) also advised international students to improve their everyday spoken English through frequent communication and interaction with host students, entering new social situations or challenges, and using opportunities to practice spoken English. Before studying abroad, the majority of international students usually had better English skills in writing than in speaking, so it was necessary for students to improve their spoken English in order to participate in class discussions and daily or casual conversations.

In addition to host language abilities, other academic skills or factors also benefit the academic success of international students. Badke (2003) pointed
out that international students usually needed to develop a different set of skills in order to study abroad successfully. In addition to courage and spoken English, taking notes, and computer or Internet abilities were significant ingredients for academic success. Teachers and students should be encouraged to work more closely. Class discussions should also be increased. Establishing and developing relationships with library staff might also help students search for better references and resources for research improvement.

The greatest differences between undergraduate and postgraduate levels relate to both the amount of study work and thinking styles. Undergraduates are usually trained to analyze and evaluate obtained knowledge or information; postgraduate students are requested to think critically on their own. Because of the increase in the number and size of homework assignments for postgraduate students, Badke (2003) suggested methods for international students to succeed in their overseas education. These methods included skills in reading, English language, time management, producing research papers, and improving personal health and the quality of their work. In addition, international students could develop and improve their critical thinking abilities through taking courses in critical thinking or logic, participating in seminars in critical thinking, reading books with practical exercises, and using Internet services relevant to their practice.

**Cultural Factors**

Cultural factors associated with the adjustment of international students include cultural similarity (or dissimilarity) and attachment to home culture. Generally speaking, cultural similarity plays a positive role in supporting the adjustment of international students. If the cultural gap or dissimilarity between an international student's home culture and the culture of a host country is big, he or she will experience more stress or difficulties and will need more time and effort to make the life adjustment (Babiker, Cox, & Miller, 1980; Furnham & Bochner, 1982; Kaul, 2001; Oberg, 1960; Okwudishu, 1983; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Surdam, 1981; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Cultural similarity or dissimilarity may vary depending on a student's country of origin. For example, international students from the Western
Hemisphere significantly adjusted more readily to life in the US than other international students (Surdam, 1981). Okwudishu (1983) also discovered that international students’ home value system was another type of adjustment problem. Europeans usually adjusted to their life in the US better than their Asian, African, or South American counterparts because Europeans experienced significantly less ‘acculturation mess’ than non-European international students and shared more cultural similarities with Americans (Kaul, 2001; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992).

A student’s attachment to his or her home culture may play either a negative or insignificant role in the adaptation or acculturation into a new host environment. Berry (1980) found that individuals’ attempts or desires to solve the conflicts resulting from differences between home and host cultures played a significant role in individuals’ acculturation into a new host or dominant living environment. Sodowsky and Plake (1992) also discovered that US permanent residents and naturalized citizens with a vested interest in life in the host country were more willing to abandon their native cultures and showed greater acculturation into the environment of the host country. However, international students demonstrated a lower degree of acculturation to American life because they were more committed to maintaining their cultural heritages. Ward and Kennedy (1992) discovered that a strong native cultural identity usually obstructed one’s adjustment to a new host culture. International students’ connection with their home, however, was not found to significantly influence their adjustment to a host environment (Surdam, 1981).

Factors Related to a Host Country
Factors related to a host country that influence international students’ adjustment include friendship and interaction with host members and host environment receptivity. In general, both host environment receptivity and friendship or interaction with host nationals positively affect the adjustment of international students. Interacting with host members and developing active and meaningful interpersonal relationships with the local population help new sojourners successfully adjust to new life in a host country. Research has indicated a strong correlation between adjustment and engagement with the
host country. For instance, individual receptivity to a host environment (Hamed, 1985) and spending more time (Locke, 1988; Surdan & Collins, 1984) or interaction (Bochner, 1981; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Hamed, 1985; Trice, 2004) with host nationals were found to be positively associated with the life adjustment of international students or sojourners. Interaction or relationship with host students and faculty members was found to be positively associated with psychological adjustment (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Locke (1988) also reported that international students who spent more leisure time with international students of different genders and had more close friends with native people in a host country and fewer close friends from their home country had higher levels of satisfaction with their interpersonal environments. Additionally, research (Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Morris, 1960) showed a high correlation between international students’ interactions with people in a host country and their satisfaction with their international experiences. International students who had more contact with host nationals tended to adjust better, had greater satisfaction with their overseas experiences, and experienced fewer social difficulties (Torbiörn, 1982; Ward & Kennedy, 1992).

However integration with the host country can itself be problematic. For instance, a study (Campbell & Li, 2008) showed that it was difficult for Asian international students to make friends with local host students or nationals in New Zealand. Prejudice toward minority sojourners because of skin color or other physical traits also impacted the degree of minority sojourners’ acculturation into the host environment (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Sue & Sue, 1990). Hostility and preconceptions between particular sojourners’ countries of origin and host countries, as the result of historical relations, political events, and economic trends, were also found to influence the communication and interaction between members of a particular group and the host environment (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984).

It is not enough to know that integration helps – the real challenge lies in facilitating integration itself. Badke (2003) suggested that friendship was beneficial for international students to improve their living and learning skills in a foreign country. Good friendship with fellow students from both a host country and countries of origin helped international students solve problems and
overcome difficulties. In addition to interacting with students from their own cultures, international students should also build friendships with the local host students in order to improve language competence, understand the host country’s culture, and develop better skills for success. Research (Tochkov et al., 2010) related to the cross-cultural adjustment of Asian Indian international students in the United States discovered that “the extent of socialization with American students” (p. 677) significantly predicted homesickness of the researched students. Students with greater socialization within their American environment tended to have less homesickness. Surdam (1981) also found that international students who interacted more with native speakers or local host people were significantly happier than those who interacted more often with other international students. Additionally, religious faith and friendship were also discovered as strong support in life (Badke, 2003). However, international students’ participation in university or community activities did not significantly influence their adjustment to a host educational environment (Surdam, 1981). One strategy that Badke (2003) advised international students for bettering learning and adjustment skills was to take opportunities to interact with advisors, professors, instructors, and senior students. Other strategies included getting involved in student clubs or small community groups, asking more questions, searching for help and information, and using available services. Hamed (1985) found that although adjustment to the culture and education in a host country was the main problem influencing international students’ life in a host country, academic advisors, non-academic faculty members, and foreign friends from different countries could also play a role as the main support resources for solving international students’ life or learning problems.

**Residential Factors**

Residential factors influencing the adjustment of international students include length of residence and type of accommodation. In general, length of residence is positively related to international students’ adjustment to a host country. Studies (Choi, 2006; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Surdam, 1981; Ward & Kennedy, 1999) showed that a student’s length of stay in a new host country played an important role in the student’s adjustment to a host environment. However, research on the length
of international students’ residence has not yet completely shown a positive impact on their adjustment. For instance, a study (Tochkov et al., 2010) related to Asian Indian students’ cross-cultural adjustment in the United States revealed that the length of stay and study in the US was significantly and positively related to abating homesickness. Ward and Kennedy (1999) discovered that after a sojourner lived in a host country for a longer period, he or she would have or develop better or more language ability, social skills, social networks or support, and comfort or contentment for the everyday life. Students with four or more years in a host country usually had the best adjustment (Surdam, 1981).

However, research (Zimmerman, 1995), studying international students’ adaptation to an American campus, found that the length of the students’ stay in a host country, the local community, and the institution did not influence their perceptions related to their communication skills and satisfaction with their communication abilities.

Research has also shown that housing and accommodation issues impact adjustment, and may compose one of the adjustment problems for international students. However, studies do not always recognize or support the significant impact of accommodation on the adjustment of international students, so more search or exploration is needed for more advanced understanding. For example, Hamed (1985) reported that housing posed one of the main problems for international students and their families. Students living in international accommodations tended to adjust better and to join more easily in cross-cultural interaction (Locke, 1988). However, Lee (2002) found that living and dining problems had the least impact on international students’ adjustment.

**Factors Related to Student Support Services**

Factors related to student support services include international student support programs, and school administration or services for international students. These services are associated with the adjustment of international learners because they are approaches often arranged or implemented to directly solve problems or improve students’ adaptation.
Generally, student support programs importantly influence international students’ adjustment to a host environment. However, different studies have not been able to get consistent results. Therefore, further studies on the related issues are still needed. For instance, Surdam (1981) found that orientation programs and international students’ participation in university and community activities did not significantly influence international student adjustment; whereas placement and orientation services were found by Lee (2002) to benefit international students’ adjustment to a host country. Additionally, Abe et al. (1998) designed an ‘International Peer Program (IPP)’ to investigate its effect on international students’ adjustment to their learning in higher education institutions and found that the IPP participants had significantly better social adjustment than the non-IPP participants. The study also showed that Asian students demonstrated a lower ability to adjust to campus life than non-Asian students.

Finally, authorities from the host educational institutions are also expected to take action to improve the adjustment of international students. For instance, administrative issues were found to be one of the main problems that international students often faced while studying abroad; however, international student advisors, academic advisors, non-academic faculty members, and student associations for international students from the same home countries were usually found to be the main support mechanisms for solving international students’ adjustment problems in a host country (Hamed, 1985). Lee (2002) also discovered that student activities, orientation services, and admission-selection issues influenced international students’ adjustment to the host learning environment. Therefore, school authorities should also pay attention to various adjustment issues and use constructive strategies to positively assist the success of international students’ overseas education.

2.2.5 Adjustment – A Creative Synergy Approach

According to Burnapp (2006), a creative synergy approach is a curriculum design for improving the adjustment of international students through increasing mutual respect and cultural understanding between international learners and
teachers and allowing learners to create their own adjustment space. This approach shows a respect for multiculturalism and emphasizes a method different from the traditional acculturative approach used for the adjustment of international learners. Therefore, mutual respect and understanding between learners and instructors are stressed by this approach. Burnapp (2006) researches a creative synergy approach of curriculum design for the adjustment of international Masters students on a pre-sessional English for Academic Purpose (EAP) course at a UK business school, and then confirms the positive benefits and effects of a hybrid curriculum design of the pre-sessional EAP seminar on international students’ adaptation to the British higher education. Hybridism is a steadily modificative process, different from the complete acculturation described in this study. It allows and encourages international students to use all available resources and strategies to create their own adjustment space. This promisingly advantageous synergy of curriculum design has inspired educators and researchers to increase knowledge in understanding the advantages of other cultures, which may provide different insights and perspectives for the internationalization of higher education.

Research by Wang and Shan (2007) demonstrated that more mutual respect and cultural understanding between instructors and learners were beneficial in ameliorating the adjustment of international students. As an example, Peelo and Luxon (2007) designed and examined whether an innovative bridging curriculum could affect social, academic, and cultural adjustments of international undergraduate students at Lancaster University. This included the development of language and study skills, and the collaboration of different disciplines (such as assistance from co-teachers). The instruction also considered and combined students’ previous experiences and cultural heritage, so it encouraged educators to understand more about other cultures and to be more open to the previous experiences of different international students. It also contributed to the design of courses suitable for a more internationalized academic environment. The research confirmed the useful impact of the bridging curriculum design.
Finally, a ‘cultural synergy’ approach was adopted by Zhou et al. (2008) to investigate international student educational adjustment, although traditional and contemporary theories had studied the relevant issues earlier. Traditional theories related to culture shock include grief and bereavement, locus of control, selective migration, expectations, negative life-events, social support, value difference, and social skills and culture learning. Contemporary theories regarding intercultural contact or communication incorporate stress and coping, culture learning, and social identification (acculturation and identity, and social identity theory). However, a ‘cultural synergy’ framework was proposed to investigate the interrelationship of factors associated with adaptation of international higher education students in the UK. The mutual understanding of cultures on the part of both learners and teachers and the explanation of mismatched expectations between learners and teachers were two innovative key concepts in this adaptive model. Therefore, this model intended to improve adaptation and educational experiences of students and teachers through a process of mutual adjustment between international sojourners and their instructors.

The creative synergy approach provides an alternative understanding for the adjustment of international students. Traditionally, adjustment means the fitting or changing process of a sojourner toward a host environment, and it only focuses on the change or adjustment of a sojourner. However, a creative synergy approach pays attention to the mutual respect and cultural understanding between learners and educators. The fitting or adjusting process is seen as involving both parties: the student and the host. Thus the role of the host is as much about facilitating institutional change as it is about facilitating student integration.

2.2.6 Adjustment – The U-curve Hypothesis

The U-curve hypothesis of cultural adaptation is often used to describe the cultural adjustment of international students. It starts with a sojourner’s initial optimistic experience with high expectation, but then declines downward. After the downward course, the sojourner then experiences a recovery toward better
adjustment, more or less similar to the initial level. The U-curve model was first introduced by Lysgaard in 1955 in his study of Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the United States. He stated:

Adjustment as a process over time seem[ed] to follow a U-shaped curve: adjustment [was] felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follow[ed] a ‘crisis’ in which one [felt] less well-adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one [began] to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community (Lysgaard, 1955, p. 50).

Other researchers (Adler, 1975; Brown, 1980; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Mohamed, 1997; Oberg, 1960; Torbiörn, 1994) continued to conduct research on Lysgaard’s theory. Oberg (1960) originally used terms such as ‘honeymoon,’ ‘crisis,’ ‘recovery,’ and ‘adjustment’ to illustrate the four stages of the U-curve hypothesis. Based on a sojourner’s self- and cultural awareness, Adler (1975) then separated the culturally adaptive process into five stages: initial contact (exciting and fresh experience), disintegration (confusing and disoriented period), reintegration phase (rejection of the second stage), autonomy stage (understanding the host culture), and independence (gaining benefit from cultural differences and similarities). Adler's research (1975) regarding the U-curve cross-cultural adjustment is commonly used to interpret the changing process of sojourners’ adjustment to cultural transition – from good and new feelings at first, rejective responses in the succeeding period, and compromising and achieving balance at the end. Other researchers (Chang, 1973; Davis, 1971; Scott, 1956; Sewell & Davidsen, 1961; Torbiörn, 1982) have also borrowed and applied the U-curve hypothesis to diverse forms of adjustment, including host culture perceptions, culture-specific knowledge, social interaction with hosts, homesickness, adjustment attitudes, and even academic adjustment. For instance, Kealey (1989) discovered that different sojourners experienced different cross-cultural adjustment. Hanvey (1976) stated that superficial tourism, cultural clash, intellectual analysis, and cultural immersion were the main four stages of cultural adjustment. Kauffman, Martin, Weaver, and Weaver (1992) indicated that practical anticipation and a long
duration of a stay (usually, more than six months) contributed to individuals’ cultural immersion.

However, more recent and comprehensive reviews of research in this field have concluded that support for the U-curve hypothesis is limited (Anderson, 1994; Furnham & Bochner, 1986) and the evidence for the hypothesis is “weak, inconclusive and overgeneralized” (Church, 1982, p. 542). Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima (1998) indicated that there were two main shortcomings of the empirical research behind the U-curve hypothesis: “[f]irst, the majority of the studies that had explicitly investigated the phenomenon had been based on cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal designs ... Secondly, there was some conceptual confusion over the definition and measurement of sojourner ‘adjustment’” (p. 279). Additionally, a study related to the initial stage of international sojourners from Brown and Holloway (2008) discovered that “the initial stage of the sojourn was not characterized by feelings of excitement, as suggested by the U-curve model (and its successors): though such feeling were present, they were overwhelmed by negative symptoms more commonly associated with culture shock” (p. 33). Given the preceding description, it would be worthwhile to re-examine and investigate the relevant issues associated with the U-curve hypothesis, especially because the hypothesis has held a central position in research and theory on transition and adjustment.

The U-curve hypothesis is important in this study, which focuses on the adjustment of international students or sojourners. Through the interview investigation, self-evaluation, and visual graph evaluation of the adjustment process, interview participants were expected to indicate how each individual adjustment process could be represented. The U-curve hypothesis provides a useful framework for analyzing and explaining the research findings.
2.2.7 Adjustment Satisfaction – Abraham H. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Man is a wanting animal and rarely reaches a state of complete satisfaction except for a short time. As one desire is satisfied, another pops up to take its place. When this is satisfied, still another comes into the foreground, etc. … The appearance of the drive or desire, the actions that it arouses, and the satisfaction that comes from attaining the goal object, all taken together, give us only an artificial, isolated, single instance taken out of the total complex of the motivational unit. (Maslow, 1954, p. 69)

In his preface to Maslow’s *Motivation and Personality* (1987), Robert Frager describes Maslow as a ground-breaking theorist in the field of motivational psychology. His theories related to motivation and personality have contributed to the fields of psychology, education, business, and social studies. Motivation theories are usually generated from two human facts: “the human being is never satisfied except in a relative or one-step-along-the-path fashion” and “wants seem to arrange themselves in some sort of hierarchy of prepotency” (Maslow, 1954, p. 69–70).

Maslow (1954) categorized human beings’ five basic needs in his Hierarchy of Needs Theory. From the lowest to the highest order, they are: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. Physiological needs are one’s biological needs for food, water, air, etc. Homeostasis is the state that individuals seek to gratify themselves. If no needs are satisfied, then the organism is dominated by the physiological needs. Safety needs are needs for freedom from danger. They include “security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; need for structure, order, law, and limits; strength in the protector; and so on” (Maslow, 1987, p. 18). After individuals’ physiological needs are satisfied, the safety needs will emerge with physiological needs being de-prioritized. Belongingness and love needs are also called social needs. Individuals’ love, affection, and belongingness needs will emerge after
physiological and safety needs are well gratified. Individuals' desires for contact, companionship or friendship, intimacy, and belongingness help to overcome feelings of alienation, strangeness and loneliness. Esteem needs are needs for self-esteem, autonomy, and respect from others. An individual whose self-esteem needs have been gratified often shows feelings of “self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world” (p. 21). Feelings of inferiority, weakness, and helplessness are the results of unmet esteem needs. “The most stable and therefore most healthy self-esteem is based on deserved respect from others rather than on external fame or celebrity and unwarranted adulation” (p. 22). Self-actualization needs are needs for fulfilling one's potential. Self-actualization needs emerge after the gratification of the physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. “What a man can be, he must be” (Maslow, 1954, p. 91) is how Maslow describes the need for self-actualization. Self-actualization needs motivate individuals to seek to be true to their own nature. For instance, musicians must make music and poets must write poems.

There are two main propositions in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The first is that the lower level needs in the hierarchy have greater prepotency, so individuals usually will try to initially satisfy their needs in the lower levels rather than in the higher levels. The second proposition is that a need will become important to individuals only when the needs lower in the hierarchy are at least partially satisfied. However, Maslow also proposes that “a satisfied need is not a motivator” (Maslow, 1954, p. 105) because the importance of a need will decrease following its satisfaction. Maslow refers to the phenomenon of new higher needs emerging after the gratification of the lower needs as a hierarchy: “the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency” (Maslow, 1987, p. 17). Once the lower basic or prepotent human needs are satisfied, the needs become insignificant in the dynamics of the need hierarchy.

According to Maslow (1954), higher human needs are developed later than the lower needs; the lower needs are required to be satisfied more urgently than the higher needs. Individuals with higher need satisfactions usually have greater happiness, peace, and fulfillment. Pursuit and satisfaction of higher needs often:
lead individuals closely toward individualism and self-actualization, show a tendency toward health and away from psychopathology, and lead to greater social responsibility. However, more prerequisite and better circumstances are required for the gratification of higher needs.

Additionally, individuals usually place a greater value on higher hierarchical needs than on lower needs. A level of needs disappears with the prolonging of its gratification stage. Further, lower human needs are more individualized, concrete, and limited than the higher needs. Usually, psychotherapy will help individuals with higher level needs more efficiently than those with lower needs.

In this research, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory is used to examine the need satisfaction of international students. Through the analysis and comparison of the research findings, this research intends to evaluate whether Maslow’s theory is applicable to explain the research findings or whether other factors may be better used as a means of explanation. International students are a special student population with unique characteristics different from their host cohorts, so it is important to know whether their various needs are met in order to improve relevant student support services or resources. Additionally, Maslow’s theory has been pre-eminent in the social science field for several decades. Therefore, it is worthwhile for this research to investigate relevant issues and determine whether the theory can be adopted to support and explain the findings from this research.

In this chapter, the areas of students’ reasons for studying abroad, their adjustment to academic and socio-cultural life along with the theoretical models that may help to explain this adjustment, and a related theoretical framework (Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory) have been outlined and discussed with an eye toward their relevance to this particular study. The various aspects that have emerged from empirical studies and the themes that they relate to have informed my decisions regarding the research content and the design of the data collection tools. These, together with a description of and rationale for the overall research approach, design, and procedure will be presented in the following chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the research methods used in this research. I will discuss the informing paradigm, and outline and justify the principles informing the design and implementation of the methods I have chosen. The research samples and the ethical considerations in working with this USW international postgraduate student population will also be introduced and discussed. I will also consider some of the limitations of my choices and justify why these decisions were made. This research project uses a sequential exploratory mixed methods strategy for data collection and analysis. Two qualitative semi-structured interviews were first conducted separately in the Autumn and Spring Terms of the 2010–11 academic year. The separation of a term in the conducting of these two interviews was in order to investigate the ongoing development of the relevant international student experience or adjustment. A quantitative online survey questionnaire, developed based on the previous literature review and the information collected from the aforementioned interview fieldwork, was then administered in the Summer Term of the same academic year. The rationale for a survey that followed the two interviews was mainly to develop a new survey instrument based on the earlier qualitative interview findings, in addition to the information from the literature review, in order to further examine the differences between the qualitative and quantitative findings based on two different samples drawing from the same research population. The interview participants were purposely selected based on the maximum heterodoxy sampling strategy. The survey questionnaire was distributed to all first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at USW. The research report is then presented according to the analysis of the data collected from twenty-six interview participants and 250 questionnaire respondents. This research is expected to contribute to knowledge regarding reasons for studying abroad, and the academic and socio-cultural adjustments and experiences of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students in the United Kingdom.
3.1 METHODOLOGY – MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

Mixed methods research is a research project that applies two or more methods (Cronin et al., 2007) of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. “The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone … [and] achieves complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.18). Therefore, “[t]he major strength of [mixed methods] designs is that they allow for research to develop as comprehensively and completely as possible” (Morse, 2003, p. 195). Mixed methods research is a more comprehensive, elaborate, and practically useful approach that offsets the inadequacy of a single approach alone and offers diverse views for questions investigation (Bryman, 2006). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) explain further:

There appear to be three areas in which mixed methods are superior to single approach designs: Mixed methods research can answer research questions that the other methodologies cannot. Mixed methods research provides better (stronger) inferences. Mixed methods provide the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views (p. 14–15).

I intend to show how these advantages are realized in my own study. First, through combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches, I achieved a better understanding of the research problems than I would have with a single method approach because using both qualitative and quantitative approaches allowed me to explore similar constructs in different ways. Second, the research participants for the qualitative and quantitative approaches were different, although they were from the same research population. For instance, there were twenty-six interview participants taking part in the two interviews of this research, but 250 respondents answered the online survey questionnaire. The interview participants had the freedom to decide whether they would also like to participate in the questionnaire survey. Through findings from different
research samples taken from the same research population, this mixed methods research design provided an exploration of both group trends based on the survey data and more in-depth personal reflections based on the interview interpretations. Therefore, the advantages of sampling from the same research population not only helped me to design a proper quantitative survey questionnaire with better measurement validity based on the earlier empirical qualitative interview findings, in addition to information from the literature review, but also allowed me to make a comparison between individual findings discovered from the interview participants and the aggregated information investigated from the survey sample. Finally, a mixed methods approach provided me with more comprehensive and elaborate perspectives for data analysis because one data set could be considered in the light of the other. For instance, in my own study, the data and information collected from the two qualitative interviews in this research design helped me to study and examine the micro level, or individual international student’s reasons for studying abroad and their academic and socio-cultural experiences. It also allowed me to investigate the changing process of the student adjustment situation from a longitudinal perspective. Additionally, the quantitative data obtained from the online questionnaire survey offered me the macro information from a larger postgraduate international student sample.

3.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND METHODOLOGY

Ontology, epistemology, and methodology are three important concepts in social science research. This section discusses issues associated with these three concepts and their relationship in order to provide a philosophical understanding about the nature of this research project.

Ontology is the initiation of all research. Issues related to epistemological and methodological positions are usually discussed in research after ontology. Questions of social ontology are most often associated with the nature of social beings (Bryman, 2008). A dictionary definition states that ontology is the “the image of social reality upon which a theory is based” (Grix, 2002, p. 177).
Blaikie (2000) prescribes that ontological claims are: “claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality” (p. 8). It is important for researchers to comprehend, recognize, and defend their own ontological positions. Generally, one’s ontological position in an educational study addresses the question: What is the nature of the social and educational reality to be researched or investigated (Hay, 2002)? Traditionally, objectivism and constructivism are the two main ontological perspectives. Objectivism is an ontological viewpoint assuming that the social incidents which human beings encounter are external facts (Bryman, 2008). Constructivism (also referred to as constructionism) is an ontological position that declares that social actors continuously produce social incidents and their meanings. It entails that social occurrences and their meanings are created or resulted from social interaction with a continuous state of alteration. Objectivism usually thinks about question related to “whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors” whereas constructivism usually reflects on questions associated with whether social entities “can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (p. 18). In the context of my own research, a concept such as ‘adjustment’ may be viewed by objectivists as an ontological fact that can be measured and understood through the principles of cause and effect or, alternatively, a social construction whose meaning is always bounded by context.

According to Grix (2002), epistemology is a philosophical concept that is concerned with the theory of knowledge, particularly in relation to its methods, validation and “the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be. In short, claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8). Epistemology originated from two Greek words: Episteme (knowledge) and logos (reason). Epistemology “focuses on the knowledge-gathering process and is concerned with developing new models or theories that are better than competing models and theories.
Knowledge, and the ways of discovering it, is not static, but forever changing” (Grix, 2002, p. 177).

Positivism and interpretivism are the two contrasting perspectives in relation to epistemological positions. Positivists emphasize the observation of external reality and facts collection. They try to research and explain social actions from a causal perspective and like to measure and quantify social phenomena (O’Brien, 2003). Positivism is an epistemological perspective which emphasizes the methods of natural sciences to research social reality (Bryman, 2008). Interpretivism is an epistemological position that “is predicated on the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (p. 16). From the preceding description, it is clear that choosing one epistemological position or another will guide a researcher to use a particular methodology. Ontological and epistemological stances can lead researchers to have different perspectives or insights into the same social phenomena (Grix, 2002). In my own field an example of a study informed by a positivist perspective would be a survey study that examines the relationships between academic performance, marital status, race, and adjustment stress of international students (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Its characteristics usually emphasize “experience in general, and observation and testing in particular” (Clarke, 2009, p.29). One of its characteristics especially is to test the correlations between variables (Silverman, 1998). Positivist social researchers usually adopt research methods similar to those in the natural and physical sciences (O’Brien, 2003). Its principal assumptions are that social incidents can be perfectly observed via scientific examinations with cause and effect sequences and that the causality between incidents is stable and constant (Bailey, Ford, & Raelin, 2009). In contrast, an example of a study informed by an interpretivist epistemology would be an interview study regarding international students’ perception of discrimination in the United States (Lee & Rice, 2007). The characteristics of interpretivism are often associated with terms, or concepts, such as subjective meaning, Verstehen, empathy, and interpretation (Clarke, 2009). Interpretivist researchers usually are interested in grasping and investigating the meanings
constituting an action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). They support the importance of subjective contexts and essences without the notion of causality (Howard, 2010). One essential interpretivist assumption is that “each reading of the world is subjectively unique, depending on the position of the reader and the encounter” (Howard, 2010, p.401). Interpretivists accept and support qualitative data, naturalistic inquiries in natural settings, and an inductive style of reasoning. They are usually interested in the meanings and experiences of human beings (Williamson, 2006). A difference between positivist and interpretivist approaches concerns their assumptions about the nature of reality. Positivists generally believe that “knowledge can only be based on what can be observed and experienced” (Williamson, 2006, p. 84). However, interpretivists believe that people construct the social world, which is different from the world of nature because the ever-changing human world is continuously interpreted by people (Williamson, 2002). These differences in approach illustrate the significance of ontology and epistemology in shaping the kind of research that is undertaken and the kind of outcomes that are generated.

Methodology is related to the possibilities, restrictions, and rationales or logic of research methods and is often misunderstood, mixed up and employed interchangeably with research methods themselves (Grix, 2002). Generally speaking,

methodology refers more to knowledge production, to the research process, the rule-based action of scientists, and to the language in use. The central issue of methodology is how (and by applying which rules) do we obtain knowledge? (Schmidt, 2008, p. 60).

A methodology usually tells a researcher how to understand the information collected (Howard, 2010) whereas research methods are the techniques or procedures regarding data collection and analysis (Blaikie, 2000). The research method(s) employed in a research project are inextricably associated with research questions and the sources for data collection (Grix, 2002). “Within a given methodological framework, then, various methods can be discussed and
those techniques of gathering information about the world can be put into context of the methodologies they serve” (Howard, 2010, p. 394).

In general, ontology, epistemology, and methodology matter for social science research and the production of knowledge because they are three important dimensions in the philosophy of science: Ontology is concerned with objects; epistemology discusses issues related to knowledge or theories; methodology is related to methods or practices (Grix, 2002; Schmidt, 2008). Ontology is “what is out there to know about;” epistemology is “what and how can we know about it” (Grix, 2002, p. 175). Ontology debates what the world is about, but epistemology discusses how the world can be known (Schmidt, 2008). The goal of methodology is to start from a special stance to enunciate what accurately counts as knowledge, which includes how an assertion or statement of knowledge is judged or determined and what should be shown with evidence to make or create knowledge (Howard, 2010). Therefore, it is important to discuss issues related to ontology, epistemology, and methodology in social science research.

3.3 THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE: ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN PRAGMATISM

The projected mixed methods research design reflects a pragmatist paradigmatic stance. Pragmatism is the theoretical perspective and philosophical stance of this mixed methodological research on the adjustment of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students. Traditionally, social science research has been divided along ontological and epistemological lines into two contrasting perspectives: interpretivism (constructivism, naturalism, and phenomenology are terms that are also used interchangeably for interpretivism) and positivism (the terms empiricism, realism, scientific, and rationalistic are also used for positivism). According to Howard (2010, p.400), interpretivists emphasise “the importance of subjective context, ideational/subjective essences, but reject the notion of causality,” positivists pay attention to “general causality, objective essentialism, and reject the importance of social context.” The goal of interpretivist research is “to uncover essential meanings of cultures,
representations, or discourse while recognizing that each articulation of meaning is totally and incontrovertibly subjective.” However, the goal of positivist research is “to construct a project that seeks to test a claim of cause and effect on an observable world to generate a generalizable causal law about how the world works.”

During the past several decades, paradigm debates have been waged between the traditional dualism in social science research – positivist/empiricist and constructivist/phenomenological (Cherryholmes, 1992; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In general, the positivism paradigm is related to quantitative methods, and the interpretivist paradigm is associated with qualitative methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Howe, 1988; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The debates between these two paradigms have been called the qualitative-quantitative debates (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). However, one consequence of this sometimes-heated debate has been a movement to challenge this dualism, seeing it as something of a false dichotomy and trying to find a balanced way forward that allows for many positions between the purist interpretivist and positivist endpoints. Some scholars or researchers assert that qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Pragmatism and critical realism are the other two main philosophical theories that stand in addition to the two traditionally divided paradigms in social science research.

Pragmatist researchers and theorists now refer to ‘mixed methods’ as an approach containing both qualitative and quantitative methods or elements (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), pragmatists use both inductive and deductive logic to build the basic framework of their research. Pragmatism is epistemological relativism. This means that both subjective and objective viewpoints are used for research inquiries. Ontologically, pragmatism accepts external reality and chooses explanations that can best produce the desired outcomes. Regarding causality, pragmatists think that there may be causal relationships and that “values play a large role in interpreting results” (p.23).
My study takes a pragmatic approach: It accepts causal reality but views the social context as key to understanding the experiences of international students and the meanings they construct from these experiences. This approach has informed the adoption of a mixed methods design. From an ontological viewpoint, the knowledge associated with this study is derived from human interest, action, and interaction among international students and relevant people, such as schoolteachers, administrators, educators, researchers, policy makers, and government officials. “Usefulness” or “application” of the research findings to practical education implementation fields, such as international higher education and student support services, is viewed as the judging criterion for knowledge. Epistemologically, pragmatism is concerned with the practical resolution to problems (Patton, 1990), and pragmatist researchers tend to use applicable pluralistic, multiple, or mixed methods approaches to uncover and examine knowledge and answers to human questions and problems (Rossman & Wilson, 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Patton, 1990). The knowledge claims of pragmatists are freedom for inquiry approaches, no commitment to any philosophical system or reality, no questions regarding reality and the law of nature, truth established on practical application and non-dualism, and research of problems and the associated outcome in practically social, political, historical, and humanistic contexts (Cherryholmes, 1992; Creswell, 2014; Morgan, 2007).

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY – SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY MIXED METHODS STRATEGY

This research uses a sequential exploratory strategy. It is one of the four mixed methods designs suggested by Creswell (Creswell, 2003; Creswell et al., 2003), and based on the following criteria: sequential or concurrent research implementation and/or data collection, priority or weight for (quantitative, qualitative, or equal) research data and analysis, sequential or concurrent integration of data collection, and a theoretical perspective as a guiding framework. The mixed methods sequential exploratory strategy is depicted by the following figure (Creswell, 2009, p. 209):
Figure 3.1 shows that this inquiry strategy starts from qualitative data collection and analysis, which is then followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data. A sequential exploratory strategy is an approach with qualitative data collection and analysis conducted initially, followed by a quantitative phase. The findings from the two methodological aspects are then integrated into the final research interpretation. This study on postgraduate international student adjustment slightly weights the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis as having more importance than the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis because two qualitative interviews are firstly conducted at different time points. The qualitative data collected from two interviews are expected to produce richer and more innovative findings than the quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire survey. This situation is the same as the methodological literature description, in which the qualitative phase is usually seen as the inquiry priority (Creswell, 2003).

A sequential exploratory strategy is employed to explore a phenomenon through the assistance of quantitative results in the qualitative research interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Its rationale is to use the exploratory qualitative findings of a phenomenon as the understanding foundation for the further quantitative investigation in order to examine the distribution and prevalence of the phenomenon (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). It can be used to examine the application of a newly developed research instrument (Creswell, 1999), a theory emerged from a qualitative exploration (Morgan, 1998), and the distribution or generalization of a qualitative finding or phenomenon into different samples in a chosen research population (Morgan, 1998; Morse, 1991). Although it often takes a lot of time for a researcher to conduct two phases of research methodology, this strategy is advantageous to the construction of a
new instrument and the exploration of a phenomenon with the expansion on more qualitative findings.

In this empirical study, the findings discovered from the two exploratory interviews are designed to be used as the foundation for the later quantitative online survey investigation, in order to further examine the distribution and prevalence of the research phenomenon. The research is also designed to evaluate the application of a newly developed online survey instrument (see Appendix IV) – International Student Adjustment Survey (ISAS). Finally, the quantitative findings are also used to evaluate the distribution and generalization of the qualitative findings into a different sample in a chosen research population.

3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

Reasons for Studying Abroad
– What are the reasons associated with international postgraduate students’ decision to study abroad?
– How does the experience of studying and living in the UK compare to their initial expectations? For instance, are international postgraduate students’ expectations or reasons (goals) for an overseas education still the same after studying and living in the UK?

Academic Experience
– What are the academic experiences of first-year international postgraduate students in a UK university?
– Especially, what do they think about their study programs, teaching arrangements in place, quality of interaction and relationship with personal tutors and other students, and the availability/accessibility of learning support (services)?

Socio-cultural Experience
– What are the socio-cultural experiences of first-year international postgraduate students in the UK university?
Especially, to what extent, are international postgraduate students able to integrate and participate in the socio-cultural life of a UK higher education institution?

**The U-curve Hypothesis**

– Can the U-curve hypothesis be applied to explain the adjustment of international postgraduate students in this research?

**Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

– Can Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory be applied to explain the satisfaction of international postgraduate students in this study?

### 3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

Two interview schedules (see Appendixes II and III) and an online questionnaire (see Appendix IV) survey were designed to address and answer theses research questions. The questions in the first interview schedule investigated twenty-six postgraduate international students’ reasons for studying abroad, and both first impressions and expectations regarding their academic and socio-cultural experiences in the first academic term. The second interview schedule was designed to discover the adjustment situations related to academic and socio-cultural experiences of the same postgraduate international students in the second term of their university studies. For example, in the first interview, the interview participants were asked what their expectations were for their future academic or socio-cultural experiences, and, in the second interview, the interview participants were then asked how their academic or socio-cultural experiences had been since the first interview. Through the questions addressed in the first and second interview schedules, the changing process of both academic and socio-cultural adjustments could be examined and uncovered. Additionally, an online questionnaire survey was designed to study similar issues related to reasons for studying abroad, academic adjustment, and socio-cultural adjustments from the viewpoint of an additional number of international students. Two hundred and fifty first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students participated in this questionnaire survey. The online questionnaire investigation helped me to discover whether there were any significant finding differences between the two interviews and this questionnaire.
investigation and whether findings discovered by these two different research methods were generally consistent.

3.7 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The research population of this study consists only of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students studying at a southwestern UK university during the 2010–11 academic year.

For the quantitative phase, the research sampling frame is the same as its research population, and includes only first-year, full-time, postgraduate (Masters and doctoral programs), international students studying at USW. I distributed the survey questionnaire or its information to every first-year, postgraduate, international student at USW in the 2010–11 academic year via an email or in person. In order to avoid repetition, I reminded each survey participant to answer the questionnaire once only on the covering letter and when the questionnaire information was distributed in person.

For the qualitative phase, twenty-six students were purposefully sampled as the research participants based on the maximum heterodoxy of the students’ background demographic characteristics (such as gender, degree of study, study field, and geographic area of origin). This was based on my expectation that by selecting this pool, I would collect the most potentially useful information for the later data analysis and to facilitate the relevant understanding. The research aspires to obtain broader understanding and knowledge associated with why first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students decide to study at a southwestern UK university and how they adjust to their academic and social-cultural life in the UK.

Interview Participants’ Background

Because of requests from the interview participants, this research does not show individual interview participant’s specific personal information. In order to avoid releasing each individual interview participant’s identification information, the background information about the interview participants is presented
through aggregated data only, as can be seen in table 3.1 (Interview Participants' Data) below. For interview participants' individuality, see Appendix IX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Degree of Study</th>
<th>College/School</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Region of Origin</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the information from the twenty-six first-year postgraduate international student participants, there are seven students studying in a PhD
program and nineteen in a Masters program at USW. There are thirteen female and thirteen male interview participants.

Among the twenty-six interview participants, six students are from the Graduate School of Education; six are from the Business School; four are from the College of Social Sciences and International Studies; four are from College of Life and Environmental Science; two are from the College of Engineering Mathematics, and Physical Sciences; two are from the College of Humanities; and two are from the Medical School.

Among the twenty-six first-year postgraduate international students, seven are married. One has a partner. Eighteen students are single. Nine students are from Europe, including one from Russia. Eight students are from Asia, including one from Kazakhstan. Three interview participants are from Africa. Three interviewees are from the Middle East. One student is from the north of Latin America. Two students are from Latin America. Nineteen interview participants are under or about thirty years old. Two are over forty years old. Seventeen of these interview participants identify with a religion. Nine of them attended religious activities regularly. Ten interviewees regularly took part in student club activities or a certain activity outside of the university.

3.8 SAMPLING STRATEGY AND PROCEDURE

Qualitative Dimension – Semi-structured Interviews with International Students

This research purposefully selected students as the interview participants based on considerations regarding equal distribution of demographic characteristics, such as gender, geographic areas (Asia, Europe, America, Oceania, Africa, and Middle East), study program, etc. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), this purposive strategy is called “sampling for heterogeneity: Cases are selected such that their combination provides the maximum heterogeneity on certain attributes (e.g., ethnicity, education) that are important to the research objective of the study” (p.76).
The maximum heterodoxy sampling strategy in this research helped to collect the broadest useful research information for data analysis. Through this approach, the research participants would come from more various backgrounds with a broad range of experiences derived from the interaction between individual background characteristics and external environmental factors. Therefore, this sampling strategy was expected to collect the most possible information regarding international students’ UK experiences by interviewing first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students from the most diverse demographic backgrounds, including factors of gender, study program, and geographic area or continent of origin.

For discernment of knowledge regarding reasons for study abroad and both socio-cultural and academic experiences of foreign learners, a semi-structured interview method was employed to qualitatively and longitudinally discover the adjustment of nineteen first-year Masters, and seven first-year doctoral international students (twenty-six international students in total) at USW. Two face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted at the middle of the Autumn (October and November in 2010) and Spring (February and March in 2011) Terms.

Based on the real fieldwork, there were thirty interviewees participating in the first interview study and twenty-nine participating in the second interview study. After removing three participants (a non-first-year PhD student; a Latin American student with UK citizenship; and one who was unhappy with the request of returning the self-evaluation form), there were twenty-six valid interview participants in each interview study. Among the twenty-six participants, one was in a two-year part-time Masters program, but until the second interview, she was still a full-time student. She started a part-time job around the time of the second interview. Therefore, this participant was counted as a valid case in this research.

**Quantitative Dimension – Questionnaire Survey**

From May 17th, 2011, an online survey questionnaire was formally distributed to all research subjects, via an email and through administrative assistance
from the relevant university staff or faculty. The interviewees in the qualitative research phase were also asked to help distribute information regarding the online questionnaire survey to the potential survey participants. The procedure was done very carefully because every research participant was only allowed to fill out the questionnaire once. Additionally, a follow-up email was sent only once. A paper note regarding the survey information was also distributed to international students in person, if it was possible. It was expected to increase the response rate of the online questionnaire survey through the relevant methods related to the information dissemination.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION

Data Collection in Qualitative Phase – Interview Guide and Procedure

I mainly used an interview method for individual information collection from the twenty-six first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students. During the interview process, participants were asked specific questions (see Appendix II and III for the interview schedules) and also requested to describe and interpret their thoughts and experiences regarding receiving an overseas education. I, as an interviewer, always carefully asked the research questions and listened to these interviewees’ interpretations. I also asked for more description if the information offered was unclear or was of interest for further investigation.

According to Kvale (1996), “[a]n interview is literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 2). A research interview is a professional conversation with structure and purpose and based on everyday life. “It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” (p. 6). Therefore, it is not a dialogue between equal partners because the communicational situation or context is usually defined and controlled by a researcher or interviewer who also introduces the interview topic and critically investigates an interviewee’s answers to the research questions. Its purpose is to get an interviewee’s descriptions about his or her life world through “interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena”
According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), interviews allow participants, both interviewers and interviewees, to talk about their interpretations of the world regarding where they live and to show how they look at things or situations from their own viewpoints. Therefore, an interview is not only related to collecting data about life; it is also part of life itself and so carries all the features that typify human interaction. An interview is a flexible approach for data collection but differs from an everyday conversation. It allows interviewers to use multi-sensory ways (including verbal, non-verbal, spoken, heard and any other possible methods) to collect data. In spite of the naturalistic features of the interview, it is nevertheless a constructed rather than naturally occurring circumstance. Therefore, a researcher must be skilled in establishing a context in which participants are comfortable to engage and reflect.

The two interview studies in this research took the form of a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee. Interview issues included participants’ reasons for study abroad, and both academic and socio-cultural experiences. Verbal and spoken information was collected and recorded, although I also paid careful attention to the interview participants’ non-verbal expressions. The two interview studies were conducted based on the two separate but correlated interview schedules (Appendix II and Appendix III). Rules and ethics for conducting interviews were also carefully established and followed. I expected to receive beneficial information for research investigation through the qualitative interview data collection.

There are four types of interviews: informal conversational interviews, interviews based on an interview guide approach, standardized open-ended interviews, and closed quantitative interviews (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This empirical study related to international student adjustment uses ‘standardized open-ended interviews’ for data collection. One characteristic of this approach is that all the interviewees are asked the same basic questions with both the same wording and sequence exactly determined in advance. One of the strengths of this type of interviews is to increase the comparability of the responses because all respondents answer the same questions. Another
advantage is that the data collected are complete for each interviewee on the same topics addressed in the interview. Additionally, interview effects and bias can be reduced when there is more than one interviewer. The open-ended interview approach also allows decision-makers to review the instrumentation adopted in the evaluation. It also benefits the organization and analysis of the data collected (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

All of the interview questions were designed based on the main research questions. In order to apply these principles into the research design, I prepared and structured the two interview schedules and used them as the guiding tool for the interview implementation (see Appendix II and Appendix III). A general interview guide approach is usually used to direct the process and ensure the focus of data collection within some freedom and adaptability (Patton, 1990). Two semi-structured and face-to-face interviews were conducted with audiotape recording, handwritten note-taking, and interview transcription. Additionally, an interview protocol, including the heading, instruction, main research questions, probe skills, transition message, and space for comment and reflection of the interview (Creswell, 2003), was also designed and adopted to assist the interview. All of the interview participants were asked the same basic questions in the same order. Through this standardized open-ended interview approach, the data collected were made more easily available for further analysis, comparison, and finding interpretation. The first interviews, depending on individual participant’s available time schedule, took about forty minutes to one hour. The second interviews generally took at least one to one-and-a-half hours. A research journal was also kept during the study (see Appendix VI).

During the second interview, one evaluative task (see Appendix III) was designed to examine interviewees’ adjustment situation (related to the visual investigation of the U-curve hypothesis) and how satisfied they were with various adjustments and life needs during their study-abroad period. The design of the visual graphs is an original feature of the investigation which importantly and innovatively contributes to research methods in this field and the relevant knowledge in this research. Additionally, a relevant supportive
document, such as a self-evaluation form regarding interviewees’ monthly adjustment (see Appendix V), was also used for data collection and later research data analysis. The purpose of this support document collection is to numerically investigate the adjustment process of the interview participants and to see whether any adjustment process mirrors the U-curve hypothesis.

In this research, two interviews were conducted with every interview participant for data collection. The time period between the first and second interviews was about three months. The interview dates for each participant can be seen in Appendix VII.

**Data Collection in Quantitative Phase – Instrumentation and Procedure**

This research used a questionnaire survey for the quantitative data collection. “The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analysis” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 317). A quantitative survey instrument was developed for empirical quantitative data collection based on the previous literature review and the qualitative fieldwork from the two interviews employed in the first and second study terms. The constructs of the survey instrument include data collection regarding demographic characteristics, reasons for studying abroad, academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, and overall adjustment of the first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students studying at a southwestern UK higher education institution.

The survey instrument is named as International Student Adjustment Survey (ISAS). The content of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix IV. The online questionnaire was mainly developed after briefly reviewing the information collected from the student interviews both in the Autumn and Spring Terms of the 2010–11 academic year. It was also designed based on previous studies reported in the literature review. It also referenced or adopted some useful resources, such as the Michigan International Student Problem Inventory (MISPI, Galloway & Jenkins, 2005), including measurements of academic
advising and records, orientation services, socio-personal, and student activities; the Social Situation Questionnaire (SSQ, Bochner, 1982), including measurements of difficulties experienced with various situations; and three college students survey instruments from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA. The three CIRP survey instruments included 2010 CIRP Freshman Survey (including measurements of expectations, values, goals, interactions with peers and faculty), 2010 Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey (including measurements of academic achievement and engagement, residential experiences, satisfaction, and college adjustment), and 2009-10 College Senior Survey (CSS) (including measurements of career plans, post-college plans, and cognitive and affective development).

A small pilot study (with nine participants) was conducted before the formal questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey aims to investigate the research questions through the quantitative aggregated data. Therefore, the survey is not suitable for investigating each individual’s specific situation, adaptation or adjustment process, and the process of how reasons influence the decision of overseas education.

The questionnaire survey was designed on the Lime Survey system from the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter. Reasons for overseas education, academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, and overall adjustments were the main four dimensions in the questionnaire design. Every survey participant was asked to answer all of the questionnaire items; the answers and participants’ information was then recorded automatically by the computer system.

The questionnaire was initially emailed to all of the first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at USW through the assistance of the Postgraduate Student Guild President. After this initial email information dissemination, I used a more direct means of finding students to participate in the online questionnaire survey: I walked around the different USW campuses and the streets in the city center of South West, disseminating the research
information and inviting first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students to answer the online questionnaire. This strategy was continued from May 17th, 2010, to the beginning of August. Fortunately, USW staff members later helped the research with further follow-up email information distribution. The quantitative questionnaire survey was finished by the beginning of August 2010. There were about 297 students participating in the online questionnaire survey but only 250 participants answering all of the questions.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative Phase: “Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 461). Qualitative data analysis is a continuous process that includes constant reflection on the data, analytical questions asking, and memos keeping throughout the research (Creswell, 2003). During the research process, I kept memos for my research diary (Appendix VI). This action is important because it helps me reflect on my own feelings, thoughts, and attitudes toward the study and its questions during the research process. A qualitative data analysis needs tremendous attention to continuous digging into the deeper and more concealed meanings of the opened-ended data collected from questioning the research participants within the special socio-cultural contexts of the study. Qualitative data usually are rich, elaborate, and detailed with information collected from smaller numbers of objects than quantitative data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, such collected data generically transcribe, code, and detail the special experiences of each individual case, in order to extract the main themes, issues, and codes that assist in the formulation of crucial theoretical perspectives or constructs. Reflexivity, analytical memos, returning to the original research questions, and re-reading the raw data also benefit the data analysis. In this study, I used the voice recorders to gather all of the vocal information from the interviews. Memos regarding the main themes of the interview information and reflection about the collected interview data were also continually kept. During the interview process, I tried to dig into the deeper or concealed meaning of the
information released by the interview participants. After doing the interviews, the audio interview information was then transcribed into textual information for further data analysis. Sometimes I encountered problems understanding the accents of the interview participants when I transcribed the audio data. I overcame the relevant problems through replaying the voice recorder and repeatedly listening to the audio information. The data analysis of this research followed the procedures of analyses focused on meaning. Coding and categorizing all of the interview transcripts were the first steps employed in the data analysis. I began by adding keywords to an interview text in order to identify the interview statements. The coding procedure can be seen through the sample of a coded interview transcript in Appendix VIII. I then organized the identified statements and counted the frequency of similar statements from all of the interview texts.

Analyses focusing on meaning, analyses focusing on language, and general analyses are the three main modes of interview analysis mentioned by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). In this research, analysis focusing on meaning is the main mode for the qualitative data analysis. Meaning coding, meaning condensation, and meaning interpretation are the three procedures in analyses focusing on meaning. They can be used to structure the interview information, to focus the meanings of patterns shown in a comparatively short space, and to investigate the implied meaning of the data collected. Coding and categorizing are the initial approaches used by researchers to analyze interview texts. Coding refers to adding one or more keywords to a text for further identification of a statement. Categorization means a more organized conceptualization of declarations and allows for quantification. After meaning coding and categorizing, meaning condensation is then implemented. Meaning condensation means to abridge the meaning stated by interviewees into more concise expressions or concepts so that the main themes of what is described are rephrased in few words. The final procedure of analyses focusing on meaning is meaning interpretation of interview texts. Meaning interpretation aims to interpret interview texts more deeply and critically, not only to organize the obvious meanings of statements. Generally speaking, meaning categorization decontextualizes the interview statement but meaning
interpretation recontextualizes the statements from the interview texts. Categorization and condensation tend to reduce the text but interpretations tend to expand the text with the outcome that more words are used than the original statements interpreted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this empirical study, after coding and categorizing the interview texts, I then condensed the main themes of the meanings into shorter descriptions or expressions. I also interpreted the findings from the deeper and more critical viewpoints in addition to structuring the clear and apparent meanings of the interview statements. The interview findings are presented and reported in chapters 4 and 5 of this research.

**Quantitative Phase:** A quantitative statistical data analysis method was used through a computer software: Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Descriptive statistical data were then used to represent research findings from the collected data. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), “[d]escriptive statistics do exactly what they say: they describe and present data, for example, in terms of summary frequencies … Such statistics make no inferences or predictions, they simply report what has been found, in a variety of ways” (p. 503-504). Therefore, descriptive statistical data in this research show the distribution of different reasons motivating study abroad and the situation of academic, socio-cultural, and overall experiences and adjustment of the research participants.

3.11 PILOT WORK

**Qualitative Interviews:** The first two interview participants of both the first and second interviews were seen as the pilot interview cases. The purpose of the pilot interviews was to see whether the two sets of the interview schedules were suitable for the research purpose and whether I, as an interviewer, could control the timing and research procedure well. Because there was no problem during the pilot study process, the first two interview cases in both first and second interviews were then included in the qualitative interview cases. Therefore, there were the same twenty-six interviewees in both the Autumn Term of 2010 and the Spring Term of 2011.
Quantitative Online Questionnaire Survey: Before conducting the formal online questionnaire survey, in April 2011, a pilot study was administered to nine volunteer international students who also participated in the qualitative interviews. There are several functions for doing a pilot study. The most crucial function of a pilot study is to increase and improve the reliability, validity, and practicability of a questionnaire design (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The purpose of the quantitative pilot study was to check whether the survey questions were understood and whether the wording was clear or ambiguous, and to establish that students were clear about how to respond to the questions through requesting feedback or suggestions from the pilot participants. The survey instrument was then revised based on the suggestions of the pilot survey participants. Only slight changes in wording in a few places were suggested by the pilot participants. For example, the question regarding where international students were from was changed from ‘which continent of the world are you from’ to ‘which part of the world are you from’ because one option, the Middle East, is not a continent. We also considered changing the options of the demographic question regarding religious background because of a pilot participant’s suggestions; however, after careful consideration, my supervisors finally agreed to keep them the same. Additionally, another important task of the pilot survey was that participants were requested to measure how much time they had spent answering the entire questionnaire. Generally, it took about 10 to 15 minutes for all of the pilot participants to answer all of the questions in the questionnaire design. This timing result was seen as an acceptable and satisfactory, so the whole structure of the questionnaire design was maintained as designed. Therefore, after modifying the slight wording problems of the online survey questionnaire based on the pilot study, the online questionnaire survey was formally conducted during May to August in 2011.

3.12 RESEARCH ETHICS
Before conducting the research, the research proposal was reviewed for the human rights protection of the research participants by the ethics committee at the University of Exeter. A survey covering letter (see Appendix I) for establishing trust and credibility between survey research participants and I, as
the researcher of this study, and an informed consent form (see Appendix I) for interview participation were also written for research ethics. Issues regarding research ethics were also raised with interview participants and the informed consent forms for participant agreement were also obtained and collected.

The purpose of the ‘informed’ consent form is to notify interview participants of their rights and the potential risks, discomforts, or negative consequences of participating in the interviews (Bryman, 2006). In order to give consent, an individual needs to be clear what it is they are consenting to, including how much time the interviews may take, how the data will be used, how their anonymity will be preserved, as well as their right to withdraw. All interviewees were given time to carefully read the informed consent form before signing their names and starting an interview. One copy of the signed informed consent form was also kept by each interviewee. In relation to refusal or withdrawal from the study, an interview participant has the right and can withdraw from the interview research without any penalty if he or she feels uncomfortable or has any concerns. I also orally described and informed participants of their right of withdrawal before starting an interview. In addition to the final twenty-six interviewees in this study, there was one student who participated in the first interview study but withdrew from the second interview study. The data from another student was also not used because he was not happy with some data collection in the second interview. Unless a participant withdraws, I continue to use the information or data collected from the participant. Additionally, the interviewees were also informed that any trouble or effect on a participant’s study or relationship with the university would not be caused by the withdrawal. However, I still sincerely invited interviewees to take part in the research and carefully thought about their willingness to participate throughout the study. For issues related to risks or discomforts, I also let the interview participants know that there were no known or anticipated risks, costs, or effects on their study or life if they participated in this study.

Regarding confidentiality, this research follows the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the GSE Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter, which cover issues of confidentiality. All of the
information provided by interview participants is treated confidentially and will be used for academic research purposes only, even though the research is published. The names of the interview participants will not be identified or associated with their personal information; instead, a pseudonym or a code number is used for research identification purpose. All of the information will be used by the researcher only and kept in a safe place for five to ten years, in order to protect interview participant’s human rights and privacy. Additionally, interview participants’ identifiable information will also not be released in the future unless written permission is obtained from them. Furthermore, interview participants were also asked to agree with the publication of the research findings for academic purposes. Therefore, through signing the informed consent form (see Appendix I), permission from interview participants regarding personal information collected for data analysis, report (use and disclosure), and publication, will be granted to the researcher, under the supervision of the GSE Ethics Committee. In addition to heeding the ethics guided by BERA or the GSE Ethics Committee, I was also very careful not to use the pressure of friendship to encourage students to participate in this research as all of the participants were expected to be volunteers with the absolute right to withdraw from the research anytime. I was also mindful of individual stresses when talking with the research participants about issues that might have been troubling them. My approach for the data collection is to respect the information released from the research participants without any interruption. Being very comfortable about sharing any experiences, information and feelings helps me with better interview data collection. Generally, all of the interviewees were very happy and willing to contribute to this research related to international students.

Rules of research ethics, such as honesty, high competence, and reciprocity, are also seriously followed. Survey research findings and data are reported only by aggregated statistical data for research and academic purposes only. The collected and analyzed data or information is also kept for a designated period of time, for instance, five to ten years (Sieber, 1998). Finally, the research finding will be published via an “unbiased language at an appropriate level of specificity” with adequate description “sensitive to labels,” and the
proper use of the name research “participant” rather than subject (Creswell, 2003, p.67).

3.13 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS
There are some research limitations in this study because of the research design. First of all, the research subjects in this study are postgraduate international students. Therefore, the research findings cannot be inferred or generalized to all higher education students, general postgraduate students, or undergraduate international students. Postgraduate international students are a special student group and have their own special characteristics, such as coming from different home countries and including students in both Masters and PhD programs. They are different from other student groups. Second, the research context is in the United Kingdom so the research results cannot be inferred or generalized to educational contexts in other countries. The educational system and educational contexts in the UK are different from those in other countries. For instance, PhD programs in the UK are more research-oriented and emphasize more student-teacher supervision or interaction. Most of the Masters programs in the UK are one-year programs so they are usually very intensive. Therefore, the research findings in this study cannot be inferred or generalized to educational contexts or systems in other countries. Third, the research issues are investigated from only the perspectives of international postgraduate students but not from the perspectives of others, such as university administrators, faculty, or staff. Therefore, issues related to adjustment of international students cannot be studied or evaluated from a more holistic perspective regarding international student services. Finally, this research cannot be investigated from a more longitudinal approach because it is a PhD thesis and needs to be finished within a limited time period. Some issues in this research are worthy for further examination or investigation from a more longitudinal perspective in order to obtain more detailed information. However, the data collection of this research was designed to be completed within a one-year period. Therefore, being unable to inquire the adjustment of international students from a more longitudinal perspective is another limitation of this research design.
3.14 STRATEGIES TO AVOID RESEARCH LIMITATIONS OR POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES

Low Response Rate and Withdrawal of Participants: Low response rates in quantitative research, and the withdrawal of the participants in qualitative interviews, are potential research difficulties. Because of various strategies adopted in this research, such as a covering letter, an informed consent form, and the inducement, I was able to avoid these potential difficulties. First, a covering letter (see Appendix I) stating sponsorship or supervision was attached to the questionnaire survey in order to establish trust and credibility. Second, an informed consent form signed by both the research participants and I, as a researcher, might benefit research participation and the accuracy of the findings because the research participants were well notified of their rights, importance and contribution. Finally, an inducement for encouraging participation but not for particular or anticipated answers was adopted. The inducement that I used was a £5 reward for 12 questionnaire survey participants through a lottery.

Quality of the Qualitative Interview Research: Validating the accuracy of qualitative findings, such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility, could also be a potential difficulty in this research. In qualitative research, “validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher” (Winter, 2000, Cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 133). Based on the study from Alan Bryman (2008), Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba (1985) suggested trustworthiness and authenticity as two criteria for assessing the quality (reliability and validity) of a qualitative study. Credibility (similar to internal validity), transferability (similar to external validity), dependability (similar to reliability), and confirmability (similar to objectivity) are the four criteria for trustworthiness. When I did the qualitative interviews, I tried to build a sincere relationship with the interview participants in order to show my respect for their information. I referenced literature and advice from my supervisors for designing interview schedules in order to make sure that the interview questions really examined
what the research was supposed to investigate. A pilot study for the first and second interviews was also conducted separately to test the validity and applicability of each interview schedule and to help me become more familiar with the interview process for better data collection. I then honestly and objectively transcribed, analyzed, and reported the interview data and findings in order to assure the quality of the two interview studies. Additionally, transparency is another criterion or requirement that is pertinent to the rigor or quality of qualitative research. It is also a standard for reporting, presenting, and disseminating research findings. It requires research methods and procedures to be shown explicitly, clearly, and openly. It is very important for every stage of the research process. Transparency sometimes is linked to clarity and visibility, and sometimes it pertains to rigor, credibility, validity, and confirmability (Hiles, 2008). A good qualitative researcher needs to be transparent and reflective about behaviors, theoretical views, and principles or standards of behaviors (Seale, Gobo, Gurbrium, & Silverman, 2004). “The methods and logic of inquiry, data collection and analysis, if they are to be clear enough for others to replicate, must be transparent” (Hiles & Čermák, 2007, p.7). In this study, I have tried to clearly, explicitly, and openly outline and justify the research design, samples, methods, and procedures in this methodology chapter. My purpose is to be transparent in my presentation of the rationales, logic, and methods of this research inquiry, the data collection, and the associated data analysis.

Creswell (2003) recommends several strategies for a researcher to increase or improve the credibility of the qualitative research finding. These strategies include triangulation via various data sources, member-checking through participants, rich and thick finding description, self-reflectivity from the researcher for avoidance of biases, investigation of reversely negative or discrepant information for credibility increase, protracted time for in-depth understanding of the narrative phenomenon, peer debriefing for accuracy improvement, and an external auditor for project review and evaluation. In order to reduce potential difficulties, I properly applied the aforementioned Creswell’s strategies to the practical enhancement of the research validation. For example, various data sources, such as interview information, numerical
data and visual graph evaluations, and interviewees’ self-evaluation were collected to improve the credibility of the qualitative research findings. During the interview process, I reviewed the information, or data collected, as a means of double-checking. Various examples and rich information were also described in the research findings. Self-reflectivity is often used to avoid biases during the process of data collection, data analysis and data reporting. Reversely negative or discrepant information, which is different from that in most of the situations, is also described and reported in the study. The time for interviews was occasionally prolonged in order to have a better or more in-depth understanding of the research data. My supervisors also acted as external auditors, giving project advice, reviews and evaluation. Additionally, I also referenced information from experts’ advice or suggestions and reviewed relevant literature. A pilot study of a questionnaire survey was implemented to increase and improve the reliability, validity, and practicability of a questionnaire design. Finally, the research methods and procedures of this research project are also explicitly, clearly, and openly shown, described, and reflected in this written report in order to meet standards of transparency.

**Validity and Reliability of the Quantitative Survey Instrument:** Ensuring the validity and reliability of a quantitative questionnaire survey could be potential difficulties in this research. In social research, reliability and validity are two technical criteria for evaluating the quality of a measuring instrument, occasionally referred to as “psychometric characteristics of an instrument” (Punch, 2005, p. 95). Reliability is equivalent to the word, consistency (Huck, 2000). While evaluating the reliability of a measurement instrument, researchers often ask the question: “To what extent can we say that the data are consistent?” (p. 86). Validity emphasizes the important connection or relationship between concepts and indicators (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). It is defined as “the extent to which any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure” (p. 17). With regard to the relationship between reliability and validity, Huck (2000) indicates that the situation could arise where a research instrument does not measure what it is supposed or claimed to measure and where the research data have high reliability but low validity.
However, valid research data must be reliable because “high reliability is a necessary but not sufficient condition for high validity” (p. 100).

Validity plays an important role in effective research. It is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). “Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman, 2008, p. 32). Among the four main types of validity discussed by Bryman (2008), measurement validity is often known as construct validity and usually refers to whether the design of a concept or measurement really reflects what it is supposed to mean and to be measured. Internal validity is concerned with whether a conclusion includes a causal relationship between two or more variables. External validity usually has to do with the generalizability of the research results. Ecology validity is concerned with the applicability of social scientific findings to real social contexts and human life (Bryman, 2008). In general, these four types of validity are well applied to this empirical study related to the adjustment of international students. Firstly, the definition of the key concepts in this research were well defined, based on the references from the literature review, and the measuring items in the survey questionnaire were all carefully designed to actually examine what it was supposed to measure. As discussed below, these careful design decisions were then checked by expert and peer review. Secondly, the potential causes or impacts of the data collected or research findings were also carefully considered and explained. For example, I was very careful to explain whether any possibly related factor, such as a cultural factor or demographic characteristic, could be even partly responsible for the variation that had been identified in relation to the international student adjustment or life satisfaction. Thirdly, the research results were able to be generalized to situations similar to those of this particular university in southwestern England because the qualitative interview findings were mostly consistent with the quantitative survey findings and both the size (250 questionnaire respondents) and the representativeness (characterized by a random sample drew from the research population) of the survey sample were sufficient or appropriate for the finding explanation within this South West university context. Finally, the research findings from this study could be applied to similar universities with
corresponding characteristics, such as being a research intensive university, performing well in national and international league tables, and being a member of the Russel Group, but might need to be treated with caution in a very different context, such as a teaching-oriented post-1992 university.

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), in quantitative research, the validity of the data “might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data” (p. 133). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) also suggest two strategies that a researcher can use to determine the validity of a measurement. One is to ask experts to help with evaluating whether a specific research instrument really measures what is expected to be measured. The other is to collect factual or actual data related to the outcome of the measurement. In this study, in addition to the expertise of my supervisors, I also collected empirical data via a survey pilot work (see section 3.10) of nine international students in order to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire instrument and make sure the quality of the quantitative questionnaire survey.

“Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The term is commonly used in relation to the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences (such as poverty […] religious orthodoxy) are consistent” (Bryman, 2008, p. 31). Test-retest reliability (evaluating the same subjects twice via the same testing instrument in two different time points), parallel-forms reliability (measuring the same subjects via two forms of the same instrument within a short time interval), and internal consistency reliability (administering a questionnaire or test to research subjects once) are three different approaches to reliability (Huck, 2000). Among these three different types of reliability, internal consistency and repeated measurement are the two common forms often conceptualized in quantitative research (Muijs, 2004). In this study, I choose to focus on measuring the internal consistency reliability coefficient because the quantitative online questionnaire survey is more suitable and convenient to be administered once only but the measurement of test-retest or parallel-forms
reliability requires any questionnaire survey to be conducted more than once or be designed as two different forms of the same instrument.

Split-half reliability, Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (K-R 20) reliability coefficient, and Cronbach’s alpha (coefficient alpha, \( \alpha \)) are three common statistical procedures that researchers use for measuring the internal consistency reliability coefficient (Huck, 2000). Cronbach’s \( \alpha \) (alpha) is a coefficient of internal consistency, first named alpha by Lee Cronbach in 1951 and used most frequently in the estimate of the reliability of a measuring instrument or psychometric test (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Although the technique of Cronbach’s alpha is equivalent to that of K-R 20 in relation to dichotomous measurement items, Cronbach’s alpha “is more versatile because it can be used with instruments made up of items that can be scored with three or more possible values” (Huck, 2000, p. 91), such as a 0–10 scale or a 5-point Likert-type scale. Therefore, Cronbach’s alpha can also be viewed as an extension of KR-20. In general, .70 or higher is the cutoff value of an ‘acceptable’ reliability coefficient in most social science research (Institute for Digital Research and Education, 2014). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, (2007), if the value of Cronbach’s alpha is >0.90, it means that the measuring scale is very highly reliable. A 0.80–0.90 alpha value represents a highly reliable measuring scale. An alpha coefficient of 0.70–0.79 shows that a scale is reliable. An alpha coefficient of 0.60–0.69 indicates a marginally or minimally reliable measuring scale. A <0.60 alpha value usually means an “unacceptably low reliability” (p. 506).

Following the guidelines from Field (2009), I used SPSS to do the reliability analysis of Cronbach’s alpha via the data collected from the quantitative questionnaire respondents in order to know the internal consistency of the different 6-point Likert-type scales, ranging from completely disagree (1-point) to completely agree (6-point), in the newly developed online survey instrument – ISAS (see Appendix IV) in this research. In order to further understand the internal consistency of each subscale, Table 3.2 summarizes the statistical data regarding the reliability of each 6-point Likert-type subscale in ISAS as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Adjustment</td>
<td>General Academic Adjustment</td>
<td>AcAd1 [1] to [7]</td>
<td>.851</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Adjustment</td>
<td>General Overall Adjustment</td>
<td>OAS1 [1] to [14]</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above information regarding the empirical Cronbach’s alpha reliability test of the different 6-point Likert-type subscales of the online survey instrument (ISAS) generally shows that, except for the subscale on academic actions (AcAd4), the reliability of each individual measure associated with reasons for studying abroad, academic adjustment, and overall adjustment is acceptable or high. However, the reliability for each subscale related to socio-cultural adjustment is not acceptable. Kline (1999) indicates that researchers should also expect this kind of data in social science research. Punch (2005) also states that unreliability exists in every measure: “[e]ven physical measurement does not produce exactly the same measures of the same object at two different points in time” (p. 96). Social measurement also cannot avoid some unreliability or error variance. “It is harder to reduce error variance in social and psychological measurement than in (say) physical measurement, but error variance is present wherever measurement is used” (p. 96). Additionally, the number of the question items on the subscale (for instance, only four items on the SCAd2 scale) can be one cause of the unacceptable or poor reliability because the formula for the standardized Cronbach’s alpha is: $\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \overline{r} - \sum_{i=1}^{N} r_{ij}}{\overline{r} - \overline{r^{2}}}$ and N is the number of the measuring items. Therefore, if the number of the items is increased, the Cronbach’s alpha can also be increased (Institute for Digital Research and Education, 2014). Other factors, such as the complexity of the international student experience (especially in socio-cultural adjustment), some inconsistency between the qualitative interview findings or literature review and
the quantitative questionnaire survey findings (because the questionnaire was designed based on the information from the literature review and qualitative interview findings), and the limitations of developing social measurement can also result in the unacceptable or low reliability. The preceding information regarding the reliability analysis may also hint at some interesting findings that have been investigated and are going to be reported in this study.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this regarding the reliability of the survey employed in this study therefore are mainly related to the quality of both the questionnaire design and the findings derived from the questionnaire survey, the complexity of the research issues, the consistency between the qualitative interview and quantitative survey findings, and the practical implications for the further data analysis and both the interpretation and discussion of the research findings. Although higher reliability usually shows more reliable data or findings, the relatively low reliability may also highlight the complexity of the international student experience and greater differences between both qualitative and quantitative findings in socio-cultural rather than academic adjustment. The low alphas for the socio-cultural adjustment subscales may also suggest that I should place more weight on the qualitative rather than the quantitative findings with regard to this aspect of the international student experience. The value of the survey in relation to the overall design therefore is that it provides an opportunity for me to reflect on my understanding of the themes emerging from the qualitative data in the light of the findings in the questionnaire.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS: REASONS AND EXPECTATIONS

This research investigates reasons for studying abroad and the subsequent academic and socio-cultural experiences of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at a southwestern UK university. Two qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews and an online, quantitative questionnaire survey were conducted for the data collection. The findings based on these two interviews and the online survey are divided into two chapters – Chapter Four: Reasons and Expectations, and Chapter Five: Adjustments. The purpose of Chapter Four is to report the findings regarding reasons and expectations for an overseas education based on the analysis of qualitative data collected from the first interviews and some quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire survey. The chapter is divided into two sections: section one focuses on findings regarding participants’ reasons for choosing overseas education; section two provides information on the participants’ expectations about studying in the UK.

4.1 REASONS FOR STUDYING ABROAD
This section mainly shows the findings regarding reasons for studying abroad, reasons for studying in the UK in particular, and reasons for studying at the specific university in southwestern UK where the data was drawn. It uses the data from both the first qualitative interviews and the quantitative questionnaire survey. Findings regarding study-abroad preparation, career planning, and application processes are also illustrated. Twenty-six students took part in interviews and 250 participants responded to the online questionnaire.

4.1.1 Reasons for Studying Abroad – Qualitative Phase
As can be seen in table 4.1, there are various factors that influence international postgraduate students’ decision to study abroad. These can be divided into
four main categories: value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons. Details of the main four categories are shown below, including the number of respondents selecting that option and specific responses given by the students to justify or clarify their views.

Table 4.1 Qualitative Information on Reasons for Studying Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Theme – Reasons for Studying Abroad</th>
<th>Numbers of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value of Overseas Study</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being aware of international and critical perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting advantages from an overseas education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing study abroad as a popular trend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal or Family-related Factors</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting a new and different cultural experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering previous study- or work-abroad experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving personal development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving English language skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving encouragement from others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being influenced by friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of Opportunities at Home</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing limited opportunities in home country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking specific study programs in home country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being aware of corruption and favoritism in home country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial or Promotional Reasons</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving financial support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiring job promotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Value of Overseas Study**

Receiving a university education in another country is frequently perceived as having additional value. This was indeed the case with many of the participants in this study, with over half (fourteen out of twenty-six) indicating this as their main motivation behind their choice to pursue an education outside their home country. For instance, a student from North America stated: “In addition to a more specific program in South West, I think I still can get the international perspective; because there is still slight difference that some people do not really realize” (0012). A PhD student (0003) from the Middle East described that receiving a higher education from a deeper, critical, and international perspective was her reason for pursuing an overseas education. An Asian
Masters student admitted: “Receiving international perspectives and foreign education in a different culture is also my reason for study abroad” (0026). Some students also expect to interact with international students from diverse countries in addition to receiving lectures in another language and by other nationals. As one participant commented: “International network is also one reason for me to study abroad. With the international exposure, contact, and network, I can always get information from my friends in different countries” (0023).

With regard to the advantage of or preference for an overseas degree, eight participants provided details during the interview section of the study. One PhD student (0003) from the Middle East claimed that people in her country actually preferred a foreign educational degree (because it was considered more prestigious) than an Arabic one at the same level. Additionally, an Asian Masters student (0018) mentioned that universities in his home country liked having professors who graduated from overseas universities, such as those in the US or UK. Another Asian Masters student also admitted: “A foreign degree will help me to find a better job, and this is the most important thing” (0026). Furthermore, one interviewee (0013) pointed out that overseas education was better than education in her home country: “A foreign degree always looks good for one’s CV” (0013). A Masters student from Latin America mentioned: “It is better for my career because it is a foreign degree, and I can improve English for better employment … A foreign educational degree is good for future employment” (0010).

Study abroad was also cited as a popular trend in a country or for a certain group of people. Two out of the fourteen interview participants mentioned this point. Participant 0016 mentioned that study abroad was popular in his university in his home country and good students tended to study abroad. An African Masters student (0023) explained that he was also a good student in his home country, but he had definitely been motivated to do the thing deemed best based on a popular trend among good students in his country.
Personal or Family-related Factors
A further reason named by over half of the participants related to the individual and/or his or her family. For instance, the opportunity for a new and different experience is an important part of living in a new place: having different culture experiences, communicating with people from different cultures, and knowing Western culture were all put forward as reasons associated with the decision for study abroad. As one Masters student from the Middle East said: “I preferred to live somewhere or a new country that I had never lived before in order to get new experiences” (0025). An Asian Masters student commented: “To experience and understand the culture and real meaning behind the language makes me want to study abroad because I can communicate with people from different cultures and learn from each other” (0007).

A less frequently mentioned reason related to previous study or work experience. For example, a Masters student from the Middle East commented: “My previous work experience in Abitibi for four years influences my decision for study abroad” (0025). One student from Asia (0017) stated that his previous short-term study-abroad experience in Denmark might have influenced his decision for his current overseas education. An Asian Masters student also mentioned how his previous long-term study-abroad experience influenced his current education-abroad decision: “My previous high-school study in France and Germany made me realize that I should spend more time with foreign students … Therefore, I want to try study abroad again in order to stay with foreign students” (0011).

Achieving personal development is also a key issue for the study-abroad decision, with reasons connected to increased independence, general improvement, and improvement in language ability. A Masters student from Latin America stated: “Studying abroad can make one learn to be independent and have connection or interaction with foreigners … Living abroad helps a person to improve” (0010). Four out of the fourteen participants mentioned improving English language skills as a reason for study abroad because English has become an international language. For instance, a European Masters participant mentioned how her previous major affected her decision for
overseas education: “It is more helpful to study in a foreign English environment since I major in English” (0014). An Asian Masters student admitted: “I am quite interested in studying English and want to improve my English skills” (0011).

Encouragement from others – either family or colleagues and friends – is also related to education abroad. Three participants stated that parents’ expectations or support affected their decision. For instance, an Asian PhD student (0016) commented that Chinese culture’s emphases on education, parental expectations, receiving a good education, and seeing different things in another country had affected his decision to study abroad. A married participant also acknowledged the encouragement from her teachers in her home country: “My professors in my home country warmly encouraged and suggested me going abroad” (0024). Two interviewees mentioned that the influence from friends also motivated their decision, with one of them, from North America (0012), stating that this encouragement came from friends already studying abroad. An Asian Masters student mentioned: “My friends influenced my decision to study abroad and I want to be like of them” (0011).

**Lack of Opportunities at Home**

Lack of opportunities in the home country may drive the student’s decision to study overseas. Fourteen of the twenty-six interview participants indicated this point. Lack of opportunity could be from experiencing limited educational opportunities (degree, research, etc.), the lack of specific study programs in the home country, or being aware of corruption and favoritism in the home country.

Nine out of the fourteen interview participant described that they experienced limited educational opportunities in their home countries. A European PhD student admitted: “There are not so many PhD opportunities in my home country” (0008), while a Masters student from South Europe (0009) also acknowledged limited Masters opportunities in her home country. Three of the nine interviewees decided to study abroad because they wanted to access research. A European Masters student admitted: “We do not have too much research in music education in my home country so I decided to study abroad”
An Asian Masters student mentioned: “Part of the reason for my further study because I want to learn and know about research” (0022).

Five out of the fourteen participants faced the problem that pursuing their study needed to be done overseas because there was no program specializing in her or his study field within the home country. For example, an Asian PhD student mentioned: “Further study in my field needs to pursue in overseas because of no further PhD program in my special field in my home country” (0016). A European Masters student described:

I decided to change my field because of no course in my current study field in my home country … I searched on the web about where I could study in this field. I first thought to go to Australia but it was expensive to study there. Then I thought to study in England because England is the center of the knowledge in my current study field. In my opinions, at least, universities in the UK have good reputation. (0020)

A country’s economic or political situation may also affect opportunities in one’s home country and then influence the student’s decision to study abroad. Three participants mentioned that the corruption in the economy or favoritism in education in their home countries made them opt for an overseas education. For example, interviewee 0024 stated that she tried to apply for a PhD degree supported by a scholarship in her home country, but the system was not easy and her opportunity was blocked. A European PhD student stated:

I know my colleague will get his PhD because he is a friend of a professor. Therefore, the problem is serious … I tried to improve myself with a Masters degree taken via three years in my home country. In the meantime, I also worked. When I worked and studied at the same time, I tried to publish a lot of books and articles. But, if they did not want to make me get in because I did not need them and they said they did not need me. That was my decision to come abroad … No, there are no opportunities. If you are not involved into the professors or the corruption affairs, you would not have any opportunity. (0005)
Financial or Promotional Reasons
A further aspect mentioned by fewer (seven) participants related to financial considerations and promotion. For example, financial support from a home country government or a previous job employer or university importantly affected international postgraduate students’ ability to study in a foreign country. A scholarship or studentship from USW was also mentioned as a significant reason. An African Masters student pointed out that without his scholarship, it would be financially difficult for him to study abroad: “I was happy with the admission on the one hand but worried how to pay the bill so I was not excited. I then applied for scholarship since February and got the full scholarship for the full tuition fees in June 2010 to study in South West. I was excited at that point” (0023). Three interview participants (0001, 0006, and 0018) indicated that job pressure to upgrade their education degree and to keep their university post played an important role in their decision, with one (0018) specifically referring to pressure from his employer.

4.1.2 Reasons for Studying Abroad – Quantitative Phase
The questionnaire used in this study also includes a question asking students to evaluate their reasons for studying abroad. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the agreement scale; scores for each item range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). Overall 250 respondents answered the online questionnaire. Findings are shown as follows (see table 4.2), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets). These findings will be compared with the data from the interviews on the same topic, which were described above.

In the paragraph below, ‘overall agreement’ and the accompanying percentages in brackets refer to the total of those selecting 4, 5, and 6 in the Likert scale, while ‘overall lack of agreement’ and percentages refer to those selecting 1, 2, and 3. Mean scores will be used to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement.
According to the information from the online survey (see table 4.2), international students’ reasons for studying abroad can be grouped as positive or non-positive factors. As can be seen in the table, there was overall agreement that a number of factors had influenced participants’ decision to study abroad. These ranged from a high level of overall agreement for gaining international perspective and fulfilling one’s potential or career dream (over 90% for both) to somewhat less overall agreement as to the importance of an overseas degree for employment, language improvement and enjoying a higher quality of education (70–85%), with only approximately 60% feeling family or parental factors played a role. The other aspects listed were viewed as less significant in the decision-making process. The least significant were political uncertainty (or corruption) and immigration plans (with over 70% of participants registering...
overall disagreement with the importance of these factors), while the fashion of studying abroad was seen by just over half as not important, with other aspects such as friends with study-abroad experience, economic growth in one’s home country, and job requirements scoring in between with means of approximately 3.

Based on the preceding qualitative interview analysis on international students’ reasons for studying abroad, I divide the above fourteen online questionnaire items into five categories (value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, financial or promotional reasons, and others) in order to compare the quantitative questionnaire findings with the qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interview findings. See table below:

Table 4.3 Five Categories of the Questionnaire Items on Reasons for Studying Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value of Overseas Study</td>
<td>Items 4, 6, 8, and 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal or Family-related Factors</td>
<td>Items 4, 7, 9, 10, and 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Opportunities at Home</td>
<td>Items 2 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial or Promotional Reasons</td>
<td>Item 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Items 1, 3, and 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to both value of overseas study and personal or family-related factors, questionnaire item 4 (‘gaining international perspective/experiences or cross-cultural sensitivity’) is a positive factor influencing the questionnaire respondents’ decision to study abroad. Questionnaire item 4 is associated with both themes (‘awareness of international and critical perspective’ and ‘wanting a new and different cultural experience’) of the qualitative interview findings and achieves an overall agreement of 95.2%, with a mean score of 5.24, the highest mean of all the items. This indicates that item 4 is a very positive item in measuring students’ reasons for studying abroad. Additionally, eight of the twenty-six interview participants admitted that they had decided to study abroad because of their awareness that international and critical perspectives were important, a topic ascribed to the category of ‘value of overseas study.’ Furthermore, six of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned that they had
decided to pursue an overseas education because of wanting new and different cultural experiences, which belongs to the category of personal or family-related factors. Therefore, from the preceding information related to the qualitative findings and the large positive numbers of respondents on questionnaire item 4, it appears that the quantitative finding for this item strongly supports the qualitative research findings.

Questionnaire items 6 and 8, both relating to students’ expectations of the advantages of an overseas education, and item 14, relating to the popularity of study abroad, also come under the overall category of ‘value of overseas study’ and can be compared with the qualitative data. Overall agreement in relation to item 6 was high, indicating that this is a positive factor influencing the students’ decision-making. Additionally, overall agreement with item 8, relating to the higher quality of education, was also high. According to the qualitative data, just under a third of interviewees stated that they had decided to study abroad because they expected advantages from an overseas education, indicating a correspondence between the two sets of data. On the other hand, there was little agreement that item 14 (popular trend of study abroad) was important (mean score was 3.14), which is somewhat in line with the qualitative data, according to which only two of the twenty-six interview participants claimed that they had decided to study abroad because they saw it as a popular trend. This suggests an overall correspondence between the two sets of data, although the correspondence is much stronger in relation to the idea of value rather than popularity.

In relation to personal or family-related factors, the two sets of data provided different results. Previous study- or travel-abroad experience (item 7) was viewed similarly by participants in both the questionnaire and the interview. This was also the case with influence of friends (item 11). For both factors, a minority of participants considered these significant. There was less agreement, however, in relation to English improvement (item 9) and encouragement from family (item 10), where interviewees considered these less important in their decision-making than the questionnaire respondents.
Based on the qualitative data, only three out of the twenty-six interview participants, a low number, mentioned that consideration of previous study- or work-abroad experience motivated their decision to pursue an overseas education. Overall agreement in relation to item 7 was not high. Therefore, the findings of item 7 were somewhat similar to the interview findings. As regards the influence from friends, only two out of the twenty-six interview participants – again, a low number – indicated that being influenced by friends was a reason for their overseas education, but the overall lack of agreement in relation to item 11 was slightly over half. Therefore, findings regarding item 11 were somewhat similar to the qualitative interview findings. For English improvement (item 9), the overall agreement was high; only four out of the twenty-six interview participants agreed this was an important factor. For encouragement from others (item 10), overall agreement was more than half, but only four interview participants claimed this as a reason to study abroad. Therefore, from the preceding information, it is clearly shown that questionnaire items 9 and 10 strongly and positively support the qualitative interview findings, whereas questionnaire items 7 and 11 do not so clearly support the qualitative interview findings.

In relation to the category regarding lack of opportunities at home, being aware of corruption and favoritism (item 2) was viewed similarly by both questionnaire and interview participants; however, this was not the case with experiencing limited opportunities in one’s home country (item 5). Two out of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned that being aware of corruption and favoritism was a reason for them to study abroad; whereas a higher number, nine interview participants, indicated that they decided to study abroad because of experiencing limited opportunities in the home country. With regard to the quantitative data, data relating to item 5 showed some differences because overall lack of agreement in relation to item 5 was slightly over half. Therefore, item 5 does not strongly support the qualitative interview research findings. However, overall lack of agreement in relation to item 2 was high. These findings regarding item 2 support the qualitative interview findings because both quantitative and qualitative findings show lack of agreement.
In relation to financial or promotional reasons (hoping for job promotion), the data from both quantitative (item 12) and qualitative sources differ to some extent. The qualitative interviews revealed little agreement with this as a factor (three out of twenty-six), but questionnaire item 12 showed a higher level of overall agreement (a mean score of 3.16) although with a mode level 1, a relatively high percentage completely disagreed.

For items 1 (immigration plans) and 13 (economic growth/ exchange rate factors), overall lack of agreement was high, indicating that neither formed a strong factor in influencing the participants' choice of overseas education. On the other hand, item 3, relating to fulfilling potential or career dreams, was agreed by a large percentage – overall 92% and the second highest mean of all items – as a highly significant factor.

### 4.1.3 Reasons for Studying in the UK – Qualitative Phase

According to the first interviews, twenty-six participants mentioned five main categories related to reasons for studying in the UK. These five categories include geographical, cultural, and historical reasons; finance; personal or family-related reasons; quality and opportunity; and admission requirement.

The details are described as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4 Qualitative Information on Reasons for Studying in the UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category/Theme – Reasons for Studying in the UK</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical, Cultural, and Historical Reasons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finances</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-year masters program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal or Family-related Reasons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay or visit in England before and familiarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantage of UK education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Geographical, Cultural, and Historical Reasons**

Half of the twenty-six interview participants pointed out that geographical, cultural, and historical reasons motivated their decision to study in the UK. About seven out of the thirteen interview participants admitted that geographical distance was one reason that made them to decide to study in England. These students were mainly from Europe, Middle East, and Africa. For instance, a PhD student from the Middle East mentioned: “UK is closer to my home country so it is easier for my husband to visit me” (0003). A European PhD student commented: “UK is in Europe so the flight distance is shorter … I feel I am protected in the UK and Europe” (0008).

Cultural factors are also one of the reasons. Six out of the thirteen interview participants mentioned relevant cultural issues. For example, a student (0007) stated that UK is a country full of culture and customs, so it is different from the US. An Asian Masters student mentioned: “England is close to Europe, Africa, and Middle East so there would be more international students from more different countries and cultures in the UK” (0011). An Asian student said: “I like the culture. I like a country that has a long history. It is amazing” (0026). A Masters student from the Middle East mentioned: “I decided to study in the UK because I contacted many British people when I worked in Abitibi. I was introduced to British culture so I wanted to experience further British culture. This could be a factor motivating me to study abroad” (0025).

Moreover, special historical, colonial or political relationships may also affect one’s decision to study in the UK. Two African interview participants (0001 and 0023) agreed with this viewpoint. One said: “My country has a strong social and political tie with the UK. We are also a member of the Commonwealth and
have relationships with the UK. Therefore, we have more opportunities to come over to the UK” (0023).

**Finances**

Twelve interview participants claimed that finances influenced their decision because they could not study abroad without sufficient financial support. Approximately half of the interview participants in a Masters program (nine out of nineteen) indicated that a UK Masters degree was only one year, and therefore relatively inexpensive. This view was expressed by students from Latin America, Europe and Asia. One representative quote was from an Asian Masters student: “I chose to come to UK because the cost of tuition fees for a Masters degree is for one year and the duration is shorter” (0018).

Study and living expenses also affected a student’s decision to study in the UK, which was mentioned by five interview participants. Most of them were European students, and as one European PhD student (0005) noted, fees were cheaper for EU students. A European Masters student stated: “It is more expensive to study in other English speaking countries” (0009). A Latin American Masters student also admitted: “It is more expensive to study in the US” (0010).

**Personal or Family-related Reasons**

Twelve out of the twenty-six interview participants admitted that personal or family-related reasons were associated with their decision for the UK education. Improving English was one reason for interview participants to choose to study in the UK. For instance, a European Masters student (0021) from the Business School indicated that it would be more helpful for her to study in the UK because English is an international language and many big companies use English. Another European Masters student mentioned: “I want to come to England because I want to improve my English and future job competition … My current study is not completely different from my previous study so it is like improving knowledge in English in my study field for my future job” (0015).
Additionally, family reasons can also be a reason for studying in the UK. This was especially the case with married students. Three married interviewees mentioned this factor. For example, a PhD student from the Middle East indicated the role of her husband: “Studying in the UK is not my choice but my husband’s decision” (0003). An Asian Masters student mentioned: “My husband has a special visa status in the UK because he was born here. I am married so I follow my husband … It is like all of the family has this kind of environment or culture to come to Britain for more education” (0022).

Previous work or visit experience in the UK, whether short-term or prolonged, also affected a student’s decision to study in the UK. Four interview participants indicated that they worked or visited England before, so they decided to study in England. As one European PhD student stated: “I was also in England last year so I want to study here” (0008). A European Masters student also mentioned: “I have a sort of connection with England because I studied English in England for two summers when I was sixteen. I like this country so I decided to come back” (0004).

Moreover, advantages could also be associated with the decision to study in the UK, as mentioned by three of the interview participants. For instance, a student (0010) from Latin America stated that studying in England was also of benefit because he learned another cultural viewpoint in addition to an American perspective. A Masters student from North America described: “A UK degree may have advantages for my PhD application in other English speaking countries or finding a job” (0012).

Another factor influencing decision-making was recommendations by another person, mentioned by two participants (0012 and 0009). For instance, one student (0012) stated that some international staff from the UK had introduced her to the UK educational system before, so she decided to come to England for study.

Additionally, two European interviewees, one Masters student (0004) and one PhD student (0008), stated that they wanted to have an enjoyable and different
experience in England from their European experiences. A European Masters student mentioned: “Because I already studied in German environment, I thought to change the language and environment … I then thought to come to England” (0004).

**Educational Quality and Opportunities**

Eleven out of the twenty-six interview participants admitted that educational quality and opportunities might also relate to their decisions to study in the UK. Ten interviewees mentioned that the quality, prestige, or reputation of a UK education attracted them. For example, one Asian Masters student (0022) stated that the educational standards in her home country could not compare with the UK educational standards – the facilities, equipment, technologies, and instruction in the UK were better than those in her home country. A European student (0009) stated that people in her country appreciated an educational degree from the UK, a high-prestige country. Another European Masters student also commented: “I then thought to study in England because England is the center of the knowledge in my field and UK universities have good reputation … There is a lot of historical research in my study field in the UK” (0020).

Better and more educational opportunities in the UK might also affect one’s decision about studying in the UK. Two interview participants (0024 and 0021), both European, mentioned this factor. As one of them (0021) stated there were more universities and various courses in England, which affected her decision to study in the UK.

**Admission Requirements**

Ten out of the twenty-six interview participants admitted that issues related to admission requirements (such as flexibility in taking the language exam) might have influenced their decision for pursuing a British education. Some students thought that exemption from the language exam was another reason for them to choose to study in the UK. Five interviewees indicated this reason, the majority from Africa. For instance, an African Masters student (0023) mentioned that he felt uncomfortable with the idea of having to take a language exam for the
school application because English is the official language in his home country. An African PhD interview participant claimed: “Australian visa was refused because I refused to take IELTS” (0001). A European PhD student admitted: “It was easier because the UK school accepted my English certificate instead of the IELTS exam score … It was easier because they accepted my degree without trouble” (0005).

Furthermore, five interview participants mentioned that reasons related to US admission or application requirements had led them to choose study in the UK. For example, a PhD (0002) student stated that he liked research but he was old to prepare the US admission requirements and take the US PhD taught courses. A Masters student (0017) in the Business School admitted that he did not want to spent time for GRE or GMAT exam preparation so he decided to come to the UK for study.

4.1.4 Reasons for Studying in the UK – Quantitative Phase

The online questionnaire used in this study also includes items related to reasons for studying in the UK. Table 4.5 shows the relevant data and findings. These items belong to a multiple-choice question so any respondent can choose more than one answer from the items listed below. Overall, 250 respondents answered the online questionnaire. Findings are shown below (see table 4.5), indicating frequency, percentage, and ranking order. These findings will also be compared with the data from the first interview on the same topic, as described above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[1]: Historical background or relationship between my home country and Britain</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[2]: Shorter geographical distance between my home country and Britain</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[3]: Lower tuition fees</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[4]: Shorter period for study or degree completion</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[5]: My plan to stay or work in the UK after graduation</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[6]: A more flexible application schedule, process, or procedure</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb2[7]: Better economic situation in Britain than my country</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the data on table 4.5, all of the questionnaire items in this section are divided into six major categories based on the grouping of the research findings in 4.1.3 in order to make a comparison with the findings in 4.1.3. These six categories include geographical, cultural, and historical reasons; finances; personal or family-related reasons; available quality and opportunities; admission requirements; and others. See table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical, Cultural, and Historical Reasons</td>
<td>Items 1, 2, 10, 11 and 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>Items 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal or Family-related Reasons</td>
<td>Items 9 and 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Quality and Opportunities</td>
<td>Item 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>Item 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, and 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the category regarding geographical, cultural, and historical reasons, the quantitative data in items 11 and 10 provide results that strongly support the qualitative interview findings, whereas item 13 does not. Items 1 and 2 play a moderate role in supporting the qualitative interview findings. According to the qualitative research findings in 4.1.3, thirteen interview participants indicated that geographical, cultural, and historical reasons were
factors associated with their UK studies: six for reasons regarding geographical distance, five for cultural reasons, and two for reasons of historical relationship. Based on the quantitative findings, item 11 (historical reasons) was the third highest choice, and item 10 (multicultural environment) was the fifth highest choice. Nearly a quarter of the 250 questionnaire respondents chose item 1 (historical relationship with own country) and more than one-fifth of the respondents chose item 2 (distance) as a motivator for studying in the UK. However, the response rate for item 13 (cultural similarity) was very low, which weakly supports the interview findings.

With regard to finance, quantitative data provides different results in supporting the interview finding in section 4.1.3. According to the qualitative semi-structured interview findings, twelve out of the twenty-six interview participants admitted ‘finances’ as a reason for studying in the UK; nine participants mentioned a short ‘one-year Masters program’ and five interviewees commented ‘expenses.’ Based on the quantitative questionnaire findings in section 4.1.4, only few survey respondents chose item 3 (lower fees) as a motivator for studying in the UK, whereas item 4 (shorter study time) was the number one choice. Therefore, there is strong agreement between both sets of data with regard to the length of study but less agreement with regard to financial aspects.

For personal or family-related reasons, quantitative findings of item 9 (influence of friends, teachers, and others) provide different results from item 15 (familiarity with the UK) in supporting the qualitative findings. Twelve out of the twenty-six interview participants gave personal or family-related reasons as motivators for studying in the UK (three interviewees for family reasons, four interviewees for familiarity and previous visits or stays in England, and three interviewees for recommendation from others). The quantitative findings in section 4.1.4 showed a high response rate for item 9, ranking as the fourth highest choice, but a low response rate for item 15. Therefore, item 9 strongly supports the qualitative interview findings, but item 15 does not.
In relation to educational quality and opportunities, item 14 (worldwide recognition) strongly supports the qualitative interview findings in 4.1.3. Twelve interview participants commented that educational quality and opportunities were factors influencing their decision in favor of UK studies. However, more than half of the survey participants chose item 14, ranking as the second highest choice, as a motivator.

With regard to admission requirements, the quantitative data in item 16 does not strongly support the qualitative findings in section 4.1.3. Ten interview participants admitted that ‘admission requirement’ was one reason (five interviewees for English examination exemption and five interviewees for different admission requirements) for their UK studies. However, the response rate for item 16 was low, so the quantitative findings differed somewhat from the qualitative findings.

The role of ‘other’ factors mentioned by questionnaire respondents (items 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, and 17) in influencing students choosing study in the UK ranged from relatively low (less than a quarter) with regard to post-graduation plans (item 5) and flexible application process (item 6), to considerably lower with regard to economic situation (item 7), visa availability (item 8), access to information (item 12), and family in the UK (item 17).

### 4.1.5 Reasons for Studying at the University of South West – Qualitative Phase

Based on information from the first interviews, reasons for study at USW can be categorized into five main dimensions. These five dimensions include study- or interest-related reasons, ranking, environmental reasons, personal reasons, and finances. Further information is illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.7 Qualitative Information on Reasons for Studying at USW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category/Theme – Reasons for Studying at USW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study- or Interest-related Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study- or Interest-related Reasons

Thirteen of the twenty-six interview participants pointed out that study- or interest-related reasons affected their decision to study at USW. Six interview participants mentioned that a link with professors’ research perspectives or a Masters program in their own area of study or research was an influencing factor. For instance, an African PhD student mentioned the expertise of his supervisor: “I also got the admission from the University of Lancaster in addition to USW. The expertise of my USW supervisor fitted my research interest. However, the supervisor’s expertise in Lancaster was difficult for me to understand” (0001). A European Masters student mentioned: “I searched information from the USW website and found that the program and modules were more interesting to me so I chose USW” (0021). An Asian Masters student described: “Some of the professors in South West are editors of many journals so I assume that studying at USW will give me interesting experience to work with professors and do some kinds of interesting work in international journals” (0018).

The specialization offered in a study program was also considered as a reason for studying at USW, as mentioned by four out of the thirteen interview participants. For instance, a Masters participant (0007) stated that he found the courses at USW were very different and more practical so he liked USW. Another participant (0012) also admitted that USW was his first choice because the program was more specific. A European student described why she chose USW: “East England accepted me in a program related to education in Africa or something so it was a narrow thing. My feeling is that I like teaching more so that is why I chose my current study program” (0014).
Moreover, contact with teachers or staff or permission received from potential supervisors could also affect one’s further action for school application. This was especially the case with European PhD students, some of whom thought they had to wait for one professor’s permission before applying. Four interview participants, including two European PhD participants, mentioned this process, with one of them (0008) stating that she contacted different professors but only her USW teacher responded. An Asian Masters student mentioned: “USW staff also emailed me information in addition to the offer letter. I then decided USW was really good for me because there were very kind and polite people in South West” (0019).

**Ranking and Reputation**

Ranking and reputation were also important factors, mentioned by eight out of the twenty-six interview participants. As one European Masters student said: “I decide South West because USW has better reputation, the ranking is No.9. Manchester is 90. Therefore, it is a big difference” (0020). An Asian Masters student (0026) claimed that he applied to the Business School at USW because of its ranking of fifth in the UK. A Middle Eastern student described:

*USW was a preference from the academic program that I followed as a lecturer in the Department of Education in a university in my country. USW is famous for the Department of Education in my home country. USW comes from the top ten in the education department ranking although it is not the top one or two.* (0003)

**Environmental Reasons**

Environmental or geographical reasons also affected participants’ decision to study at USW. Six out of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned location, warmer weather, safety, nice people, and a nice environment. Another influential factor was the number of students at USW from the same country as the student. For instance, an Asian Masters student in the Business School commented: “I choose USW because there are only few students from my home country in South West; whereas, there are many students from my home
country and courses related to my home culture in UEA” (0011). A European Masters student also mentioned: “The location of South West is in the southwest so it is not that cold. Manchester is in the north” (0020). Additionally, married students especially pay attention to relevant environmental issues. For instance, a married Middle Eastern PhD student (0003) stated that a small town with nice people was good for her and her baby. A married European PhD student described the university’s environment: “South West is nice and green with hills and family kind of dimension so I think it is good for my family” (0024).

Personal Reasons
Seven out of the twenty-six interview participants admitted that personal reasons were related to their decision-making for USW. Introductions or recommendations could also be influential, as mentioned by three participants. An Asian PhD student (0016) stated that he had contacted with and learned about USW through his Masters supervisor in his home country. A PhD student (0003) from the Middle East mentioned that her colleague who had previously studied at USW had positively influenced her choice.

Other individualized reasons included being accepted only by USW, employment opportunities, previous short visits, exemption from the (language) exam, and the possibility of new experiences. For instance, a Masters student in the Business School mentioned: “My main reason to come back to South West because I want to find a job here and to see whether it is possible to stay in the UK in the long term” (0013). An Asian PhD student (0016) commented that he submitted his PhD application to USW immediately after a short visit to the campus. An African Masters student indicated: “No need to take the language exam is a reason why I like USW. Taking the exam is quite expensive. USW only requested me to submit the result of the West African School Certificate Examination to show my qualification” (0023).

Finances
Additionally, scholarships played an important role in reasons for study at USW, as mentioned by four interview participants, including a European PhD student (0024) and an Asian Masters student, who admitted: “I come to South West
because I get the scholarship from USW” (0022). An African participant stated that if he had not gotten a scholarship, he would not have come to South West because it would cost a lot of money. He stated:

I applied for the scholarship and then got the scholarship in June to study at USW. I waited and prayed everyday for my scholarship since February and I finally received it in June 2010. I get the full scholarship for full tuition fees but I have to pay money for my accommodation and living expenses. It was very good so I got excited at that point. I was really happy because I did not dream about to study abroad and at USW before. (0023)

4.1.6 Reasons for Studying at the University of South West – Quantitative Phase

The online questionnaire used in this study also includes items related to reasons for studying at the University of South West. Table 4.8 shows the relevant data and findings. These items belong to a multiple-choice question, so any respondent can choose more than one answer from the question items listed below. There are 250 respondents answering the online questionnaire. Findings are shown below (see table 4.8), indicating frequency, percentage, and ranking order. These findings will also be compared with the data from the first interviews on the same topic, as described above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[1]: Ranking of the University</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[2]: Cost of living expenses</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[3]: Ranking of my study program</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[4]: Weather</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[5]: University reputation</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[6]: Safe or low crime environment</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[7]: Reputation of my study program</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[8]: Southwestern location</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[9]: Specialty of my study program</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReAb3[10]: Non-city environment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the questionnaire items, in section 4.1.6 are divided into six categories based on the research findings in 4.1.5 in order to make a comparison with the interview findings. These six categories include study- or interest-related reasons, ranking and reputation, environmental reasons, personal reasons, finances, and others. See table below:

**Table 4.9 Six Categories of the Questionnaire Items on Reasons for Studying at USW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study- or Interest-related Reasons</td>
<td>Items 9 and 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking and Reputation</td>
<td>Items 1, 3, 5, and 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Reasons</td>
<td>Items 4, 6, 8, and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reasons</td>
<td>Items 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, and 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>Items 2, 11, and 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Items 12 and 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the qualitative interview finding in section 4.1.5, thirteen out of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned that study- or interest-related reasons were their reasons for studying at USW. However, nearly one third of the questionnaire respondents replied that item 9 (specialty of study area) was one of the reasons behind their choice of a university and only few survey participants chose item 14 (responses from tutor) as a factor related to their
decision-making. Therefore, items 9 and 14 provided different results in supporting the interview findings.

As far as ranking and reputation, items 1 (university ranking), 3 (program ranking), 5 (university reputation), and 7 (program reputation) were related to the ranking and reputation of the university as a whole or to the study area, and all provided similar and positive results supporting the qualitative interview findings in section 4.1.5. Eight out of the twenty-six interviewees commented that the reputation or ranking of their study program or field was important. The quantitative data in items 1, 3, 5, and 7 all provided high response rates supporting the qualitative interview findings. Therefore, items 1, 3, 5, and 7 strongly support the qualitative findings in section 4.1.5.

For environmental reasons, the quantitative data in item 6 provide results oppositely different from item 10. Items 4 and 8 moderately support the interview findings in section 4.1.5. Six out of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned that environmental reasons influenced their decision to study at USW. Therefore, item 6 (safe or low crime environment) plays a strong role, items 4 (weather) and 8 (southwestern location) play moderate roles, and item 10 (non-city environment) plays a weak role in supporting the qualitative interview findings.

In relation to personal reasons, the quantitative findings from item 19 (friend recommendation) provide results slightly different from the findings in items 15, 16, 18, 20, and 21. Five out of the twenty-six interview participants mentioned that personal reasons affected their decision-making when choosing USW. However, the data from table 4.8 show a moderate response rate for item 19 but low response rates for items 15, 16, 18, 20, and 21. Therefore, among items regarding personal reasons, only item 19 moderately supports the qualitative interview findings.

With regard to finances, items 2 (cost of living expenses), 11 (USW scholarship), and 13 (non-USW funding) play weak and similar roles in supporting the qualitative interview findings. Three out of the twenty-six interview participants
mentioned that their decision-making was related to finances. However, the response rates for item 2, 11, and 3 were quite low. Therefore, the items in relation to finances do not strongly and clearly support the qualitative interview findings.

Finally, in relation to the ‘other’ factors replied by questionnaire respondents, the role of items 12 (short distance from London) and 17 (accessibility of information) ranged relatively low as factors affecting the students decision to study at USW. Therefore, items 12 and 17 did not powerfully and strongly influence international students’ decision-making to study at USW.

4.1.7 Career Plans After Study Abroad
Career plans may relate to a student’s decision to study abroad so it is necessary to examine the relevant information. Career plans after study abroad include both academic and non-academic career goals. Most of the interviewees have various plans for their short-term or long-term career after their UK studies. Six out of the seven PhD participants planned to work or continue further development in academia. For example, a PhD student from the Middle East admitted: “I will go back to work at the same university because my work financially supports my current study. With a doctorate degree, I will have more time for research and more freedom or preference to choose my classes” (0003). However, one PhD participant wanted to remain to open to any opportunities after his PhD study. An Asian PhD student stated that he would like to have more options: “Currently, I do not have this thought to be a professor in the university forever … I hope I can have more choices, but many things depend on what I will and can learn in these three years … I can pursue this goal to be a professor but I should also have other options” (0016). Interestingly, six of the nineteen Masters interviewees wanted to pursue PhD study and planned to continue study in academia or to work in the university. A male Middle Eastern Masters student stated in the interview: “I wanted to be a lecturer and teach in the universities so I want to pursue my PhD study later. My long term career goal will be in the academia after my PhD study” (0025). A female Masters student (0012) also claimed that she thought she was going to
study in her home country. She probably would continue on to do research in a university setting and perhaps teach as well. She also planned to do doctoral study at a later date.

For those planning to pursue non-academic careers after their current UK study, the majority of the Masters interview participants planned to work and apply what they had learned at USW in practical fields after graduation. Some wanted to return to their home countries to work. Some hoped to stay and work in the UK, if there were an opportunity to do so. Some also desired to work in another country. For instance, an Asian Masters student mentioned: “Now I plan to go back to my home country to get some jobs after my graduation but I am really interested and want to engage in international business in some international companies in my country. If I can get a working visa in the UK, I also hope to stay in the UK” (0011). A Masters student from Latin America also stated: “My main career goal is to work in an investment bank to apply what I have learned from my MAs. I hope to be successful and earn a lot of money … My goal is to do a job that I really enjoy and this is more practical for me” (0013).

4.1.8 Study-abroad Preparation
The purpose of this section is to investigate how long interview participants had planned and prepared for their UK study. It also investigates whether one’s decision for study abroad was influenced by anyone. It finally aims to know whether interviewees also applied for other universities and how they made their final decision to study at USW. The relevant findings provide supplemental information related to the decision making of studying abroad.

Preparation Duration
The length of preparation for UK studies depends on individual cases. Most of the Masters study applications took a few months, but preparation was always less than six months. Usually, students only needed to wait about one month before knowing whether their school application was accepted. Most PhD applicants’ followed a different application path: many of the PhD interview participants first tried to find teachers (in several universities) whose expertise
fitted their research interests. After receiving a response or permission from the professors they had contacted at USW, they then started their school application. Some of the students might defer their admission because of financial reasons. For instance, a Middle Eastern student (0025) who needed more income for paying his tuition fees stated that he did the school application about two years ago and received admission from USW. He then decided to work for one more year so he deferred his admission. A married Asian student also explained how she and her husband had taken turns in their education and she deferred her study because of the scholarship application:

_We decided my husband did his Masters first in 2008. I was supposed to enter the university last year, 2009 … But, I did not get the scholarship, so I deferred. I asked for deferral so we went back to my home country first for one year. I then applied again for the scholarship. This time we got the scholarship._ (0022)

Usually, for admission in the 2010–11 academic year, students would start thinking about study abroad in 2008 or 2009, or one or two years in advance. They then did the school application in 2010. For example, a male European Masters student (0004) mentioned that he decided to go on his studies in 2009 although he started thinking about his Masters study much earlier. He met a teacher from USW in 2005 and the teacher mentioned to him that the school provided research in his field. He submitted his application in June 2010 and was accepted in July. A European PhD student stated: “_I first contacted teachers at different universities but only my teacher at USW contacted me so I then did the only one PhD application … I actually wanted to go to Warrick … But, a teacher with similar research interest there did not contact me_” (0008).

**Decision-making Process**

The findings in this section can be divided into two parts: whether the decision to study abroad was or was not influenced by someone else. Most of the interviewees made their own decision to study abroad. For example, an African PhD participant mentioned: “_I made the decision for study abroad by myself._”
is somehow the goal of my family and my mother. They have expectations to me. I also have expectations for myself and my life” (0001).

However, ten interviewees mentioned that their decision to pursue an overseas education was influenced by someone else. These influential people included teachers, husband, employers, friends with study-abroad experience, parents, and a Masters supervisor in the student’s home country. A European Masters student said: “My study abroad in South West is influenced by a professor whose expertise is in my field” (0004). An African Masters student also commented: “My employer somehow influenced my decision to study abroad. My husband also influenced my decision to study abroad because he supported and encouraged me” (0006). An Asian Masters student stated: “My friends influenced my decision to study abroad. I want to be like one of them in the future. I was inspired by my friends who used to study abroad and have very good English, many international friends, and precious experiences” (0011).

**Decision for Admission**

Most of the interview participants applied to different study programs, within the same university, different universities, or in different countries. For instance, one Masters participant (0010) stated that he applied to study in the US and Sweden but was not accepted. He then applied for study in the UK. An Asian Masters student also stated his decision-making process for his USW admission:

> I also applied for Glasgow, York, King’s College, New Castle and others, about seven or eight universities. … I remember three or four admissions … I then did the comparison … The courses here, to me, are more practical, not just the theories or methodologies. They include how to evaluate students, how to design materials, and how to find out the proper methods. This is very important for me. (0007)

Most of the PhD interviewees, especially European participants, applied for study only at USW because they submitted the school application only after receiving application permission from their potential supervisors. A European
PhD participant stated how he contacted his teacher and did his PhD application:

*I started to find information on the Internet and speak with all of the possible PhD programs in the whole Britain … Probably, my current supervisor was the first person with whom I contacted … I found she was a very open-minded person. I could bring a lot of arguments and speak in a very broad way so the mentality was very important.* (0005)

4.2 EXPECTATIONS

Having reported the complex set of reasons that students cite for studying abroad, findings exploring their expectations with regard to their decision will now be presented. These data were collected shortly after students’ arrival in the UK, based on their early impressions and a reflection on their expectations before and after arrival. The data reports on and contrasts both their academic and their socio-cultural expectations. The findings, listed below, are mainly discovered from the first semi-structured interviews.

4.2.1 Students’ First Impressions of the UK

The purpose of this section is to know what international students’ first impressions of the UK were in their first three months of the overseas study. In general, the interviewees would start with comparisons between nations in answering this question. For instance, an African PhD student stated: “UK is quite different from my home country. I do not think my country is so bad to go back. UK is beautiful and better than my home country” (0001). Some of the interview participants, however, had visited or studied in the UK before, so their first impression was tracked back to their first visit. A European PhD student described his first UK impression from when he studied in Scotland: “My first impression about the UK was related to the island for my MA and I felt it was cold, tidy, clean and very organized” (0005).
Compared to students from other regions of the world, Asian students tended to experience more differences between the UK and their home countries. European students and students from other parts of the world described fewer contrasts between their home country and the UK. For example, an Asian Masters student in the Business School mentioned her first impression of the UK as a differently nice environment: “Quite nice and quiet, beautiful and peaceful, I like here so much. It is an amazing place. It is quite different from my home country. There are a lot of people in my country and it is noisy. We have a lot of big cities and night life. But, it is quite peaceful in the UK” (0026). An Asian Masters student also stated:

I first found that there were a lot of differences … There is more freedom in the UK stores … I think that UK employees are quite free and more casual … In my country, there are a lot of restrictions and employees are not allowed to speak, eat, drink, and dye the hair when they are working or offering services in a store … I think that I like the freedom and UK styles although the services are not good sometimes. (0011)

However, a European Masters student described her first impression about people in the UK as: “Well, it is not that different from my home country. There are some positive aspects. I think people in the UK are more polite” (0020). A PhD student from the Middle East claimed: “Everything was okay for me because I already went to other countries before and the information received from USW and websites was very good. I knew what I should do when I arrived at the airport and had a good map to come to South West” (0002). An African Masters student stated: “When I came to the UK, seriously, it was not so different from part of my home country … I thought my home country indeed had improved for a while … I am still impressed that my home country could still be like the things that I see here” (0023).

The majority of the interviewees had mostly positive first impressions. These included a nice and welcoming environment; friendly and polite people; a green, peaceful, and cold environment; and, perhaps less positively, expensive living costs. For example, a European Masters student stated: “People are very
friendly and welcoming; and always want to help me because South West is a smaller city than London, I think. I like South West is in the countryside and it is nice” (0015). These positive initial responses represent the first impressions of students from a variety of different cultural and national backgrounds and from both experienced and first-time travelers. The data will now explore how these initial positive responses relate to student reflections on their own expectations and how this is linked to their decision to study abroad.

4.2.2 Reasons Reviewed After Arrival
This section aims to present information on whether interview participants still had the same reasons for study abroad after arriving in the UK as they did before. Based on the interview information, seventeen interviewees had the same reasons for study abroad before and after coming to the UK. For instance, a Masters student from Latin America mentioned: “My reasons for studying abroad before and after coming to England are still the same” (0010). A European PhD student commented: “Yes, I have to confirm the same reasons for my UK study before and after coming to the UK because I feel lucky that I have very good opportunities that my peers in my home country do not have” (0024).

However, few participants gave different opinions or reasons for studying abroad after coming to the UK. Some of these changes were in response to new perspectives and new opportunities. For example, an African PhD student stated: “After coming to the UK, I want to explore new things and learn to use different equipments and many new technologies for my PhD study … I would like to have some link with people here, such as inviting teachers and my PhD colleagues to my home country for lectures” (0001). A European Masters student commented that his current study had become his new motivation for study abroad after coming to the UK:

I am discovering and diving into new things so I would say that I have further reasons to study here … I want to see whether some social science theories can be applied to music education or improvement. I
In contrast, some students had moderated their intentions because of unexpected challenges. For example, a Masters participant who had planned to stay in the UK after her current study showed that she had changed her reasons for studying abroad (staying and working in the UK after her current study) after coming to the UK because of homesickness: “Now I feel maybe, I should not stay … This time, I do not know. I think, maybe, I miss home more … Maybe, I become more mature now so I become missing my family more” (0013). An Asian Masters student (0011) also mentioned that he had found that studying in English with a lot of assignments or presentations was much harder than he had expected when considering studying in the UK. Therefore, studying knowledge in English became a new challenge and a reason for him to study abroad because he liked challenges:

Since I came to study in South West, I have found that it is very hard to study in English with a lot of assignments or presentations and this is much harder than what I expected before coming abroad … This becomes a new reason for my study abroad after studying in my program; because I like challenges and think that I will overcome the harder difficulties. I really enjoy this situation. (0011)

What is clear from these examples is the importance of initial impressions in framing personal intentions and expectations in relation to the experience of studying abroad. Although students’ experiences were largely positive, there are indications that some students faced challenges from the outset of their overseas study. Chapter Five will explore student adaptation to the reality of the new context more fully. In this chapter (Chapter Four), I hope to understand the impact of these early impressions on shaping student expectations. The following section explores student reflections on how their expectations might change before and after arrival.
4.2.3 Expectations Before and After Arrival

The purpose of this section is to know what interviewees' initial expectations for study abroad were before coming to the UK and whether they still have the same expectations for an overseas education after coming to the UK. The findings are as follows:

**Initial Expectations for Studying Abroad Before Coming to the UK**

Most of the interview participants’ initial expectations for study abroad were related to academic experiences, although few of them had expectations related to socio-cultural experiences. For example, interviewee 0004 indicated his initial expectation in terms of academic experience: “When I looked at the website related to the MSc program and courses in March, I had the desire to study these things” (0004). A European PhD student stated that her expectations were associated with socio-cultural experience: “I expected to have more opportunities to have more friends and interact more with people” (0008). However, it is academic expectations that appear to be the most striking and they relate both to course content and to how subjects are taught, suggesting that from the outset some students were anticipating a learning experience that would contrast with their previous experiences. A European Masters student mentioned her initial academic expectations: “Before coming to South West, I wanted to have more professional and practical study, to learn more about my study field, to have more knowledge, and to focus more on specific study areas” (0015). A PhD student from the Middle East stated: “Before coming to the UK for study, I expected that teachers’ teaching could consider students’ both knowledge and personal backgrounds in culture and language” (0003).

However, few interviewees did not have an initial expectation about study abroad. For example, a European Masters student remarked: “I did not have any initial expectation because I was waiting to see something new. I did not know how this would be … I did not have any particular expectation before coming to the UK. Maybe, I just waited for coming here” (0009).
**Expectations Reviewed After Arrival**

Initial expectations may or may not stay the same after international postgraduate students’ UK arrival. For many, their academic expectations remained the same; for a few, they differed. When personal expectations were reviewed after arrival, some interviewees talked of little having changed. For example, a Masters student from the Middle East admitted: “I still have the same academic expectations after coming here because I have not yet been disappointed by the educational level here” (0025). A European PhD student stated that her expectations were the same before and after coming to the UK: “My expectation is still the same because the program is the same and I still work for the same project with my teacher. I still have the same research focus. My teacher does not force me to choose anything so I am quite free to do what I want to do. She just supports me” (0008). A Masters student in the Business School also stated that her expectations remained the same: “My expectation now is still to find a good job via the whole Masters experiences. Do well and have good grades when I graduate. This is the only thing I expect. Have a good time of study and to enjoy my time to be a good student” (0013). A European PhD student (0024) also described that her expectations were still the same before and after coming to the UK because she expected less than what she had actually got from her education at USW. She did not see a major conflict between the beginning of her stay in the UK and the moment of her interview. For example, she did not expect to have a trip to Iraq paid by her study center. She also did not expect the small classes at USW, which allowed her to have a close relationship with professors and to discuss topics directly.

However, some interviewees had different expectations for study abroad before and after coming to the UK. The information from these interviewees shows how new learning can shape expectations. For instance, an African PhD student commented how his initial expectation was changed after coming to the UK: “I had my own research direction and interest before coming to the UK but my research proposal then was changed; because after reading more information advised by my supervisor, I found my earlier concepts were useless and had to update the research information” (0001). A European Masters student mentioned: “Yes, after coming to the UK, I may have more expectations
in addition to my initial expectation before coming here. Sometimes I need more feedbacks from teachers although some of our four teachers are not native speakers” (0014). A European Masters student stated that her initial expectation was higher than her current one, but it was then changed: “No. My expectation was higher before. I expected more for my courses because I expected to learn more things … Before coming here, I expected to learn a specific field … However, after coming here, I do not feel the courses prepare us to do so” (0020).

The data reported so far indicates the significance of initial impressions and how these impressions can act to confirm or moderate initial expectations. In addition, it reveals that early impressions focus very primarily on academic expectations. The following section explores this focus on academic expectations in more detail and then contrasts it with socio-cultural expectations.

4.2.4 Academic Expectations
This section aims to investigate what interview participants' first impressions were about their UK academic experience and what their expectations were for their future UK academic experience after the first interview.

First Impressions About the UK Academic Experience
Most of the interviewees showed positive first impressions about their academic experience in the UK. They talked about their study programs, teachers, classmates, academic resources, interactions or relationships with teachers and other students, and learning support services. For example, an African PhD student mentioned: “I think the university IT persons are very helpful … I like my UK study because everyone is willing to help me” (0001). Commenting on the quality of the study program and teachers, a European Masters student in the Graduate School of Education stated: “I have the impression regarding the well-structured syllabus, concepts, and very competent teachers. Teachers are available and very kind. Everybody is very kind. I am really satisfied with my choices” (0004). A European PhD student stated his first impression about the quality of his program: “The first impression is that the courses are very
professional. The academic courses are very prepared and exactly show what we want to reach and what I have to reach” (0005).

**Expectations for Future UK Academic Experience**

Generally speaking, international students’ expectations can be categorized as expectations about visualizing themselves in the academic context and their expectations of others, e.g., tutors, classes, colleagues, and support staff. They include positive and negative expectations.

Most of the interview participants, or about twenty-three interviewees claimed that they expected their ongoing UK academic experience to be positively better over time. For instance, participant 0012 stated: “I definitely expect my future UK academic experience to be positively better.” A PhD interviewee listed her future expectations about her achievements: “I hope to attend some conferences, have the possibility to present papers, and get involved in more new projects with my professors” (0024). A Masters student said about his self-expectation: “I hope to get the studentship to go on my PhD” (0023).

Many interview participants positively expected that they would perform well academically. Although there are early indications that the academic areas that cause them the most concern are difficulties in language and critical thinking, the interviewees’ academic expectations are generally positive. For example, a Masters student from the Middle East stated: “I hope to finish my degree with good marks and get good recommendation from my lecturers to enable me to continue my academic career” (0025). An Asian Masters student also mentioned his positive self-expectations: “First I expect to improve my language. Second I want to improve some skills and knowledge in my subject field. Now I feel I am improving” (0019).

What is clear from the above comments is the students’ focus on marks and progress. One possible area of tension, however, might be when unfamiliar learning contexts appear to challenge previous learning expectations. A welcoming of new approaches to learning might well be challenged if previous
learning patterns are not recognized or accommodated. The following comments relate to early impressions about the learning environment itself.

A Masters interviewee commented on her expectations about professors: “I hope to grow and have a strong relationship with professors because teachers may support and give me advice and write recommendation letters in the future” (0012). Nevertheless, a Masters student from Europe stated his disappointment about his teachers:

However, I see some of the teachers just patient and say, okay I am getting to grow, the students get to grow to understand how real complex this field is … I just get angry when some ideas are not clear … Sometimes the teachers should be better to understand our limitation … and provides some sort of growing paths or ways from nothing to a lot. In the way, we just face that this is what we have to know and organize ourselves. But students do not know with which book they should start after going home. (0004)

However, there were two participants (0003 and 0013) who responded with less positive self-expectations. A PhD student from the Middle East mentioned: “I could not tell you a concrete answer because I have not had an advisor to talk about my research and received the feedback from the teacher” (0003). A Masters student in the Business school claimed that her later self-expectations would stay at the same level because she was studying in a similar field again: “I think I would stay at the same level. So far, I think I do very well and excellently … I like it and am interested in my field. It is also my second time in the similar field. Additionally, I am getting older and more mature” (0013).

How these largely positive attitudes laced with some early indications of tensions and challenges impact student adaptation to the new academic context will be explored more fully in the next chapter.
4.2.5 Socio-cultural Expectations
This section aims to investigate what interviewees’ first impressions were about their UK socio-cultural experience, and what their expectations were for their future UK socio-cultural experience after the first interview.

First Impressions about the UK Socio-cultural Experience
Most of the interviewees had positive first impressions about their UK socio-cultural experience, although students’ impressions covered a full range of experiences. They talked about food; the language barrier; very cold weather; England’s drinking culture; British accents; friendly, nice, and helpful local people; and students from different countries. For instance, a PhD student from the Middle East commented on the niceness of the people in South West: “My first impression about my UK socio-cultural experience is very good and people are friendly, especially in South West. I make many friends with international and local people. My family is very happy to live here” (0002). Another European Masters student said: “English people are very welcoming and helpful. I live with English students and feel comfortable” (0015).

However, some participants had less positive opinions. Although they were less positive, they could be seen as useful suggestions or advice for improving the future socio-cultural experiences of international students. These negative impressions mainly related to the drinking culture, the lack of interest in people from other cultures, the food, and people’s responses to international people. For example, a European PhD student indicated a less positive first impression about his socio-cultural experience in South West: “I have to say that the multiculturalism in South West does not reflect exactly this kind of multiculturalism … I mean that it is not mixed … I have seen that people are used to stay on their own by their cultural backgrounds or their nationalities” (0005). An Asian Masters student stated: “Although some British students are, of course, very kind and friendly … It seems that British students are not interested in students from other different countries” (0011). A PhD student from the Middle East stated her less positive first impression:
People here are not really social … I think the local people just keep themselves and do not have the curiosity or make efforts to know other people from other cultures … I do not feel or think that the community people are sociable. From my experience in the US, when I took the bus, people would talk or chat with me … I guess it is something related to local people’s nature and they just want to keep themselves. (0003)

A Masters student from the Business School also commented negatively on the drinking culture: “It is hard for me to socialize with people via drinking and I do not like to get into the same situation as others” (0010). A Masters student in the Graduate School of Education also commented about his negative first impression regarding the local drinking culture:

First impression, always, always, alcohol … Not disappointed, just a little bit not used to it; because I am not a guy liking to drink wine or alcohol. Actually, I do not drink alcohol at all … But here it seems that there are only pubs, dancing, and drinking so I am not used to it … But people here really need to drink while talking … Therefore, it is like to make friends, to understand the culture, and to interact with people need to drink. It is a terror thing for me. (0007)

An Asian Masters student in the Business school shared his less positive first impression about British food: “I think that the British food is quite boring and I do not like it; because there is no variety. I like fish and chips but I think that they are quite oily because they are all fried. Therefore, I am not interested in British food” (0011). A married Asian Masters student who had one-year living experience in London with her family also stated her less positive first impression about how local South West people reacted to her dress:

In London, it was not unusual if I wore the head covering because people were the mixture there. In South West or the neighborhood, I tend to be the only one or two so people may stare because they are not used to see something new. Therefore, it is the different sense and I have never
been in subject in this reason. Therefore, I expect people are not used to see that. (0022)

These early indications of the more negative aspects of social engagement will be explored more fully in the following chapter, but it is salient that even in these early reflections certain issues are emerging as significant; namely, a lack of multi-cultural awareness in the southwest of the UK and the student drinking culture.

**Expectations for Future UK Socio-cultural Experience**

Most of the interview participants expected their ongoing UK socio-cultural experience would become better. For instance, interviewee 0014 admitted: “I hope my future UK socio-cultural experience to become positively better.” An African Masters student mentioned: “I expect my later socio-cultural experience to be positively better. I hope to meet more people, especially British people, and to know British culture” (0023).

In spite of the negative experiences mentioned above, these students remain largely optimistic and positive about their future expectations in relation to socio-cultural engagement. These expectations include learning and adjusting to the local culture (e.g. through seeing people’s activities and traveling to learn more about the UK), having friendship and interacting more with local and international people (e.g. through joining clubs and volunteering work), and improving their language. For instance, an African PhD student stated that he wanted to know more about British culture: “I want to know more about the British culture here. I want to be a volunteer for the community and to see what the community is doing in order to know more about the local culture” (0001). A European Masters student claimed that she wanted to increase her socio-cultural experience: “I expect to meet more local people; study English; learn more about the culture, habits, and the ways British people celebrate things on holidays; and really integrate into the culture here” (0015). A European Masters student (0009) also mentioned her expectations as, first of all, expecting to speak better English and at least understand English better. Second, she wanted to meet international people and make more international friends.
Some students, however, did not have positive expectations about their future socio-cultural experience. This lack of interest was because of their focus on studying, previous experiences, or lack of time. For example, an Asian Masters student commented that he did not care about how his socio-cultural experience might be in the future because socio-cultural experience was not important for him: “If I were an undergraduate student, I would like to do social activities or joining activities in pubs. However, I clearly understand what I want this year so I only need to pay attention to my studies. Therefore, I do not care about my future UK socio-cultural experience” (0007). A European Masters student who studied in London as an undergraduate indicated: “I think my socio-cultural experience will be the same because I already know the culture here and am used to it. Therefore, I do not have any new expectation” (0021). A European PhD student who has studied in South West for her Masters degree mentioned: “I am not a so sociable person. I do not expect this so much because it is not my main focus” (0024). A European Masters student commented that his expectation for his future socio-cultural experience was limited because of personal reasons: “I already know British culture a little bit and am a little bit familiar with the things here … I just feel that I just stay here temporarily, for a short term … Therefore, my expectation for my future socio-cultural experience is limited. I may put a limit because of myself” (0004).

SUMMARY
The qualitative interview data related to international postgraduate students’ reasons for studying abroad are grouped into four categories: value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons. More specific reasons for studying in the UK include: geographical, cultural, and historical reasons; finances; personal or family-related reasons; educational quality and opportunities; and admission requirements. Reasons for studying at USW include: study- or interest-related reasons, ranking and reputation, environmental reasons, personal reasons, and finances. Most of the quantitative questionnaire findings are generally consistent with the qualitative interview findings, except for some minor
differences in the following categories: personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons that are included in reasons for studying abroad; study- or interest-related reasons, finances, and personal reasons that are included in reasons for studying at USW; and geographical, cultural, and historical reasons; finances; personal or family-related reasons; and admission requirements that are included in reasons for studying in the UK.

Studying abroad was perceived to beneficially contribute to the career development of international postgraduate students. Most of the PhD and some Masters interviewees had academic career plans after their overseas education, which might come from the knowledge that pursuing postgraduate studies is commonly a necessary criterion for an academic career. The length of preparation for UK studies usually varied based on the differences between students’ study degrees or programs and individual situations. Financial considerations sometimes deferred the start of a student’s overseas study. Most of the interview participants had made their own decision for studying abroad, and had applied to more than one study program within the USW or in different universities. It was very typical for students to have more than one alternative before making a final decision concerning his or her overseas education.

Cultural dissimilarities might be the cause of the study’s finding that Asian students tended to feel greater differences between British culture and that of their home countries. The majority of the interviewees had the same reasons for studying abroad before and after arrival. However, new learning, perspectives, and opportunities could cause changes in the student’s reasons for studying abroad. Most of the interview participants had positive first impressions of their study abroad and positive future expectations toward both their academic and socio-cultural experiences. These findings generally show that students experience a good start in their student life and hold optimistic hopes for later studying abroad experiences. The consequent outcomes will be presented and analyzed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS: ADJUSTMENTS

Chapter Five reports the research findings regarding the adjustments of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at a southwestern UK university, based on the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the second semi-structured interviews and some quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire survey. It includes findings related to both academic and social adjustments, and a final report on how international students come to understand their study-abroad experiences. Twenty-six participants took part in the second interview study. 250 respondents participated in the online questionnaire survey. The second interviews were conducted about three months after the first interviews and, therefore, the findings review the academic and socio-cultural experiences of the students after a three-month adjustment. The research findings are expected to increase knowledge and understanding related to international postgraduate students’ adjustment in the early months of their overseas experience.

5.1 ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT
The focus of this section is on the academic adjustment of international students, and includes a report of what challenges these students faced and how they coped with these challenges, followed by a reflection on their academic adjustment. These academic adjustments will be contrasted with socio-cultural adjustments later in the chapter.

5.1.1 Academic Adjustment – Quantitative Phase
The questionnaire used in this study includes a question asking international students to comment on their academic adjustment. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the agreement scale; scores for each item range from 1
(completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.1), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets).

### Table 5.1 Quantitative Data on Academic Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Levels of Agree/Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[1]: Overall I have adjusted well to my UK academic life.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[2]: I like the teaching styles or the way teachers in the UK guide my research.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>(4.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[3]: I am confident of my English ability for my academic work.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[4]: Teachers here understand and respect my cultural or special needs resulting from my specific cultural background.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[5]: I feel I belong to the South West academic community.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[6]: I feel I have been accepted by the university teachers, students, or staff.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd1[7]: Overall the academic resources here benefit my current UK studies.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levels of Agree/Disagree: 1 – Completely Disagree; 2 – Mostly Disagree; 3 – Slightly Disagree; 4 – Slightly Agree; 5 – Mostly Agree; 6 – Completely Agree

One striking feature of the data collected here is the strong positive response by the students to all of the items. This is most marked for item 1, which relates to overall adjustment and suggests that overall the students feel positively towards their academic experience even if they face different degrees of positive engagement in relation to specific experiences. The items highlighted by this set of responses include teaching styles, language ability, cultural backgrounds, relationships to individuals and to the particular university context itself, and the available resources. None of these taken individually rates as highly as the overall response, which suggests that an overall positive response is itself made of a complex set of varying experiences. The three items that rate most highly are those linked to available academic resources, respect for the students’ cultural identity, and the students’ relationship with staff and other students. Those rating least highly are linked to teaching styles and the students’ sense of themselves as part of this particular academic community. This suggests that available academic resources, a positive approach to cultural diversity, and personal engagement inform a positive response rather more than the academic culture itself and that different teaching and learning styles may present a greater degree of challenge. The interview data also highlight
the specific learning context of lectures as possibly generating less positive attitudes.

According to the proceeding information and the quantitative data from table 5.1, item 1 (AcAd1[1]) positively and directly supports the qualitative finding (in section 5.1.2) that most of the interview participants found that their academic experiences had been positive from the time they entered the USW community. Findings regarding other questionnaire items, from items 2 to 7, also indirectly show and prove the aforementioned finding regarding good adjustment, although these items clearly specify the academic actions or issues that they measured. Therefore, based on the information above, it shows that a similar set of perspectives is revealed in both data sets, quantitative findings in section 5.1.1 and the qualitative data in section 5.1.2.

5.1.2 Academic Adjustment – Qualitative Phase
This section aims to investigate how interviewees’ general academic experience had been since the first interview or since they came to South West. It also intends to discover which academic experience made the deepest impression on the students, how they perceived their academic performance since the first interview, and how their interactions or relationships with their teachers and classmates were developed.

General Academic Experience Reviewed After Three Months
Academic experience can be positive or negative. Most of the twenty-six interviewees said that their academic experience had been positive since they came to South West. For instance, an African PhD student mentioned: “My academic experience has been good. I have enjoyed it. I have good interaction with my two supervisors and have a very good progress so far” (0001). An Asian Masters student admitted: “Most of my academic experiences have been improved a lot. I nearly get used to the environment and life here … I read a lot and participate in a lot of courses. They are quite helpful for me to get used to the academic environment” (0007).
However, four interviewees stated that their academic experiences had not been good or improved. For instance, an Asian Masters student mentioned her less positive academic experience:

I could not adapt well in the first month because it was my first time to listen to one to two hours English lectures. The lectures became difficult for me because I could not adapt to the context and speed of them. I then lost my confidence and my feeling was not so good … Now it is still difficult for me to listen to the lectures although I am familiar with the content more. (0026)

Nevertheless, in spite of these more negative examples the positivity discussed in chapter 4 is largely maintained after three months of the students' study-abroad experience.

**Deepest Impressions About the UK Academic Experience**

Students’ deepest impressions about the UK academic experience can be divided into impressions about self-learning in the new academic context and how others might influence this learning, such as the relationship between teachers and students and how the learning environment was experienced through lectures and study programs. As with all the findings reported here, the overall positive experience is itself made up of a complex interaction of both positive and negative experiences.

Interview participants’ deepest impressions about self-learning related to adjustments they needed to make regarding their responsibility for their research, the need for independent study with intensive reading, critical thinking skills, plagiarism, freedom of academic discussion, and self study. For instance, a European PhD student admitted his deepest impression was about academic freedom: “My first deepest impression about UK academic experience is the freedom of academic discussion … In the UK, professors would still recognize the good performance or essay writing of a student even though they had an argument before” (0005). An Asian Masters student also stated that his
deepest impressions were in regard to critical thinking, plagiarism, and group work:

_Critical thinking is the major factor impressing me mostly. Additionally, issues related to plagiarism also impress me a lot … Sometimes I am confused with how I can paraphrase or quote information properly … Receiving different perspectives through group works also makes me have very deep impression about my UK academic experience._ (0011)

The academic freedom mentioned above focused on the relationship that was being developed with the student’s tutor and on the informality of the learning context. These were valued by students as positive even though they continued to have concerns about how well they could engage with this learning context given that it was held in a second language. For example, a European PhD student claimed her deepest impression regarding the relationship between students and teachers in the UK: “I like the academic teaching and close, informal, relaxed, and welcoming relationship between teachers and students in the UK. Teachers here are always available for students to ask for help” (0008). Another Asian Masters student admitted that the second-language English learning environment created his deepest impression: “The second-language English learning environment makes me have the deepest impression because I have to do everything and express myself via the second language … I worry about my English and how I can improve myself so language is a very big issue for me” (0007).

However, one European Masters student (0009) said that she did not like the practice in the UK that students were not corrected if they said something significantly wrong. This is a good example of how the informality of learning in the UK – although valued by the students – can also be viewed as problematic because the teaching emphasis is focused less on correcting errors, which was a familiar aspect of many international students’ previous learning experience. An Asian Masters participant also mentioned that his less positive deepest UK academic impression was the lack of the diversity of UK academic sources: “I observed that UK academic writing often cited references within the UK, instead
of those from America or Europe. Books or academic references are not from America or Europe; and they only focus on the UK. Firstly, I think it is not good because it seems to be limited” (0018).

In spite of these reservations the overall impression remained positive. For instance, an African Masters student described: “My UK academic experience adds my knowledge a lot, especially in doing research. I also learn something in the process through participating in others’ research. I also learn practical work in my filed in the laboratory and this makes me have the deepest impression” (0006). An Asian Masters student stated: “I have the deepest impression about the lecture from one of the professors in the first term because it was really useful, good, and informative. I will always remember his very useful lessons because he explained everything carefully and precisely” (0019).

**Academic Performance**

Academic performance can be positive or negative. Most of the interviewees had positive academic performances. For example, an Asian Masters student mentioned his positive performance: “My academic performance includes some very good and some just passed results so it is about merit and above average, on average. I think it is not bad and I get what I expected to get” (0019). Another Masters student stated about her positive academic performance: “I have done very well and have not had any really bad grades or anything so far. I only need to get used to the different marking system between UK and my home country” (0012).

Based on the differences in the nature of learning systems, PhD and Masters participants showed their academic performance in different ways. PhD students usually evaluated their academic performance by talking about their research or their interactions with their supervisors because PhD students usually worked with their supervisors individually. Masters interview participants evaluated their academic performance based on exams or assignments because they usually took modules or course work. For example, a PhD student from the Middle East talked about his research work and
interactions with his supervisor: “I am happy with my supervisor who is quite good to me … I am happy with the right direction of my current research project but have more expectations for my progress” (0002). A European Masters student mentioned his academic performance based on his assignments: “I got two distinction marks for my two assignments. I am the person who gets the second highest marks” (0004). A Masters student in the Business School described his academic performance based on the exams: “I had five modules last terms and passed all of them with feedbacks. Maybe, I expected myself for higher grades because I studied a lot and felt good about the exams. I think my academic performance is a little bit above average” (0010).

Most of the Masters interview participants viewed their academic performance as about average, although some rated their performance as above average. For instance, a Masters student from the Middle East claimed: “It is good. All of my first essays are good marks and the first mark is about 70 of 100” (0025). Only one Masters participant (0020) commented that her academic performance was below average. Students reasoned that below-average performance was often related to language skills, again demonstrating that language was a focus of concern for students. For instance, a European Masters student mentioned: “My academic performance is below average because of my language skills. I am not used to English writing so it is difficult for me” (0020).

**Interaction or Relationship with Teachers and Classmates**

Most of the interviewees indicated that they had a helpful relationship with their teachers and classmates. For instance, a European Masters student mentioned: “My interaction or relationship with my teachers and classmates is good. My teachers are very helpful with feedbacks and everything. I make friends with my classmates” (0015). An Asian Masters student claimed a positive relationship with teachers and classmates:

> I usually visit teachers in their offices and ask them questions after the class so I think I have quite good relationship with teachers. Now I also have good relationship with some teachers who taught us in the first
term … I always ask teachers about knowledge in the field, how to do assignments, or the direction of my homework or writing assignment … I have got good relationship with my classmates, especially, the classmates for the group assignments. I keep contacting them almost everyday and have good relationship. (0017)

PhD students did not have classmates but might have colleagues in the same office. For example, an African PhD student mentioned his positive relationship with his teachers and colleagues:

My interaction with my supervisors is very good. If I need anything and email my teachers, they then respond to me; I really do not have problems with them … I have a very happy relationship with my colleagues. Especially, we are in the same research area. Therefore, I send an email to them if I have any challenges or need any help. If I need to see my colleagues, we talk, chat, and find answers for our research questions. It is really fantastic. (0001)

Three interviewees had quite limited interaction with their classmates. For example, a European Masters student claimed: “I only talk with my classmates during the classes but do not have much time outside of the class” (0015). Only one participant showed limited relationship with teachers. A European Masters student stated she had positive relationships with classmates but less positive interaction with teachers: “My interaction with classmates is good. I do not have real interaction with teachers … First time I made one appointment with a lecture but he was not helpful. Therefore, in this term, I just studies by myself and ask my classmates or friends for any question or anything” (0021).

5.1.3 Academic Difficulties
This section draws on both qualitative and quantitative findings to explore the academic difficulties that international students might face while studying abroad. In particular, it focuses on these difficulties after a period of adjustment in order to explore the changing nature of these difficulties.
**Qualitative Phase:** Having academic difficulties depends on a learner’s individual situation. Although one Masters student from Latin America stated: “I do not have any difficulty and have not yet asked for any help (0013),” most of the interviewees had some academic difficulties. Some of them worried about their academic writing and writing assignments. For instance, one Masters interviewee commented: “The structure of an assignment or academic writing is another difficulty that I am encountering because it is very different from what I learned before. I talked this issue with some lecturers and my teachers gave me very helpful assistance” (0007). Many international students especially needed help with proofreading because they hoped to write English the same as native speakers. Issues related to plagiarism also posed problems because some international students had no previous experience of the relevant concepts. Reading skills, independent study, and time management were also academic difficulties that were related to the heavy postgraduate workload. Critical thinking ability was also cited by many students as a problem because it was a key marker of postgraduate learning in Western education, but it was not characteristic of how many students were educated or trained in their home countries. For example, an Asian Masters student stated: “I have difficulty in critical thinking. I try to improve through reading more journal articles. I also discuss my difficulty and the relevant issues with my colleagues” (0007). Additionally, presentation was mentioned as another difficulty because it is related to English speaking skills and self-confidence in public speaking. Understanding the accents, teaching content, and subject knowledge from the lecturers were also related to how well a student could learn from lecture-based teaching. Some students also had difficulties related to their own English language skills. For instance, a European Masters student claimed: “I have academic difficulties in language relevant issues. I have difficulty in thinking, writing, and expressing things in English so language issues may make my performance a little bit lower than my expectation” (0009).

**Quantitative Phase:** The online questionnaire used in this study also includes a question requiring student respondents to specify their academic difficulties. Table 5.2 shows the quantitative data regarding academic difficulties that
postgraduate international students usually face at the beginning of their study programs. This question is a multiple-choice question and respondents can choose more than one answer from the items listed. Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.2), indicating frequency, percentage, and ranking order.

**Table 5.2 Quantitative Data on Academic Difficulties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[1]: Understanding subject knowledge in my field.</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[2]: Understanding what the lecturers (or speakers) said in the class or seminar</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[3]: Understanding the accent of the teachers or tutors</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[4]: Critical thinking ability</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[5]: Academic writing</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[6]: Knowledge related to plagiarism and its relevant practice</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[7]: Time management for my studies</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[8]: Doing independent study (e.g. extensive reading)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[9]: The UK learning style</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd2[10]: Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally speaking, at the beginning of the academic year, more students found that they had difficulties in academic writing and critical thinking ability. Therefore, academic writing and critical thinking ability ranked as the two most frequently cited academic difficulties in this study based on the questionnaire responses. However, some difficulties are common to all students regardless of whether they are international students or not, and are related to being an independent learner, taking responsibility for time management, and understanding the UK learning style. On the other hand, some difficulties are particular to international students who have to adapt to a new learning environment, such as adjusting to or understanding lecture or seminar content, the accent of the teachers or tutors, and subject knowledge in one’s study field.

The fact that the fewest students replied to having knowledge related to plagiarism showed that postgraduate international students had the fewest concerns about how issues of plagiarism impacted their academic performance. This may be explained by the fact that issues related to plagiarism can be taught and learned directly as a set of rules, in contrast to the ability to think critically.
Table 5.3 shows the quantitative data regarding whether international postgraduate students still had academic difficulties near the end of their first academic year study. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the agreement scale; scores for each item range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.3), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets).

Table 5.3 Quantitative Data on Check of Academic Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Levels of Agree/ Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[1]: Now I still have difficulty in understanding subject knowledge in my field.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>(39.2) 28.8) (16.0) (13.2) (2.8) (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[2]: Now I still have difficulty in understanding what the lecturers (or speakers) say in the class or seminar.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>(36.8) (36.0) (14.4) (10.0) (1.2) (1.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[3]: Now I still have difficulty in understanding the accent of the teachers or tutors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>(36.8) (30.8) (16.4) (10.8) (4.4) (0.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[4]: Now I still have difficulty in critical thinking ability.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>(32.4) (23.2) (19.2) (17.6) (6.0) (1.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[5]: Now I still have difficulty in academic writing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>(24.8) (22.8) (20.0) (19.6) (9.6) (3.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[6]: Now I still have difficulty in knowledge related to plagiarism and its relevant practice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>(49.2) (27.6) (10.4) (8.4) (3.2) (1.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[7]: Now I still have difficulty in time management for my studies.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>(30.0) (23.2) (15.6) (18.4) (8.8) (4.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[8]: Now I still have difficulty in doing independent study (e.g., extensive reading).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>(37.2) (22.8) (20.4) (12.0) (5.6) (2.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[9]: Now I still have difficulty in the UK learning style.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>(34.8) (31.2) (16.0) (9.2) (3.6) (3.2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[10]: If given the chance to start my studies again, I would come with more background knowledge in the field.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>(21.6) (11.6) (12.0) (16.0) (23.2) (15.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd3[11]: If given the chance to start my studies again, I would come with a higher level of English.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>(28.4) (14.4) (8.8) (15.2) (19.6) (13.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levels of Agree/Disagree: 1 – Completely Disagree; 2 – Mostly Disagree; 3 – Slightly Disagree; 4 – Slightly Agree; 5 – Mostly Agree; 6 – Completely Agree

The research data above show that academic writing, time management for study, and critical thinking ability continued to be the principle difficulties that international postgraduate students had after two terms of academic adjustment. Understanding lecture or seminar content and knowledge related to plagiarism and its relevant practice were still considered by fewest students as academic difficulties near the end of the first academic year.

A comparison between tables 5.2 and 5.3 shows that, based on student numbers, difficulties in writing reduce the most between the beginning and the end of the academic year. The numbers of students whose academic
difficulties were related to understanding lecture or seminar content, critical
thinking ability, and understanding the UK learning style had also reduced by
the end of the academic year. This means that students’ difficulties in
mastering academic writing is the area that shows the most improvement,
followed by improvements in their understanding of lecture or seminar content,
critical thinking ability, and adapting to the UK learning style. The fact that the
number of students whose academic difficulty was related to understanding
plagiarism and its relevant practice decreased the least between at the
beginning (table 5.2) and near the end (table 5.3) of the academic year showed
that this was the area of least improvement. This finding might be a result of
the fact that international students who had difficulties related to plagiarism
might not know how to use available resources to solve relevant problems, or it
might be because there was less need to overcome associated difficulties.

If given the chance to start one’s studies again, more than half of the students
agreed that they would come with more background knowledge in their field.
This shows that students generally thought they needed to improve their
background knowledge in the field more than their English language skills.
Therefore, background knowledge in the field was perceived as more needed
than improving ability in English. This result also shows a changing focus of
student concern away from language and toward their understanding of their
field of study.

Finally, the quantitative findings in this section also support the qualitative
finding that most of the students had academic difficulties when they studied
abroad. The quantitative findings further help to explain the changes within
various academic difficulties. How students manage their own learning and
adjust to new teaching and learning styles are generally the two types of
academic difficulties uncovered in this research. The focus for academic
difficulties experienced in these early months would appear to be academic
writing, time management for studies, and critical thinking ability.
5.1.4 Coping with Academic Difficulties

After one-term of academic adjustment, some of difficulties had been solved, but others continued into the second academic term. For instance, a European Masters student mentioned that her academic problems had been solved: “Before I had some problems or difficulties but I tried to help myself through asking for help from teachers and using the university insessional English support lessons. Now I think I really do not have any problem or difficulty” (0015). However, an Asian Masters student described that, while he had tried to solve his academic problems, he still needed to improve his critical thinking ability: “The problem have been tried to be solved. Teachers have given me good and useful advice about the writing structure. However, I think critical thinking ability is one thing that I have to try to learn and improve by myself. I still need to practice more” (0007).

Interviewees often used the university academic support services or asked for help from lecturers, teachers, supervisors, friends, colleagues, or an Internet network or group to overcome academic difficulties or improve their academic experience or performance. For instance, an Asian Masters student stated that he mainly used the university academic support services to solve his academic difficulties: “I mainly learned the writing skills of avoiding plagiarism from the preparation courses and insessional English support lessons. However, I did not discuss the relevant issues with any teacher or tutor” (0011). A PhD student from the Middle East stated how his difficulty in English academic writing has been improved through the university learning support services and help from his supervisor: “I have attended several university insessional English support lessons in Terms One and Two. My English writing has been improved. My supervisor usually gives me feedbacks with English writing correction from my research work one week later. I appreciate his help” (0002). A European Masters student commented that she preferred to ask for help from her friends: “I have difficulty in writing skills and asked my Canadian and US friends to proofread my writing. My writing content is okay but only has the grammar problems … I prefer to ask my friends to read through my writing” (0020).
Generally, interviewees felt they were able to discuss their experiences with their tutors or mentors and that they were able to take their problems to their tutors or mentors. For instance, a European Masters student stated: “Yes, I think I am able to discuss my experiences with my tutors or mentors and take my problems to them. I found that it was really difficult to understand some questions for my presentation so I asked for help from my teacher and he helped me to find the way out” (0015). An Asian Masters student admitted: “Yes, I asked my teachers questions related to knowledge in my study field and received helpful advice” (0011). However, one participant (0013) said she did not have any interaction with teachers or tutors because she did not have any problems. Three interviewees (0003, 0011, 0014) only discussed academic problems with teachers but not personal problems or issues. For instance, a European Masters student described: “Yes, I took academic problems, not personal things, to my teachers … However, teachers help students with academic things, especially when students email teachers” (0014).

Additionally, the questionnaire also includes a question asking students about how they went about solving their academic problems. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the frequency scale; scores for each item range from 1 (never) to 6 (very frequently). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.4), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets).

### Table 5.4 Quantitative Data on Coping with Academic Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AcAd4[1]: I ask for help from my teachers or tutors for any academic problem.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
<td>(14.4)</td>
<td>(19.6)</td>
<td>(37.2)</td>
<td>(17.2)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd4[2]: For any academic problem, I ask for help from my classmates or colleagues.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.2)</td>
<td>(8.4)</td>
<td>(12.0)</td>
<td>(32.0)</td>
<td>(28.0)</td>
<td>(14.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcAd4[3]: I use the academic support lessons or services to improve my ability or solve my academic problems.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(14.1)</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
<td>(17.2)</td>
<td>(31.6)</td>
<td>(18.8)</td>
<td>(8.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levels Agree/Disagree: 1 – Never; 2 – Very Rarely; 3 – Rarely; 4 – Occasionally; 5 – Frequently; 6 – Very Frequently

International postgraduate students usually asked for help from their tutors, classmates or colleagues with any academic problems. They also used academic support lessons or services to improve their ability or solve problems. According to quantitative data on table 5.4, asking for help from classmates or colleagues was used more often by international students than asking for help.
from teachers or tutors. Additionally, fewer international students used academic support lessons or services to improve their ability or solve their academic problems.

Therefore, the preceding information shows that international students tend to ask for help firstly from their classmates or colleagues when they have academic problems. Teachers or tutors are less often considered as a direct, immediate, and helpful way for solving academic problems. Academic support lessons or services are considered the least important options for international students’ academic problem solving. The fact that students tend to look for support amongst other students rather than by using official services suggests that sharing difficulties with peers is as important as finding solutions. It may also suggest that students feel better supported by those who share similar experiences. Finally, items 1, 2, and 3 support the qualitative finding that interview participants tend to use different academic support resources or services to improve their skills or solve the academic problems.

5.1.5 Reflecting on the Academic Adjustment

The purpose of this section is to investigate what international students would do in order to make their academic experience better if they had the opportunity to go back to the beginning of their study-abroad career. In the light of the largely positive experiences reported above, it also attempts to understand whether and why international students were happy or satisfied with their academic experience. It finally asks whether students had any suggestions regarding their academic experience or study program to the university.

Bettering Academic Experience

Most of the international students had successful learning experiences in their home countries. However, coming to the UK, they find themselves in a different learning context and therefore experiencing various academic difficulties. In order to have a better academic experience, these students need to relearn how to be a ‘good student’ – although they have been successful learners in the
past, they need to adjust their understanding of what it is to be a ‘good student’ in a context where different things are expected.

Nine participants said that they would not change anything if given the chance to go back to the beginning because they thought they had already worked very hard. They thought they had done as much as they could have done to make their learning situation optimal. For example, a Masters student stated: “I think nothing I would do or change because everything is okay and it goes like what or how it should go” (0019). A Masters student from the Business School commented: “I really would not do anything differently because I already study very hard” (0013). A European PhD student described: “I really do not think I would change anything because I only need to keep moving toward the goal and not to be afraid of what is going to happen in the future” (0008). What is interesting about these examples is that these students see themselves as the agents of their own experience. If they work hard, things will go well. If things go wrong, they will work harder. This reveals that students can locate problems and solutions internally or externally. Some students see themselves as the ones who can change things. Other students experience their problems as external to themselves, in the cultural context or the institution.

On the other hand, some participants mentioned that, if given the chance to go back to the beginning of their study-abroad academic careers, they would work harder to be prepared for the need for academic adjustment. Therefore, pre-planning for life adaptation, starting earlier to read more for background knowledge in the subject field, and arriving at USW earlier were suggested as better preparation. Working harder at English skills, essays, presentations, and assignments and improving critical thinking ability were stated by some interviewees who hoped to have better academic performance. Some interviewees also mentioned that they would like to have more contact with teachers, attend more conferences, comply with academic standards for better academic practice, and take easier modules in the second term. For example, an Asian Masters student (0011) mentioned that if given the chance to begin over, he would like to have better English skills, critical thinking ability, and discussion skills. A Masters student from Latin America stated that he would
arrive in South West earlier: “I think I would arrive here earlier … I would choose to be here earlier in September to adapt to the life from the beginning of the term, and to start my assignment writing or preparation from day one” (0010). A Masters student (0025) from the Middle East stated that he would take easier modules in the second term in order to make his academic experience better. An Asian PhD student also commented: “I would learn some very necessary skills, such as time management and efficient communication with others. The most important skill for me is English language” (0016).

**Academic Satisfaction**

Interviewees were happy or satisfied with their UK academic experience for various reasons. For example, an Asian PhD student mentioned: “Yes, I am definitely happy and satisfied with my UK academic experience because my UK academic experiences are quite different from my experiences in my home country. It is like some good shock to me” (0016). This example is important and builds on the earlier point that difficulties might be the focus of learning. A European Masters student admitted: “Yes, I am because I have really improved my English and been happy to write and speak English … I thought it would be more difficult for me to think or write in English; however, I have quickly got used to it. The study subjects and classes are very interesting for me” (0015). An African PhD student (0001) commented that he was very satisfied with his UK academic experience because he studied the same topic in the UK as in his home country and the technology in the UK was better. He also valued the chance to see others engaged in research. He wanted to see what other researchers were doing and to participate in relevant seminars or workshops. Furthermore, he found it encouraging that he could learn specific research methods without having to pay additionally. Thus, being part of a research culture was viewed as contributing to academic satisfaction.

However, four participants did not feel happy or satisfied with their academic experiences. By looking at these examples of unhappy or dissatisfied students, we can learn how to improve international students’ academic experience. For instance, a PhD student from the Middle East mentioned: “I am not so happy because I expect more things related to overall supervision or academic studies
from study abroad” (0003). An Asian Masters student commented: “Not really. Not satisfied. I hope to have more classes for the taught program. Some schools have tutorials after a meeting section so I hope the system in my program can be like that if it is possible. If it is so, we then can have more contact with the academic stuff” (0022). Another Asian Masters student also stated:

*It is quite hard to say happy or not happy with my UK academic experiences. So far, I really think the one-year program is not that very helpful. An intensive program is good; but I feel they cram a lot of things. It is like to touch the skin of something although we do learn a lot of things. I still have to move on although I cannot really understand some things. Therefore, sometimes I am still confused.* (0007)

The focus on instruction or taught classes here is because learning has been more ‘one way’ in the past, from the teacher to the student. However, in the UK, learning is more interactive and requires independent learning on the part of the student rather than information being delivered by the teacher to the students. This makes an interesting contrast to the examples above regarding the academic satisfaction – the earlier example sees the challenges as constructive, the later example sees the problem as lying with the way things are taught.

**Academic Suggestions**

Students’ suggestions were directed towards the way teaching was delivered. For example, some participants hoped courses, instruction, teaching methods, or lectures could be improved. In contrast, other students did not focus on ‘how’ but on ‘how many’ and called for more support in the form of taught lessons or modules, English support lessons, and English proofreading tutorials. Others suggestions were more practical, concerned with timing or availability of academic or library resources, academic learning support services, laboratory resources, and supervision. Additionally, some participants hoped the amount of course modules in the program could be equally distributed across terms so no term had an excessive workload. Class size, choice of course modules, and the workload of teachers were also suggested as areas that needed to be
improved. These suggestions revealed where students thought their academic problems lay. For some the problem is strategic, for others the problem is one taught input, while for others it is one of different learning styles. These suggestions reinforce issues raised by the findings reported earlier.

For instance, an Asian Masters student mentioned proofreading: “I suggest that the school can offer us more free proofreading opportunities and have more available tutors helping us with proofreading because the opportunities provided by the school this year are limited and it is not all of us can register or use these opportunities” (0007). An Asian Masters student in the Business School admitted: “The class size for some courses are too big so it is difficult for students to understand lectures and hear the professors clearly ... Maybe, the better class size is 30 or 40 students. I know some schools usually have fewer students in one program or class” (0017). A PhD student from the Middle East suggested having more supervisors and reducing teachers’ workloads:

I suggest that we should have more supervisors. For example, my supervisor has about eight, nine, or ten PhD students and he told me that he is very busy ... I do not know why the university does not recruit new faculty when we have more students ... There is a student-teacher ration standard for every university benefiting students and supervisors. I do not know whether this student-teacher ration is controlled here. (0002)

The previous findings in section 5.1 show a continuing and generally positive response as the background to all other findings. There is also a changing perspective on what constitutes a good student, especially given the continuing challenge posed by the requirement to write academically and to be critical and independent thinkers. The quantitative questionnaire findings show a slightly higher tendency among international postgraduate students to look to fellow students for support and to give low priority to university support systems, although the qualitative interview findings show that teachers and official university support services are also well used for solving academic problems. Finally, a theme worth further discussion is whether adjustment is located in a student’s attitude or in the university’s provision of academic resources.
5.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

This section shows the findings regarding first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students’ socio-cultural adjustment. The findings include issues related to adjustment of international students, socio-cultural difficulties these students faced, how they coped with these difficulties, and a reflection on socio-cultural adjustment. The findings are expected to contribute to knowledge, understanding, and services related to the socio-cultural adjustment of international students.

5.2.1 Socio-cultural Adjustment – Quantitative Phase

This section examines through quantitative data analysis what the participating international students’ socio-cultural experiences were and how often they engaged in certain socio-cultural activities. It also aims to investigate international students’ interactions and friendship with different people.

Socio-cultural Adjustment

The questionnaire used in this study includes a question requiring international students to indicate their socio-cultural adjustment. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the agreement scale; scores for each item range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.5), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets).

Table 5.5 Quantitative Data on Socio-cultural Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Levels of Agree/ Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][1]: Overall I have adjusted well to my socio-cultural life in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][2]: I do not have time to socialize with people.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][3]: Most of the time I interact with students only.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][4]: I feel comfortable interacting with local people.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][5]: I feel South West people welcome international students.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd[1][6]: Local British people are friendly or polite to me.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research defines socio-cultural adjustment as “how a person fits in or adapts to a new social and cultural environment.” Based on the quantitative questionnaire survey data (see table 5.5), almost all of the survey participants agreed with item 1, showing that most of the international students at USW felt they had made a good socio-cultural adjustment to the host country and that the host environment was generally friendly towards them. Findings related to items 4, 5, 6, and 7 show that the relationship between international students and host country nationals was good enough so that international students felt comfortable and were able to befriend local British people. Because the majority of the international sojourners agreed that they had good interactions with and favorable impressions about the host people, the data suggest that South West is a positive place for socio-cultural experience and conducive to the socio-cultural adjustment of international students.

Findings from items 10, 11, and 12 show that international students in this research were open-minded and well adjusted to British life style, however, they also hoped to maintain space for their own culture. These two approaches – an open-minded attitude and a space for one’s own culture – were held simultaneously by international students while going through socio-cultural adjustment. This interesting situation merits further discussion in the following discussion chapter.
With regard to socializing with others, items 2 and 3, provided interesting data. Although over half the participants thought they had time to socialize and do activities that required involvement in the local culture and environment, many interacted only with other students. Responses to item 14 show that most of the international students in this study had good interactions or relationships with their housemates or neighbors. This finding also supports the findings related to item 1 in this section. Finally, more than half of the questionnaire respondents disagreed that religion played an important role in their UK adjustment. This finding showed that religion was related to one’s UK adjustment for only few students. The finding is also interesting for further discussion with other research findings and literature review.

Responses to items 8 and 9 show that international students in this research generally thought that students or people from their home countries were helpful to their adjustment, and that it was good to interact with people from the same country or culture. These findings show and recognize the positive contribution of students or people from home countries to international students’ adjustment. They also indirectly support the preceding finding related to a third space for one’s own culture while adjusting to a host environment. Finally, these findings also reveal the importance and supportive role of the home culture or people from a home country in international students’ socio-cultural adjustment.

**Socio-cultural Activities**

The questionnaire also asked international students to indicate how often they did some socio-cultural activities. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the frequency scale; scores for each item range from 1 (never) to 6 (very frequently). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.6), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Levels of Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCAd2[1]: I interact with students or people from my country.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1 (5.6) 14 (6.0) 15 (4.0) 10 (19.2) 48 (28.4) 71 (36.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd2[2]: I participate in activities with British students or people.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>12 (4.8) 54 (21.6) 51 (20.4) 67 (26.8) 46 (18.4) 20 (8.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the quantitative data from table 5.6, almost all the survey participants replied that they at least occasionally interacted with students or people from their home countries (item 1). This finding also supports those related to students or people from home countries (items 8 and 9) from table 5.5. Only slightly more than half of the survey participants agreed that they at least occasionally participated in activities with British students or people (item 2). The finding also shows that possibilities exist for improving the interaction between international students and British students or people because items 5, 6, and 7 (table 5.5) indicate that many international students were interested in more interaction with British people.

Only slightly more than one-third of the respondents admitted that they at least occasionally participated in activities held by student clubs or societies. The finding shows that either international students still need to be encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities from student clubs or societies inside the university, or student societies need to do more to enable international students to participate, even though postgraduate students are usually occupied with their studies.

Data from both tables 5.5 (item 13) and 5.6 (item 4) suggest that the role of religion is a significant issue for about one-third of the students participating in the survey. Religion can act both to narrow and widen social participation. Joining local faith communities, for example, can be a means of integrating into the host community. Choosing to socialize with those who share one’s faith, however, can limit the diversity of interactions a student may experience. The preceding information importantly concludes that even if international students intend to participate more with students from the host country and value this as an opportunity, in reality they tend to have more social engagement with other international students. This may also be linked to the findings concerning academic adjustment, which reveal that international students find other
international students as the most likely human resource for facilitating adjustment.

**Socio-cultural Interaction or Relationship**

The online questionnaire used in this study also includes a question asking student respondents to evaluate their socio-cultural interactions and friendships. Table 5.7 and table 5.8 show the relevant data and findings. Findings indicating frequency, percentage, and ranking order are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[1]: Students or people from my country</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[2]: Students or people from different countries but with similar culture to mine</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[3]: Students from different countries</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[4]: British students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[5]: British people (non-students)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAd3[6]: Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from table 5.7 that international students interact most often with students from their own country. They are also more likely to socialize with other international students, especially those who have a similar cultural background, than with British students. This reinforces other data showing a limited interaction between international students and host communities. It also suggests that the interaction between international students and host British students or people needs to be improved.
According to questionnaire survey data from table 5.8, most respondents agreed that most of their friends were students or people from their home countries. After students or people from home countries, most of the survey participants’ friends were students from different countries, or students or people from different countries but with similar cultural background. The fewest number of respondents had a majority of friends who were British, students or non-students.

The findings from table 5.8 are similar to findings from table 5.7. Additionally, the findings show that international students find it difficult to build friendships with British students or people. Although it cannot be established from these results where the nature of this difficulty lies, the fact the international students find it easier to relate to other international students from a variety of backgrounds rather than to students from the host country suggests that the problems may be institutional rather than any unwillingness to integrate on the part of international students. The institution itself may serve to create natural groupings of international students but not facilitate integration between international students and British students.

5.2.2 Socio-cultural Adjustment – Qualitative Phase
The purpose of this section is to investigate how interviewees’ socio-cultural experience had progressed since the first interview or since they came to USW. It also intends to discover what socio-cultural experience impressed them the most deeply. It finally aims to discover how their friendship and interaction were with friends, other students, and local British people.

General Socio-cultural Experience Reviewed After Three Months
Compared to the results of the first interview investigation, interviewees’ socio-cultural experiences had improved by the second interview. They had made more friends with students from different countries, and some had made friends or had more interaction with local people. For instance, a European Masters student stated: “Some British people invited me to their houses for eating,
cooking, or church activities. Every Sunday after church, a lady always invites people to her house to cook and talk. It includes students, local non-student people, and normal working people” (0021). However, not many interviewees had had experiences with student clubs or societies. For instance, an Asian Masters student stated in the second interview about his socio-cultural experience with a student club: “I participated in the Community Action Club once to be a volunteer in a farm and it was interesting. However, I am a one-year Masters student so I do not have a lot of time. I hope to join the similar activities more in the future when I do not have so many courses” (0017).

Most of the interviewees’ friends were students from different countries. For example, a European Masters student mentioned: “Most of my friends are international students. I really do not have UK student friends because most of the Business School students are internationals … Sometimes my class organizes to drink something with a short talk … it is more like an international experience” (0021). A PhD participant from the Middle East described his experiences with students from different countries:

I am very happy with my socio-cultural experiences and make a big friendship with students from many different countries. I enjoy communicating with my friends from different countries and learn many things from their cultures … I think I need to learn more things and languages and have a big network with people, in addition to my PhD studies. (0002)

Some participants also visited other places in England and knew more about British culture and the country. For instance, a European Masters student commented: “My socio-cultural experience has been very good. It is quite nice that I visited and traveled to some places in England” (0015).

Interviewees learned more about the local culture and were able to pinpoint differences and make comparisons between British culture and their home cultures. In contrast to this general backdrop of positive and improving sets of
experiences were those who had negative socio-cultural experiences. For example, an Asian Masters student shared displeasure with local youths:

*I think the youths here are impolite and do not respect other cultures. Asians are absolutely different people and from different cultures and the youths here should understand international people living in South West … International students are good people receiving good education and learning more languages so the local youths should be more polite.*

(0019)

In addition to this uncomfortable experience of local prejudice, socio-cultural experiences were perceived to be limited by workload issues. For example, a European PhD student claimed that she was isolated because she worked hard: “I feel isolated and do not have a very huge social life because I usually work quite a lot and do not go out a lot or know many people” (0008). A European Masters student stated: “I feel I do not have socio-cultural experience. Since I came to South West, I studies at school and then go home … I am not in South West for holidays so I am busy for my studies. It seems that my socio-cultural experience is quite limited” (0004).

**Deepest Impressions About the UK Socio-cultural Experience**

The deepest impressions left on these international students in relation to socio-cultural experiences were varied and reflected both personality and contextual differences. Values related to freedom, privacy, and openness existed on the one hand, but on the other, students experienced prejudice. The British drinking culture left a strong negative impression on them. An Asian Masters student mentioned her positive deepest impression: “The fact that people here are kind and helpful if they know someone needs help makes me have the deepest impression. However, one should let other people know where the problem is because studying abroad is not like studying in one’s home country” (0017). Another Asian Masters student also state his positive and negative deepest impressions: “The relaxing and friendly UK store services with freedom make me have the deepest impression … However, I still feel ‘xenophobia’ in the UK and some British students or people sometimes try to avoid talking with
international students” (0011). For different nationalities, the contrast between these values and those of the home country are likely to vary. The positives and negatives here are related to freedom and, conversely, lack of discipline.

The drinking culture encountered in the UK was the most frequently mentioned cause of negative impressions on international students. More than five participants commented on the UK drinking culture. For example, A European PhD student described her impression about UK pubs or bars: “I do not know much about the UK socio-cultural things here. However, I hate drunken people and do not like the very crowded and loud pubs in the UK although I like quiet pubs with light music” (0008). Additionally, a Masters student from Latin America stated his deepest impression about the British drinking culture:

*My deepest impression about socio-cultural experience is how people here are able to go to the extreme without bad consequences. For example, extreme drinking and walking exist at the same time without any stupid or fighting behaviors. If people in my country drink, they will start to fight each other. I think people here have limit or self-control and are responsible.* (0010)

**Friendship and Interaction with Friends, Students, and Local People**

Most of the interviewees had supportive friendships or helpful interactions with friends, students, and local people. For example, a PhD student from the Middle East talked about his friendship with his office colleagues: “I have many friends from different countries; and have good relationships with my colleagues in the office and have meals with them sometimes” (0002). A European Masters student admitted: “My friendship or relationship with my friends, other students, and local people is fine” (0021).

**Participation in Activities with Local People**

Few interviewees interacted on a deep or extensive level with the local British non-student population. Activities with the local people included church activities or extra-curricular activities. For instance, an Asian Masters student stated her interaction with the local British: “I do the meal activity with Christian
local people on Friday night … I feel quite nice because they listen to me. When I had some questions related to the local government, my British friends were so nice to try to help me” (0026). This finding presents an interesting contrast to the more general tendency to look for support amongst other international students. Additionally, an Asian PhD student commented on his interaction with local British students: “I only have some local British friends or teammates from the table tennis club. We went to the national game together” (0016). An Asian Masters student also mentioned his interaction with the local people: “I think my friendship or interaction with the Kong-Fu lesson members or local people is quite good and this common interest connects and makes us closer” (0007).

Most of the interviewees’ local friends were their student friends or classmates, and their interaction with local people was with British classmates or colleagues. For example, an Asian Masters student stated: “It is very good. I have some British local friends but most of them are students. Maybe, my non-student friends are teachers only” (0017). A European Masters student claimed: “No, I only interact with British students, from student clubs and accommodation, but not the local British people” (0015).

However, eight interview participants stated that they did not engage in any activity with non-student local British. Seven participants said that they usually did not interact with local British people. For instance, an Asian Masters student admitted: “I have not participated in any activity with local people because I am busy mainly for two student societies. However, I think I should have more relationship with local people” (0007). A European Masters student commented: “Except my wonderful classmates, I have good friends but stay away from the local British people” (0009).

Participation in Activities with Students
Based on the interview information, international students usually ate a meal, had a trip, saw a movie, or went to a party with other students. If students interacted with other international students, they would share and learn different cultures from each other. Some international students did activities with other
students through student clubs or societies. Some students only participated in activities with other students on campus. Married international students tended to have limited activities with other students. For example, a European Masters student stated her activities with her study group members: “I went with my group to Bath and bowling together. We also get together occasionally for lunch or something. It is interactive and I feel it is good” (0014). A European Masters student mentioned: “I joined International Society and a student society for students from my home country last term but I have not been to any society in this term” (0020). An African Masters student stated:

I had a wonderful Chinese hot pot with my housemates … I had a Christmas dinner on Christmas with my Mexican and Chinese friends and it was a long table of food. We had so many things to eat, including Chinese hot pot, Mexican style BBQ chicken. It was nice and lovely. I enjoyed it. I had a wonderful time. (0023)

Interaction with Students or People from the Same Home Country
Most of the interviewees often interacted with students or people from the same home country or a similar cultural background. Many of them said that people from the same home country or similar cultural background were quite helpful when they needed any help. For instance, an Asian PhD student mentioned: “My landlord’s family and I are from the same home country. At the beginning, I indeed needed their help because I did not know quite a lot of things in the UK. Now I get used to the life here and we talk about everything together” (0016). A PhD student from the Middle East stated:

I have found not many friends from my home country; but we have a community and sometimes gather together … Especially when I just arrived in South West, students from my home country helped and gave me very helpful advice. Students from my home country and I support and talk to each other. (0002)

However, six interviewees showed that they usually did not interact with students or people from the same home country or similar cultural background.
For instance, an Asian Masters student stated: “I know some students from my home country but usually do not interact with them. I always interact with students or people from other countries and try not to speak my native language or not to stay with students from my home country” (0007). A European Masters student also mentioned: “No, I also do not know anyone from my home country … I also do not want to be together with people from my home country because I will not speak English but one of my purposes here is to improve my English” (0014).

In spite of students’ original perception that studying abroad may benefit their personal development in terms of intercultural interaction, what seems evident here is that international students’ interaction with non-student local British people needs to be encouraged. International students tend to interact with their peers, which may result from their shared feelings, internal needs or desires. However, interacting more with local British people may help them understand more about what local British culture means, despite the feelings of shocks, differences, or alienation that they may simultaneously feel.

5.2.3 Socio-cultural Difficulties
Ten interview participants claimed that they had not had any difficulty in socio-cultural adjustment. For instance, an African PhD student stated: “I do not think I have any problem with anyone or regarding my socio-cultural experience; because it depends on how I look at people or things” (0001). A Masters student mentioned: “I do not think I have much difficulty related to socio-cultural adjustment because I think I have British friends to help me out. I only have some little things related to the use of some British English words so I do not think I have any big difficulty” (0012).

Among those who experienced socio-cultural difficulties, students commonly cited language as part of the problem; in particular some participants had difficulty in understanding local people’s accent. Language barriers or communication problems were noted as the possible causes of limited social interaction. Most of the students citing these problems were Asian students.
For example, an Asian PhD student mentioned: “I think the main difficulty is the language barrier … I think British people are very kind and I hope to talk to them with casual issues. However, I need to improve my English listening, understanding, and speaking ability” (0016). An Asian Masters student also stated about his language difficulties: “Yes, it is the language problem – sometimes I cannot understand or it takes more time for me to understand what the native speakers say. Because of the language problem, it may take a longer time to solve the problem or do the daily communication. My friends told me that language means efficiency” (0017).

Language is an example of how efforts to integrate can be challenging. In contrast, efforts to maintain cultural identity can also present difficulties, as the following example illustrates. An Asian Masters student commented on her family’s difficulty in finding the suitable food: “I think not much difficulty – except the food, halar meat, for religious reason. We try to eat vegetarian food. Sometimes we drive a car to buy some halar meat … But, I do not think the meat is fresh so I do not like to buy it. Therefore, we eat a lot of fish and the relevant products” (0022).

As has already been discussed, the UK drinking culture leaves a strong impression on many international students, but it also creates difficulties for international students who attempt to engage socially, as the following example illustrates:

I am not used to the ways, such as parties and drinking, that people socialize to each other here … I usually ask my girlfriend to go with me to a party although she also did not like it. At least, I feel that someone speaking Chinese also goes with me. The main point is that I am not interested in that because there is no common chatting issue between other people and me. I feel it is like a cultural gap between me and other people … I think the main problem is about the gap between each other but not whether I want to speak English or not. (0007)
In summary, the main focus for the socio-cultural difficulties experienced by these students is mainly related to language issues (related to daily life communication) and miscellaneous factors associated with housing, food, health, and how to socialize with people. Socio-cultural difficulties can be located externally and internally – some problems change with time but others remain constant throughout the student’s stay. Adjustment, therefore, is constrained by the extent to which international students feel they can or should adapt. There are some things that they cannot change and some things that they are not prepared to change. The understanding of adjustment, therefore, should not be viewed as a gradual process of assimilation but as linked with choice, agency, and identity. How international students have tried to seek ways to solve their socio-cultural difficulties is shown in the following section.

5.2.4 Coping with Socio-cultural Difficulties

The questionnaire also required international students to indicate how often they used university support services. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the frequency scale; scores for each item range from 1 (never) to 6 (very frequently). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.9), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets). These findings are also compared with the data or findings on the similar issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[2]: I have used the university counseling services.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(52.8)</td>
<td>(12.8)</td>
<td>(12.8)</td>
<td>(14.8)</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[3]: I have used the welcome week services from the International Student Support Office.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(22.8)</td>
<td>(14.4)</td>
<td>(13.2)</td>
<td>(20.0)</td>
<td>(17.2)</td>
<td>(12.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[4]: I have participated in activities provided by the International Student Support Office.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(34.4)</td>
<td>(19.2)</td>
<td>(16.8)</td>
<td>(19.6)</td>
<td>(7.2)</td>
<td>(2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[5]: I have used the student advice services from the Student Guild.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(40.8)</td>
<td>(16.4)</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
<td>(17.2)</td>
<td>(7.2)</td>
<td>(4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[6]: I have used the housing or accommodation reception services from the university.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(29.2)</td>
<td>(9.6)</td>
<td>(9.6)</td>
<td>(24.8)</td>
<td>(16.4)</td>
<td>(10.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS2[7]: I have used the services or advice from the University Health Center.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(39.6)</td>
<td>(14.8)</td>
<td>(14.0)</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
<td>(11.2)</td>
<td>(4.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levels of Agree/Disagree: 1 – Never; 2 – Very Rarely; 3 – Rarely; 4 – Occasionally; 5 – Frequently; 6 – Very Frequently

The above findings recognize the important contributions of the Welcome Week services from the International Students Support Office (ISSO) and the
university housing or accommodation reception services. These survey findings generally support the qualitative interview findings related to how international students become familiar with university resources through the ISSO Welcome Week services and how the housing services helps solve problems in the students’ daily life. However, the university counseling services were used least often by the study participants, and more than half of the survey participants had never used the relevant services. This finding is consistent with the qualitative interview result, which showed that only one interview participant had used the service for overcoming a very challenging event in her life. Therefore, this situation showed that either most of the students did not have serious adjustment problems or the function of the university counseling services should operate differently in order to meet the needs of international students. The details regarding these services for aiding the students’ socio-cultural adjustment will be shown via the qualitative interview findings below.

Based on the qualitative interview, seven interview participants said that they had never used any of the university support services or resources to improve their life adaptation. For instance, an Asian PhD student mentioned: “I have never used any of these services because my life is quite simple without many activities, comparing with my undergraduate life. I only have three goals in the UK: Health, PhD work, and English. I also missed the welcome week activities because I arrived in South West late” (0016). An Asian Masters student stated: “I did not have any special bad socio-cultural experience so I did not use the university support services or resources” (0007).

Some interview participants used the university insessional English support lessons to improve their language in dealing with daily life communication. About three of them mentioned that they had used the housing reception office for heating problems. A few students also used the university security service. One interview participant (0024) used the university counseling service. Some interview participants used the services or took part in the Welcome Week activities. Interview participants also used IT services and services from the porter’s lodge, student guild, student information office, housing office, and the Student Health Center. For instance, a European Masters student stated: “No, I
have not. The only time was to use the Student Guild and Housing Office for my accommodation information. I also went to the welcome week activities from the International Student Support Office but did not use the pick up service because I studied in the UK before” (0021). Following a personal tragedy, one student (0024) found the counseling service offered space and support to help her cope with this major crisis in her life. It may be that the support services offered are more adept at supporting major needs rather than meeting more ordinary everyday needs in students’ life.

5.2.5 Reflecting on the Socio-cultural Adjustment
This section aims to discover what and how international students’ attitudes are toward the local UK culture and daily life through specific examples. It asked international students to use examples to show a cultural phenomenon that differed between the UK and their home countries, and then indicate their preferences. It also attempted to determine whether and why international students were happy or satisfied with their UK socio-cultural experiences. It finally asked international students for suggestions regarding their socio-cultural experience that might be of value to other international students.

Attitudes to Local Culture
Most of the interview participants responded that they were open to accept, respect, or adapt to local UK culture and daily life. For instance, a Masters student from the Middle East mentioned: “I adjust to the local UK culture and try not to offend anyone … I would like to visit more places around Devon. The UK drinking culture is okay for me because I also drink and think it is the social activity for people here” (0025). An Asian Masters student commented: “I accept and adjust my way to the local UK culture and my daily life because culture means something different from what I was used to do … I still have to make myself get involved because it is necessary to try different cultures although I really do not like parties very much” (0007). An African Masters student mentioned:
I think if one cannot adapt to the culture or people, it is better for one not to leave one’s home country. For example, I do not need to book tickets or schedule an appointment in my home country. However, I need to adapt to this different UK culture and need to fit into the system here. (0023)

However, some interviewees had less positive, or an openly negative, attitude toward the local culture. For example, an Asian Masters student commented: “I am not open. I also do not have any enthusiasm toward the local UK culture or to try different things; because I am also very busy for my own things, such as studying and job hunting” (0011). A PhD student from the Middle East mentioned: “My attitude to the local UK culture is like some sort of selection. I select the things suitable for me to do. I take the best and positive things from the local UK culture but stay away from the negative British things that do not fit my Muslim culture” (0002). A married Asian Masters student mentioned that they did not want their children exposed to British TV and media, although they also tried to imitate and teach their children to adopt the good things in the UK: “We do not want our children to expose to Western TV content, such as dressing and drinking alcohol. We are not allowed to drink alcohol in my religion. For parties, it is okay to gather but not parties with music and dancing because we are not allowed to do that” (0022). An Asian Masters student commented: “Sometimes one interact with people or learn things from other countries. This does not mean that one should give up all what one should know or have about his or her home country. Therefore, I do not give up my own culture because it is also very good” (0017).

Because of cultural similarities, European participants tended to reply that nothing was special or different between the UK and their home countries. For instance, a European Masters participant stated: “I am about the same with the knowledge or learning of the British culture. Nothing is special here; or it is not that different from my home country. Here is the European culture” (0020). A European Masters student also admitted: “I think I like UK culture. It is quite similar to my home culture. My English housemates made Christmas dinner
and the typical English meal on Sunday. We ate together. I also try to learn the recipes here although I also like my home food” (0015).

**Differences from Home and Student Preferences**

Interview participants used various examples to illustrate differences between the UK and their home countries. Sometimes the participants liked UK cultural practices, but sometimes they preferred the practices of their home country.

International students admired British people’s manners, behaviors and attitudes towards problem solving, whereas the behavior sanctioned by drinking in the UK was disapproved of. Some international students hoped that the British political situation and people’s freedom in political debates would happen in their home countries. Many international students missed the more convenient shopping hours of stores in their home countries.

More than half of the examples mentioned by the interview participants were about preferred practices in their home countries. For example, an African Masters student mentioned that he did not like the need to schedule appointments in the UK: “For the bus timing and schedule, I prefer the home ways because scheduling an appointment does not make any sense to me. I cannot realize that I have to book an appointment for everything” (0023). An Asian Masters student from the Business School claimed: “I prefer the socio-cultural life in my home country because most of the shops or stores are closed at midnight. However, shops or stores in South West are closed at 5 pm … South West is more peaceful and quieter but I prefer the more convenient big city life” (0026). An Asian Masters student (0018) indicated that he preferred his country’s practice of buying or booking a ticket because the UK practice favored making plans earlier. An Asian Masters student mentioned that he liked the pace of life in his home country:

*I think the biggest difference is the slow pace of life in the UK – British people live in a more casual and slower way; however, people in my home country are more hurried and rush to somewhere else and things should be efficient … if you really ask me to choose one, I still prefer the more efficient life in my home country. (0007)*
Less than half of the examples cited indicated that the student preferred some aspects of life in the UK. For instance, an African PhD interviewee described his preference for the UK banking with cards: “The use of money is one example: people in my home country usually still carry money around but people in the UK do not do so and use cards. I prefer the UK style in this example because it is simple and safer. The money issue is still a serious problem in my home country” (0001). A Masters student from the Middle East mentioned: “Things, such as the public social order things or services, in the UK are organized. But the social order things in my home country are not good. For this, I like South West more because it is more organized and better. I think this difference is caused by the civil wars in my country” (0025). Another Asian Masters student also indicated that he preferred the quality of life in the UK:

The pace of life and quality of life here are very different from those in my home country. People here do not work on Saturday and Sunday. They clearly and distinctively separate time for work and private life; but people in my home country always keep working … I prefer the quality of life in the UK because it gives me other different perspectives, ideas, or thoughts. (0011)

Clearly these preferences varied according to the context of life in the home country and the confidence of the students, but they also indicated a range of student reactions from a willingness to appreciate new ways of doing things to a sense of discomfort with the unfamiliar. What emerged in the interviews was a tension between adjusting to a new cultural environment and holding on to familiar cultural norms and values.

**Socio-cultural Satisfaction**

Most of the twenty-six interviewees admitted that they were happy or satisfied with their UK socio-cultural experience after one-term of socio-cultural adjustment. For instance, a Masters student from North America mentioned: “Yes, I am satisfied with my UK socio-cultural experience because most of my experience has been very good. I make very good friends and have really good
interaction and learn lots of things and cultures that I did not know before” (0012).

However, ten interview participants indicated that they were not happy or satisfied with their socio-cultural experiences in the second interview. This number is nearly 2.5 times the number expressing academic dissatisfaction: only four participants indicated they were not happy or satisfied with their academic experience. For example, an African Masters student said: “I am not satisfied with my UK socio-cultural experience because it is still a bit strange for me and I am not familiar with UK culture or things here” (0006). An Asian Masters student detailed why he was unhappy with his UK socio-cultural experience:

Be honest, I am not so happy with that. The main point is that I really have no time to do that. If I have enough time, I think I will try to experience more UK social activities here. If I have more time, I will try more; of course, if I can do that, it will make me distracted. I then cannot concentrate on my studies. Therefore, I am not so happy with that so far; because my main purpose here is to study and I do not have so much time for the UK socio-cultural experience. The main point is the time. (0007)

Socio-cultural Suggestions
All of the interviewees had various suggestions regarding socio-cultural experiences for other or future international students. Some interviewees suggested trying to interact with local people and to avoid always staying with students from the same home countries. Some of them suggested participating in students clubs or societies in order to experience life and meet people. Some participants advised international students to visit more places and experience the local culture. Some suggested being independent and to enjoy life in South West in addition to their studies. For instance, a European Masters student admitted: “I suggest international students joining student societies because it is good experience to meet people” (0015). An Asian Masters student stated: “Feeling free to make mistakes is my suggestion. Sometimes
we do not intend to be rude but just do not know the right way to do things so sometimes we need someone to inform us the right ways or the rules in order to do things properly” (0017). A European PhD student mentioned: “I think international students should adjust themselves a little bit. I like, enjoy, and suggest international students communicating and interacting more with people from different countries in order to learn more things from other cultures or countries” (0005). A European Masters student also gave suggestions for bettering UK socio-cultural experience: “I would suggest them trying to go into the local environment … If they can interact with local people more, they surely will interact with the local environment more. We get used to go out with a group of international students but we also try to go to where local people are” (0020). An African Masters student stated:

*I think international students need to learn to be flexible and not to be rigid … International students should try to speak English often and do not be shy or feel shameful because of their bad English … Students should keep saying and asking people in English. This will help them to improve English.* (0023)

The preceding findings in section 5.2 show a tendency of international students to spend more time with other international students, which is exacerbated by limited opportunities to engage with local people – a notable exception here is for those who join local faith communities. There are also concerns about some aspects of British culture, in particular, the drinking culture. Student adjustment is affected by the tension that emerges when the students’ attempts to preserve their own cultural values and norms take precedence over their adapting to the values of the host community. This raises the question of whether adjustment is always a good thing or in the interests of international students.

**5.3 UNDERSTANDING THE STUDY-ABROAD EXPERIENCE**

Previous sections have reported how international students experience adjustment in the early months of their study-abroad programs. The next section considers students’ perceptions about the process of adjustment itself.
The findings include issues related to the study-abroad experience in general, reflection on the study-abroad experience, the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad, an evaluation on student satisfaction in the light of adjustments and needs, and the U-curve hypothesis. The findings are expected to contribute to the knowledge, understanding, and services related to education abroad.

5.3.1 General Study-abroad Experience

The questionnaire used in this study includes items asking students to review their general study-abroad experience. A six-point Likert-type scale was used for the agreement scale; scores for each item range from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.10), indicating mode, mean, frequency, and percentage (in brackets). These findings will be compared with the data or findings from the interviews on similar issues.

### Table 5.10 Quantitative Data on Overall Experience and Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[1]: I am satisfied with my overall adjustment in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[2]: Overall I am satisfied with my UK academic experience or adjustment.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[3]: Overall I am satisfied with my UK socio-cultural experience or adjustment.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[4]: I am satisfied that my basic daily life needs (food, water, weather, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[5]: I am satisfied that my esteem needs (self-esteem, self-confidence, capability, autonomy, being useful, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[6]: I am satisfied that my needs related to being loved and belonging (relationships, friendship and companionship, etc) are met in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[7]: I am satisfied that my self-actualization needs (fulfillment of my potential or life/career goal) are met in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[8]: I am satisfied that my safety needs (security and protection, freedom from fear and anxiety, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[9]: It would have been better to arrive in South West two or three weeks before the start of the term in order to settle in.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[10]: Overall I am able to discuss any problems with university staff and receive assistance.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[11]: Overall students' opinions are valued in this university.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[12]: Overall I have not experienced any serious academic difficulty in my current UK study.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[13]: Overall I have not experienced any serious socio-cultural difficulty in the UK.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[14]: I would still decide to study at South West University if</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10 Quantitative Data on Overall Experience and Adjustment
Based on the quantitative data of table 5.10, almost all international students in this research were generally satisfied with their study-abroad experience in the UK. An important conclusion of this data, however, is that there were more international students satisfied with their UK academic adjustment than with their socio-cultural adjustment. The finding regarding item 2 supports the qualitative interview finding in section 5.1.5 that most of the interview participants were happy or satisfied with their UK academic experience. The finding related to item 3 also supports the interview finding in section 5.2.5 that most of the interview participants were happy or satisfied with their UK socio-cultural experience.

The quantitative findings show that a generally positive attitude is made up of a complex set of attitudes and that negativity is not necessarily linked to the fact that difficulties are experienced but, rather, to how these difficulties are experienced and overcome. Second, the difficulties themselves are variously located: sometimes as a problem themselves and sometimes as a problem with the institution. Again, positivity may be linked to the student’s sense of agency when in engaging with these difficulties. These claims are supported by the findings from the previous sections and may be used to understand their reflections on the study-abroad experience more generally.

In relation to the five different needs in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory, the research data seem at odds with the theory because international students’ satisfaction with the five different types of needs does not follow the ranking order declared by the theory. Based on the findings, almost all of the survey participants were satisfied with their safety needs, so the satisfaction level and the mean score of the safety needs ranked as the highest one, followed by basic daily life needs and esteem needs. The ranking orders of satisfaction with basic daily life needs and satisfaction with esteem needs were similar because the numbers of students agreeing with item 4 (basic daily life needs) and item 5 (esteem needs) and their mean scores were quite the same. The numbers of
students agreeing with item 6 (love and belongingness needs) and item 7 (self-actualization needs) and the mean scores for items 6 and 7 were also similar. The aforementioned research findings may result from the fact that international students are a special research population with special characteristics. Therefore, factors related to cultural differences may mainly affect the need satisfaction of this special research population.

Many international students hoped to arrive in South West earlier in order to settle in, which was indicated by about seven tenths of the questionnaire respondents who agreed with item 9. The finding supports the qualitative interview finding regarding bettering academic experience through arriving in South West earlier (in section 5.1.5). It also gives suggestions for university housing office or associated authorities to improve the relevant services. Almost all of the survey participants agreed with item 10, which supported the qualitative research finding that most of the interview participants agreed that they were able to take their problems to and discuss their experiences with their tutors or mentors (section 5.1.4).

A majority of the questionnaire respondents agreed that overall they had not experienced any serious academic difficulties. Most of the respondents also admitted that overall they had not experienced any serious socio-cultural difficulties. These two findings generally support the qualitative interview findings that international students usually had academic or socio-cultural difficulties at the beginning of their academic career at USW, but most of their adjustment difficulties had been solved through using various support resources.

Additionally, international students also considered that they were respected by the university, indicated by the fact that most of the questionnaire respondents agreed that, overall, students’ opinions were valued in the university (item 11). The finding generally supported the qualitative interview finding that most of the interview participants thought that students’ opinions were valued by USW (section 5.3.2). Finally, the fact that a majority of the respondents agreed with item 14 recognized the positive educational quality and services that the university had provided to international students. It also supported the
qualitative interview finding that most of the interview participants would study in South West again if given the chance (section 5.3.2).

For satisfaction of overall, academic, and socio-cultural adjustments, the study compares findings on items 1 to 3 with the findings in section 5.3.5 related to satisfaction evaluation on three different types of adjustments: the quantitative findings on overall, academic, and socio-cultural adjustments in this section are opposite to the qualitative findings in section 5.3.5. In relation to satisfaction of the five different types of need as specified by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory, findings from items 4 to 8 in this section are not consistent with the findings in section 5.3.5. In spite of these inconsistent differences or results, the quantitative questionnaire respondents and the qualitative interview participants generally experienced high satisfaction in their various types of adjustments and needs. The cause of these differences in findings may result from the data collected from different research samples for the qualitative interview (26 participants) versus the quantitative questionnaire survey (250 respondents).

5.3.2 Reflecting on the Study-abroad Experience
The purpose of this section is to study whether and why interview participants would still choose to study in South West if given the chance again. It also intends to investigate whether and why interview participants thought students’ opinions were valued in the university. It finally aims to know what the interview participants’ advice was for other prospective international students intending to study in the UK and at USW.

Whether to Choose to Study at USW Again
Most students would choose to study at USW again. What was valued about this particular university was the students’ perception that the environment was safe and the services, facilities, and resources offered met their requirements and expectations. In spite of some reservations about the nature of cultural and social life in the UK, most students felt they had benefited from the social activities provided by the university. For example, an Asian Masters student described why he would like to study in South West again: “It is good because I
think South West is good for research. It is hard to keep calm in big cities because many things may attract one's mind. When one wants to do research, one needs a quiet environment. South West is quiet and good for research” (0017). An Asian Masters student also stated: “Yes, definitely I would still choose to study in South West … The university ranking is improved. The university improves the facilities every time so it is a quite good university. I would advise students from my home country to study in South West” (0019).

Five interviewees said they would not choose to study at USW. Two participants said they could not make a clear decision but needed to see other choices before doing a comparison. For instance, a European Masters student commented that she needed to be objective to do the comparison: “I would do the comparison in the quality of teaching, courses, and information. The best thing is that one feels to develop oneself in a learning environment … I should try to be objective because everything is relative” (0014).

An Asian Masters student in the Business School mentioned why he would study at another university: “If given me the chance again, I would like to go to a university with a smaller student-teacher ration and a smaller number of students in order for me to have better quality of interaction or relationship with teachers or other students” (0011). Another Asian Masters student in the Business School also commented why she would not choose to study again in South West: “I also applied for Bath University before. If given me the chance again, I would go to a big city, not like a small town in South West” (0026).

**Whether Students’ Opinions Are Valued**

Generally speaking, most of the interviewees agreed that students' opinions were valued by USW. For instance, a European PhD student stated: “I think that students’ opinions are valued in this university because the university cares about foreign researchers and has tried to improve the multicultural and students’ learning environment” (0005). An Asian Masters student commented: “Yes, I think so because the university’s ranking also counts students’ satisfaction level. I think the university should see students’ opinions as
important. I also heard that student satisfaction level at USW was at the first place” (0019).

However, four interview participants doubted whether students’ opinions were taken into consideration or had priority during the university’s decision-making process. For instance, an Asian Masters student stated:

*It is hard to say because sometimes the university makes the decision based on students’ opinions but sometimes based on their own reasons. Generally, the university cares about students’ opinions but the decisions may not be completely the same as students’ opinions because they have to consider all of the suggestions.* (0017)

**Advice for Prospective International Students**

Generally, advice for prospective international students intending to study in the UK and at USW varied. Advice can be related to finance, language, study, background knowledge, international friendship, or pre-preparation. Therefore, the advice can be categorized into three categories: advice related to academic experience, socio-cultural experience, and others (such as finance and pre-preparation).

Some interviewees would recommend prospective international students to study at USW, but others advised to carefully choose one’s study program after seeing all the possible opportunities. For instance, interviewee 0021 said: “Probably, they should think very well about their choices.” A Masters student from Latin America mentioned: “My first suggestion is to make sure one really wants to study in a particular subject because a program may be going to be very intensive; if one really does not like a subject, one then cannot do it” (0010).

Some participants think good English is important for starting a course of study, so some participants advised prospective international students to use the language support courses provided by the university. For example, a European PhD student mentioned: “I also suggest using the university insessional English support lessons for language improvement and nice international friendship with
students from different countries” (0008). A Masters student from Latin America stated: “My second suggestion is to prepare English very well because English is hard for every international student. It is better to wait and prepare English well before starting a program” (0010).

Some participants suggested that prospective international students should study very hard and remain patient about the realization of their study goals. For instance, an African PhD student mentioned: “I advise students should have study ambition and then be patient to work toward the end … Therefore, I think international students should have and develop their patience and ensure they enjoy what they are doing and come over to do it” (0001). An Asian Masters student commented: “They should study harder because some students waste time here. I think students here should study more and harder and make a balance between studies and their free time” (0019).

Some interviewees advised prospective students to develop international friendships (socio-cultural experience) with students from diverse countries or cultural backgrounds. A PhD student from the Middle East said: “I will also suggest prospective international students making friends with students from different countries” (0002). A European Masters student mentioned: “I also think international students should mix and interact with other students or people from different countries or cultures because one will not experience these foreign or international things again after going back to one’s home country” (0021).

Of course, money matters because it is expensive to study and live in the UK for most of the international students. An African Masters student mentioned: “The academe and academic experience are good but the living cost is high. Therefore, more money does matter and should be prepared” (0006). An African Masters student commented: “Also, preparing money before coming because coming to England should also have consideration regarding money. I get a scholarship from USW so I advise international students to have financial plans very well” (0023).
In general, there is a sense here that students feel that students themselves should shoulder the responsibility for getting the most out of the international experience, whether through sound financial planning, through careful subject choice, and through improving language skills, working hard, or making the most of the social and cultural opportunities.

5.3.3 Advantages of the Study-abroad Experience

The purpose of this section is primarily to know what advantages exist for international students by studying abroad through the quantitative survey and qualitative interview data. The findings are shown below.

Advantages of Studying Abroad – Quantitative Phase

The online questionnaire used in this study also includes a question asking international student respondents to specify the advantages that their study-abroad experience provides. Table 5.11 shows the relevant data and findings. This question is a multiple-choice question so any respondent can choose more than one answers from the question items listed below. Findings are shown as follows (see table 5.11), indicating frequency, percentage, and ranking order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[1]: Academic abilities</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[2]: English language abilities</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[3]: Professional abilities</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[4]: Future employment opportunities</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[5]: World/Global view</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[6]: Independence (the state or quality of being independent)</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[7]: International social network (connection/friendship/relationship with others)</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[8]: Self-actualization (being able to develop/achieve one's abilities/full potential)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[9]: Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the quantitative survey data of table 5.11, most of the questionnaire respondents replied that their study-abroad experience benefited their academic abilities and this fact ranked as the main benefit. Study-abroad experience also
benefits international students’ English language abilities, future employment opportunities, world or global view, independence, professional abilities, international social network, and self-actualization. More than half of the survey participants agreed with the benefit regarding self-actualization although it was ranked as the least mentioned factor. The quantitative data and findings shown on table 5.11 generally support the qualitative interview data and findings, which will be presented next.

Item 1 supports the qualitative finding below in this section (section 5.3.3) regarding knowledge improvement and improving research interest and subject knowledge. Items 2, 4, and 5 separately correspond to the interview findings regarding English improvement, opportunity for employment or promotion, and gaining an international and different perspective or being aware of the reality of the globalized world. Item 6 supports the qualitative finding regarding one’s independence, maturity, responsibility, or personality. Item 3 is somewhat related to the interview finding associated with knowledge improvement or improving subject knowledge. Item 7 corresponds to the qualitative finding regarding international friendship as an advantage for studying abroad. Finally, item 8 also supports the quantitative survey finding of item 7 regarding self-actualization in section 5.3.1. These positive findings specifying advantages of studying abroad result from the actual benefits recognized and expected from international students participating in both interview and questionnaire survey studies. They also help to explain why international students want to study abroad.

**Advantages of Studying Abroad – Qualitative Phase**

Based on the researcher’s second interview findings, students are more inclined to speak of the advantages of studying abroad than of the disadvantages. The advantages they mention are: possible benefits for one’s future job opportunity or career, improving English language ability, developing independence and maturity, understanding international perspective or different perspective, and gaining new life experiences, an academic degree or an educational certificate.
As can be seen in table 5.12, there are various perceived advantages for one to study abroad. These can be categorized into five categories: different cultures or perspectives, personal improvement, opportunities for employment or promotion, knowledge improvement, and better education. The details of the main five categories are shown below, first with numbers of respondents selecting that option, and then with details from the qualitative responses supporting their views.

Table 5.12 Qualitative Information on Advantages of Studying Abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Theme – Advantages from Studying Abroad</th>
<th>Numbers of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Different Cultures or Perspectives</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiving international and different perspectives</td>
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<td>Receiving cultural experience</td>
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<td><strong>Personal Improvement</strong></td>
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<td>Receiving personal improvement</td>
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<td>Making international friendship</td>
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<td><strong>Opportunities for Employment or Promotion</strong></td>
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<td>Expecting employment benefit</td>
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<td>Receiving a foreign educational certificate</td>
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<td>Expecting employment in a host country</td>
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<td><strong>Knowledge Improvement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiving English improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving research interest</td>
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<td>Improving subject knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Better Education</strong></td>
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</table>

**Different Cultures or Perspectives**

Experiencing different cultures or perspectives can be one advantage for receiving education in a different country, although this might be viewed both as a positive reason for studying abroad or as a point of difficulty and challenge as illustrated in the earlier discussion. According to the second interview information, fourteen out of the twenty-six interviewees admitted that studying abroad would benefit one’s experience of different cultures or perspectives. Nine out of the fourteen interviewees admitted that studying abroad could help one to gain international or different perspectives and to be aware of the reality of the globalized world. For instance, an Asian Masters student (0011) commented that studying abroad also benefits one’s familiarity with international relationships and perspectives or ways of thinking. A Masters student from North America mentioned:
Going to some places that I have never been to or experienced before, learning about some other countries, being able to challenge myself, having completely new experiences, overcoming difficulties independently, and gaining different perspectives based on the new experiences are definitely the advantages. (0012)

Additionally, about eight interview participants pointed out that studying abroad contributed to their cultural experiences. For example, a PhD student (0003) from the Middle East indicated that exposure to a different culture and learning new things and perspectives were advantages of studying abroad. An African Masters student mentioned:

Another advantage is to share individuals’ cultures to each other … Through the real interaction, people will not keep some cultural biases or stereotypes about some countries or different people from the same countries because of some individual events … Study abroad benefits people to understand each other, to have a broader mind, and to become more mature and open-minded with more experience. (0023)

Personal Improvement
Fourteen interviewees claimed that studying abroad was beneficial to personal improvement. Among the fourteen, ten interviewees mentioned that studying abroad benefited the following aspects of one’s personal improvement: independence, maturity, responsibility, and personality. A European Masters student (0021) mentioned that studying abroad would show and strengthen one’s flexibility and ability to adapt. A European PhD student commented:

The good thing is that these difficulties, such as studying or living alone and reading books in another language, will bring something to one person; because one usually learns something through experiencing some difficulties. If one has never experienced any difficulty, then one is not actually learning something. Therefore, difficulties usually make a person stronger and grow up. (0008)
Among the fourteen, five interviewees mentioned that international friendship was another advantage of studying abroad. For example, a European Masters student (0004) indicated that the possibility to know teachers, lecturers, and people was one advantage from studying abroad. An African Masters student mentioned: “I now know that international friendship is one of the advantages to come to study in the UK. I can visit my international friends one day if I travel to different countries. Therefore, I believe that it is one advantage to come to study in the UK” (0023).

Opportunities for Employment or Promotion
Thirteen interview participants admitted that study abroad contributed to their opportunities for future employment and personal promotion. Among the thirteen, nine participants mentioned that education abroad could benefit their future career and job employment. For example, a Masters student (0013) from Latin America admitted the benefits related to one’s future employment from studying abroad. An Asian Masters student (0019) mentioned English as a requirement for having a good job in his home county now, therefore, it would be good if a person could receive an overseas education in England. A European Masters student in the Business School mentioned:

*If you study in a good university in the UK, like South West, your chance to get a job and your standard will be higher than the people who do not have the international experience … One also has more chances in one’s job searching. One can search jobs anywhere with an international degree, study-abroad experience, and international perspectives. (0021)*

Among the thirteen, six participants indicated receiving a foreign educational degree or certificate as one advantage of studying abroad because the foreign certificate would contribute to one’s personal future employment or promotion. A European Masters student (0020) mentioned that having a well-recognized foreign or UK degree was an advantage for bettering her future employment. An Asian Masters student stated: “For the reputation, a degree from a UK
university is worth of the reputation after going back to a person’s home country” (0022).

Additionally, two European PhD students (0005 and 0008) agreed that studying abroad might also benefit one’s employment in a host country. For instance, interview participant 0005 mentioned having an academic career, life, or job in the UK as an advantage.

Knowledge Improvement
Based on the second interview, eleven interviewees claimed that studying abroad improved their knowledge. The knowledge improvement included English language ability, and knowledge in research and study subject field. Among the eleven, nine interviewees indicated that improvement in their English language skills was an advantage. For instance, an Asian Masters student (0011) stated that studying abroad benefited one’s English skills. An Asian Masters student mentioned: “Advantages include interacting with professors in an English speaking country and using English to improve myself. I also learn a lot of research skills and know how to write English academically; but my accent or pronunciation is still same, not like a native speaker” (0018). Another Asian Masters student also commented:

> English language is the huge advantage because English is widely spread and it is estimated that about one billion people will speak English by the end of 2020 … It is good if a person can receive education in England … I will advise people to study abroad in England as well as the United States. (0019)

Additionally, three of the eleven interviewees admitted that improving research interest was another advantage from studying abroad. For instance, an Asian Masters student mentioned: “One advantage for me is that I find my interest in research” (0017). A European Masters student claimed: “I come to South West to know and learn about how to do research because there is no strong tradition for research in my home country” (0004). Furthermore, improving subject knowledge was also mentioned as an advantage of studying abroad. A Masters
student from the Middle East admitted: “I have learned a lot about knowledge in my subject field from my study program” (0025).

**Better Education**
Six out of the twenty-six interviewees stated better academic quality or academic resources in the UK as one advantage for them to study abroad. For example, a Masters student from the business school admitted: “The UK academic quality of teaching is better than that in Latin America at least” (0010). A European Masters student commented how she liked the good education in the UK: “The universities here also have more resources than universities in my home country. I think I like studying abroad because it is very valuable. It is very good to receive education here. Students are free to have lots of academic resources” (0015).

Generally, these perceived advantages align with the postgraduate international students’ initial reasons and expectations for pursuing an overseas education. This may be because motivations and expectations usually drive individuals to work toward any outcomes and this is similar to the roles that reasons for study, expectations, and perceived advantages play in one’s receiving an overseas education.

**5.3.4 Disadvantages of the Study-abroad Experience**
As can be seen in table 5.13, there are also perceived disadvantages from studying abroad. These can be categorized into three main categories: cultural or emotional adjustment, high costs, and personal disadvantages. The details of the main three categories are shown below, first with numbers of respondents selecting that option, and then with details from the qualitative responses to justify their views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/Theme – Disadvantages from Studying Abroad</th>
<th>Numbers of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural or Emotional Adjustment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing emotional adjustment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiencing cultural adjustment

| High Costs | 12 |
| Personal Disadvantages | 11 |
| Experiencing harsh weather |
| Experiencing imperfect English |
| Studying in a one-year Masters program |
| Lacking a social network |
| Searching for jobs |
| Doing independent study |
| Experiencing old age |

Cultural or Emotional Adjustment

Based on the second interview, seventeen interview participants indicated that cultural or emotional adjustment was one of the study-abroad disadvantages. Among the seventeen participants, twelve mentioned issues related to emotional adjustment (such as missing family and friends in the home country) as one sort of disadvantages. For example, a married PhD student from the Middle East stated: “The disadvantage is that students are always homesick because they are strangers in a strange country and away from home or family. Being away from home is the biggest disadvantage. I do miss home. My husband also tries to visit me as much as he can” (0003). An Asian Masters student commented:

The disadvantages of studying abroad for me include … being unable to spend time together with my family or friends in my home country for one or two years … The disadvantages of studying abroad include missing home food and sometimes forgetting home culture or mother tongue while concentrating on English language improvement. (0011)

Additionally, among the seventeen participants, four stated that experiencing cultural adjustment was a disadvantage of studying abroad. For instance, an African Masters student commented: “Strange and different culture is another disadvantage” (0006). An Asian PhD student stated that one had to adapt to a new life while going to a new place with a different and strange culture: “For disadvantage, living abroad is not like living at home so one has to realize that one is in a different place … There are some differences between the host and home countries. Therefore, a person has to expect differences in culture or
daily life in a foreign country” (0016). This finding points out that engaging with cultural differences is perceived as both an advantage and a disadvantage because cultural differences can lead to personal improvement but also can cause feelings of uncertainty.

**High Costs**

Based on the second interview, twelve interviewees admitted that the high cost of study and living expenses was one disadvantage of studying abroad. For instance, a Masters student from Latin America mentioned: “I think the only disadvantage is the expensive cost, especially the currency exchange rate between pound and the money in my home country” (0010). A PhD student from the Middle East also stated about the high cost of living expenses in South West:

*The bad things are the economic issues because studying here is expensive. Especially, South West is much more expensive than other universities in Lees, Glasgow, Scotland, and Lancaster. The tuition fees are the same; however, the living cost and rent for housing or accommodation in South West are much more expensive.* (0002)

**Personal Disadvantages**

Eleven interview participants admitted that personal factors might be disadvantages. These personal disadvantages might be associated with weather, imperfect English, a one-year Masters program, social networking, job searching, independent study, and age. For instance, an African Masters student mentioned: “The fact that the weather is not so friendly is another disadvantage so I have to adapt to it” (0023).

The need to use English is another disadvantage. For example, a European student claimed: “Imperfect English sometimes could be the disadvantage for the essays or presentations and make me have a lower level of academic performance than what I did before for my studies in my home country” (0015). Another European student admitted: “Doing tasks in English is another
disadvantage. Native English students get more advantages because of no language problem” (0009).

Interestingly, interview participants initially agreed that a one-year Masters program in the UK was one reason they chose to study in the UK. However, after several months, some interviewees thought that a minimum two-year Masters program might be better. A European Masters student mentioned: “The one-year Masters course should not be one year. I think it is better to do two and a half years than only one year” (0021). A Masters student from the Middle East also commented: “Comparing UK one-year MA programs with US more than two-year MA programs, probably, it is better to do the two-year MA programs in the US; because it can get more things” (0025).

Additionally, lacking a social network, searching for jobs, doing independent study, and experiencing old age can be personal related disadvantages. For instance, an Asian Masters student mentioned: “It may be difficult to get the social network when one is in trouble or try to ask for help” (0022). An Asian Masters student (0011) stated that job hunting with training requirements from his home country was a disadvantage for him. Another Asian Masters student also mentioned: “It is really hard for a mature person, like me, to study abroad because I had worked for eight years before and forgot how to study. I felt it was hard for me to begin my studies in the first month because of my old age” (0019).

5.3.5 Evaluating the Satisfaction of Adjustments and Needs
At the end of the second interview, participants were asked to evaluate their satisfaction levels on the three different types of adjustments and the five different types of needs based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The mean score and ranking order of the measurement results are shown on table 5.14. In addition to measuring the satisfaction levels of three different types of adjustments, the purpose of the evaluation is also to test whether international students’ satisfaction levels on the five different types of needs follow the principles of Maslow’s theory.
Table 5.14 Satisfaction Data on Adjustments and Needs

<table>
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<th>Three Adjustments</th>
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<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Combing Ranking</th>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of Socio-cultural Adjustment</td>
<td>6.9846</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory

| Satisfaction of Physiological Needs     | 7.0577  | 4       | 4               |
| Satisfaction of Esteem Needs           | 7.0808  | 2       | 2               |
| Satisfaction of Safety Needs           | 8.1923  | 1       | 1               |
| Satisfaction of Self-actualization Needs | 7.0692 | 3       | 3               |
| Satisfaction of Belongingness and Love Needs | 6.5154 | 5       | 8               |

Based on the statistical analysis (see table 5.14) of the data collected from the twenty-six interview participants, the ranking order of the mean score of different satisfaction levels, from the highest to the lowest, includes satisfaction of safety needs, esteem needs, self-actualization needs, physiological needs, socio-cultural adjustment, academic adjustment, overall adjustment, and belongingness and love needs. For satisfaction of overall, academic, and socio-cultural adjustments, the findings show that the twenty-six interview participants were more satisfied with their socio-cultural and academic adjustments than with their overall adjustment. The mean value for satisfaction of safety needs is the highest, and satisfaction of belongingness and love needs is the lowest among the different types of satisfaction levels.

The preceding information shows that the satisfaction levels of different types of the hierarchy needs do not follow the pattern of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The satisfaction order of different types of needs in Maslow’s theory, beginning with the greatest need and ending with the least need, is satisfaction of physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Therefore, the satisfaction level of the physiological need should be stronger than the satisfaction level of the safety need, which should be stronger than the satisfaction level of the belongingness and love need. The satisfaction level of the belongingness and love need would
should be stronger than the satisfaction level of the esteem need, which should be stronger than the satisfaction of the self-actualization need. Theoretically, a person cannot move on to the next stage’s need until the previously need is satisfied. However, the satisfaction level of the belongingness and love needs was ranked lowest by the twenty-six interview participants, and the satisfaction of the safety need was ranked highest. This means that these participants felt lack of belongingness and love needs more strongly than the other types of needs. This may be related to homesickness or missing family members and friends in home country. The satisfaction of safety needs has the highest mean and may be related to the good security and safe environment of the university’s location in a southwestern UK city.

5.3.6 The U-curve Hypothesis
The purpose of this section is to examine the actual changing process of the interview participants’ academic, socio-cultural, and overall adjustments through a visual graphic presentation. It also investigates their self-evaluation on academic, socio-cultural, and overall adjustments and tests whether the U-curve hypothesis fits any adjustment process. It finally aims to discuss whether a U-curve hypothesis fits or supports any adjustment process.

Graph Evaluation on Adjustments
Academic Adjustment
In order to exactly show the interview participants’ adjustment process, visual graph questions were designed for the interview participants to answer. The purpose of the graph design is to avoid the ambiguousness of oral or verbal expression. Through the graphic and visual expression, I expect to more accurately examine the individual student’s adjustment process.

For academic adjustment, twenty-four out of the twenty-six, or about nine-tenths, of the interview participants did not choose a U-curve graph. This means that most of the participants did not believe that the U-curve hypothesis reflected their academic experience. Eleven interview participants chose graph (a) as a representation of their academic adjustment process. Graph (a) shows a
person’s adjustment as a process that moves up and down in relation to occasional difficulties. However, the overall trend shows the adjustment process as continually moving upward. The participants who chose graph (a) to represent their academic experience included 0001, 0004, 0005, 0008, 0011, 0012, 0015, 0016, 0020, 0022, and 0025.

Two interview participants (0006 and 0024) chose graph (c) to show their academic adjustment process. Graph (c) also does not look like a U-curve.

Two interview participants (0009 and 0018) chose graph (g) to represent their academic adjustment process. Graph (g) resembles the U-curve adjustment process.
Socio-cultural Adjustment
For socio-cultural adjustment, only three of the twenty-six (about one-tenth) interviewees chose (participants 0016 and 0018) or drew (participant 0011) a graph similar to the U-curve hypothesis. This means that most of the interview participants did not perceive their socio-cultural adjustment as a pattern following the U-curve hypothesis. For example, participants 0002, 0007, 0014, and 0020 chose graph (c) to represent their socio-cultural adjustment.

Participants 0003, 0021, 0022, and 0025 chose graph (i) to show how they perceived their socio-cultural adjustment.
Participants 0006, 0023 and 0026 chose graph (a) to show their socio-cultural adjustment.

Participants 0005 and 0024 chose graph (e) to represent their socio-cultural adjustment.
Participants 0016 and 0018 chose graph (g) to show their socio-cultural adjustment. Graph (g) is like the U-curve hypothesis.

**Figure 5.8 Graph (g) for Socio-cultural Adjustment**

![Graph (g) for Socio-cultural Adjustment](image)

**Overall Adjustment**
Regarding overall adjustment, none of the interview participants chose a U-curve graph to represent their experience. For instance, participants 0001, 0003, 0004, 0011, 0012, 0014, 0016, 0020, 0024, and 0025 chose graph (a) to show their overall adjustment process.

**Figure 5.9 Graph (a) for Overall Adjustment**

![Graph (a) for Overall Adjustment](image)

Participants 0007, 0008, 0010, 0015, and 0023 chose graph (c) to show their overall adjustment process.
Participants 0018, 0022, and 0026 chose graph (e) to represent their overall adjustment process.

**Self-evaluation on Adjustments**

The research also requested the interview participants to do a self-evaluation of their academic (table 5.15), socio-cultural (table 5.16), and overall (table 5.17) adjustments. The main purpose of this request was to investigate interview participants' adjustment process through the numerical data. Additionally, through the numerical self-evaluation data, it is possible to examine and test whether any individual participant's adjustment process fits the U-curve hypothesis. The quantitative score of the self-evaluation required the participants to rank experiences on a scale from 0 to 10. ‘10’ means the best or highest adjustment situation and ‘0’ means the worst or lowest adjustment situation. Because of the timing of the second interview, the interviewees only
could evaluate their adjustment situation up until the date when the second interview was conducted. Therefore, the evaluation from August 2010 to February 2011 showed an individual student's self-evaluation based on actual or real experiences. On the other hand, the self-evaluation from March 2011 to September 2011 showed the student's anticipation of the future adjustment process.

Table 5.15 Self-evaluation of Academic Adjustment

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### Table 5.17 Self-evaluation of Overall Adjustment

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224
The research result shows that none of the numerical data of the self-evaluation, including academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, and overall adjustment (see tables 5.15, 5.16, and 5.17), actually follow the pattern of the U-curve hypothesis, no matter whether it is examined from the individual data or from the mean data of every different timing (month). From the three adjustment tables (academic, socio-cultural, and overall adjustments) above, it is found that the U-curve hypothesis is not seen from the twenty-six interview participants’ self-evaluation of the adjustment process.

**Reflecting on the U-curve Hypothesis**

According to the second interview information, only four out of the twenty-six interviewees agreed with the U-curve hypothesis based on their academic, socio-cultural, or overall adjustments. Among these four interview participants, one European participant (0009) thought that the U-curve was similar to both
her academic and overall adjustment processes. One Asian Masters participant (0011) claimed that his socio-cultural adjustment process resembled a U-curve but his development curve did not go downward all the time and then went upward near the end, like a U-curve. An Asian PhD participant (0016) admitted that the U-curve hypothesis was very similar to his socio-cultural adjustment process because he had problems with the language barrier at the beginning of his studies and because this was his first time studying abroad. However, his academic and overall adjustment processes both went up gradually and did not look like a U-curve. Another Asian Masters participant (0018) agreed with the U-curve hypothesis and thought that it fitted his personal situation for both academic and socio-cultural adjustments but not for his overall adjustment. He explained this contradiction as the result of his high expectations before coming to the UK.

However, twenty-two of the interview participants did not agree with the U-curve hypothesis or did not think that the U-curve model fitted any of their adjustment processes. European participants (0004, 0005, 0008, 0014, 0015, 0020, 0021, 0024), one Latin American participant (0013), and one North American participant (0012) thought that cultural similarity (Western or European culture) made them have better understanding of the UK environment and experience a better adjustment than that described by the U-curve hypothesis. For instance, a Masters student from North America mentioned: “Cultural similarity also helps my adjustment as well because it is not a mass of differences within the culture for me to study in the UK. Additionally, I do not have any language problems. This also helps me have better adjustment” (0012). One European Masters participant stated: “I do not think everything here is all new for me because I come from another European country. Therefore, I do not feel that things here are like a big shock for me. I do not think or feel things here are new or exciting for me” (0020).

Previous visiting or traveling (0015), studying (0005, 0021, 0024), and working (0004, 0008) experience in the UK also made participants more familiar with the UK environment. A European participant who had worked in the UK before for one year mentioned: “It is possible that I am more familiar with the UK culture
here because I worked in England before” (0008). A European Masters student stated: “However, for my socio-cultural adjustment, there is no change for me so it is constant. I am used to the socio-cultural adjustment. Additionally, I was in London for three years before. I do not have language problems” (0021).

Previous work experience in a foreign country may also affect a person’s adjustment. A Masters student from the Middle East said: “For my socio-cultural adjustment … I do not feel that I need to do a lot of adjustment … I worked in another country before. I already know that if I live in a foreign country, I have something to adjust … I already know that and prepare in mind” (0025).

Previous work experience may also be associated with one’s adjustment. A European Masters student described that her part-time job experience might have affected her adjustment process: “I had worked for few years in hotels in London. I am in control because I was a supervisor, controlling people. That is why I think that also adds advantages with more experiences with things and being more mature to deal with things. I would no more be like a kid” (0021).

Previous traveling abroad experience may also be a factor in how students adjust to a new culture. An Asian Masters student mentioned: “But, studying in the UK is not my first experience to travel or study abroad … The more time one travels abroad, the less culture shock for one” (0017). An Asian Masters student claimed that his previous travel abroad experience might have affected his adjustment process:

The U-curve hypothesis does not represent my case; because I have traveled to many countries, including very poor countries. Additionally, I had been in very bad situations or societies without regulations. Therefore, UK is totally fine and very good, comparing with my past experiences. The UK culture is fine for me and I do not need to do a lot of adjustment … If this is a bad country, I then may need to make more efforts for the adjustment. (0007)
Age, personality, and maturity may also be associated with one’s adjustment. For example, one European participant who did not agree with the U-curve hypothesis said: “I am mature and 45 years old. I am old (0004).” A PhD participant from the Middle East mentioned: “I am mature and older with many experiences so I have good approaches or attitudes for life. I participate in different activities and arrange my wife to have the English lessons and immerse in or interact with local international or British culture” (0002). An Asian Masters student indicated: “Maybe, it is related to my personality because I am a guy who does not really refuse new cultures or things. Sometimes I would try new things by myself. It is okay for me even it is a new culture. Sometimes I may get shocked or depressed but not so much” (0017).

Additionally, a European Masters student also admitted that age also affected her ability to adjust to the UK culture:

*I think age is important because one usually get more resilience when one gets older. One does not feel so affected by bad, negative, or offensive things and adventures when one is getting older … I think age also affects a lot of my adjustment. Age makes me more resilient because this is not my first adaptation – I have been used to get adapted to different environments … If one knows the situation beforehand, one’s attitudes will get different toward the difficulties.* (0020)

Language issues also affect adjustment. Better English helps with every day communication and problems with the language barrier may hinder a person’s adjustment. For example, an African PhD student stated: “Maybe, I do not have any language problem and I think this may be one situation making my adjustment different from the U-curve” (0001). A student from North America with better adjustment commented: “I do not have any language problems. This also helps my better adjustment; because it may make me cry as well if I have some language problems or do not understand the language so well. Therefore, I think these factors definitely contribute to my better adjustment” (0012).

An Asian PhD student agreeing that the U-curve hypothesis fitted his socio-cultural adjustment attributed his adjustment difficulty to the language barrier:
I think the U-curve hypothesis especially fits my socio-cultural adjustment or situation because I have language problems at the beginning. I also think it is very common for an international student, while first time coming to a foreign country, to have high expectations different from life in one’s home country. After settling down, I have to face the basic things in life and need to talk and communicate with local people. Language barriers are quite the main difficulties in my daily life experience. (0016)

Study fields or levels of study may also influence how international students adjust to their new life experience. A PhD student studying in the social sciences field claimed: "Also, my study field is related to cultural things so my attitude may be more positive. Therefore, I can overcome any difficulty" (0024). Some interview participants indicated that postgraduate and undergraduate students might have different attitudes about how to deal with life adjustments or difficulties. Usually, postgraduate students are more mature so they can handle things better than undergraduate students who have less knowledge, experience, and skills. For instance, a Masters student in the Business School described: “I think, maybe, for undergraduate students, it is more like the U-curve. However, for a Masters student, it is so fast. If a Masters student really works very hard everyday, he or she does not really have time to go down and up” (0010). A Masters student from the Middle East also claimed: “If I were in undergraduate study, my situation could be like the U-curve” (0025). Additionally, an African PhD student indicated that as a postgraduate student, his adjustment process was different from the U-curve hypothesis:

The third reason could be that I start my study here as a postgraduate student; because coming to a new environment, undergraduate students may feel differently … When I come here as a postgraduate student, I do not think about whether anyone is going to hurt me … I do not have any fear because I know if I have any problem with my study or if sometimes I am not in a particular area, I can ask and have my private or personal needs. (0001)
Globalization, information dissemination through the mass media and Internet, and convenient transportation may also alleviate the distance between people of different cultures and make international students’ adjustment different from the U-curve hypothesis. For instance, an African Masters student illustrated:

*I think I have prepared in mind through reading about England, and seeing British and Western films. I already have the ideas about what the Western life is … I knew and read on the international websites about what the English would like to see and I had learned to do that. Therefore, I already construct concepts before coming to the UK. That is why I should not say that the U-curve fits my situation … I had googled South West and knew it is a quiet place … I have some preparation in mind already … Globalization and the global vision of the world also benefit my adjustment process. For example, we also have BBC in Nigeria. We listen to news from BBC in my home country. It helps us know British things and what is happening in the world in Nigeria.* (0023)

Religion also plays an important role in some students’ adjustment. A PhD student who is a Muslim from the Middle East stated: “I think that my adjustment curves do not look like the U-curve may be resulted from that I believe in God strongly. I have faith in God and feel the support from God everyday” (0002). A Christian African Masters student also claimed:

*My religious faith is everything for me. I have strengths to do what I have to do because I have faith in God to achieve that … I believe that God is with me and helps me get used to the environment. Therefore, faith is the inner strengths to support and encourage me to do what I have to do.* (0023)

Other factors, such as supportive staff members (0001), an intensive study program (0004), focus only on academic purposes (0017), good friendships or interactions with friends (0020), and the relationship between a sending country and a host country may also make participants’ adjustment process different
from the U-curve hypothesis. For instance, a European Masters student stated that her good friendship and interaction with friends influenced her adjustment: “*I think that having friends here and getting close to them is also important for my adjusting process not to be like the U-curve*” (0020). An Asian Masters student said that the focus only on academic purposes influenced his adjustment: “*A student is better because the stress is not so heavy … If one wants to join a new society, like working in America, one then needs more communication with others. One then may have more culture shock*” (0017). An African Masters student mentioned that the close colonial relationship between the UK and his home country might have reduced his language problems and enhanced his familiarity with things in the UK: “*Additionally, the relationship between Nigeria and England is close. We were colonized by the UK so we always have British talk shows and British styles in many things. I also do not have language problems because English is the official language in Nigeria*” (0023).

**SUMMARY**

The research findings regarding the academic adjustment of the international students shows that USW generally is a very good learning environment with sufficient available academic resources, respect for cultural diversity, and an emphasis on the student-teacher relationship. However, issues regarding teaching styles and engaging with the academic community still challenge the future development of the university and its efforts to ease the adjustment difficulties of international students. The findings related to the positive adjustment of the interview participants generally support and are consistent with the relevant quantitative questionnaire survey findings.

For most of the international students, it is very natural that difficulties occur during the academic adjustment process. Academic writing and criticality in thinking and questioning are the top two difficulties that most of the international postgraduate students face based on the quantitative survey data. The peers of international students, the university support mechanisms, and teachers play important roles in the process of solving difficulties. Based on the quantitative
questionnaire survey findings, there is a slightly higher tendency among international postgraduate students to ask for academic assistance from their colleagues or classmates. It is especially important and helpful that the university and its staff welcome international students and encourage them to share their problems and ask for assistance. Sufficient and proper support also results in more satisfactory academic experiences for most of the international students.

Findings regarding the socio-cultural adjustment of the international students at USW suggest that the local British cultural engagement and interaction with local British people need to be improved and encouraged because most of the international students tend to interact with and ask for help from students or people from their home country. Although language or communication skills and host cultural engagement are socio-cultural difficulties for some international students, participation in religious activities or student clubs or societies appears to benefit students’ cultural engagement with the host community. The question of why international sojourners are more likely to rely on people from the same home country or with a similar cultural background during their socio-cultural adjustment process is worth further investigation.

Most of the interview participants have an open attitude toward local British culture or society but they prefer and like to maintain their own cultural values, traditions, or life styles. This preference indicates that cultural identity tends to be shaped over a longer time period; students experience something new but they also like to remain who they are. The good effect of the university’s Welcome Week services suggests that educational institutions can help international students with better social, cultural, or institutional adjustment through well-organized orientation programs or support services from the beginning of the students’ university career. Sharing the feelings with friends or peers with similar experiences or cultural backgrounds importantly influences international students’ choices and acts as a support mechanism in their socio-cultural adjustment.
The research finding also indicates that academic adjustment may not have been easy but the need to adapt is more pressing than for socio-cultural adjustment. International students make more efforts at academic adjustment than socio-cultural adjustment so they generally are more satisfied with their academic progress than with their progress in socio-cultural adjustment. The social order or security in the USW community is better than many places in England so international students are satisfied most with their safety needs. Early arrival in South West is suggested as an approach for improving adjustment because it allows sojourners more time to prepare for life in the UK and to learn and understand more about the local culture. Whether students’ opinions are valued in some degree is linked with their feeling of being respected by the university. The finding that international students have more advice about academic adjustment, such as improving English skills and studying hard, than socio-cultural adjustment confirms that academic tasks are still the main focus of international students at USW. The advice regarding international friendship reflects the situation that it is still not easy for international students to have local British socio-cultural engagement in South West.

The quantitative finding that improving academic ability and bettering English language skills rank as the top two benefits from studying abroad shows that international students at USW make their greatest efforts at academic achievement rather than socio-cultural adjustment. This finding is slightly different from the qualitative interview findings in which more diverse advantages from studying abroad are mentioned by the interviewees. However, the findings from both the quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative interview study are generally consistent with one another. It will be interesting to further discuss issues related to a one-year Masters program because a one-year Masters program is mentioned in different finding sections in this study.

Finally, the adoption or application of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory to the field of international higher education should be reconsidered because the research data do not support Maslow’ theory. The finding that the U-curve hypothesis is not well applicable to the first-year, full-time, postgraduate,
international students’ experience within this research project challenges the U-
curve hypothesis as the common pattern for student adjustment, since the
research data suggest that simple models of this sort will never capture the
complexity of the student experience.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION

In the light of the research data and findings reported in Chapters Four and Five, in this chapter I will start by briefly summarizing the answers in relation to the research questions stated in Chapter Three.

The first key finding in relation to the first focus of my research questions regarding reasons for studying abroad is that reasons associated with international postgraduate students’ decision to study abroad can be mainly categorized into four dimensions, namely the value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons. Questionnaire respondents agreed that gaining international perspectives or experiences, fulfilling one’s potential or career dream, considering benefits of an overseas degree for future employment, and making language improvement were the top four important reasons for pursuing an overseas education. Additionally, most of the interviewees’ initial expectations for studying abroad were associated with academic experiences. The majority of them had the same expectations before and after studying in the UK, but new learning or experience might re-shape or change their initial expectations. More than half of the interviewees had the same reasons for studying abroad but some students’ original reasons changed as a result of unexpected or new challenges.

In relation to the second focus of my research questions, namely to explore the academic experience of these students, I found that overall most of the international postgraduate students at USW adjusted well, with positive academic experiences, and acknowledged the positive experiences they had in relation to beneficial academic resources, teachers’ respect of students’ different cultural backgrounds, and relationships with teacher, staff, and students. In spite of the fact that the difficulties were academic in nature, it was their peers from whom they sought support. Academic writing, critical thinking
ability, and time management were the main difficulties challenging students throughout the overseas study period, although there was a considerable number of students who declared that their academic writing skills had improved by the end of their studies. The interview data revealed that the majority of the students were generally satisfied with their study programs, teaching arrangements, the quality of interaction and relationship with personal tutors and other students, and various learning support services, although suggestions for improving the academic experience were also mentioned.

With regard to the third research focus associated with socio-cultural experience, in general, most of the international postgraduate students at USW adjusted well to their UK socio-cultural life and were satisfied with their socio-cultural experiences. Most of them agreed that the South West socio-cultural environment was friendly and they were open-minded to adjusting well to the British life style, although they also wanted to have some space for their original cultures or traditions. The majority of the students interacted most often with students from their home country or a similar cultural background, and found it difficult to have friendships with British students or people. In the case of questionnaire respondents, many of their friends were students or people from their home country; with regard to the interviewees, on the other hand, many said that their friends were students from different countries. Less than half of the students participated in activities held by student clubs or societies at USW. Some interviewees mentioned that a heavy study workload tended to hinder their intentions to participate in social activities.

Relating to the U-curve hypothesis, the appropriateness of this for understanding adjustment is not demonstrated by most of the empirical evidence, including the varied responses from the visual graphical evaluation, collected in this study, since international students usually encounter a more complex set of experiences while studying abroad. Students’ monthly self-evaluation of their various adjustment processes also does not support the hypothesis. In contrast to the simple pattern of responses suggested by the U-curve hypothesis the data here reveal the variability and complexity of the international postgraduate student experience. Various factors, such as
expectations and globalization, were suggested by the interviewees for explaining the lack of relevance of the hypothesis to this research; but issues related to research methods could also contribute to the explanation. Finally, the research data do not support Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory, suggesting that this cannot be applied to explain the satisfaction of international postgraduate students in this research. Both qualitative and quantitative data revealed that international students at USW were generally most satisfied with their safety needs regarding the local environment. However, with regard to those needs least met during their stay in the UK, the qualitative data differ from the quantitative data, in that in the case of the former, the least met need was belongingness and love, whereas for the latter, it was self-actualization.

Based on the research findings and literature review, pertinent issues are further discussed in this chapter from various comparative perspectives. Experiencing adjustment and understanding adjustment are the two major sections. Experiencing adjustment discusses how international students experienced academic and socio-cultural adjustments. Understanding adjustments explains adjustment from broader and more theoretical viewpoints. Through the discussion and reflection of the research findings in this chapter, this study aims to add to current understanding in the field of multicultural studies and international higher education.

6.1 EXPERIENCING ADJUSTMENT
The discussion in this section focuses on how the data reveal adjustment as it is happening. Academic and socio-cultural adjustments are at the heart of this section. Models related to reasons for studying abroad and how the research findings support, contradict, or add to the understanding of these models are discussed first. This section also seeks to explain how initial reasons for studying abroad might interact with the adjustment process. The relationship between pre-conceived ideas, early experience, and adjustment is discussed so the focus is on change over the first three months and what drives this change. The discussion of adjustment difficulties in both academic and socio-cultural sectors demonstrates the challenges that international students face during
studying abroad and the strategies that they use to deal with these challenges. Finally, discussing what the differences and similarities between academic and socio-cultural adjustments are reveals the tensions students experience through the process of adjustment.

6.1.1 Preconceived Perceptions Before Studying Abroad
This study was designed to explore students’ changing attitudes from their initial decision to study abroad through their early impressions to a period of three months in the study-abroad experience with a view to understand how reasons for study abroad might change and evolve and how initial expectations were confirmed or challenged. The purpose of considering these reasons and expectations was to explore what motivated, limited, and underpinned the adjustment process.

Reasons for Studying Abroad
In general, the push-pull model (section 2.1.4 in the literature review) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (section 2.1.5) are two common theoretical bases for explaining why international students want to study abroad. The push-pull model uses various push and pull factors to explain why international students choose to study abroad (Mazzard & Soutar, 2002). My study posits that one advantage of the push-pull model is that it is very clear and easy to understand the decision-making of studying abroad when only two dimensions of motivators are looked at – factors from a sending country that push students to leave and factors in the host country that pull students into joining their postgraduate populations. Interpreting my own data in the light of this model suggests that personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons are the factors pushing international postgraduate students to leave their home countries to study abroad, and value of overseas study is the only pull factor attracting these students overseas. However, it may be an oversimplification to explain the studying abroad decision through factors from only two dimensions.
TPB views students as consumers and declares that there is a link between human behaviors and beliefs, attitudes, or intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) so individuals' chosen behavior can be understood by examining their attitudes and the following intentions or objectives (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Gatfield & Chen, 2006). The merit of adopting the TPB perspective is that it carefully uses certain elements or considerations, such as attitudes towards behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Gatfield & Chen, 2006), to describe decision-making. The problem with TPB lies in its tendency to be too rigid, without any flexibility, in its use of these elements or considerations to explain behavior or decisions. Interpreting my own data in the light of this model suggests that, for the students in my study, their decisions are associated with their desires for an overseas education. However, the details of the main elements explaining individuals' attitudes cannot be explored by the research data because they are too complex and not the main focus of the research design. For instance, research that applied TPB found that Taiwanese students’ intentions to study in different English-speaking countries were related to their attitudes and perceptions about the host country’s higher education (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Gatfield & Chen, 2006). However, my study was not mainly and originally designed to investigate international students’ perceptions or attitudes related to overseas studies in general.

Therefore, after carefully considering the merits and drawbacks of both theories in explaining reasons for studying abroad, I found the push-pull model seemed to better account for the empirical data and findings of my research project: the data obtained in my study could not be easily analyzed or explained through TPB. Consequently, in my study, the push-pull model is more suitable than TPB, to explain international students' reasons for studying abroad. The argument in this section is to explore how these students experienced adjustment, so I will also seek to show, through the discussion of my data, how push and pull factors were experienced by the students in my study.

My study investigates not only reasons for studying abroad but also reasons for studying in the UK, and at USW. The different reasons cited become more specific based on the different scopes of destination: studying abroad, in the UK,
and at USW. There are also several socio-cultural reasons related to the more specific areas of study in the UK and at USW. For instance, the perceived value of overseas study is one of the pulling reasons for studying abroad, and it is investigated and further explained from a worldwide level and includes such factors as being aware of an international perspective, expecting advantages from an overseas education, and seeing studying abroad as a popular trend. However, reasons for studying in the UK are investigated and explained at a national level, with reference to aspects such as geographical, cultural, and historical reasons related to the UK and its higher education admission requirements. Reasons for studying at USW are explained from a more local perspective, and include factors such as the academic ranking of USW and the local environment. In general these different reasons based on the different scopes of study destination also empirically support the push-pull model.

Findings from the questionnaire survey investigation support the qualitative interview findings in furthering an understanding of the reasons for studying abroad. Except for ‘desiring job promotion,’ which is related to financial or promotional reasons based on the qualitative data, most of the research findings are consistent with those of other studies outlined in the literature review. These findings, therefore, affirm that the perceived value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons are significant reasons for studying abroad. Additionally, this empirical study presents a new finding related to reasons for study abroad: ‘desiring job promotion’, although this reason may slightly and broadly relate to internal needs or desires to become more professional in one’s subject field (Kitsantas, 2004), which is listed in the literature review under the category of personal reasons. The slight difference is that becoming more professional generally refers to improving one’s skills or knowledge; however, based on the interview data collected in my study, ‘desiring job promotion’ strongly means to improve one’s job position in the same work context through a better educational degree. The emergence of ‘desiring job promotion’ as a further push to study abroad may also be explained by the worldwide pressure to upgrade one’s educational degree or qualification. This finding also adds weight to the push-pull model as the more convincing explanation of overseas
studies because it is clear how ‘desiring job promotion’ may impact one’s decision to study abroad.

The reasons that remained constant throughout the data collection period were mainly related to lack of opportunities at home and financial or promotional reasons. An explanation for this may be that these two factors are already predetermined before students’ travel abroad. Experiencing limited opportunities in the home country, lacking study programs in the home country, and for some students, being aware of corruption and favoritism in the home country are reasons related to lack of opportunities at home, and they are factors associated with the attributes of one’s home country so they are usually the pre-existing factors pushing international students to leave for an overseas education. These findings related to lack of opportunities at home are also supported by some of the literature reviewed related to educational reasons for studying abroad in section 2.1.3. Furthermore, receiving financial support and hoping for job promotion are factors associated with financial or promotional reasons; they are also the factors that tend to remain unchanged after arriving in a foreign country for an overseas education. These factors are also similar to the literature related to economic reasons for overseas studies specified in section 2.1.3.

However, the research data showed that some reasons associated with value of overseas study and personal or family-related factors were changed after arrival. Initially, reasons for studying abroad are usually forged in the home context, but the first indications of change are how some reasons may be revised from the moment students experience the host context. For instance, after arriving in the UK, some international students mentioned new reasons for an overseas education, such as making more personal development (personal or family-related factors), wanting a new and different cultural experience (personal or family-related factors), and building an international network (being aware of international and critical perspective as part of the ‘value of overseas study’) through interacting with students from different countries in the host university community. These new reasons for studying abroad became additional
mechanisms motivating and supporting the socio-cultural adjustment of international students.

The preceding information generally shows that academic and socio-cultural influences may overlap, so the successful completion of an academic degree may be informed by social and cultural aspirations formed in the home country and will have social and cultural implications when students return home. The data reported here reveal that some international students’ original decision for an overseas education is more informed by social and cultural factors from the home context than by expectations in relation to academic factors. This stands in contradiction to the student experience that once in a foreign host country the greatest external pressure on adjustment is academic.

**Expectations**

International students also have different expectations before or while studying abroad, which may become a mechanism affecting their adjustment. The data reported here demonstrate that adjustment is a complex phenomenon influenced by different experiences in the early months of the study abroad process. Expectations that were revealed in my research included academic expectations, which were experienced by the majority of students, and socio-cultural expectations, which were experienced by few students. This is in contrast to the reasons for studying abroad that seem to be predominantly socio-cultural. Academic expectations can be grouped into expectations that international students hold for themselves in the academic context (such as having good academic performance) and the expectations they hold for others (such as tutors, classes, and support staff). The majority of the international students in my study had positive expectations at the beginning of their overseas education, suggesting that they were generally optimistic about things in the future. The findings suggest that it is very natural for international students to have expectations and that these expectations may affect their action plans and the feelings or satisfactions felt about how to react or respond to events related to adjustment. Although expectations may be a mechanism affecting adjustment, too many expectations can be a negative factor that frustrates the adjustment or feelings of international students. For instance, in
the section of the interviews related to the U-curve hypothesis, participant 0018 mentioned that it was better not to have expectations during the adjustment process because too high expectations could cause more frustration or dissatisfaction; this situation made his adjustment process look more like the U-curve hypothesis. This finding is similar to the literature that posits that international students tend to feel disappointed and experience high levels of culture shock and difficulties that often result in frustration and anxiety, especially if they have high expectations about their experiences within the host country (Yan & Berliner, 2011). The relationship between positive adjustment and the proper degree of expectations therefore is revealed here as an area that can benefit from future research.

### 6.1.2 Academic Adjustment

International students unavoidably need to adjust to the new host academic setting because academic studies compose the main focus of their overseas education. Some research also indicates that education in a host country often challenges international students (Parr et al., 1992; Zhai, 2002), and that they usually have more academic difficulties than host-country students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Which academic difficulties challenge international students and how they usually face these challenges, engage in or cope with these difficulties, will be further discussed in section 6.1.4.

My research data showed that most of the interview participants had good and positive academic performances or adjustment to their UK studies although sometimes I wondered whether their awareness of participating in the interviews might have positively impacted their perception of their academic performance. A common experience amongst the sample in my study was that their academic experiences had improved even though they faced challenges and difficulties at the beginning. Some students also stated that their experiences somewhat met their earlier expectations. Although other studies had not systematically uncovered how earlier expectations affected the academic adjustment of international students, my research findings showed
that students whose earlier academic expectations were met at the end usually tended to be more satisfied with their academic adjustment.

In general, difficulties in English language are very common for many students whose native language is not English. Literature has shown that language competency or proficiency importantly affect the academic adjustment of international students (Andrade, 2006; Choi, 2006; Gourlay, 2006; Wang and Shan, 2007). My research data also show that many academic challenges or difficulties, such as academic writing, class discussion, and presentation, are associated with the students’ competence with the host language. However, in addition to the mastery of a host language, cultural differences or dissimilarities are also found to crucially affect the adjustment of international students. For instance, my research findings show that critical thinking skills are not emphasized in some non-Western cultures and academic training, but they are required in academic writing and discussion in the Western academic setting. Badke (2003) also points out that critical thinking is one of the Western learning skills that international students need to develop in order to study abroad successfully. For students coming from countries where these relevant skills are not culturally encouraged, developing criticality may be an academic issue as well a cultural one. The research data in my study showed that some students questioned whether they could develop their critical thinking abilities in a short period of study. One interview participant even doubted whether it was practical to learn the preferred critical thinking skills because he would return to his home country after graduation and it would be useless to apply those critical thinking skills in the employment setting of his home country. Therefore, the preceding information shows that the developmental nature and practical function of critical thinking abilities merits further investigation in the future.

Most of the interview participants had adjusted well and agreed that the university’s academic resources were beneficial to their UK studies. The details of the relevant discussion can be seen in section 6.1.4. Additionally, data from the quantitative questionnaire survey reported that students liked the academic environment in South West, but they showed least agreement in their perceptions of belonging or being accepted in the South West academic
community. Although both the qualitative interviews and the questionnaire survey did not investigate the reasons for this finding and no relevant literature was found to explain the situation, issues related to the connection or involvement of a host academic community would be worth investigating in the future.

6.1.3 Socio-cultural Adjustment

Based on the research data, most of the international students had a good impression of the UK and expected to experience a better socio-cultural life from the beginning of their UK studies. They gradually learned more things about the country and developed their own ways of adjusting socio-culturally because sometimes they were used to their original or traditional ways and might feel uncomfortable to adjust to British life styles or habits, such as the drinking culture, schedules for eating meals, and the daily diet. They also built new friendships and relationships with their student cohorts. They felt happier and more comfortable interacting with international students than with students or citizens from the host country. These findings consistently reflect the literature information that international students tend to experience an ‘international postgraduate student culture’ rather than have contact or interaction with local host people (Wu & Hammond, 2011).

Some students had opportunities to interact with the local host students or people, but they only had this kind of local interaction through accommodations, personal leisure time activities, and religious services. Wu and Hammond (2011) found that international students seldom interacted with host students or nationals unless they had the chance to share accommodations or attend special social or academic activities. Yan and Berliner (2011) also discovered that although Chinese students wished to have more host socio-cultural interaction, they tended to interact with co-nationals, and it was difficult for them to initiate social contact or interaction with host people.

One issue raised by these findings is whether interaction or integration with the host community usually happens naturally, or whether it is better to prearrange
special occasions or encounters to facilitate international students’ integration in the local community. Typically, opportunities for cultural engagements seem to be limited. The initial reasons for study abroad include the intention to engage in new cultural experiences; however, this rarely translates into practical experiences as revealed here and supported by earlier research (Wu & Hammond, 2011; Yan & Berliner, 2011). Some international students questioned whether it was necessary and important for them to have local cultural interaction when they did not feel comfortable doing so. For example, interview participant 0003 felt that she was no longer interested in the local culture or interacting with host people after having a bad experience. Similar examples raise considerations regarding whether international sojourners lack initial curiosity or interest in knowing the host culture, or whether they learn to reject social contact after bad experiences or being shocked by cultural differences. Another key element related to this discussion is personal agency, because people usually have the freedom to decide how they will respond or react to certain circumstances or social contexts. A discussion related to personal agency will be developed later in this chapter.

Additionally, this research finds that international students’ cultural or self-identity tends to be re-shaped or re-enhanced after perceiving cultural differences and experiencing uneasiness, distress, or tension during the adjustment process. Zhou et al. (2008) discover that identity is usually forged via social interaction during the cross-cultural transition, and is influenced by individual attributes, group characteristics, and social contexts. Identity is usually “constructed through complex interactions between different forms of capital (cultural, social, economic and emotional), broader social and economic conditions, interactions and relationships in various contexts, and cognitive and psychological strategies” (Ecclestone, 2009, p. 14). My research data showed that international students tended to recognize their self-identity as related to home cultures, values, and traditions, especially when they could not integrate into the local community or felt misunderstood or unaccepted by the host people. For example, participant 0007 tended to maintain his original cultural identity and felt that it was difficult for him to socialize with the local people because he disliked drinking alcohol and was not familiar with conversational topics at
parties. He felt more comfortable socializing with students or people from his home cultural background. Because of language deficiency, participant 0009 felt that she was not easily understood by the local people and therefore felt more comfortable maintaining her cultural identity and interacting with students from her home country or from other non-UK countries. The experiences of these students raise questions as to whether studying abroad is an optimum opportunity for sojourners to experience a different host culture or to re-shape their self-identity toward their home culture. The relationship between cultural identity and both academic and socio-cultural adjustments will be further discussed in section 6.2.4. It is expected and acceptable that multiple results or answers, such as acculturation and hybridization (see concept definition in section 2.2.1), will co-exist in the modern multicultural society. This research has found that international students use both approaches – acculturation and hybridization – together to adjust to the UK socio-cultural life. Details about this form of adjustment will be developed more fully later in section 6.2.2.

6.1.4 Adjustment Difficulties

Concerns that persist are the kinds of difficulties that challenge the academic and socio-cultural adjustment of international students. The research findings correlate with the literature on a number of areas that challenge international students, namely academic writing (Andrade, 2006; Wang & Shan, 2007; Tran, 2007), critical thinking abilities (Badke, 2003), time management (Badke, 2003; Wang & Shan, 2007), and the Western learning styles (Ladd & Ruby, 1999; Wang & Shan, 2007; Yan & Berliner, 2011). For instance, Badke (2003) suggested taking courses in critical thinking or logic, participating in seminars in critical thinking, reading books with practical exercises, and using relevant Internet services for practice were approaches that international students could use to improve their critical skills. Most of the interviewees also indicated the necessity to adjust themselves to meet the various academic requirements. Learning differences also caused some problems for some students. For instance, some Masters students focused more on classes and relied on lecturers’ instruction or explanations of the course material. This might be because learning had been more ‘one way’ for them in the past – moving from
the teacher to the student. This situation particularly reflected the experiences of some Asian participants. However, in the UK, learning is more interactive and requires independent learning on the part of the students rather than information coming from the teacher to the students. For instance, Wang and Shan (2007) found that Western academic practice was more independent and self-responsible, which was different from the previous experiences of Chinese international students. Yan and Berliner (2011) also discovered that Chinese international students often were expected to develop considerable self-management and self-discipline in Western academic settings, but this was not so easy for them to do because they were used to the educational and learning styles in their home country.

Some students adjusted more easily by seeking help from a variety of sources, such as friends and support services, while others were clearly less aware of the availability of these resources or simply did not use them. After adjusting to using resources or strategies, students found that the difficult situation usually improved. Interviewee 0019 exemplified improvement in academic writing and knowledge regarding plagiarism by using the university insessional language support services. However, some students still faced the academic difficulties near the end of the first year. One explanation for this situation could be that students did not know where to ask for help, or did not use official resources for improvement. Interviewee 0020, for example, said she could not get any assistance when her friends were not available to help her with academic writing or proofreading. Another possible explanation for this problem could be that some academic difficulties, by their nature, needed more time for improvement. For instance, interviewee 0011 thought that improving critical thinking abilities might take a longer time than many academic problems because of the nature of the challenge itself. Additionally, self-efficacy, learning strategies, perception, or attitudes may also affect students’ problem-solving of academic difficulties. Literature on the subject has documented self-efficacy (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002) and learning strategies or approaches (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005) as factors associated with academic adjustment. With better self-efficacy, both international and domestic students tend to adjust better academically (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Learning strategies or
approaches were also found to be importantly related to the academic adjustment of Iranian students (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005).

Compared to academic adjustment, international students face relatively fewer difficulties in socio-cultural adjustment. Language issues, the same as academic adjustment, still bothered some students in socio-cultural adjustment but difficulties were mainly in developing communication skills and understanding local accents. Coping with cultural differences, local cultural engagement, and interaction or friendship with host nationals were also found to be socio-cultural challenges. These findings are consistent with the literature demonstrating that social networking is important for adjustment (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002), and that social contact or interaction with host students or nationals challenges international students (Yan & Berliner, 2011). In general, students had different attitudes and responses to socio-cultural difficulties. They chose to face, or not to face, socio-cultural difficulties after evaluating the consequences of their decisions. Many internationals tended to use alternatives and avoid facing difficulties directly. An example from the data showed that some students preferred to interact with their international cohorts or students from the same home countries, while feeling more anxious or challenged by communicating with host people. They naturally drew back to seek self-confidence or something familiar from their home culture. This situation showed how socio-cultural adjustment could relate to motivations for transition. Tomich et al. (2000) discovered that with a stronger motivation for transition, immigrants, refugees, and those seeking political asylum usually acculturated more into the new environment because they saw a host country as a new home and consequently had a stronger desire to fit in. However, international or exchange students, tourists, and business travelers did not have strong desires for cultural assimilation because they were temporary residents and their final goal was to return to their home countries. The preceding information shows that international students generally have more options and a variety of attitudes toward facing socio-cultural challenges because various outcomes for socio-cultural adjustment are acceptable and no serious bad effects will occur if sojourners refuse or fail to be acculturated. Therefore, issues regarding socio-cultural adjustment are best understood when the
discussion is based on the nature, alternatives, and consequences of the socio-cultural adjustment.

6.1.5 How Academic and Socio-cultural Experiences Are Informed – The Similarities and Dissimilarities

The research reported here reveals a complex picture in terms of how academic and socio-cultural factors impact the experiences of international students. This research finds that some factors facilitate or limit both academic and socio-cultural adjustments but others are different. In terms of academic adjustment, the research data tend to focus on how cultural differences, language skills, colleagues or friends, interaction or relationship with teachers, and personal demographic characteristics affect students’ adjustment. In general, colleagues or friends, good interaction with teachers, and some personal characteristics, such as previous experiences, positively influence academic adjustment. However, students tend to feel more stressed if both cultural differences and language barriers are experienced simultaneously. These findings suggest that university teachers or support staff need to pay more attention with proper resources if they wish to assist international students who potentially tend to experience more language difficulties and culture dissimilarities: literature has shown that institutional awareness and support are usually the heart and soul behind improving adjustment (Choi, 2006).

In terms of socio-cultural adjustment, the research data tend to focus on how cultural differences, friendship, language issues, attitudes toward local culture, and personal characteristics impact students’ adjustment. This emphasis implies that international students experiencing fewer cultural differences, language problems, or friendship difficulties tend to adjust better socio-culturally. Some special personal characteristics and positive attitudes toward the local British culture also contribute to socio-cultural adjustment. These findings help international students to reflect on what approaches or attitudes they should have in order to better assure that their socio-cultural expectations are met. Students should also feel comfortable asking for any necessary support: literature has documented that foreign students usually obtain less social
support (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002) and that they usually need special social support that is different from the support needed by host students because of differences in culture and language.

The similarities between these two forms of adjustment are related to the role that cultural differences, language issues, relationships with colleagues or friends, and some personal characteristics play in affecting both the academic and socio-cultural adjustments of international postgraduate students. For instance, cultural differences unavoidably affect and challenge both academic and socio-cultural adjustment, and this is supported by the literature (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005; Parr et al., 1992; Zhai, 2002; Wu & Hammond, 2011). International students need to adjust to different academic writing styles or skills (Tran, 2007) and various socio-cultural challenges (Wu & Hammond, 2011) because of cultural differences. My research data showed that different learning and student–teacher interactive styles in academic adjustment and different life styles, paces of life, or social activities in socio-cultural adjustment were caused by cultural differences. International students are usually expected to adjust to new cultural norms, increase cultural understanding, and improve community engagement in a host country (Sherry et al., 2010). Generally, good friendship and interaction with colleagues or friends contribute to the problem-solving or supportive mechanisms needed for both academic and socio-cultural adjustments. Interviewee 0021 was an example of a student who used the assistance from her friends for her academic and socio-cultural adjustments. Literature also supports the important role of social networks in adjustment (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Better host language ability or skills also contribute to international students’ academic (Andrade, 2006; Bacon, 2002; Beaver & Tuck, 1999; Choi, 2006; Gourlay, 2006; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Wang and Shan, 2007; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Zhai, 2002; ) and socio-cultural (Sherry et al., 2010) adjustments. Some special personal background characteristics also affect the adjustment. For instance, European students in my study tended to adjust better socio-culturally than other international students because of cultural similarity with the host country. This finding is also supported by research related to European international students’ better adjustment to Western culture (Klomegah, 2006) and Asian students’
experiencing more adjustment difficulties than other students (Smith et al., 2007; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Additionally, married international students, such as interviewees 0022 and 0024, might have less time for study or socio-cultural activities because of family responsibilities. This finding is also supported by the literature related to spouses and children as problems for adjustment (Hamed, 1985).

A significant difference between these two forms of adjustments is that international students have more options or strategies to deal with cultural differences related to socio-cultural adjustment than those related to academic adjustment. Some studies generally have shown that students are often expected to develop various skills for academic adjustment, but they are also allowed to build up their own student culture (Wu & Hammond, 2011) and interact with co-nationals for socio-cultural adjustment (Yan & Berliner, 2011). My research data showed that students could not avoid academic difficulties caused by cultural differences, so they had to face them via various available resources, assistances, or approaches. Some students even saw academic difficulties positively, as challenges for self-improvement. However, students had more freedom or strategies for socio-cultural adjustment: accepting or ignoring the host culture, having their own space, or keeping original life style or values from their home countries. This difference may relate to the reality that international students have to pass the various criteria to achieve a final and successful academic outcome, because this is the main purpose for them to study abroad; however, socio-cultural adjustment does not have this necessity. Research related to Mandarin-speaking students in New Zealand and their thesis writing process discovered that “[w]estern academics apparently view[ed] the ideal postgraduate student as a native speaker of English, familiar with (and apparently uncritical of) western academic discourse” (Chang & Strauss, 2010, p. 416). Canagarajah (2002) also indicated that “the discourses of academic communities [were] not open to negotiation or criticism” (p. 32). The preceding literature has well demonstrated the limit of student agency in international students’ academic adjustment.
6.2 UNDERSTANDING ADJUSTMENT

So far in this chapter the experiences of international students have been explored and discussed. The following section will consider how this experience of adjustment is understood in the literature and what the research data and findings can contribute to this understanding. This section first discusses what role adjustments play in the process of studying abroad. It also discusses a new finding regarding acculturation and hybridism. Adjustment challenges are then discussed from both international and external aspects. The discussion of the relationship between demographic characteristics and different adjustments also contributes to further understanding regarding adjustment. Finally, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory and the U-curve hypothesis are discussed in terms of how well they account for the findings.

6.2.1 Students’ Adjustments

When an international postgraduate student studies in a foreign country, adjustment is often desirable if differences appear or occur and a key challenge for the student is seeking balance. The literature has documented that attempts or desires to solve the conflicts resulting from differences between home and host cultures play a significant role in sojourners’ acculturation into a new host living environment (Berry, 1980); and socio-cultural differences importantly affect sojourners’ self-esteem establishment (Zhou et al., 2008), academic adjustment (Tran, 2007), and cultural adaptation (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005). An interview participant from North America indicates that she still has to adjust to the slight language differences in Britain even though English is her mother language. However, not all adjustment is viewed as desirable and there are examples of students resisting change. This situation can be seen in research data showing a more complex understanding of adjustment informed by initial expectations and early experiences. Yan and Berliner (2011) found that Chinese international students experienced high levels of culture shock and adjustment difficulties because they often felt disappointed with their experiences. This was especially true for students with high expectations toward life or culture in a host country. These adjustment difficulties often resulted in frustration and anxiety.
My research data from some interview participants showed that a big gap between high initial expectations and early bad experiences might result in a reluctance to initiate any change. After perceiving the gap between initial expectations and early bad socio-cultural experiences, some interview participants felt disappointed and declared that they would not carry any more expectations: they then refused to pay attention to the host culture or to make any socio-cultural adjustment. The relevant research findings are similar to the literature showing that if expectations about host life are especially high, international students tend to often feel disappointed (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

This research finds that it is almost impossible for international students not to make any academic adjustment. Even international students whose first language is English still need to adjust to the UK academic environment and get used to minor language differences in British English. However, in the process of the socio-cultural adjustment, students can easily choose to keep their same life styles and stay away from any change or adjustment. The findings in my study reveal an external necessity to adjust academically and show how this represents a point of tension, especially in relation to critical thinking but also reveals that this adjustment is not strongly resisted. On the other hand, students’ personal willingness to adapt socio-culturally is tempered by experiences, and this adjustment can be more problematic for some students. A key conclusion from the data therefore is that students seem to feel more personal agency in socio-cultural adjustment than in academic adjustment, and this may be seen in the way adjustment is resisted. For instance, interview participant 0016 in my study refused to change to the UK time schedule of eating three meals and insisted on the same schedule for meals as that practiced in his home country. Interviewee 0004 was occupied with his UK study and business in his home country so he had almost no interaction with the UK people. Adjustment is almost always desirable in the academic adjustment process; however, sojourners usually can decide through their free agency whether they need to adjust to various socio-cultural contexts.
The focus so far has been on the adjustment made by international students, but it is perhaps worth pointing out that a better outcome of the adjustment relies not only on the adaptation of the sojourners but also on the ability of existing people or things in the adjustment context to change as well. For instance, the creative synergy approach mentioned in the literature review shows that adjustment from both international students and teachers contribute to the better academic or learning outcomes for both sides (Burnapp, 2006; Wang & Shan, 2007). However, if adjustment is always to be that of international students or sojourners only, misunderstanding and miscommunication may continue to exist. Therefore, the ideal socio-cultural adjustment should come from both sides, including sojourners and host nationals. Through this way, better communication, understanding, and adjustment outcomes can then be expected.

6.2.2 Acculturation Versus Hybridism or Acculturation with Hybridism?

Hybridity, or hybridism, and acculturation are two different approaches for explaining the adjustment of temporary sojourners or international students. In general, most research only mentions one of them – either acculturation or hybridization – as an approach for the adjustment of the research subjects or participants (Berry, 1980; Burnapp, 2006; Fougère, 2003; Kaul, 2001; Peelo & Luxon, 2007; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992; Zhou et al., 2008). From the accounts of these processes in the literature, it seems that these two concepts or adjustment approaches are mutually exclusive.

However, my research finds that in order to account for how its participating students adjust to UK socio-cultural life, both approaches have something to offer. International students are quite flexible in response to different adjustment issues, and this is an unconscious process most of the time but a conscious process in some special situations. The findings in my study are best explained by ‘acculturation with hybridism’ rather than ‘acculturation versus hybridism.’ Although acculturation and hybridism are seen as two different ways of understanding the adjustment process of many international students, my research findings show that the responses of interview participants are
better explained by the acculturation approach, but the questionnaire responses are better explained by the hybridism approach. For instance, many interview participants stated that they were open to accept or adjust to local things in South West but nearly nine-tenths of the questionnaire respondents agreed that they would like to leave some space for their own culture in addition to adjusting to the local British culture. These slightly different findings may be related to the large number of Chinese students participating in the questionnaire survey. Why Chinese students tend to use hybridization for the socio-cultural adjustment can be an interesting and complicated future research question, associated with issues such as cultural identity and cultural differences or similarity.

Earlier research sees acculturation as a key concept for cultural adjustment but more recent studies pay more attention to hybridity, or the mixing of various cultures and traditions. My research data showed that many interviewees tended to choose and keep their own values, cultural identities, traditions, and life styles after having more cross-cultural interaction or becoming increasingly aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of engaging with the local British culture. However, for some aspects, such as appreciating active educational styles, banking system, and freedom of political debates, international students were selective in accepting, appreciating, and learning from these perceived positive benefits of Western culture. In general, it is fine and acceptable for international students to have the freedom to choose to be acculturalized or hybridized and their free choices usually do not cause any harm for them in the socio-cultural adjustment process. Surdam (1981) reported that connection with their home did not significantly influence international students’ adjustment to a host environment. Some interview participants in my study claimed that they felt more comfortable and gained more self-confidence through recognizing their own cultures and finding their own identities within the socio-cultural adjustment, although they had never thought to recognize the advantages of their own cultures before studying abroad. My research also found that the cultural identity of some international students was particularly and strongly shaped by culture shock or cultural dissimilarities they experienced during the adjustment or transition process.
Because of disliking or being shocked by the cultural differences between host and own cultures, some international students tended to find themselves through seeking things familiar from their own cultures. Hybridity, or free choice in making socio-cultural adjustments, is acceptable for international students because they are only temporarily staying abroad and do not have to meet any standardized requirement for life in a UK society that also respects the values of freedom and multiculturalism. Additionally, literature from Tomich et al. (2000) also shows that because students are only in the UK temporarily, their desire for cultural assimilation is lower. Therefore, my study has found that acculturation does not have to happen throughout the entire adjustment process, but that hybridity can give some comfortable scope for international students.

The findings from my study showed that, on the one hand, international students generally had an open-minded attitude and good adjustment to the British culture and life style. On the other hand, they also liked the traditions, habits, or life styles of their home cultures and hoped to maintain some space in their lives for their own culture. Many interview participants stated that they had an open attitude to the local UK life or culture. Although the quantitative data in section 5.2.1 showed that most of the respondents were comfortable with and open-minded to the adjustment to the local culture or life style, many commented that they would also like to leave some space for their own cultures or traditional values and their attitudes were selective. These findings reveal that international students generally are very rational and able to analyze and compare both the advantages and disadvantage of various cultural differences and then make the decision for accepting or rejecting new things in the host country. For example, participant 0001 liked the UK banking system but disliked the educational philosophy for early-aged children. Participant 0022 had concerns about the negative impact of mass media and UK teenager culture on her children although she liked the open, creative, and active British educational style and encouraged her children to interact with their school peers. The preceding information demonstrates that students in my study generally use two approaches – an open attitude for acculturation and a third space for their own culture – together for their socio-cultural adjustment. Their
choices of actions or approaches are usually conducted rationally and based on flexible considerations regarding contexts, benefits, and self-harmony.

Acculturation with hybridity is therefore proposed as the best approach for explaining the socio-cultural adjustment process of international students in my study. This is not only because the research data have shown that the two approaches can possibly co-exist but also because this co-existing explanation may result in more benefits than either acculturation or hybridization alone can do in a sojourner’s socio-cultural adjustment process. As for what kinds of benefits and how the benefits are produced, my study cannot answer these questions, but they may be answered by future research, which can focus on issues related to what kind of external contexts and with what kind of personal background characteristics are associated with international students’ tendency to accept acculturation or hybridization as a way for their socio-cultural adjustment.

6.2.3 Internal or External Challenges
Internal challenges often refer to trials related to personal nature, ability, or characteristics; external challenges, however, generally signify difficulties associated with or originating from environmental contexts. Inadequate language competency (Choi, 2006) is a typical internal challenge for some international students. Participation in class discussion and different academic conventions or evaluation approaches (Wang & Shan, 2007) are examples of external challenges.

Based on my research data on academic adjustment, internal challenges tend to relate to personal abilities. English language skills, critical thinking ability, and the ability to manage time for study have been found to be the main academic difficulties. External academic challenges are usually associated with difficulties which originate from the outside learning environment. Understanding lecturers’ accents, working in groups, lack of academic resources, and changes in research direction are examples of difficulties related to other people or circumstances rather than originating with individuals.
themselves. For socio-cultural adjustment, internal challenges may be associated with personal abilities or attitudes toward cultural differences. Poor communication skills, homesickness, and negative or closed attitude toward the local host culture hinder some international students’ socio-cultural adjustment. Understanding local accents, miscommunication, culture shock, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination are external challenges that individuals usually perceive as arising from the outside host socio-cultural environments.

In the adjustment process, students usually see challenges as both internal and external, and they tend to see challenges as opportunities for them to learn new things, grow up, and become more mature or skillful. The literature has documented that experiencing different academic, social, and cultural challenges (Davey, 2005), enhancing independence and global competencies in adaptation (Zeszotarski, 2003), and becoming more professional in one’s subject field (Kitsantas, 2004) are personal reasons for studying abroad. In some cases or situations, international postgraduate students feel they want to and can initiate the change; however, in some circumstances, they feel they do not want to or cannot initiate any change. One example from the research data was that some interview participants were committed to improving their English language abilities by attending the university insessional English support lessons for learning the Western academic writing style and communication skills because they wanted to initiate the change. However, some international students, disapproving the UK drinking culture and realizing this was a behavior they could not change, did not want to initiate any change in this kind of social interaction. According to the research findings, whether students want to initiate the change and whether they feel they can initiate the change are decisions selectively based on their perception and evaluation of their own abilities and the outside external conditions or circumstances.

Based on the research findings, students are more likely to do their best to face and adjust to internal or external challenges necessary for academic adjustment because they will be evaluated finally based on whether they have adapted well to the academic environment and requirements. For instance, students usually use various available resources to improve themselves in order to meet
different academic requirements in the completion of their academic studies. Therefore, international students are more willing to initiate the change for meeting academic outcomes or standards. However, for external challenges in the socio-cultural adjustment, they may try to initiate the change at the beginning but after discovering the difficulties of facing and changing external challenges, they tend to give up and not want to change anything in most of the situations. They think avoiding initiating any change is probably the best way to protect themselves, reduce stress, and balance their recognition. For internal challenges in socio-cultural adjustment, such as improving communication skills and having an open attitude toward cultural differences, most international students want to initiate the change and improve their skills for coping with difficulties and self-insufficiency. Yan and Berliner (2011) reported that Chinese international students also wished for greater socio-cultural interaction with host students or nationals, although it was difficult for them to start social contacts or interaction with host people and they tended to often interact with co-nationals.

My study also finds that compared to host nationals, international students have more sensitivity and empathy concerning multi-cultural and transitional adaptation because they have learned something through their real cross-cultural experiences. This finding is consistent with the literature. For instance, Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001) discovered that five multicultural personality traits, including emotional stability, social initiative, open-mindedness, flexibility, and cultural empathy, were positively related to sojourners’ adjustment to a host environment. Yakunina et al. (2012) also discovered that emotional stability and social initiative directly related to the adjustment of international students to a host country and open-mindedness, flexibility, and cultural empathy had indirect effects on openness to diversity. “Specifically, students who were more open-minded, flexible, and empathic also demonstrated greater openness to diversity, which in turn led to better adjustment” (p. 533). Therefore, international and external challenges from studying abroad generally benefit individuals’ personal growth, worldviews, resilience, and cultural sensitivity.
6.2.4 Internal Aspects Related to Adjustment

Internal aspects related to adjustment are mainly discussed from the perspectives of personal agency and cultural identity. The role of personal agency generally deals with ‘willingness to adjust’ and the role of cultural identity is usually associated with ‘the degree of adjustment.’

**Personal Agency**

Drawing on the literature review (Ahearn, 2001; Bandura, 2001; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Gecas, 2003; Giddens, 1976; Hitlin & Elder, 2007; Loyal & Barnes, 2001; Thoits, 2003), I define agency as the capacity or social engagement of an individual actor’s responses or choices based on problematic social contexts. In general, my research finds that there is little choice in how international students deal with academic adjustment – they need to adjust or risk failure; with socio-cultural adjustment, on the other hand, they are more in a position to choose whether to adjust or not. This also means that in order to meet some evaluation criteria or standards, postgraduate international students usually have less personal agency in the process of academic adjustment but they have more freedom or personal agency in socio-cultural adjustment. The interview data show that even if one refuses to adjust to socio-cultural difficulties, personal agency can actively motivate one to behave well within the host social norms. ‘International postgraduate student culture’ as discovered by Wu and Hammond (2011) is an example that supports this finding. The existence of different ethnic communities, such as African or Muslim communities, or Chinatowns in a host country, tells and also shows how personal agency can help sojourners survive in a foreign country without acculturation. When individuals find it difficult to accept or adjust to the host culture, individuals with a similar cultural background tend to gather together and help each other. Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) quantitatively investigated the relationship between ethnic communities and student adaptation at a US state university and found that ties and social relationships with cohorts from the same country or a similar culture importantly contributed to international students’ adaptation to American life. Examples from the research data in my study included the Chinese Student Association, the mosque for Muslim people, and the Christian church for African people in South West.
The preceding information shows fewer choices or less personal free agency in international students’ academic adjustment. Based on the research data, acculturation tends to better account for the effects on the academic adjustment of international students; whereas, hybridism is more likely to occur when sojourners experience more cultural dissimilarities or socio-cultural difficulties and when freedom is permitted and emphasized in a host country. Although these two concepts are different, the research data show that both acculturation and hybridization can be identified as strategies adopted by students based on different contexts in the transitional process.

Because of learning accountability and outcome evaluations, international students tend to have no other choices but to compromise with various academic difficulties and do their best to meet the academic standards. Chang and Strauss (2010), in their study regarding how the agency of international students acted in a Western academic setting, pointed out that “[i]t appear[ed] somewhat ironic that the western academic community that value[d] critical thinking so highly [was] loath to critique its own practice” (p. 416). Generally, students in my study had acculturated to the UK learning style and academic writing. For instance, interview participant 0010 tried his best to adjust to the self-independent learning style in the UK and finally achieved good academic achievement. The quantitative data regarding the checking of students’ progress also showed that many students had improved and could meet the different challenges in the UK academic setting near the end of the first academic year.

However, much greater personal free agency may easily lead international students to choose the more comfortable ways with less stress or conflict with regard to socio-cultural adjustment. This is a plausible explanation for why my study finds that many international students tend to congregate with other international students, or student or people from their home countries: the students have more similar attributes and share the feeling of being in the same boat. Examples from my research data included interviewees 0002 and 0016, who received assistance from people from their home countries at the
beginning of their study-abroad adjustment. The choice of many students in my study to socialize with other international students is also well supported by studies conducted by Wu and Hammond (2011), which focuses on East Asian students and their social participation; by Yan and Berliner (2011), which looks at Chinese students and their emotional needs; and by Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998), which studies international students’ social relationship and their personal adjustment.

**Cultural Identity**

In relation to how important cultural identity is in the process of adjustment, this research has found that one’s original cultural identity is more important to and tends to be maintained in the socio-cultural adjustment than in the academic adjustment. The research data showed that international students tried their best to meet various academic requirements and standards, but that many of them tended to maintain their original cultural identity when they experienced stress or cultural differences in the socio-cultural adjustment process. As temporary residents, international students usually demonstrate a lower degree of acculturation to a host country because of the limits of their stay and commitment to maintain their cultural heritage (Sodowsky & Plake, 1992).

In the process of the socio-cultural adjustment, cultural identity tends to be easily shaped and enhanced when individuals experience cultural differences or adjustment difficulties. However, in the academic adjustment process, it may be more disadvantageous if students want to keep their original cultural identity because accountability and more standardized learning criteria are often required. For instance, writing styles in some countries are different so international students usually have to learn and adjust to Western writing styles in order to pass academic criteria. Critical thinking may not be preferred, trained, or emphasized in some cultures or countries but without choices, students have to adjust to it in order to participate in academic discussion or to pass their evaluations. Therefore, the preceding information shows that cultural identity is less emphasized in the academic adjustment process because of the requirement to adjust to the host academic context. If a student insists on
maintaining his or her own cultural identity without any adjustment, then the student may have to face the consequence of failing the academic studies.

On the contrary, individual cultural identity is permitted, encouraged more, and operated better in the socio-cultural adjustment process. The research findings show that social identity formation tends to occur when sojourners experience cultural differences. Especially, social identity is more likely to link to one’s original culture when one suffers a more painful or difficult situation in a host country. Zhou et al. (2008) indicated that identity was usually shaped during the cross-cultural transition through local social interaction, which might “lead to anxiety-provoking change in perceptions of self and identity” (p.67). Ward and Kennedy (1992) found that a strong native cultural identity might obstruct one’s adjustment to a new host culture. However, based on the research findings, cultural identity is usually encouraged in a multi-cultural society with freedom and respect. Additionally, cultural identity plays a more important role for international students in the socio-cultural than the academic adjustment because the current world’s mainstream culture emphasizes multiculturalism and diversity. The various student societies based on the country of origin and residential faith communities mentioned by the research participants are examples that demonstrate this current major trend.

6.2.5 External Aspects Related to Adjustment
External aspects related to adjustment are mainly discussed from the perspectives of type and length of study, the role of students or people from the same home country, the role of the host university, and the role of religion. Although these aspects are external to international students themselves, they play important roles in assisting the success of both academic and socio-cultural adjustments.

Type and Length of Study
A one-year Masters program is mentioned in three areas of findings – reasons for studying in the UK, academic adjustment, and reflections on the study-abroad experience – so it is worth further discussion. Regarding reasons for
overseas studies, a one-year Masters program was indicated as an important reason for their UK studies by many interviewees, because of the short study-period and the relatively less expensive tuition fees. However, in the academic adjustment section, some interviewees mentioned the intensive workload on a one-year Masters program as a challenge. In reflecting on the disadvantages from studying abroad, some interviewees commented that an intensive one-year program could become a disadvantage because of the short time-frame allowed for mass knowledge learning. For example, participant 0007 stated that he was still confused sometimes because he had crammed a lot of information into his studies without having a clear or deep understanding of that knowledge. This exemplifies a contradictory dilemma for students and educators because, on the one hand, students like a program with a shorter study period, but on the other hand, they also hope to learn more things very well. Additionally, an intensive study program or heavy study workload also impact the quantity, because of time considerations, and quality of the international students’ socio-cultural adjustment or local cultural engagement, so an intensive one-year Masters program is also a disadvantage in those areas. Therefore, the above information shows that a one-year Masters program in the UK higher educational system is characteristically contradictory. More advanced research regarding the advantage–disadvantage analysis of a one-year Masters program is definitely needed in the future.

The relevant research data also show the difference between a taught Masters program and an independent research PhD program, which require different kinds of academic adjustment. PhD studies require greater levels of independence than Masters studies. The fact that students put so much emphasis on the instruction or explanation from their tutor in a PhD program may signal a reluctance to leave the more familiar relationships and support structures of a taught program. Some literature also documented that Chinese international students were usually expected to develop considerable self-management and self-discipline in Western academic settings, but it was not so easy for them because the Western educational and learning styles were different from the learning style which emphasized strict direction and rigorous discipline that they were used to in their home country. Additionally, they were
usually hesitant and unwilling to start a conversation with their professors because they were unsure and unfamiliar with the norms regarding how to interact with their professors and how to build up a teacher–student relationship (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Therefore, adjusting to a different length or type of the study is an unavoidable issue for many international students while studying abroad.

According to the literature, knowing and being familiar with adjustment issues related to international students and encouraging them to use available academic resources are ways in which professors can help international students to have better academic adjustment. Mentor support (Choi, 2006), faculty guidance and support (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002), student-teacher interaction or communication (Ladd & Ruby, 1999), peer study partnership in academic settings (Andrade, 2006; Zhai, 2002), workshops or support groups (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), learning communities (Andrade, 2006), and advice or assistance from experienced cohorts (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002) also contribute to better academic adjustment. My research data showed that various academic workshops or extra lectures were often used by international PhD students for improving their academic adjustment. Students also commented that workshops designed to develop research skills, support from university staff, and assistance from more senior students were helpful in adjusting. Therefore, my research finds that proper official academic support mechanisms generally play an important role in assisting students to manage change during the transitional period. However, there is still some room to improve efficient peer study partnership or learning communities in the future.

**The Role of Students or People from the Same Home Country**

My research data showed that students or people from the same home country played a crucial, positive, supportive, and helpful role in students’ socio-cultural life; especially for students who just arrived in the UK, or those instances when they needed assistance. Students also felt more comfortable sharing feelings and problems with people from the same home countries via their mother tongue. In general, my study confirms the findings of others (Yan & Berliner,
2011; Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998) that many students feel more comfortable and gain more from interacting with colleagues or people from their own country.

However, at the same time, interaction with students or people from the same home country can lead to issues with cultural adjustment, such as hindering local cultural adjustment and decreasing opportunities to interact with host people or students from other countries. Yan and Berliner (2011) discovered that interaction with co-nationals isolated Chinese students from the host culture. Interview participants in my study also commented on the loss of opportunities to improve a host language when interactions were primarily with speakers of the same language. Chinese students were specifically mentioned by other students as not seizing opportunities to know students from other countries and sharing their culture with other students. Interviewee 0019 indicated that communicating with co-nationals via Chinese often increased Chinese students’ English deficiency and led to difficulties in communicating with other students. Sherry et al. (2010) also discovered that “[m]any international students [got] the impression that any experiences of social isolation [were] due to their own deficiencies in the English languages” (p. 44). The research findings suggest that there should be a certain degree of relationship between host language abilities and cross-cultural social interaction. How much or how strong the degree of the relationship is can be another issue for future research.

In general, based on the research findings, students or people from the same home country contribute less to international students’ academic adjustment than to their socio-cultural adjustment. Only few research participants used their network or asked for help from students from the same home countries for some academic difficulties. For help with academic challenges, many international students still tended to use official support mechanisms or seek for help from their colleagues or student cohorts, regardless the nationality of the helpers.

As to hybridization and acculturation, my research found that international students who acculturated better to a host culture tended not to rely much on networks, interaction, or assistance from students or people from the same
home countries because they usually were more independent to build up their new social network with host nationals and were also more likely to enjoy experiencing a new host culture. To the contrary, international students who tended to use more hybridized approaches for socio-cultural adjustment usually had more interaction or friendship with students or people from the same home countries because they also liked to maintain and have relationship with things from their home countries, including friendships.

The preceding positive and negative effects of students or people from the same home country make international students themselves, educators, researchers, and other relevant people reflect on what the main and real purpose of studying abroad is. Literature show that education abroad, especially a short-term study-abroad program, generally increases students’ intercultural sensitivity (Jackson, 2008; Anderson et al., 2006). For instance, Mazzarol et al. (2001) discovered that the opportunity for learning and increasing knowledge about or understanding Western culture played the most important role in motivating students to study abroad. Therefore, Chinese students at USW were advised to be aware of their tendency to favor comfortable interactions and to try to interact with students from diverse backgrounds, even though they had the largest number of students at USW. Interviewee 0011 stated his reasons for studying at USW were that there were only a small number of students from his home country.

Ideally, international students are expected to have host community engagement and host cultural interaction. Through host cultural engagement, international students usually experience more host culture in addition to academic studies. If students only or mainly interact with students or people from the same home countries, then their experiences during the term of their study abroad may be quite similar to study at home because they do not take any advantage from the opportunities to experience another culture or to have interactions and friendships with people from different parts of the world.

The findings raise a number of issues about the experience of studying abroad. Questions which emerge relate to the importance of experiencing the host
country culture, the interest of the sojourner students in the local culture and their willingness to engage with it, the willingness of the sojourners and host people to interact with each other, and the availability of appropriate mechanisms to foster interest in the host culture and to engage with it. These questions provide important information for people to reflect on the potential outcome or contribution that may be made or caused by studying abroad. They also suggest some interesting points or issues, such as possible or efficient strategies for increasing multicultural understanding, causes of the host cultural alienation, and reasons for host cultural engagement, for future researchers to pursue in relevant fields.

The Role of the Host University

Since international students are recruited by educational institutions for an overseas education, it is very important for universities to provide support mechanisms to assist them to achieve academic success and adjust well to various life challenges. The following text mainly discusses what the role of a host university is and what issues a higher educational institution should be aware of.

In general, living and studying in South West should be a fine experience for many international students, although it is not like living or studying in London, a metropolitan capital city with more multicultural characteristics. Although international students at USW usually focused on their academic studies, many of them still expected to have more local socio-cultural experiences or integration. These findings are supported by research which reveals that interaction with host nationals tends to happen only via shared accommodation or special arrangements in social and academic settings (Wu & Hammond, 2011), and that Chinese students in particular feel that it is difficult, frustrating, and disappointing to initiate social contact or interaction with host people (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Therefore, the above information shows that students have expectations of more socio-cultural experiences or engagement, but simultaneously they also have some concerns. The importance and function of the relevant socio-cultural support mechanisms should be emphasized and improved by the host university.
Additionally, within the university, supportive academic resources or services are generally used by international students for improving their academic abilities and skills. Most of the students in my study thought that the university staff and faculty were very helpful when they had any question or request. The international student orientation program also importantly provided useful early information and assistance. Different academic resources or services, mainly including language support courses or tutorials, research seminars, research training courses, and other necessary educational training courses, importantly helped students to better adjust with different academic skills. Various student clubs or societies and relevant university life support services, such as housing, counseling, health, and the Student Guild advice service, also assisted international students to adjust. A research intensive educational institution emphasizing student satisfaction was also highly recognized by many students as an important feature showing the sensitivity of the university to students’ opinions.

The findings in my research show that there is still room for the university support staff to improve their services for international students. For instance, literature reported that international students might have misunderstandings or concerns with counseling services, even though they often faced more stressful difficulties and needed more assistance than host students (Lacina, 2002). Additionally, the interview data from my study showed only one European interviewee who had used the university counseling service. Therefore, the university authorities continue to face the challenges of how to encourage international students to use official support services with open and healthy attitudes and how to train university support stuff to provide services with more understanding, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and patience toward international students.

The research findings suggest that university support structures can help international students with both internal and external challenges. Although they cannot force students to use the official support services for problems solving, what they can do is to provide proper and sufficient resources or services to
assist students. Additionally, communication is very important because the university support structures can always be improved through knowing what kind of assistance international students need most during the adjustment process. What the university can do is to make sure that the students are aware of support services and to encourage students to use them; however, ultimately the extent to which these services are used is up to the individual student and their free agency.

The Role of Religion

Religion plays an important role in the adjustment of international students. Based on the qualitative interview findings, international students who had strong religious beliefs tended to have a positive attitude toward their academic and socio-cultural adjustments. Additionally, religious activities often became a mechanism for international students to broaden their socio-cultural experience and a channel to facilitate their interaction with the local British people or international students. This finding is supported by the information from students with Christian and Muslim faiths.

This research finds that religion not only provides spiritual support for international students but also beneficially contributes to their socio-cultural adjustment in the UK. The positive function of religion on international students is supported by research conducted by Sadrossadat (1995) and Lee (2002). Interviewee 0023 in my study was an example of a student with a strong Christian faith, whose faith helped him be confident of his ability to achieve good academic adjustment. Positive attitudes towards adjustment (Surdam, 1981) and spiritual support for overcoming difficulties with better tolerance (Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005) are two of the benefits of religion. Interviewee 0002 is a Muslim, and he exemplified a student who confirmed that the spiritual support from God made his family able to overcome many difficulties. Roman-Catholic and Protestant international students are also found to be more satisfied with their interpersonal environments (Locke, 1988). This was exemplified by the research data provided by interviewee 0021 who commented on her satisfaction with her church experiences and their contribution to her socio-cultural interaction with host people.
However, the quantitative data did not strongly support the qualitative interview findings because only less than half of the questionnaire respondents agreed that religion played an important role in their UK adjustment. The qualitative interview findings tend to be consistent with the literature (Lee, 2002; Mehdizadeh & Scott, 2005; Sadrossadat, 1995; Surdam, 1981), and more clearly show the beneficial function of religion than the quantitative survey findings. The discrepancy between the two sets of data might be caused by the research sampling design, in which the interview participants were purposefully sampled based on equal distribution of demographic characteristics, such as gender, geographic areas, study program, and level of study. Therefore, participants from different religious backgrounds might have been better represented and investigated in the qualitative interview study and the positive impacts of religion could be clearly shown in the research findings.

The findings also revealed that although religious practice was an activity for the minority of students, those who maintained their religious observance found it personally helpful in the process of adjustment. In general, UK society may have a Christian heritage but there is very little religious observance. Therefore, part of student adjustment may include adjusting to a largely secular society. This may well be a point of tensions for students coming from a context where religious observance is the norm. Therefore, how to offer relevant religious services for more international students may be another important issue for future student support services.

Currently, religious services related to Christianity or Islam at USW are normally well implemented, but religious activities for Asian students are still rare, so more religious services or activities need to be provided to support Asian students spiritually. Both the Muslim and Christian resident faith communities also broaden Muslim and Christian international students' social networks and increase their interaction with the same religious cohort in addition to maintaining their religious and socio-cultural identity. Through interacting with students or people from the same religious background, students from different countries tend to communicate with each other more easily as they have more
issues in common. However, for many Asian students, student societies based on the country of origin, such as a Chinese or Indian student association, may replace the function of religious faith communities helping students with better socio-cultural or academic adjustment because there is a less visible presence of the Buddhist and Hindu faith or other Asian religions in South West. Therefore, in the future, the need for improving the religious services or activities for Asian students is still extensive since the university or the South West community is open to different religions and multiculturalism.

6.2.6 Demographic Characteristics and Adjustment

It is necessary to discuss the relationship between individual demographic characteristics and the adjustment of international students because the literature has reported that some demographic characteristics are importantly associated with the academic (Beaver & Tuck, 1999; Choi, 2006; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006) and socio-cultural (Beaver and Tuck, 1999; Leung, 2001; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006) adjustments of international students. Additionally, my research data show that international postgraduate students possessing certain background characteristics tend to show different responses to their adjustment.

In relation to students’ demographic characteristics, this research finds that married international students with children in the UK have less time to integrate or participate in the socio-cultural life of a UK higher education institution. This situation is especially the case with female international students with young-aged children and without their husband located nearby. It is also generally consistent with the literature supported by research which reveals that married international students tend to be more dissatisfied with their interpersonal environments (Locke, 1988) and that a spouse and children present challenges for life adjustment (Hamed, 1985). Usually, married female international students see the care of their children as more important than their studies. For instance, interviewee 0003 indicated that her baby was her life priority. Interviewees 0002 and 0024 mentioned that only after having made good arrangements for their children first, could they then concentrate well on their
studies. Therefore, a married status was found to also have negative impacts on students’ concentration on their academic studies. These findings reveal that married international students need more support in their family responsibilities. If they want to have more time or concentration for their studies, problems related to child care or family duties need to be solved first. Students can be made aware of the relevant concerns earlier for them to better prepare before pursuing an overseas education. Additionally, support, assistance, or thoughtfulness from the spouse can also contribute to students’ better adjustment.

Regarding ethnicity, the students in my study liked to mention that Chinese students tended to be together with other Chinese students, which was not good for their socio-cultural life and interaction or for cultural exchange with students from other countries. This poses an interesting conundrum because Chinese students may not be able to avoid interacting with other Chinese and they are often the largest population among the world international students in many educational institutions. Some studies or discussions related to ethnicity often pay more attention to Chinese students, also probably because of the large number among the student population. Rienties et al. (2012) reported that international students with a non-Western background had lower social integration or adjustment than others. Yan and Berliner (2011) found that the social and emotional needs of Chinese students were best met through interacting with Chinese. My research data showing that Chinese students tended to be together with Chinese might relate to the large Chinese population at USW. When it is easy to find students from the same home countries or similar cultural backgrounds, many students naturally gravitate together through speaking the same language. Chinese students think they can help each other better or reduce homesickness through speaking Chinese; however, this makes people reflect on whether studying abroad is indeed a great opportunity for different cultural experiences or cultural exchange, and whether speaking mother tongues may hinder the mastery of a host language. Yan and Berliner (2011) discovered that because of infrequent English practice, inappropriate English training, and insufficient contextual or cultural knowledge and background, language barriers and communication problems tended to frustrate
Chinese students. Bacon (2002) also indicated that learning the academic and socio-cultural rules of a language contributed the most to its application within the socio-cultural setting and that informal experiences played a more important role than formal experiences in language learning. Therefore, learning and improving the host language skills is another concern along with experiencing cultural differences and broadening international perspectives via multicultural interaction. Although frequent interaction with people from the same home country is indeed more convenient and comfortable, international students may also lose precious opportunities to experience other cultures or differences that only can be obtained through studying abroad.

Having shown how demographic characteristics and both internal and external factors have impacted adjustment for the students in my study, I will now consider how this may be accounted for using existing models and theoretical frameworks, namely Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the U-curve hypothesis.

6.2.7 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory
Abraham H. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory needs to be discussed in this research because information regarding international students’ satisfaction of different needs in a host country is an important indicator reflecting their own perceptions of the adjustment process. The relevant information also contributes to the understanding and knowledge related to future support services for international students. The research findings related to Maslow’s theory also help researchers and educators better understand the special attributes of international students and how cultural factors may importantly affect their various adjustments.

In section 2.2.7 of the literature review, Abraham H. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory is introduced and illustrated. Both the quantitative and qualitative data sets of my study provided somewhat different information regarding the satisfaction of different needs, but both survey respondents and interview participants were most satisfied with how well their safety needs were met. Interview participants were generally most dissatisfied with their belongingness
and love needs because they were far from home and old friends and needed to have friendship with new people. Maslow (1987) indicated that desires for contact, companionship or friendship, intimacy, and belongingness could help individuals overcome their feelings of alienation, strangeness, and loneliness. Therefore, how student support services or resources can be improved in order to meet the love and belongingness needs of international students importantly challenges the USW support staff in the future. Literature has shown that improving social networks (Ladd & Ruby, 1999), interaction with people in the host country (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), and socialization or participation in the host culture (Yan & Berliner, 2009) are possible approaches for improving students’ socio-cultural adjustment. In addition to international student services, Lacina (2002) also advises that various student clubs, or societies, and English conversation groups, or clubs to meet with native speakers can contribute positively to international students’ socio-cultural experience.

Both qualitative and quantitative data sets indicated that international students generally felt that their esteem needs were satisfied and that they were safe and respected to live in South West without any threat or harassment. Therefore, the relevant USW authorities can use and emphasize this information for future international student recruitment. Zhou et al. (2008) found that knowledge regarding a host culture, mutual perceptions between hosts and sojourners, and cultural differences or similarities might affect the establishment of cross-cultural sojourners’ self-esteem. However, whether my research findings related to satisfaction of esteem needs really reflect the research findings from Zhou et al. is still far away from what I can explain based on my research data because resolving these tensions is very much more complex than the simple satisfactions represented by the model of a hierarchy of needs. Additionally, there are some slight differences among the findings regarding the satisfaction of physiological needs, belongingness and love needs, and self-actualization needs in the interview and survey investigations. These slight differences may be caused by the different research samples from the two different investigations, although the results from the two investigations are from the same research population. However, overall the research results show that Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory is not supported or proven by the research.
findings or data because the research participants’ satisfaction with Maslow’s five different types of life needs does not follow the assumed theoretical pattern. A research context different from Maslow’s and a special research population may be the two main factors resulting in the findings different from Maslow’s theory. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory was established several decades ago with a social context different from that of today, or the UK research context for my study. Additionally, in my study, international students are a special research population with special characteristics, so various cultural factors, such as cultural differences or similarities, may mainly affect the need satisfaction of the researched international students. Furthermore, relevant research findings may possibly relate to the gap between students’ need priorities and what may be informing them. Finally, the relationship between challenges and motivations or drives is still more complex than what a linear set of needs may explain because challenges and motivations may also interact with each other. Therefore, more research on the relevant issues is still needed.

With special characteristics and different need satisfaction, it is very important for university authorities to pay attention to and examine the particular needs of the international student population and then try to implement specific strategies for meeting international students’ needs for better adjustment. Currently, USW has provided different resources to help students’ UK adjustment. However, some room for improvement still exists for increasing student satisfaction. For instance, belongingness and love needs were found to have the lowest satisfaction level in the satisfaction evaluation among the twenty-six international interviewees because students were usually far away from home and needed to build up new relationships or friendships with people located nearer to them. Therefore, it is very important for the relevant university people to think how to help and make international students feel more satisfied with their belongingness and love needs, thereby reducing homesickness and increasing consolidation and community engagement. Interviewee 0006 suggested opportunities or activities to share students’ home cultures as approaches for increasing mutual understanding and willingness for interaction between international students and people in the host country. The implications
and recommendations related to the findings will be further discussed in the concluding Chapter Seven.

6.2.8 The U-curve Hypothesis

The U-curve model or hypothesis is often used by researchers to explain the changing adjustment process of cross-cultural sojourners, starting from good and new feelings at the beginning, followed by feelings of rejection, and then making a compromise or balance in the end. The introduction and limits of the U-curve hypothesis are already illustrated in section 2.2.6 of the literature review in Chapter Two.

The data in my study, from both the visual graph evaluation and the numerical evidence collected from the self-evaluation in concert with the second interview study, suggest that the U-curve model does not represent the experience of many postgraduate international students. Far from being a predictable curve, the data presented here reveal that adjustment is a complex set of experiences influenced in various ways by different internal and external factors, different cultural expectations, and the student’s adaption, negotiation, and resistance to social norms in the host context. The internal factors include age, previous UK experiences (visiting, traveling, studying, and working), previous work or travel abroad experience, previous work experience, language ability, level or field of study, religion, whether the student’s focus is on academics alone, and good friendship or interaction with friends. External factors include cultural similarity, globalization, information dissemination, convenient transportation, supportive university staff members, an intensive study program, and the relationship between a sending country and a host country.

For most of the first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international student participants, the patterns (outlined in section 5.3.6) of the adjustment for the three contexts examined – academic, socio-cultural, and overall – are all different. However, for some students who see academic achievement or performance as their priority, the pattern of their socio-cultural adjustment tends to be similar to the pattern of their academic adjustment because the academic
adjustment usually guides or influences the primary focus of their life or daily activities. In general, the research participants agreed that the more common patterns (graphs (a), (c), and (e)) for their academic, socio-cultural, and overall adjustments tended to gradually improve in a linear fashion, although sometimes there might be some difficulties in the adjustment process. Four interviewees thought that their socio-cultural adjustment would stay the same without any change. Therefore, the research findings generally prove the improper applicability of the U-curve model to this research project.

Since the research data prove that the U-curve hypothesis is not adequate in explaining the adjustment of the first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students at USW, it is important to carefully illustrate how the data may be conceptualized based on the real empirical research evidence. This research finds that every individual participant’s adjustment situation varies based on the differences related to the different internal and external factors, different cultural expectations, and one’s responses or attitudes in the host context. For instance, in relation to one of the external factors, cultural similarity or difference, this research finds that it is easier for European students to adapt to the UK socio-cultural environment because British culture belongs to European culture. However, it is relatively more difficult for Asian students, compared to students from other parts of the world, to get used or adjust to the local UK socio-cultural context because of the greater cultural dissimilarity between Asian and British or European culture. For instance, one European PhD student (0024) stated that her UK experiences were not like the U-curve hypothesis because of the similarity of her culture to that of the UK; however, her previous experiences in a Northwest African country were more like the U-curve hypothesis because of the greater cultural difference combined with difficulties related to language issues. With regard to language issues, one of the internal factors associated with students’ adjustment, my study finds that students coming from a country where English is the official language usually have better academic adjustment because they are used to the various English learning contexts and have fewer language-related difficulties. Furthermore, some students might have previous UK studying, working, visiting, or traveling experiences. These experiences helped them have better academic or socio-cultural experiences unlike those
students who had no previous UK experiences. As for the relationship between the relevant internal or external factors and both the academic and socio-cultural adjustments of international students, this research suggests that it will be very worthwhile to further investigate this relationship and then systematically build up a theoretical model through a more advanced statistical data analysis method.

Finally, the U-curve model or hypothesis was first mentioned in 1955, and was based on a special research context in that era. However, the human world continues to change and develop. When Lysgaard or Oberg discovered this research model over half a century ago, the adjustment context or global environment was completely different from the present. Information dissemination, transportation, technology, and internationalization have continued to improve so studying abroad or sojourners' adjustment may also mean something other than what and how it did previously. Therefore, it is noteworthy and meaningful for researchers to re-inspect the hypothesis and continue investigating the associated issues based on a different research context nowadays and in the future.

SUMMARY
Based on the above discussion related to both experiencing and understanding adjustment, this research concludes that the adjustment of international students is a complex phenomenon that does not fit easily with attempts to define and categorize it. For the discussion regarding experiencing adjustment, the push-pull model explains international students' reasons for studying abroad better than the theory of planned behavior based on the research data. Most international students have more academic than socio-cultural expectations and this is in contrast to their reasons for studying abroad, which seems to have more socio-cultural reasons. Academic adjustment is discovered to play a more important role than socio-cultural adjustment because it is often the main focus of an overseas education. International students usually pay more attention to adjusting to academic difficulties than to socio-cultural difficulties because of issues related to accountability. Discussing the similarities and dissimilarities
between academic and socio-cultural adjustments contributes to the comparison regarding how international students experience and cope with these two different adjustments; demonstrating that they overlap considerably but that academic adjustment exerts the stronger influence and offers less scope for personal agency.

In relation to understanding adjustment, students’ adjustment seeks to explain the necessity of adjustment in the process of studying abroad. The discussion related to acculturation and hybridism contributes to an innovative understanding regarding how these two concepts are applied in the adjustment process: both approaches, acculturation and hybridism, tend to be visible in the experiences and choices of international students in their socio-cultural adjustment. Internal or external challenges provide different insights for understanding the nature of this adjustment and whether international students can and want to initiate the change. Personal agency and cultural identity importantly contribute to further understanding regarding the internal aspects of adjustment: they both operate more actively in the process of socio-cultural than academic adjustment. The discussion related to type and length of study, students or people from the same home country, the educational institution, and religion also helps to achieve a better understanding regarding the external aspects of adjustment: students or people from the same home country, the university, and religion have been found to have positive impacts on students’ adjustment. Through discussing the relationship between demographic characteristics and different adjustments, the research is able to further explore the potential impacts of individual attributes on students’ experiences. Finally, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory and the U-curve hypothesis are not supported by the research data, but they provide beneficial perspectives for my study to review and reflect on the more theoretical and comprehensive understanding related to adjustment. A population with special characteristics and the impact of cultural factors are possible explanations for the contrast between these findings and Maslow’s theory. Methodological issues, different internal and external factors, cultural expectations, individual responses or attitudes, and the development of the world are also discussed as aspects associated with the improper applicability of the U-curve hypothesis to my study.
In general, my study has revealed a number of important issues related to reasons for studying abroad, expectation, adjustment, and the relevant theories. While previous literature has obviously highlighted areas that institutions can take into account and 'act' on to help improve students’ progress both academically and socially, I will present what I feel are the implications of my findings for different groups and make some concrete recommendations in the final chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

This final chapter offers a brief summary of the research findings, their implications, and my own reflection on doing this research. Recommendations for future research, practices, and policies are also presented. Finally, the knowledge contributed by this study is then discussed.

7.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS
Concerning my original research questions, this study has revealed that reasons for studying abroad, academic adjustment, and socio-cultural adjustment interact in a fluid and complex way and so contribute to the potential outcomes of international students’ overseas education. This section summarizes the research findings and their implications from those aspects related to reasons for studying abroad, academic and socio-cultural adjustments, and the theories and issues regarding studying abroad.

7.1.1 Reasons for Studying Abroad
The value of overseas study, personal or family-related factors, lack of opportunities at home, and financial or promotional reasons are identified as the main reasons why international students choose to study abroad. Most of the students’ reasons for studying abroad remained the same before and after studying in the UK: lack of opportunities at home and financial or promotional reasons remained constant throughout the data collection period, but motivations regarding the value of overseas study and personal or family-related factors changed after students experienced the host context. ‘Desiring job promotion’ in the category related to financial or promotional reasons based on the qualitative data is viewed as a new finding, which is slightly different from the existing topic in the literature associated with becoming more professional (Kitsantas, 2004). Additionally, the push-pull model is discovered as more
applicable than the Theory of Planned Behavior in explaining reasons for an overseas education in this research as the research findings are more easily and conveniently illustrated by both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ dimensions of the model. In the interview section of the research, students’ reasons for studying abroad, in the UK, and at USW, are different; however, both financial and personal reasons consistently influence these three different types of decision-making, indicating the prevalence of social factors as the ‘push’ element from the home context. Both qualitative and quantitative research findings are generally consistent and confirm the existing findings presented in section 2.1.3 of the literature review, including political, economic, personal, educational, cultural, informational, and environmental reasons. Most of the international students have more academic expectations compared to more socio-cultural reasons for studying abroad.

Findings related to reasons for studying abroad, in the UK, and at USW provide beneficial information for future student recruitment because higher education authorities can provide attractive incentives, such as scholarships, and proper support services, such as community engagement opportunities, in order to meet the various needs of international students. Additionally, being able to make a comparison between the qualitative and quantitative findings regarding reasons for studying abroad, in the UK, and at USW, demonstrates one of the advantages regarding selecting the qualitative interview participants and quantitative questionnaire responds from the same research population.

7.1.2 Academic Adjustment
Academic studies play a central role in students’ overseas education, so academic adjustment is usually unavoidable and generally exerts stronger influences than socio-cultural adjustment. Students voice positive academic experiences, and yet, this is the area in which they experience the most difficulties and have the least personal agency and cultural identity because of the educational accountability required, based on the more standardized evaluation criteria. Most of the interviewees’ initial expectations for studying abroad were related to academic experiences, and they generally had stronger
motivations or paid more attention to adjust to academic than socio-cultural difficulties. Generally, they had positive first impressions, in addition to positive expectations, experiences, and performance for their academic adjustment, even though they experienced difficulties initially. Some academic experiences met students’ earlier expectations, and this situation also caused greater academic satisfaction. This research draws attention to how cultural differences, language skills, colleagues or friends, interaction or relationships with teachers, and personal demographic characteristics affect students’ academic adjustment. Language issues are common difficulties for students whose native language is not English. Academic writing, class discussion, criticality, and presentation are also difficulties caused by cultural dissimilarities or learning differences, but teachers or official university resources and friends or colleagues are beneficial support mechanisms for problem solving. Engagement in the academic community is highlighted as an area that needs improvement both in terms of how this is supported by the institution and in how this is taken up by international students. However, most of the students liked their study programs and were satisfied with their academic resources, teaching arrangements in place, and quality of interaction with teachers or cohorts. Type and length of studies also affect academic adjustment because more intensive and independent skills are required in British education, but these requirements are different from many students’ undergraduate experiences or learning styles practiced in home countries.

The research findings imply that international postgraduate students’ feeling a part of the South West academic community needs to be improved, and that peer-study partnership may become more efficient in order to help them achieve better academic community engagement. Both international students and teachers need to adjust to each other, in regard to the teaching, guiding, and learning styles. University faculty can also assist students to adjust better through being familiar with students’ adjustment needs and encouraging them to use the available university resources. A creative synergistic approach may be adopted for improving mutual respect and cultural understanding between teachers and international learners. Finally, there is still some room for relevant educators or student support staff to improve international students’ future
academic adjustment, even though they generally had positive experiences and used various resources to overcome difficulties.

7.1.3 Socio-cultural Adjustment

Most of the interviewees had positive first impressions, expectations, and actual experiences about their socio-cultural adjustment. Both personal agency and cultural identity are significant here in shaping adjustment, with fewer intentions to initiate changes in the process of socio-cultural than academic adjustment, because international students are temporary residents with weaker or minor desires to acculturate to the host country but with a stronger commitment to maintaining their original cultural heritages. This finding is particularly interesting because it is slightly at odds with students’ original reasons for studying abroad, which cite cultural engagement as a reason for choosing to study overseas. Thus an initial expectation and intention may be moderated and adjusted once students are in the host university, which in turn may moderate their intention to engage culturally with the host community. Especially, this research also finds that students’ cultural or self identity tends to be re-shaped or re-enhanced in a multicultural society, and students are more likely to link to their culture of origin after perceiving cultural differences and experiencing uneasiness, distress, tension, or culture shock. This research tends to focus on how cultural differences, friendship, language issues, attitudes toward the local culture, host cultural engagement, and personal characteristics can impact students’ socio-cultural adjustment. Most of the international students in this research tended to experience an ‘international postgraduate student culture’ as defined by Wu and Hammond (2011), have more interaction with people from the same home countries, and prefer their cultural heritages or home life styles even though they were open to socio-cultural adjustment, and some also had opportunities to interact with host nationals through shared accommodation, personal leisure activities, or religious services. Cultural engagement was one of the initial expectations from international students, but such engagement rarely happened because of the barriers they experienced and the choices they made while exercising personal agency. Cultural similarities, religion, and student clubs or societies benefited socio-cultural
adjustment, although a heavy study workload might reduce the time for socio-cultural engagement. International students were found to exemplify both acculturation and hybridization in the experiences and choices of their UK socio-cultural adjustment. They face relatively fewer difficulties in socio-cultural rather than academic adjustment, and have a wider range of attitudes, options, or responses to socio-cultural difficulties because diverse outcomes and resisting the process of acculturalization are usually acceptable in the socio-cultural adjustment process. Finally, in spite of limited engagement with the host community, international students usually have more sensitivity to and empathetic understanding about multi-cultural or transitional adaptation compared to host nationals because of their cross-cultural experiences.

The research findings imply that, with generally good adjustment, international students’ interaction with host nationals needs to be improved because host friendships and cultural experiences benefit both international students (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Yan & Berliner, 2009) and British people, and should be part of the studying abroad experience. Findings related to first UK impressions and cultural dissimilarities suggest that Asian international students may need more resources or assistance in order to increase their understanding of European culture because they tend to feel or perceive greater cultural dissimilarities. The positive socio-cultural findings generally demonstrate that Britain is a good destination country for pursuing an overseas education.

7.1.4 Theories and Issues Regarding Studying Abroad

The insufficient applicability of Maslow’s theory to this study can be understood by two possible explanations discovered by this research: first, the fact that international students are a different population with special characteristics, and second, the fact that cultural factors may be primary in affecting their need satisfaction. Additionally, students’ experience is not best accounted for by the U-curve hypothesis, which states that culture shock is first experienced and then accommodated by adaptation, because students in this study usually appear to encounter a more complex set of experiences. Methodological issues, different internal and external factors, cultural expectations, individual
responses or attitudes, and technological and world development are discovered as issues associated with this finding. Thus, traditional models can be challenged in the light of the complex forces informing adjustment. Even when students voice positive attitudes, the qualitative data reveal tensions and a variety of ways in resolving these tensions. In general, students or people from the same home country, the educational institution, and religion have positive impacts on the adjustment of international students. Students or people from the same home country play a more crucial and helpful role, especially with initial adjustment, in students’ socio-cultural rather than academic adjustment; however, people from the same home country may hinder students’ host cultural engagement and interaction with students from other countries. This research finds that there is still some room for educational institutions to improve and provide better support mechanisms that assist international students to deal with various internal and external challenges. Although religion is not mentioned by the majority of the international postgraduate student population, its spiritually supportive function and positive impacts on host community engagement should not be ignored. This seems to be especially needed by Asian students since many Asian students have been found to less actively engage in religious activities. Finally, the data reveal that international students are not a homogenous community and that their differences require different kinds of adjustment and hence different kinds of support. For example, married female international students were discovered to need more support in time management and child-care issues, whereas Chinese students might need more interaction with people from different countries.

The findings related to Maslow’s theory imply that support services for international students should consider their special needs and be aware of cultural factors or language issues that may dominate their adjustment. The research data also imply that international students probably care more about mutual cultural understanding and respect between themselves and host nationals, so they may need more assistance in increasing their interaction with host nationals and improving their involvement or engagement within the local or academic communities. Finally, the findings related to the U-curve hypothesis imply that culture shock does not play a major role in student
adjustment in this study, and that the adjustment process of international students nowadays, after globalization, high-tech and transportation development, and the internationalization of higher education, is not enough or adequately explained by the hypothesis.

7.2 SELF-REFLECTION
As an international student myself, this research has framed the way I think about my own experience, particularly in relation to why I chose to pursue my PhD studies in a foreign country and how I have adjusted to the academic studies and socio-cultural differences in the UK. During my study period I have become increasingly aware of the role that reasons for studying abroad play; in my own case, I am aware of both personal and academic reasons and the desire to fulfill my potential and career dreams and to be open to international experiences or perspectives. However, I have also realized that finding a place and time for both academic work and activities that help with my socio-cultural adjustment is a challenge, and that many international students have a similar difficulty. I believe strongly that interaction with people from different countries and with host nationals is important and that this can be achieved in different ways; in my own case, the role of participation in religious observation is a means to achieving this and a way to overcome homesickness. Especially, I also had the precious opportunity to hear many special stories and broaden my friendship with internationals through doing this research.

As a research student, completing a piece of original research has influenced the way I now think about research, it has shown me that a lot of persistence and patience are needed along with great efforts at each step of the research. Without strong motivation and sufficient visible or invisible support, it is very difficult to overcome the challenges presented in accomplishing a research project with fruitful outcomes. The process of doing and completing this research is a task like that an international student takes on when choosing to study abroad, and this research on the adjustment of international students is also a study on my own adjustment. However, my academic adjustment contrasts with the social adjustment that I have actually experienced during my
study-abroad period because I have had the personal free agency to decide how I would act and respond to issues related to cultural dissimilarities and host social engagement. Through my engagement in a religious community, I have been more fortunate than many other international students to have the opportunities to interact with host natives, although my own experience also reflects that of my participants because I too find that it is more convenient and comfortable for me to associate with international students rather than the local British population.

Reflecting back on a completed study always raises questions about how things might have been done. Knowing what I know now, some of things I might do differently if I were to undertake such a study again would be to investigate a different research population (such as undergraduate international students) and to collect more raw (first-hand) or personal data (such as personal diaries) from the research participants as these kinds of data would allow relevant research to be investigated from more and diverse perspectives. For instance, undergraduate international students are generally different from postgraduate international students in age, level of studies, and maturity. Therefore, the experiences, feelings, responses, and process of the adjustment of undergraduate international students may be expected to differ from those of postgraduate international students. Future investigation of this different research population may also contribute to research findings other than those from the current study and allow more researchers to examine and compare the relationship between adjustments and different personal characteristics. Additionally, more personal or raw data collected from the research participants are also expected to increase deeper and more detailed understanding regarding international students’ experiences or adjustments as the data come from a continuous empirical record with more direct evidence.

In spite of these ideas for a different research design I would still argue that a key strength of the approach I have taken is the mixed methods approach for both data collection and analysis, because this methodology allows me to collect rich and diverse data from two dissimilar methods and to analyze the data from both micro and macro perspectives, which combine to address both
what happens and why it happens. Therefore, it is very worthwhile and beneficial to use a mixed methods design, although it takes time to develop and needs lots of energy to accomplish both the data collection and analysis. If given the chance to research similar issues again, I would still use a mixed methods approach for investigation.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PRACTICE, AND POLICY

Recommendations for further research, practices, and policies are presented in this section. They are expected to positively provide useful and constructive suggestions. I anticipate that these findings will be useful to future research related to international higher education, practices in international student support services, and policies regarding the internationalization of higher education.

7.3.1 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some recommendations for future research, as more research will contribute to increased relevant understanding, practices, and policies. Firstly, in relation to research subjects, university staff or faculty associated with international students or their relevant support services should be included because their information can provide another perspective in understanding the adjustment and needs of international students, which is different from information collected from international students themselves. Their opinions can help researchers investigate the gap between ideals and realities or supplies and demands of student support services. Additionally, future research can investigate international students from more diverse backgrounds, focusing on groups that are different from volunteers. In this research, all of the interview participants voluntarily participated in the interviews so most of their experiences were quite positive. If researchers can use strategies to invite students with fewer characteristics of a volunteer community to participate in future research, they may be able to collect research results with negative and perhaps more insightful findings that are closer to a larger body of students'
actual experiences. Furthermore, different international student groups, such as undergraduate students, non-first-year postgraduate students, or students in short-term language studies programs, can also become research subjects for future research on other different issues. Regarding the research period, future research can be conducted for a longer period than this research, which may help researchers discover more varied issues related to the change or development of the students’ adjustment. Finally, there are still many issues, such as cultural dissimilarities, different demographic characteristics, and religion, related to international students’ adjustment that can be further studied systematically in the future. For instance, in relation to cultural differences, a more focused study that looks at how international students adjust to the more interactive teaching styles in Western contexts, how international students adapt to academic writing conventions in their second language, or how international students interact with their supervisors can also yield interesting and significant information in future research.

7.3.2 Recommendations for Future Practice

Some relevant issues for the further practices in the field are also recommended. For instance, university authorities can provide more language support or academic proofreading services for international students as they often need to improve their academic performance and their English skills. Although the students in this study acknowledged that some official language support services were provided by USW, they also indicated that it was still difficult to book the space for individual tutorial or proofreading services, and that opportunities for taking advantages of such services should be increased. Additionally, they also can provide necessary application information or assistance for prospective international students based on the relevant research findings. In addition to sufficient and reasonably priced accommodation, the university should also permit and encourage international students to arrive at the university earlier in order to better prepare for adaptation to the university life, because the research data revealed that earlier arrival with better preparation was one advice for prospective students. Furthermore, international students and host nationals should be encouraged and have more
opportunities to interact with each other. Opportunities or activities, such as host families and trips during vacations, should be provided or created more for increasing this interaction. The university student support staff may be able to facilitate the relevant opportunities at times. For instance, although activities for some special holidays or events were held occasionally, students in this study had positive responses and expected that such events could be increased for more host cultural engagement and multicultural understanding. Furthermore, international students should also be encouraged to participate in student clubs or activities and to use the available resources provided by the university for life adjustment. For instance, university counseling services could help them release the stress from academic or life challenges, but the services were used by only one of the twenty-six interview participants and few questionnaire respondents in this study. Finally, based on the associated findings regarding Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory, international student support services can be improved through good and professional job training to university staff, more friendly students-centered services, and increasing knowledge and understanding regarding the difficulties and needs of international students. It is also very important that international students feel that they are understood and respected culturally when they seek for relevant student services because cultural factors have been found to be important issues influencing their perception of satisfaction. Currently, various support services for international students, such as orientation and advice services, may be provided generally by educational institutions; however, with more thoughtful attention and cultural understanding, students’ well-being can be ameliorated with greater success.

7.3.3 Recommendations for Future Policy
This research also has some recommendations for future policies. Since studying abroad has more advantages than disadvantages and benefits both international students and a host country, policies related to the recruitment of international students to study in the UK should be continued and even improved for increasing the mutual understanding among people in the world. In relation to the length of study, a one-year Masters program is not popular with all international students, as although some appreciate the length of one
year for financial and timing considerations, others also hope to have more time for robust learning and training. Therefore, how to improve the disadvantages of this situation and how to use these positive special characteristics to recruit more international students to study in the UK present challenges to educators and policy makers. Policies regarding scholarships or financial supports for international students to study in the UK can be improved in order to encourage recruitment as financial reasons importantly influence international students’ decision to study abroad.

7.4 KNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH
The internationalization of higher education is an important issue in this globalized era. Teichler (1996) states, “[w]e might consider internationalization of higher education as the next theme, which gives rise to a new focus of both higher education policy and higher education research” (p.435). Therefore, research on international education and international students should be emphasized.

The mixed methods approach in this research design importantly contributes to the research findings because adjustment is a complex set of experiences, which are therefore most suitably investigated by multiple methods. The mixture of a quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative interviews allows the relevant research issues to be studied from both the macro and micro perspectives and helps the research data to be collected, investigated, and explained in both systematical and detailed ways. While the quantitative survey data show the broader picture or trend of the findings derived from the larger student sample, the qualitative interview information supplies the elaborate variation demonstrated by independent individuals. This contributes to the comparison of similarities and dissimilarities among the research phenomena and the analysis of the gap between both quantitative and qualitative data, which have not led to a simple set of outcomes. Furthermore, this mixed methods design enables this project to investigate the complex interaction of tensions and both external and internal pressures that shape international students’ adjustment. In a field largely governed by survey data, this research
design brings greater insight to the field through its combination of methods and has been successful in demonstrating that simple adjustment models such as the U-curve hypothesis do not account for the complexity that this research has encountered. Therefore, the mixed methods approach used allows students’ reasons for studying abroad and their experiences to be faithfully examined and reported.

Through mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods, this study significantly contributes to research on the internationalization of higher education. Its findings will help educators better understand important reasons or factors motivating international students to study abroad, and their subsequent academic and socio-cultural experiences or adjustments. In addition to the mixed methods benefits, this research also contributes to practical knowledge that educators need in order to know how to efficiently recruit international learners, how to assist international students to experience better academic and socio-cultural adjustment, and how to help them achieve their educational goals.
Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/ and view the School’s statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Yu-Yi Grace Chien
Your student no: 590038644
Return address for this certificate: Program Information Office, Graduate School of Education, St. Luke’s Campus, University of Exeter, Heavitree Road, Exeter, UK EX1 2LU
Degree/Programme of Study: PhD (Direct Entry)
Project Supervisor(s): Dr. William Richardson (Primary) & Dr. Jill Cadorath (Secondary)
Your email address: yc298@exeter.ac.uk; GraceChien@live.com
Tel: 077-687-06853

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: [Signature].....................................date:.........................

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010
Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 590038644

Title of your project: Adjustment of international students: Reasons for study abroad and subsequent academic and socio-cultural experiences

Brief description of your research project:
This ontologically and epistemologically pragmatist mixed methods research design intends to investigate adjustment of first-year full-time graduate international students in a UK university through qualitative case study interviews and a quantitative questionnaire survey. International student adjustment mainly focuses on issues related to reasons for overseas education, academic and socio-cultural experiences. Firstly, sixteen international graduate students at a south-western UK university will be purposefully sampled, based on the equal distribution of demographic characteristics, for interview inquiries. Eight student learning support staff may furthermore be interviewed if it is necessary for more relevant information collection. In the second phase of the study, all of the first-year full-time graduate international students will be invited to participate in the questionnaire survey. Through qualitative analyses of the interview data and advanced quantitative analyses of the statistical data, the researcher plans to academically develop a more comprehensive and updated theoretical framework with methodological accuracy to explain why first-year full-time graduate international students decide to study in a UK university; and to explore how their both socio-cultural and academic adaptations are to the host country. The appropriate research ethics guidelines will be carefully followed. This research, therefore, will practically contribute to the internationalization of higher education, the global mobility of international students, and the increase of global communication and cooperation.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):
Summarily speaking, sixteen first-year full-time graduate international students at a south-western UK university will be purposefully sampled for the qualitative interview participants; and the entire qualified students will be the later large-scale questionnaire survey participants in this study. Additionally, eight student learning support staff may be interviewed if additional information collection is necessary. The research population includes the entire first-year, full-time, graduate, international students at a south-western UK university in the 2010-2011 academic year. In the qualitative phase, sixteen students will be purposefully sampled as the research participants, based on the maximum heterodoxy of the students’ background demographic characteristics. This is resulted from the researcher’s expectation of collecting the most potentially useful information as much as possible for later data analysis and relevant knowledge increase. The researcher wishes to obtain broader understanding/knowledge associated with why first-year international graduates decide to
study in a south-western university and how they adjust to their academic and social-cultural life in the UK. In the quantitative phase, the quantitative research sample is the same as its research population, including all of the first-year, full-time, graduate international students in the university. The researcher intends to distribute the survey questionnaire in person (with a postage envelope) or emails. For avoidance of repetition, she will also remind each survey participant to answer the questionnaire once only on the cover letter or in announcement.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

a) **informed consent**: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents. An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document. A blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents.

An informed consent form for participation agreement and a cover letter attached on the survey questionnaire instrument for trust and credibility establishment between research participants and the researcher will be written/ applied for research ethic explication. The informed consent form for the qualitative case studies and the cover letter for the quantitative survey investigation, both stating the details of the human right protection action in the research design, are attached with this Certificate of Ethical Research Approval form. Please see the attachment.

b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

All of the information from research participants will be treated confidentially or anonymously and used for academic research purposes only. Each research participant’s name will not be identifiable or associated with individual’s personal information. A pseudonym or a code number will be used for research identification purpose. Each participant’s identifiable information will also not be released in the future unless a written permission is obtained from the participant. All of the information and data collected will be used by the researcher only with a secure storage for human rights and privacy protection. The guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 will also be carefully followed.

In the qualitative research phase, the researcher will obtain the permission for the qualitative data collection and result publication through the interview participants’ signature/authorization on the informed consent form, generally illustrating various actions regarding human rights protection. In the quantitative survey research, a cover letter stating the research purpose and freedom for research participation helps the research participants know their participation as a voluntary agency, through answering the survey questionnaire, and the survey findings reported via aggregated statistical data as the protection for their individual privacy.
Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

The research participation and all information that the participants provide will not affect their life, study, future, or relationships with anyone. In addition to the preceding description regarding informed consent and anonymity/confidentiality, the researcher will seriously follow BERA ethics guidelines and the GSE Ethics Committee guidelines at the University of Exeter.

**Data Collection in Qualitative Phase – Interview Guide & Procedure**

Qualitative case study interviews will be employed for the data collection from sixteen first-year full-time graduate international students and possibly, eight student learning support staff (interviewing the university staff will be decided later if it is necessary and helpful for the knowledge increase) in a south-western UK university. A semi-structured and face-to-face interview method will be adopted by the researcher with audiotape recording, handwritten notes taking, and interview transcription. A general interview guide approach will direct the process ensuring focused data collection within some freedom and adaptability (Patton, 1990). Each interview will take about 50 minutes. The researcher will also keep a journal during the study. The researcher may also write her own autobiography and request an autobiography from each participant. Relevant supportive documents from participants may also be collected for research analysis.

**Data Collection in Quantitative Phase – Instrumentation & Procedure**

A Likert-scale quantitative survey instrument will be developed for empirical data collection based on the previous literature review and some beneficial interview findings. The constructs of the survey instrument includes data/information collection regarding demographic characteristics, reasons for study abroad, socio-cultural experiences/adjustment, and academic experiences/adjustment of the first-year full-time graduate international students in a south-western UK higher education institution (university).

The survey instrument is temporarily named as International Student Adjustment Survey” (ISAS). It will be developed completely by the researcher before the end of the spring term in 2011. The reliability and validity of the survey instrument will be evaluated/examined through a small pilot study and a formal survey investigation. The survey questionnaire will be mainly emailed to the research subjects. The researcher may also distribute the questionnaire in person via some private networks. The research participants will be anticipated to fill out the questionnaire and then email it back to the researcher within two weeks. The researcher will keep encouraging the survey participation through follow-up emails. It probably will take about two to three months for the quantitative data collection.

**Methods for Data Analysis – Qualitative Phase:**

Qualitative data analysis “is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (Creswell, 2003, p.190). The researcher will generically transcribe, code, and detail the special experiences of each individual case and then extract the main themes, issues, and codes that would assist the formulation of the crucial theoretical perspectives or constructs. Reflexivity, analytical memos, returning to the original research questions, and re-reading the raw data
will also assist the data analysis. A computer software program, Nvivo, will be utilized to facilitate the coded qualitative data analysis and comparison. A concept map will finally display the research findings and the relationships among the key themes.

**Methods for Data Analysis – Quantitative Phase:**

Quantitative statistical methods through a computer software, Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS; its former name is Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), will be employed for data analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistical data will be used to represent research findings from the data collected. Descriptive statistical data will show the distribution of different reasons motivating study abroad, and the situation of both academic and socio-cultural experiences/adjustment of the research participants. Inferential statistical methods, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), Student t-test analysis, reliability analysis (Cronbach α coefficient), factor analysis, correlation analysis, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and multiple regression will be used to examine the research questions; to evaluate the internal consistency reliability, and structure validity of the survey instrument; and to test the research hypotheses.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

All of the information collected will be used by the researcher only and be kept in a safe place for both human rights and privacy protection. Any written documents/texts, audio-tape recording, completed questionnaires, and computerized transcription or statistical data will be stored in a special and secure place for at least 6 years. The research participants are free to ask any questions regarding the research and its procedure during or after the research participation. They also can contact the researcher for any concerns, including future publication of the research findings.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

There is no any exceptional factor that may raise ethical issues, in the current research design. Through keeping the research journal, careful observation, peer debriefing and self-reflectivity, the researcher wishes not only to increase the credibility of the qualitative research findings but also to detect and avoid the unexpected harm or stress that may pose danger or hurt to the participants. There will also be no known or anticipated risks, costs, or effects on anything related to the research participants even though they decide to withdraw from the research participation. Finally, any information from the participants also will not affect their life, UK study, or relationship with anyone.
This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School’s Research Support Office for the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor.

This project has been approved for the period: 01. 2010 until: Sept. 2013

By (above mentioned supervisor’s signature): ___________________________ date: 19/10/10

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: D.1. 11. 13

Signed: ___________________________ date: 2/11/2010
Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee

This form is available from http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/

Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee
updated: July 2010
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Informed Consent

Title of the Research: Adjustment of International Students: Reasons for Study Abroad and Subsequent Academic and Socio-cultural Experiences

Investigator: Yu-Yi Grace Chien, a PhD student at the University of Exeter, sincerely appreciates your interest and willingness to be a research participant of her PhD thesis research regarding adjustment of international students. The human rights protection action of this research has been reviewed by the Ethics Committee in the Graduate School of Education (GSE). Therefore, you can fully trust the researcher’s responsibility for your human rights and privacy.

Purpose of the Research: This research intends to investigate reasons for study abroad, and both academic and socio-cultural experiences of the first-year full-time graduate international students in a south-western UK university. Its main purpose is to increase understanding and knowledge in international student adaptation; in order to improve the welfare of future international students.

Procedure: Please be aware of and consent to the tape recording of your responses to the research questions. During the interview process, you will be asked some questions regarding your reasons for the UK study, and both academic and socio-cultural experiences in adjustment. These questions are designed based on the research purpose with a general guideline. There will be no right or wrong answers; therefore, please feel comfortable to answer them according to your real situation. Additionally, information from you will be notes taken and audio-tape recorded for transcription and the later data analysis. You will be interviewed twice totally in October/November and February/March separately. Each interview will take about 50 minutes. Sixteen first-year full-time graduate international students at a south-western UK university will be the qualitative interview participants. You may also be requested to provide some personal documents or texts to support your personal information if it is necessary.

Benefits: The information collected and the later research findings will benefit knowledge and practical implementation in experiences and services to international students; although they currently may not have any direct and positive impact on your UK life or study. Your contribution to the research will also help educators and school authorities to improve the welfare of future international students.

Risks/Discomforts: There are no known or anticipated risks, costs, or effects on your study or life if you participate in this study. Please understand that no information from you will, in any way, influence your study, life, or any relationships with anyone, based on the research ethics.

Confidentiality: The research follows the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the GSE Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter, which covers issues of confidentiality. All of the information provided by you will be treated confidentially/anonymously and used for academic research purposes only; even though the research is published. Your name will not be identifiable or associated with your personal information; instead, a pseudonym or a code number will be used for research identification purpose. All of the information will be used by the researcher only and kept in a safe place, for five to ten years, in order to protect your human rights and privacy. Your identifiable information will also not be released in the future unless a written permission is obtained from you. Furthermore, please agree with the publication of the research findings for academic purpose. Through signing this informed consent form, permission from you, regarding personal information collected for data analysis, report (use and disclosure), and publication, will be granted to the researcher, under the supervision of the GSE Ethics Committee.
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Refusal or Withdrawal without Penalty: You can withdraw from the interview research at any time if you feel uncomfortable or have any concern. Before your withdrawal, the researcher will still keep using the information/data collected from you. The withdrawal will not cause any trouble or effect on your study or relationship with the university. However, the researcher would sincerely encourage your full participation because your contribution will greatly help other international students’ future UK experience/adaptation. Therefore, before your decision making, please carefully think about your continuous willingness of participation until the end.

Payment for Research Participation: The researcher will appreciate you very much with some positive feedback (money bonus from a limited private budget) because the information that you provide is so valuable. It will be given by the end of the second interview.

Questions about Participation: Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the research and its procedure although you surely can trust the action/design of the human rights protection in this research. You are also very welcome to send a written request or contact the researcher directly if you have any questions regarding the research, its procedure, or how your personal information will be treated. The contact information is listed at the end of this consent form.

Certification of Participation: I have been fully informed about this research and understand the preceding description. I agree to take part in this research and give consent to be involved in it as an interview participant. I understand that this interview participation is voluntary. I have had the opportunity to contact/ask the researcher any questions regarding this research. I understand that I could contact the GSE Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter, if I have any concern regarding my human rights or privacy. I also have received a copy of this consent and authorization form.

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<td>Type/Print Researcher’s Name</td>
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Researcher Contact Information
Yu-Yi Grace Chien
PhD Student, Graduate School of Education
St. Luke’s Campus, University of Exeter
Heavitree Road, Exeter, Devon UK EX1 2 LU
Email: yc298@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University’s registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.
Research: Adjustment of International Students: Reasons for Study Abroad and Subsequent Academic and Socio-cultural Experiences

April, 2011

Dear International Student:

I am a research student in the Graduate School of Education (GSE) at the University of Exeter. I am conducting research regarding your life adjustment to a UK university. I would appreciate you a lot if you could please fill out the questionnaire and help me to accomplish this research.

This research is to examine international students' reasons for study abroad, and both academic and socio-cultural adaptation while studying at a UK university. Its purpose is to investigate and understand many adjustment issues that international students may face or experience while studying overseas. Through this research, I wish to assist educators to know your experiences, expectations, and life adjustment to education abroad based on the information collected from the enthusiastic internationals. I also wish to ultimately improve the welfare of future international students. Therefore, your true responses will be very valuable because it will not only benefit the accomplishment of this investigation but will also assist future international students to receive better experience and overseas education.

This research follows the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the GSE Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter, which covers issues of confidentiality. Your responses will be confidentially treated and represented only by aggregated statistical data. Consequently, please set your mind at ease and answer the attached questionnaire truly according to your individual situation and personal opinion. Additionally, please remember that you need to answer this questionnaire once only. If you have any questions about the research, please contact me without any hesitation.

Sincerely yours,

Yu-Yi Grace Chien
PhD Student, Graduate School of Education,
The University of Exeter
E-mail: yc298@exeter.ac.uk
APPENDIX II
First Interview Schedule

With the above literature in mind, the research seeks to answer the following operational/practical research questions based on research questions in the research design (This first interview proximately may take about 51 minutes in total):

Student Demographic Background (About 5 Minutes in Total)
Operational/Practical Questions (About 5 Minutes):
➢ Could you please briefly introduce yourself (e.g., nationality, degree of study, study program, gender, age, family, marital status, current accommodation, financial resource, previous study or travel abroad experience, job(s) in home country, career goal/plan, etc.)?

Reasons for Studying Abroad (About 30 minutes in Total)
Research Question – What are the reasons associated with the decision making of international graduate students to study abroad?
Operational/Practical Questions (About 15 Minutes):
➢ Could you please talk about what reasons/factors mainly motivate/help you to study abroad?
➢ How long had you planned/prepared for your UK study?
➢ Is your decision for study abroad influenced by anyone?
➢ What is your (career) plan after your UK study?
➢ Do you also apply for and receive admissions from other schools? If yes, why do you decide to study in the UK and South West?

Research Question – How does the experience of studying and living in the UK compare to their initial expectations? For instance, are international graduate students’ expectations or reasons (goals) for overseas education still the same after studying and living in the UK?
Operational/Practical Questions (About 12 Minutes):
➢ What is your first impression about UK (e.g., school, living condition, community environment, friendship, etc.)?
➢ After your UK arrival, is (are) your reason(s) for study abroad the same as your pre-arrival one(s)?
➢ What is (are) your initial expectation(s) for study abroad?
➢ Do you still have the same expectation(s) for study abroad after your UK arrival?

Research Question – Do students of different demographic backgrounds have different reasons for overseas education?
Operational/Practical Questions (About 3 Minutes):
➢ Do you think that your UK study abroad decision is related to any of your special personal background characteristics (e.g., family experience/expectation, previous study/travel abroad experience, career plan/goal, previous work experience, etc.)?

Academic Experience (About 8 Minutes in Total)
– What are the academic experiences of first-year international graduate students in a UK university?
– Especially, what do they think about their study programs, teaching arrangements in place, quality of interaction and relationship with personal tutors and other students, and availability/accessibility of learning support (services)?
Operational/Practical Questions (About 6 Minutes):
What is your first impression about your UK academic experience (e.g., study program, teachers, classmates, academic resources, teaching arrangements in place, interaction/relationship with teachers/other students, learning support services, etc.)?
What is your expectation for your future UK academic experience?
Overall, do you expect your ongoing UK academic experience to be positively better, negatively worse, or others? Why?

Do students of different demographic characteristics show different levels of academic adjustment?

Operational/Practical Questions (About 2 Minutes):

Do you think that any of your personal background characteristics (such as previous travel or study abroad experience, cultural background/country of origin, family support, financial/scholarship support, and so on) may make your UK academic experience different from other students? Why?

Socio-cultural Experience (About 8 Minutes in Total)

What are the socio-cultural experiences of first-year international graduate students in the UK university?
Especially, to what extent, are international graduate students able to integrate and participate in the socio-cultural life of a UK higher education institution?

Operational/Practical Questions (About 6 Minutes):

What is your first impression about your UK socio-cultural experience (e.g., interaction/relationship with classmates, teachers, other international students, other domestic/host students, and local people in the community; participation in any socio-cultural activities, etc.)?
What is (are) your expectation(s) toward your ongoing UK socio-cultural experience?
Overall, do you expect your future UK socio-cultural experience(s) to be positively better, negatively worse, or others? Why?

Do students of different demographic backgrounds show different levels of socio-cultural adjustment?

Operational/Practical Questions (About 2 Minutes):

Do you think that any of your personal background characteristics (such as previous travel or study abroad experience, cultural background/country of origin, family support, financial/scholarship support, and so on) may make your UK socio-cultural experience different from other students? Why?
APPENDIX III
Second Interview Schedule

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE  [About 15 minutes in total]
A. Could you please talk about how your general academic experience has been since you came to South West/since our last talk (e.g., experience in your own learning skill, language skill, and academic preparation; teaching arrangement in place, quality of instruction, quality of interaction and relationship with personal tutors and other students; school administrative services; and availability/accessibility of learning support services, etc.)?  [3 minutes]
B. Could you please talk about what UK academic experience makes you have the deepest impression?  [2 minutes]
C. How is your academic performance so far?  [1 minute]
D. Have you ever experienced any academic difficulty since you started your current study program in the UK/South West?  Has the difficulty been solved yet?  Where did you ask for help and how did you cope with the difficulty?  [2 minutes]
E. How is your interaction/relationship with your teachers and classmates?  [1 minute]
F. Do you feel you are able to discuss your experiences with your tutors/mentors?  Are you able to take your problems to your tutors/mentors?  [1 minute]
G. If let you have the chance to go back to the beginning, what would you do in order to make your academic experience better?  [2 minutes]
H. Are you happy/satisfied with your UK academic experience?  Why?  [1 minute]
I. Do you have any suggestion regarding your academic experience and/or study program to the university?  [2 minutes]

SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE  [About 19 minutes in total]
A. Could you please talk about how your general socio-cultural experience has been since you came to South West/since our last talk (e.g., accommodation/housing, student activity participation, participation in any local socio-cultural activities, religion, and interaction/relationship with classmates, teachers, other international students, other domestic/host students, and local people in the community, etc.)?  [3 minutes]
B. Could you please talk about what UK socio-cultural experience makes you have the deepest impression?  [2 minutes]
C. Have you ever experienced any difficulty regarding your socio-cultural adaptation or UK daily life?  Has the difficulty been solved yet?  Where did you ask for help and how did you cope with the difficulty?  [2 minutes]
D. Have you ever used the university support services/resources (e.g., counseling center, housing office, international student office, students guild, etc.) to help/improve your life adaptation?  Are these services/resources very helpful?  [1 minute]
E. How is your friendship and interaction with your friends, other students, and local people?  [1 minute]
   Have you ever participated in any activity with local British people?  What do you think/feel about it?  [1 minute]
   Have you ever participated in any activity with other students?  What do you think/feel about it?  [1 minute]
   Do you often interact with students/people from your home country or the same/similar culture as yours?  How is/was it?  Do you often ask for help from them?  [1 minute]
F. What is your attitude toward the local UK culture and your UK daily life? Do you accept, refuse, ignore, close yourself, or try to adjust to the local things here? Could you please take an example? [2 minutes]

G. Could you please take an example and describe something in the UK, which is particularly different from that in your home culture/country? Which one do you prefer? The UK one or the one in your home country? Why? [2 minutes]

H. Are you happy/satisfied with your UK socio-cultural experience? Why? [1 minute]

I. Do you have any suggestion regarding your socio-cultural experience to other (or, future) international students? [2 minutes]

OVERALL SUGGESTION [About 10 minutes in total]

A. If given the chance again, will you still choose to study in South West? Why? [1 minute]

B. Do you think students’ opinions are valued in this university? Why? [1 minute]

C. What is your advice for other prospective international students intending to study in the UK and University of South West? [5 minutes]

D. From your personal experience in the UK/South West, could you please talk about what the advantages/disadvantages are for you to study abroad (in the UK/South West)? [3 minute]

Pauline Furge Individual Questions

How is your learning in theories related to international relationship/management?

How has your student activity participation been so far (politics society, tennis club, and riding club)?
### MATCH YOUR SITUATION WITH A PROPER GRAPH

[About 16 minutes in total]

A. Which graph matches your academic adjustment best? Please ☑ it. Also, please explain it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graph</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) ☑</td>
<td>High (Good) Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) ☑</td>
<td>High (Good) Adjustment</td>
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<td>(c) ☑</td>
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<td>(i) ☑</td>
<td>High (Good) Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(j) ☑</td>
<td>Your Own Shape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please draw it!!

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later

Low Adjustment

Beginning ➔ Later
B. Which graph matches your socio-cultural adjustment best? Please ☑ it. Also, please explain it.

- (a) High (Good) Adjustment
- (b) High (Good) Adjustment
- (c) High (Good) Adjustment
- (d) High (Good) Adjustment
- (e) High (Good) Adjustment
- (f) High (Good) Adjustment
- (g) High (Good) Adjustment
- (h) High (Good) Adjustment
- (i) High (Good) Adjustment
- (j) Your Own Shape

Please draw it!!
C. Which graph matches your overall adjustment best? Please check it. Also, please explain it.

(a) High (Good) Adjustment

(b) High (Good) Adjustment

(c) High (Good) Adjustment

(d) High (Good) Adjustment

(e) High (Good) Adjustment

(f) High (Good) Adjustment

(g) High (Good) Adjustment

(h) High (Good) Adjustment

(i) High (Good) Adjustment

(j) Your Own Shape

Please draw it!!
PLEASE SCALE WHERE YOUR SATISFACTION IS & BRIEFLY DESCRIBE IT:

Low Satisfaction ➔ Better ➔ 6.8 ➔ High Satisfaction

1. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your overall adjustment in your UK study/life?

2. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your UK academic adjustment?

3. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your UK socio-cultural adjustment?

4. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your physiological needs (biological needs for food, water, air, etc) in the UK? [Basic needs in daily life]

5. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your esteem needs (needs for self-esteem, autonomy, and esteem from others, such as feeling of “self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world” (1987, p.21)) in the UK?

6. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your safety needs (needs for freedom from danger: security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; need for structure, order, law, and limits; strength in the protector; and so on) in the UK?
7. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your self-actualization need (needs for fulfilling one’s potential) in the UK?

[10-point scale graph]

8. Could you please scale your satisfaction with your belongingness and love needs (also called social needs: desires for contact, companionship/ friendship, intimacy, and belongingness) in the UK? [Desires for school/family/community belongingness, friendship, (close) relationship, etc.]

[10-point scale graph]

A. Thank you very much for answering the above questions. Now, could you please explain why you choose each graph to describe your different type of the UK adjustment/adaptation?

B. Traditionally, the U-curve hypothesis is often used to explain a person’s cultural adaptation to a foreign country. Do you think whether it fit your personal situation? Do you agree with it? Why?

C. Could you please briefly describe (using one or two sentences) why you scale/specify each different number from Question 1 to 8?
APPENDIX IV
International Student Adjustment Survey (ISAS)

Research Title. Adjustment of International Students in a UK University. Reasons for Study Abroad and Subsequent Academic and Socio-cultural Experiences

Dear USW International Student:

Thank you very much for responding to this invitation and being willing to participate in this study. My name is Yu-Yi Grace Chien, an international PhD student in education. My research is related to the adjustment of first-year, full-time, postgraduate, international students in a UK university: reasons for studying abroad and subsequent academic and socio-cultural experiences.

Your responses to the questionnaire survey below are vital to my PhD and will importantly contribute to the knowledge and practice related to international student support services. This research carefully follows the relevant research ethics. Your answers will be treated confidentially and only represented by aggregated statistical data.

Please answer the attached online questionnaire ‘once’ only and as accurately as possible, according to your individual situation and opinions. It will probably take you about 15 to 20 minutes to complete this survey.

Please feel free to contact me for any question regarding this research.

Sincerely yours,

Yu-Yi Grace Chien
Yc298@exeter.ac.uk
PhD Student
Graduate School of Education
University of Exeter
St Luke’s Campus
Heavitree Road Exeter EX1 2LU
1: **Where are you from?** (Choose one of the following answers – Dropdown world country answer)

2: **Which part of the world are you from?** (Choose one of the following answers)  
  □ Europe    □ Asia    □ Africa    □ Middle East    □ Oceania  
  □ America    □ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

3: **What is your subject area?** (Please type your study program.)

4: **When did you start your current USW study?**    ______ (Month) _______ (Year)  
   *(Only numbers may be entered in these fields)*  
   Please input the month (e.g., 10, 01, etc.) and year (e.g., 2010).

5: **What is your gender?**    □ Female    □ Male

6: **What is your marital status?** (Choose one of the following answers)  
  □ Single    □ Married    □ Divorced    □ Have a partner  
  □ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

7: **Which degree are you now studying for?** (Choose one of the following answers)  
  □ Master's    □ Doctorate (e.g., PhD)  
  □ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

8: **Including English, how many languages do you speak in total?**  
   Please input a number. _______  *(Only numbers may be entered in this field)*

9: **English is your:** (Choose one of the following answers)  
  □ 1st language    □ 2nd language    □ 3rd language  
  □ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

10: **Is English an official language in your home country?**    □ Yes    □ No

11: **How would you assess your academic performance at the University of South West?**  
   (Choose one of the following answers)  
   □ I am (have been) struggling    □ Below average    □ Fair/Pass  
   □ Good/Merit    □ Excellent  
   □ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

12: **Who or what is/are your source(s) of finance for both tuition and living expenses?**  
   (Check any that apply – You may choose **more than one** answer.)  
   □ Self    □ Parent(s)    □ Other family member(s)    □ Employer (previous or current)  
   □ Loan    □ South West University scholarship or studentship  
   □ Scholarship from UK government or British Council  
   □ Government fund(s) from my home country
Organizational scholarship/grant
☐ Other: _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

13: Is support from your parent(s) your main financial resource?
☐ Yes    ☐ No

14: Which type of tuition fee did you pay to the University?
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ International fee ☐ Home fee (EU student)
☐ Other _________ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

15a: Before starting your current UK study, had you had any full-time work experience?
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ No    ☐ Yes

15b: If yes, please specify about how many hours per week (hours/week) on average.
_______ (Only numbers may be entered in this field)

16a: Had you studied (any program of study) abroad (including Britain) before your current UK study program?
☐ Yes    ☐ No

16b: If yes, please specify the name(s) of the country (countries). _______

17a: Did you study at South West University before your current study program?
☐ Yes    ☐ No

17b: If yes, please specify which program and which degree you studied at the University of South West. ____________________________ (program & degree)

18: When were you born?
_______ (Month) _______ (Year) (Only numbers may be entered in these fields)
Please type the number (e.g, Month: 01, 08, etc; Year: 1985, 1978, etc.)

19a: In addition to studying, do you currently work part-time?
☐ Yes    ☐ No

19b: If yes, please specify about how many hours per week (hours/week) on average.
_______ Please type the number. (Only numbers may be entered in this field)

20: What is your religion or current religious preference?
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ No religion    ☐ Buddhist
☐ Christian (including Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, etc.)
☐ Jewish ☐ Hindu ☐ Muslim ☐ Sikh
☐ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other."

21: Where is your accommodation?
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ University dormitory ☐ Off-campus private housing
☐ Private housing organized by the university
☐ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

22: In which type of accommodation are you living?
Choose one of the following answers
☐ Alone (have own kitchen & bathroom)
☐ With my family
☐ With relatives
☐ Share kitchen with students from my country
☐ Share kitchen with students from different countries
☐ Share kitchen with British students
☐ Share kitchen with British people (non-student)
☐ Share kitchen with people (non-student) from my country
☐ Other ______________ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

23: What is your family’s socioeconomic status in your home country?
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ Lowest ☐ Below average ☐ Average ☐ Above average
☐ Highest ☐ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

24: Your father’s education:
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ Below high school ☐ High school ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Master’s
☐ Doctorate (e.g., PhD) ☐ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

25: Your mother’s education:
(Choose one of the following answers)
☐ Below high school ☐ High school ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Master’s
☐ Doctorate (e.g., PhD) ☐ Other _______ (Please specify if you choose "other.")
Below are some reasons that might have influenced your decision to study abroad. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your own reasons for study abroad?
Please mark one answer for each item.
(1=Completely Disagree; 2=Mostly Disagree; 3=Slightly Disagree; 4=Slightly Agree; 5=Mostly Agree; 6=Completely Agree)

| ReAb1[1] | Immigration plans for after my current study affected my decision to study abroad. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[2] | Political uncertainty or corruption in my home country affected my decision to study abroad. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[3] | I decided to study abroad because I want to gain international experiences or cross-cultural sensitivity. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[4] | Limited educational opportunities in my country influenced my decision to study abroad. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[5] | I decided to study abroad because a foreign educational degree will benefit my CV or offer better future employment opportunities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[6] | My previous study or travel abroad experience affected my decision to study overseas. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[7] | I decided to study abroad because the UK offers a higher quality of education than my home country. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[8] | I decided to study abroad because I want to improve my language skills in addition to my professional knowledge. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[9] | I decided to study abroad because my family encouraged, supported, or expected me to do so. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[10] | I decided to study abroad because of influence(s) from my friend(s) with study abroad experience. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[11] | I decided to study abroad because my job requires me to upgrade my educational qualifications or professional knowledge. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[12] | The economic growth in my country or the currency exchange rate affected my decision to study abroad. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[13] | My plan to stay or work in the UK after graduation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| ReAb1[14] | I decided to study abroad because it is a popular trend in this globalized era. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

What are your reasons for studying in the UK rather than any other English-speaking country?
I chose to study in the UK because of …
(Check any that apply – You can choose more than one answer)

| ReAb2[1] | Historical background or relationship between my home country and Britain |
| ReAb2[2] | Shorter geographical distance between my home country and Britain |
| ReAb2[3] | Lower tuition fees |
| ReAb2[4] | Shorter period for study or degree completion |
| ReAb2[5] | My plan to stay or work in the UK after graduation |
| ReAb2[6] | A more flexible application schedule, process, or procedure |
| ReAb2[7] | Better economic situation in Britain than my country |
| ReAb2[8] | Relative ease of visa availability from Britain |
| ReAb2[9] | Influence or recommendation from friends, teachers, or people studying in the UK before |
| ReAb2[10] | A more multicultural environment |
| ReAb2[11] | Britain’s rich historical background |
| ReAb2[12] | Relative ease of access to information |
| ReAb2[13] | A cultural environment that is more similar to my country |
| ReAb2[14] | Worldwide recognized educational degree |
| ReAb2[15] | More familiarity with Britain |
| ReAb2[16] | Relatively easier, less, or more flexible admission requirements |
| ReAb2[17] | Family members or relatives currently living in Britain |
| ReAb2[18] | Other: ____________ (Please specify if you choose ‘other.’) |

What are your reasons for studying at South West University?
I chose to study at the University of South West because of …
(Check any that apply – You can choose more than one answer.)

| ReAb3[1] | Ranking of the University |
| ReAb3[2] | Cost of living expenses |
| ReAb3[3] | Ranking of my study program |
| ReAb3[5] | University reputation |
| ReAb3[6] | Safe or low crime environment |
| ReAb3[7] | Reputation of my study program |
| ReAb3[8] | Southwestern location |
### ReAb3
- Specialty of my study program
- Non-city environment
- USW scholarship or studentship
- Short distance from London
- Non-USW scholarship or offer of financial support assigning me to USW
- Welcome responses from USW teacher(s)
- Previous study at South West University
- Previous visit to South West University
- Accessibility of information from the faculty, administrative staff, or university website
- Alumni recommendation
- Friend recommendation
- Teacher recommendation
- Only USW accepted me

**Other:** ______________ (Please specify if you choose "other.")

### Below are questions related to your academic adjustment.

By "academic adjustment," I mean "how you fit in or adapt to a new academic environment or educational requirement." Please indicate the level of your agreement or disagreement based on your own current situation.

Please mark one answer for each item.
(1–Completely Disagree; 2–Mostly Disagree; 3–Slightly Disagree; 4–Slightly Agree; 5–Mostly Agree; 6–Completely Agree)

| AcAd1[1] | Overall I have adjusted well to my UK academic life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[2] | I like the teaching styles or the way teachers in the UK guide my research. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[3] | I am confident of my English ability for my academic work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[4] | Teachers here understand and respect my cultural or special needs resulting from my specific cultural background. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[5] | I feel I belong to the South West academic community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[6] | I feel I have been accepted by the university teachers, students, or staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd1[7] | Overall the academic resources here benefit my current UK studies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Below are academic difficulties that international students may experience during their overseas education. Please indicate whether you had any of these difficulties when you just "started" your current study program.

*When I just started my current study program, I had difficulties in ...*

Check any that apply.

You can choose more than one answer.

| AcAd2[1] | Understanding subject knowledge in my field. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[2] | Understanding what the lecturers (or speakers) said in the class or seminar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[3] | Understanding the accent of the teachers or tutors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[4] | Critical thinking ability | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[5] | Academic writing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[6] | Knowledge related to plagiarism and its relevant practice | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[7] | Time management for my studies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[8] | Doing independent study (e.g. extensive reading) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[9] | The UK learning style | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd2[10] | Other: ______________ (Please specify if you choose 'other.') | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Based on your previous academic difficulties, please indicate whether you still have any of these academic difficulties.

Please mark one answer for each item.
(1–Completely Disagree; 2–Mostly Disagree; 3–Slightly Disagree; 4–Slightly Agree; 5–Mostly Agree; 6–Completely Agree)

| AcAd3[1] | Now I still have difficulty in understanding subject knowledge in my field. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| AcAd3[2] | Now I still have difficulty in understanding what the lecturers (or speakers) say in the class or | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
How often do you do the following things? Please answer the following questions based on your personal situation.

Please mark one answer for each item.

(1–Never; 2–Very Rarely; 3–Rarely; 4–Occasionally; 5–Frequently; 6–Very Frequently)

| AcAd4[1] I ask for help from my teachers or tutors for any academic problem. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| AcAd4[2] For any academic problem, I ask for help from my classmates or colleagues. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| AcAd4[3] I use the academic support lessons or services to improve my ability or solve my academic problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| AcAd4[4] I interact with my British classmates or colleagues. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

Below are questions related to your socio-cultural adjustment. By "socio-cultural adjustment," I mean "how you fit in or adapt to a new social and cultural environment." Please indicate the level of your agreement or disagreement based on your own current situation.

Please mark one answer for each item.

(1–Completely Disagree; 2–Mostly Disagree; 3–Slightly Disagree; 4–Slightly Agree; 5–Mostly Agree; 6–Completely Agree)

| SCAd1[1] Overall I have adjusted well to my socio-cultural life in the UK. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[2] I do not have time to socialize with people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[3] Most of the time I interact with students only. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[4] I feel comfortable interacting with local people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[5] I feel South West people welcome international students. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[6] Local British people are friendly or polite to me. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[7] I wish to make more British friends. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[8] Students or people from my country are helpful to my UK life adjustment. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[9] I think it is better not to interact with people from the same country or culture when a person studies abroad. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[10] I feel comfortable with the local life style. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[11] I am open-minded and try to adjust myself to the British culture or life style. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[12] I like to leave some space for my own culture in addition to adjusting to the local British culture. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[13] Religion plays an important role in my UK adjustment. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd1[14] I have problems with my housemates or neighbors. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

How often do you do the following activities? Please answer the following questions based on your personal situation.

Please mark one answer for each item.

(1–Never; 2–Very Rarely; 3–Rarely; 4–Occasionally; 5–Frequently; 6–Very Frequently)

| SCAd2[1] I interact with students or people from my country. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd2[2] I participate in activities with British students or people. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd2[3] I participate in activities held by student clubs or societies. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| SCAd2[4] I go to religious services or activities. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
With whom do you interact most often?

Most of the time I interact with …
Choose one of the following answers

- SCAd3[1] Students or people from my country
- SCAd3[2] Students or people from different countries but with similar culture to mine
- SCAd3[3] Students from different countries
- SCAd3[4] British students
- SCAd3[5] British people (non-students)
- SCAd3[6] Other ____________ (Please specify if you choose ‘other.’)

Who are your friends?

Most of my friends are …
Choose one of the following answers

- SCAd4[1] Students or people from my country
- SCAd4[2] Students or people from different countries but with similar culture to mine
- SCAd4[3] Students from different countries
- SCAd4[4] British students
- SCAd4[5] British people (non-students)
- SCAd4[6] Other ______________ (Please specify if you choose ‘other.’)

Below are questions related to your overall adjustment and satisfaction. Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following description based on your own current situation. Please mark one answer for each item.

(1–Completely Disagree; 2–Mostly Disagree; 3–Slightly Disagree; 4–Slightly Agree; 5–Mostly Agree; 6–Completely Agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OAS1[1]</th>
<th>I am satisfied with my overall adjustment in the UK.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[2]</td>
<td>Overall I am satisfied with my UK academic experience or adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[3]</td>
<td>Overall I am satisfied with my UK socio-cultural experience or adjustment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[4]</td>
<td>I am satisfied that my basic daily life needs (food, water, weather, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[5]</td>
<td>I am satisfied that my esteem needs (self-esteem, self-confidence, capability, autonomy, being useful, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[6]</td>
<td>I am satisfied that my needs related to being loved and belonging (relationships, friendship and companionship, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[7]</td>
<td>I am satisfied that my self-actualization needs (fulfillment of my potential or life/career goal) are met in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[8]</td>
<td>I am satisfied that my safety needs (security and protection, freedom from fear and anxiety, etc.) are met in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[9]</td>
<td>It would have been better to arrive in South West two or three weeks before the start of the term in order to settle in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[10]</td>
<td>Overall I am able to discuss any problems with university staff and receive assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[11]</td>
<td>Overall students’ opinions are valued in this university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[12]</td>
<td>Overall I have not experienced any serious academic difficulty in my current UK study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[13]</td>
<td>Overall I have not experienced any serious socio-cultural difficulty in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS1[14]</td>
<td>I would still decide to study at South West University if given the chance again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often have you used the following university services or resources? Please answer the following questions based on your personal situation.

Please mark one answer for each item.

(1–Never; 2–Very Rarely; 3–Rarely; 4–Occasionally; 5–Frequently; 6–Very Frequently)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OAS2[1]</th>
<th>I have used the writing support services or the INTO insessional lessons to improve my English language skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are advantages related to receiving an overseas education.
Please choose any answers that fit your individual situation.

Overall my current UK study abroad experience benefits my:
Check any that apply
You can choose more than one answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OAS3[1]</th>
<th>Academic abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[2]</td>
<td>English language abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[3]</td>
<td>Professional abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[4]</td>
<td>Future employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[6]</td>
<td>Independence (the state or quality of being independent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[7]</td>
<td>International social network (connection/friendship/relationship with others)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[8]</td>
<td>Self-actualization (being able to develop/achieve one's abilities/full potential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS3[9]</td>
<td>Other: _______________ (Please specify if you choose 'other.')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX V
Self-evaluation

SELF-EVALUATION

Could you please scale (from 0 to 10) your adaptive situation of each month and then briefly describe your answer? You are very welcome to describe each answer creatively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Adjustment</th>
<th>➔ Better</th>
<th>High Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Adjustment (Example 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Haven't started my study yet!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Just started to learn where my department/university is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Couldn't completely understand the British accent and class instruction although I passed the IELTS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Finally understand half of the lessons ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>It was getting better but still, didn't like the exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>A lecturer let 1/3 of us fail the assignment! Unbelievable!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>I need to study harder now!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later Expectation/Prediction for My Academic Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Keep working hard!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Near the end of a term again!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 May</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Almost near the end of the study......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 June</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Should be too busy for the final assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 July</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Almost reach the end ....&amp;*%$#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>Finish all of the Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 September</td>
<td>0.0 or N/A</td>
<td>Complete the degree. I will be already back to my country, I think.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A: Not Applicable
### My Own Adjustment Process
(Please record your academic, socio-cultural, and overall adjustment.)

#### Academic Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description (Please write anything that you want to say.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Later Expectation/Prediction for My Academic Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description (Please write anything that you want to say.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Memo:**

#### Socio-cultural Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description (Please write anything that you want to say.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Later Expectation/Prediction for My Socio-cultural Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description (Please write anything that you want to say.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overall Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later Expectation/Prediction for My overall Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 June</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 July</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Memo:

## Overall Adjustment (Example 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Still at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Still at home for the preparation. Had some problems with the visa application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Everything was new for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Things were getting better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Not bad. So So!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>A new start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Better now.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later Expectation/Prediction for My overall Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Not bad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Memo:
### Socio-cultural Adjustment (Example 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 August</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>I came here to stay with my friend first. She helped me to find the accommodation. We are from the same country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 September</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>The welcome week activity was not bad. I decided to join the International Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 October</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>My classmates are from different countries. Interesting &amp; not bad!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 November</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Sometimes still missed the food at home. People are generally friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 December</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>My first Christmas in a foreign country. My friend invited me to go to the Christmas party in the student dormitory. It sounded interesting that the local people dressed up and got into the water (sea) on Boxing Day!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 January</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>It is so frustrating because a local person said that he couldn't understand my English so well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 February</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Everything is getting better. The weather becomes friendlier now!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Later Expectation/Prediction for My socio-cultural Adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 March</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Good!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 April</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>The same as March.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 May</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>I plan to have a trip to Scotland with the International Society. I look forward to it!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 June</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Nothing special anymore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 July</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>The same......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 August</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>I plan to travel to other countries in Europe before going home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 September</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>I should be at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX VI
Research Journal

The following examples show some extracts from the research journal.

October 25, 2010
I had a meeting with Dr. Richardson. We talked about the information from the pilot participants which reflected what I read from the literature review. Dr. Richardson inspired and encouraged me to find something different from the literature review in order to show my research’s new contribution to the field.

November 1, 2010
Participant 0003 was very cute because some of her answers surprised me and made me laugh. After interviewing participant 0003, I met another PhD student who was from Taiwan and waiting for his viva in the UK. He said that he came to the UK for studies because he needed to get a PhD for his job teaching at a college in Taiwan. He said that compared to PhD studies in the US, a British PhD is easier, cheaper, and faster. Additionally, he didn’t want to spend money for the course work in the US.

November 2, 2010
Maybe I should have asked interview participants whether they had participated in the student orientation program during welcome week and asked them how they arrived and settled in to get a clearer understanding of how they felt about South West.

November 25, 2010
I lost my voice on Tuesday morning and have not been able to speak since then. I tried to wait for a potential interview participant. I still need to keep doing interviews on Thursday and Friday.

December 25th, 2010
It is difficult to start to transcribe the interview content. Hanging in there.

January 9, 2011
It is difficult to understand the interview participants’ accents. I reflect on my own feelings and thought that I should not mention too much of my own situation and interrupt the interview participants. It is still difficult to start to transcribe the interview content.
January 28, 2011
When I did the interviews, I always wanted the participants to say more. However, when I did the transcription and coding, I wished that they could have talked less, as I would then not need to type so much information. I feel I am like a machine doing the transcribing jobs when I have to finish certain stressful things within a certain time period.

February 14th, 2011
Every question for the second interview was new for me so I did not know what responses or information the first participant would provide. The participant also wasn’t so sure how to answer some questions quickly. Sometimes, very surprising answers came out. I also had to try to clarify the link between the interview questions and the information from the participant. I even forgot to ask one question near the end. This made me nervous until the meeting with Dr. Richardson at 16:00 pm.

February 16th, 2011
Participant 0010 improved a lot. I am more familiar with the interview questions and better understand the students’ answers and how and where I can dig deeper for more information. The participant improved a lot in both spoken English and his academic studies. I am not so nervous now and get more of a sense of how I can ask the other participants questions next time.

February 17th, 2011
Participant 0003 still likes her American university. She calms down more and understands that she cannot change many things here. She was a little bit quieter this time to answer the questions. For socio-cultural adjustment, getting used to and being familiar with local people’s responses usually reduces a participant’s strong emotional responses. This situation implies that this kind of responses is not so fresh or new to the participants because they also tend to first reflect on their own thoughts and feelings.

February 17th, 2011
Participant 0018 mentioned that it was better not to have many expectations. His graph choices for both academic and socio-cultural adjustments were similar to the U-curve. He was the first interviewee who chose the U-curve shape. I felt that he did not adjust as well as other students although he told me that he had adjusted well. He had tried to discover and experience different things; however, I felt sometimes he
doubted his new experiences with local people. He emphasized not to expect too much for the things related to the host community because he strongly felt that more expectations would make him feel more dissatisfied.

**February 22nd, 2011**

Participant 0006 is very happy that she will go home soon in May because she misses her family very much. She will work for one year at least and then may continue her PhD studies through long-distance learning, if it is possible. In general, she has overcome her academic problems better than participant 0011 because of her better language skills. (English is an official language in her home country).

**February 23rd, 2011**

Participant 0012 adjusts very well in both academic and socio-cultural sections. She knows to ask for academic advice from teachers and has good friendship with both British and international students. She mentioned that her adjustment situation was quite good because of cultural similarity and no language problem. She plans to pursue her PhD studies if she can find the funding. She was the first person who was not so satisfied with her safety needs because she heard that someone’s things were stolen during exams.

**February 26th, 2011**

In general, interview participants are getting more familiar with this research. They are quite open to say what they want to say. I also try to make our interaction more relaxed. This may also help us to build up friendships.

**March 3rd, 2011**

Participant 0015 adjusts quite well with good relationships with her student friends. This may result from the fact that she comes from a European country. She was the first person who was very satisfied with the British food so far. This could be derived from her interaction with her housemates. She was satisfied most with her daily life needs. Through reading the interview transcription, I can tell that participant 0005 was struggling with his English. However, I think he might have some limits on learning or improving his English. First, English is not his first language and he has already learned many different European languages. Second, he is older than most of the international postgraduate students. Additionally, it takes time to learn a new language well. Therefore, I feel that the participant needs to keep learning English and not to give up.
March 4th, 2011
Participant 0001 answered the interview questions more concisely this time. Actually, I should have been able to finish the interview in about one hour. However, I asked more questions so it took about one and an half hours in total. The more focused way that he answered the questions this time could also show his improvement in his academic studies. His wife will come to the UK for her research next weekend. He will also arrange for his children to come to the UK for vacation after the second year. He feels that everyone is very helpful and willing to help him. Participant 0002 is the first person mentioning that religion plays an important role in his life adaptation. He arranges everything well for his family in the UK. Initially he was not happy with his supervisor’s change of his research proposal. However, now he is quite happy and thinks that his supervisor’s advice is correct after reading more articles. Both of us could talk more but I really had to leave for another interview from 14.00 pm.

March 6th, 2011
I am getting nervous because I haven’t completed the survey questionnaire design but also have to do the interview. Interviews take time for preparation and the notes or themes taking.

March 8th, 2011
Participant 0008’s English has been improved. She looks better with consistent responses. Her new accommodation seems better now. She is starting to teach her native language at the university and also takes courses for the teaching certificate. She relies on her boyfriend quite a lot, but doesn’t plan to follow the traditional pattern to get married in the future.

March 9th, 2011
Participant 0013’s adjustment is quite good. She said this was because of cultural similarity and her previous program in a similar program at the same university. Some of her international friends from the previous studies still work in South West so she interacts with them sometimes. She is also a hard-working and responsible student. She plans to stay and work in the UK after graduation.

March 9th, 2011
It seems that participant 0022 is not improving too much in her time management. Her performance is good, but she wants to do better. In general she has more expectations for her study program.
March 14th, 2011
Participant 0021’s adjustment is very good. Her opinions are quite special and honest, although they may be negative sometimes. She has good socio-cultural adjustment without any language problem. She is the first person who marks 3 (of 10) for the satisfaction scale. She knows how to work hard and find resources for her academic difficulties, although her teachers are not so helpful sometimes. She is quite mature and rational in her analysis of the reasons for her academic problems. She is grouped with African students often although she has been used to European culture.

March 16th, 2011
Participant 0024 has been very busy with her studies and research. Things are getting better. Her husband has come to South West and taken greater care of their child. She has more time for herself now. She is very busy for arranging a trip back to her home country before her field work in Turkey. She is open for her child to stay in a multicultural environment.

March 17th, 2011
Participant 0004 is very busy with his studies and assignments. He is waiting for the scholarship application at the moment. He feels that British people eat simple and unhealthy food. He refused to complete the self-evaluation form initially but decided to do it few weeks later.

August 10th, 2011
While transcribing the interview content, what interviewee 0010 said often inspires and encourages me to keep working hard. I also use the chance to reflect on my own activities and progress and hurry up my data analysis progress. I appreciate the interviewees’ support and participation. We encourage and learn from each other.

August 11th, 2011
Sometimes it is very boring to transcribe the interview content. Additionally, sometimes I have to understand the accent of a participant first. The participants’ answers or responses often cause me to be engaged in self-reflection and adjust my thoughts or views regarding where I am now and my attitudes towards the learning environment here. Maybe, appreciating what I have and how much I already have is the better approach. I also become more mature to think things from different perspectives through diverse answers, values, perspectives showed by the interview participants.
**August 25, 2011**

Sometimes I have a similar feeling to the participant’s viewpoints, but am not quite sure whether it is correct. However, these viewpoints sometimes help me explain why I had bad socio-cultural experiences in the UK. I feel that participant 0011 thinks critically about the cultural differences between the UK and his home country although many people admire the excellent customer services in his home country. I forgot to ask whether any personal background characteristics might influence participant 0011’s adjustment which was different from the U-curve hypothesis. However, from the two interviews, I can tell that his previous travel or study abroad experiences may influence his adjustment. Based on the information from the second interview, I feel that he expects and requests himself a lot to have better social interaction with others. His internal characteristics, such as personality and self-expectations, make the curve of his socio-cultural adjustment more similar to the U-curve. He is a reflective person with high demands of himself, especially in the socio-cultural adjustment. This could result from the fact that he is a leader and committee member of two student societies. The graph choice for his academic adjustment is different from the U-curve. His previous travel and travel abroad experiences, age, a postgraduate program, and previous preparation studies at USW might cause this difference.

**August 27, 2011**

All of the participants were very nice and brave to help me with the interview studies. Some of their English was not good but they were very enthusiastic. It is a blessing that they were very kind to help me and did their best to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I feel upset about my mistakes with two participants. I forgot to ask them the last question. I felt very frustrated and scared when I found this mistake. I almost couldn’t do anything for about two days. I tried very hard to recover and tell myself to keep moving forward since the mistake had been made. My progress should not be influenced because of the mistake. I need to keep moving forward, so I pray and hope to be able to find some information from the interview content for answering the question that I forgot to ask the two interview participants. I told myself to go forward and be honest to face my mistake. In the future, I hope not to make the same mistake again.

**September 6th, 2011**

Recently I have some difficulties in life in where I live. I believe that I have experienced more difficulties than students living in South West. Compared to South West, where I live is a less multicultural place. I feel so frustrated living here. However, through these experiences, I hope to become braver. These bad experiences will help me understand more about what international students experience and how they feel in a foreign country.
September 18th, 2011
I am tired of transcribing the interview content. I don’t like my slow speed, although I have tried my best.

December 7th, 2011
I felt participant 0001’s English was not good enough for him to express himself because he often used incomplete sentences. His oral speaking was quite good but the pronunciation was not as clear as most of the international students whose first language was not English. Probably, it was okay because he was not in the field of humanities and social sciences. His African English sometimes is difficult to understand, even though English is the official language in his home country.

May 7th, 2012
Most of the interview participants have good academic performance. I don’t know whether their awareness of participating in this research might potentially influence their hard work for good academic outcomes or whether they were originally very good with academic studies.

May 24, 2012
I feel that sometimes the participants were aware of the interview recording so they might say the more positive things.
## APPENDIX VII

### Interview Dates

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<th>Interview Participants</th>
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APPENDIX VIII
Sample of a Coded Interview Transcript

Participant 0022 – female, Asian, Masters program in the Medical School
(Length of the first interview: 60:23)

-------- Interview
-------- Summary
-------- Code

Grace: So, you were all together. Good. So, could you please talk about what reasons, factors, mainly motivate you to study abroad?

My current study field is quite new in my home country. We only have one university that has a four-year program with full-time work and plus a Masters degree. Therefore, it is too much and difficult. I thought I would do somewhere outside. Therefore the one-year Masters program in the UK is not the same as the one in my home country. I can break up the training and do things slowly. I would like not to have so much stress because I have little children in the family. [reason: limited educational opportunities in home country]

0022: This field, [her current study field], in [her home country], is quite new, we only have one university program in [her home country], the four-years program include, you have to work, and do a ... full-time work, plus do a Masters degree, so it is in four years. It’s too much and too difficult, I think, because we have a family to go around so, that is the only option in [her home country]. So, I thought, I would do somewhere outside. So, the coursework in the United Kingdom, in the UK, this is not the same as the one in [her home country]. This is only one year, Masters in science, but I can break up the training. So, I can do things slowly, not everything in four years. So, this is one year, after the clinical training in another four, five years. So, it will take longer. But, I will not have as much stress because I have small little children in the family.

Grace: Yea, so, you mean, the courses here are more intensive, more?
The course in the UK is more intensive and going to be longer; however, I can break up the theoretical and training parts. [reason: intensive UK studies, being able to separate theoretical and practical training]

0022: Yea, and then I can break up the theory part and the training part
Grace: Yea, it’s shorter, and everything, the duration is shorter
0022: Duration overall is going to be longer.
Grace: Here?
0022: Yea, because this is one year plus. This is just the first part.
Grace: Really?
0022: Second part will be the training in the hospital before five years.
Grace: For five years?
0022: Yea.
Grace: And, but, in [her home country]?
0022: It's four years and it includes everything.
Grace: The same four years?
0022: Yea, everything. But, you have to do everything once, and there is no break. And you have to work at the same time, full time. So, it's difficult.
Grace: But, here, the training, you don’t need to work. The training is just like the working, right?
0022: Yes. After work, but not particularly in [her current study field].
Grace: You mean, the program here is study first, and then the training, and the [her home country] one is together, all together?
If I can take and have a Masters degree in the UK, I have another point for where I apply to get into the practical training because the training system here usually take local people first and then take international graduates. [local British people are preferred in training opportunities]
0022: Actually, I don't really have to take this Masters to join the training here, But, since I am an international graduate, to enter the system here is difficult, because they don't; they take local people first, and then they take international graduates, so if I have this Masters, at least I have another point for where I apply to get into the training.
[time – 8:08]
Grace: So, your program now is one year with four years training
0022: I have to apply.
Grace: You have to do the application. Is the situation the same for other students in your program?
0022: No.
Grace: Like the [her current study field]?
0022: Actually, in [her current study program], I am the only one doing it because the other students are, no.
Grace: They’re just one year?
After this one-year Masters program, I can go into research or continue the public health in medicine.
Therefore it is better for me to do this and see how it goes. My options will become more. [reason: benefiting future alternatives/opportunities]
0022: Yea, when this is finished, the Masters in [her current study program], we can do something else. Because if I do this, also, if I decide not to continue into [her current study field], this specialist or consultant. I can go into research, or I can continue to go into the public health, or other sectors in medicine, not necessary in the hospital so. It's better that I do this and see how it goes. And my option will be more, if I do this.
[time – 09:14]
Grace: So, what is your plan after your UK study, after your MSc? It seems you have more than one option.
After my UK study, it depends on how it goes. We don’t have enough doctors in my home country so we don't have any opportunity to do research when I work. I want to try research and see whether I also like research. [may try research after current study]
0022: Yea. So, it depends on how it goes.
Grace: Yea.
0022: Because this is the first time, I am doing Master of Science, in research. Because I was doing undergraduate and then I worked for six years, I didn’t have. The system in [her home country] is
because they are, they don’t have enough doctors, so when you work, you only work, you don’t have any opportunity to do research, unless you are in the university, but I was working in the government. So, all work, no research, no papers, nothing academic. So, I thought I want to try this first, this branch first, to see whether it works or not.

[time – 10:06]

Grace: So, you also want, you also like the research.

0022: And, I am.

Grace: Is this part of the reason?

Part of the reason for my further study is because I want to learn and know about research. [reason: learn and know about research]

0022: I want to. Part of the reason why I want to do this one or the one in [her home country] is because I want to learn research and know about research, how to do research and see how it is, because in [her home country], this I, they will have to know about it, but together with working. So, it’s a little bit confusing.

Grace: How about, you think about foreign degree, I mean, some have.

The one I am doing now is not accepted in my home country because internationally recognized degrees have not been updated in my country regularly since 1950s or 1970s. There is no exactly the same program in my home country so that is why I want to do in the UK. But, if I go back, I still can do the Masters in my home country because it is like something under benefits. [reason: benefit from an overseas education]

0022: Yes. Yea, the one I am doing, right now, it’s not accepted in [her home country]. But, it’s not because of that it’s not good or anything, not the quality. Moreover, the process is not updated from the 1970s or 1950s. The internationally recognized degrees have not been updated in [her home country] regularly. At this point, because [her current study program] in [her home country], there is no [her current study field], just [her current study program] and medicine. That’s another reason why I want to do in the UK. So, [her current study program] and medicine [her current study program] in [her home country] and they have, at the moment, they want the doctors to stay inside [her home country], and do the program in [her home country]. But, if I go back, I still can do the Masters in [her home country] and join them because it’s like something, like something under benefits.

[time – 12:42]

Grace: I see. So, do you plan to stay here, I mean, after your study? Stay in the UK?

It depends on my husband whether I would stay or not after my UK study. [family-related factors influences plans after overseas study]

0022: Depends on my husband. He is not doing his PhD, so that would be.

Grace: Will he study in South West?

0022: No, I don’t think so.

Grace: The same university?

0022: PhD?

Doing PhD? At the moment, he is not sure yet, when and where? But, it’s next year.

Grace: So, he plans to study in a PhD program later.

Next year after I finish my Masters, my husband will do his PhD in the UK. [my husband plans to do a PhD later]

0022: But, next year, after I finish mine, he’ll do his PhD somewhere, but also will be in the United Kingdom
Grace: Okay. So, were they [children] all born here?

My children were all born in my home country. I will follow my husband's plan. [follow family plan]

0022: No! No! All of them were in [her home country].

Grace: I see. I mean, it depends on your husband, so you will follow your husband? So, is it? If he wants to stay or to find a job here, does his status allow him to do so?

0022: Yea.

Grace: Okay.

0022: Yea, it’s easy, I mean.

Grace: so, you choose the UK and you don’t want. Have you ever thought to study in other English-speaking country? Like America or Canada?

[time – 14:04]

0022: Not really, because the system is different.

Grace: You mean, other English-speaking countries?

I didn’t think to study in other English-speaking country because the educational system is different. I have been to the United States before. Additionally, my husband has a special visa status in the UK because he was born here. The UK education is also good so we decide to come to the UK. [reason: similar educational system, good education in the UK, husband’s special visa status]

0022: Yea, I have been in the United States.

Grace: Yea.

0022: The reason for why we are here, initially, was because, not in America, not in Canada or Australia, even, because my husband has a special visa status here because he was born here, that means why the United Kingdom, but also, because the education is good, that’s why, that’s why United Kingdom.

Grace: So, mainly, I mean, it’s no matter how, international perspectives, your husband has [a special visa], you just follow him because you are married, you just follow your family, if he stay, then you just stay.

Because I am married, I follow my husband. [married, follow family plans]

0022: I stay.

Grace: Okay, so it’s for, I mean, because your case is different, this question is for all of the students, some students think they want to have, like the international perspectives, to know the global things, do you think? To gain international perspectives and know global things is an advantage for study abroad. [reason: gaining international perspectives and global knowledge]

0022: It’s an advantage because I was here before,

Grace: Yea.

I was in the UK in 1984 to 1988 when I was little (five-year-old) when my parents took their PhD in Scotland. I liked the school there. Therefore, I think it will be advantage for my children to go to school here in the UK because the education system here is better with more activities, creativity, and diversity. [reason: were in the UK before, better UK education benefits children’s education]

0022: When I was small, even I, my parents took PhDs in Scotland.

Grace: Oh! Your parents also.

0022: Yea, in the 1980s, so I was here before, in 1984 to 1988.

Grace: 1984 to 1988, when you were little?

0022: Yes, when I was five years old. So, I was here before, I like, I do quite remember a number of, I like the school there, when I was there, when I was here, before, I liked the school.

Grace: So, you liked the school before.
Urward: Yea, in Scotland. So, I was thinking, it will be the advantage for my children to go to school here, because the school, education system is better than in [her home country], for primary school, because the English, the primary school is exam oriented, they teach to answer exam questions, not so many activities, not so much creativity. Everything is writing-focused, learning for the exams.

Grace: It's quite the Asian Style.

[time – 16:45]

0022: Yes, a lot of Asian countries are like that. So, what we found that they will know the ABC and mathematics and science, subjects, but learning how to think, maybe, they don’t learn how to think by themselves, they won’t know how to, if they have a problem, they don’t know how to think outside of the box. And not a lot of cultural diversity, also, if you are in the government school. So, there is an advantage going to school here, we like what they really teach children in primary schools here.

Because of my special childhood experience/situation, I would like my children have the same experiences as me. [special childhood experience in the UK, expecting similar UK educational experiences to my children]

Grace: Yea, so, I think, because of your special situation, you also think to. For your children's education, you will like them to.

0022: Have the same experience.

Grace: Like you, and study here. So, do you want them to study all the time, all their life. Or, will you go back? I mean, do you have the, how was your adjustment?, I mean, you studied here, when you went back ...

0022: Yea, it was difficult when I went back, adjusted to the system because, here they study, including a lot of playing. But, except from that, I will let my children to have religious study also, because we are Muslims. I will also let my children to have religious study because we are Muslims. [keeping cultural identity]

Grace: You mean, here?

0022: Yea, here. Even in [her home country], the curriculum has religion, but, because Muslim is the religion in [her home country], the majority are Muslims

Grace: Yea.

0022: But, here, they are Christian so the religion is Christian at school. So, if they continue to study here, they will have to go to another school, to balance their study and the religious study.

When my children study here, they will also have to go to another school in order to balance their study and religious study. [normal and religious education for children]

Grace: Is there any school here that has the?

0022: The Mosque.

Grace: School education and the religion?

The Mosque has an Islamic school in London and some other cities, but not in South West. [religious school in London]

0022: They have Islamic schools.

Grace: Really?

0022: Mostly, in London, they had, some of the cities in, not in South West.
APPENDIX IX
Individuality of Interviewed Participants

There were twenty-six interviewees taking part in two qualitative semi-structured interviews. In this section, each interviewee’s individuality is briefly reported as follows:

Participant 0001 was a first-year PhD student in the College of Live and Environmental Sciences. His wife and children were in Africa. Before studying in the UK, he was a university lecturer in his home country. His career goal was to be a university professor. Work pressure made him need to upgrade his educational degree. His wife was working in a university pursuing her PhD studies. He went to an international Christian church every Sunday (if he was not too busy) and Bible studies every Friday. He had good interaction with his church friends. Because of current financial support from his previous university work sponsored by the government for a staff training and development program, he had to go back to serve in his country after graduation. His reason for studying at USW was the lack of a requirement for a language exam. He believed Britain colonized his home country, which belonged to one of the commonwealth nations so he refused to take the language exam and his English ability should not be discriminated against. Britain was his first travel abroad country. The geographical distance between his home country and Britain motivated him to study in the UK. He disagreed with some concepts for children’s education but agreed to allow his children to study in the UK for postgraduate studies in the future. He preferred to keep some African traditions. He had good progress with good interaction with his supervisors. Sometimes he also attended some research training programs. Generally, his academic and socio-cultural adjustments were quite good.

Participant 0002 was a first-year PhD student in the College of Engineering, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. His wife and daughter lived with him in the UK. His daughter went to a local primary school with good adjustment. His wife found a job as a hair dresser from the second term. He was quite happy with the situation. With strong Muslim faith, he believed that he could achieve any goal he wanted. Among the interviewees, he was the first person emphasizing how religion played an important role in his life adjustment. Before studying in the UK, he was a university lecture and department chair in his home country. He still needed to find more financial support although his previous job offered him the first-year financial support. From the second term, he started to be a lecturer in statistics in his department but the income was not much. He positively and actively used the university insessional language support resources and had good interaction with his supervisors. With active participation in some activities for international students, his socio-cultural adjustment was good. He appreciated the multi-faith chaplaincy at the university and hoped to make more friends with students from different countries. He thought that social network was also very important for his future career.
At the beginning, he was not happy that his supervisor changed his research direction but he then realized the advice was correct and better.

**Participant 0003** was a first-year PhD student in the Graduate School of Education. She was married lived with her daughter in South West. Before her UK studies, she studied a PhD in the US. For her husband’s visa problem, she was requested by him and her father to transfer study in the UK but she then regretted doing so. She missed her US university, studies, and classmates a lot. Initially she was very dissatisfied with the UK environment. Later her husband also apologized for his request and the decision. Time management was a big problem because she had to look after her baby who was her life priority. Her family’s socio-economic status was above average in her home country. Because of her father’s job, she often had opportunities to travel abroad when she grew up. She did not have a good experience with a local taxi driver. This experience especially made her not to have expectations toward later socio-cultural experiences. One of her British neighbors was her classmate; she often interacted with this neighbor who also often proofread her writing. She did well and got used to academic things although they were difficult at the beginning. At the beginning it was difficult for her to trust a stranger to take care of her baby but it became better gradually. She paid a childminder to take care of her baby when she needed to stay outside. She tried to expose her baby to a multi-lingual environment. She also got familiar with local people so she gradually did not have strong responses to them.

**Participant 0004** was a European Masters student in the Graduate School of Education. Several years ago he knew a USW professor who introduced him to the Masters research program. He also had been busy in his business in his home country although currently he lived and studied hard in South West. Because of this situation, he did not have time for social activities. He only invited his classmates to his place for meals because he believed that it was important to have some communication and interaction with his classmates. He felt British food was simple and not healthy as that in his home country. He criticized and had different opinions about the lectures but his academic performance was very good. He thought it was important to get the scholarship for further PhD studies. Without scholarship, he would not spend much money and time for PhD studies in the UK. He contacted his partner and colleagues for work through the Internet. He flew back to his home countries few times. He did not attend any religious services or student societies. He was the oldest among the interviewees.

**Participant 0005** was a first-year PhD student in the College of Humanities. He wished to teach at USW but his insufficient English hindered the opportunity. From the second term, he started a part-time job in a restaurant. His previous housemates were loud and bothered him a lot at midnight. The housing problem was solved by his landlord. He had good interaction with his supervisor who also helped him to get any academic resources. He encouraged international
students to interact with students from different countries. He thought local nationals and international students did not have real interaction. With a supportive supervisor and good academic adjustment, he was happy with his academic experience because he had improved a lot of skills, especially English ability. He thought his background knowledge in his field was good enough to compete with some professors. He didn’t like it when British scholars only drew people’s attention to their own research foci, indicating it was quite self-centered and no other perspectives were allowed to get involved. Freedom of discussion was his deepest UK academic impression. He thought English was obviously a big problem for him: especially, expressing himself and what he wanted to say. He used the university insessional English support resources to improve his English. The serious corruption in his home country made him decide to study abroad.

**Participant 0006** was an African Master student in the Medical School. Her husband and two children were in Africa. This was her first time to leave her country. She often cried at the beginning because she missed her family a lot. She also cried during the first interview. She contacted her family everyday through the Internet. A university lecturer was her job before studying abroad. Work pressure made her need to upgrade her educational degree. Her husband encouraged her a lot and told her that she had the mission to study well in order to teach students in her home country. She planned to pursue PhD studies later but hoped to do it online or through long distance learning because she did not want to separate from her family. She planned to first work for at least one year in her home country after graduation. Near the end of her studies, she was quite happy because she looked forward to seeing her family soon. With her first experience with snow, she did not like the overly cold UK weather and thought the cold weather was not so friendly to her. Initially she was not familiar with issues regarding plagiarism but used the university insessional English support lessons to overcome the relevant problems and improve her academic writing. A USW scholarship, which covered tuition fees, made her studying abroad possible. She went to a Catholic church near the student dormitory and had friendship with a nice local lady. She had good academic performance and interaction with her classmates.

**Participant 0007** was an Asian Masters student in the Graduate School of Education. He did not like the UK drinking culture so he tried to find ways for adjustment. Setting up a cram school in English teaching in his home country was his career goal. Speaking his mother tongue or watching TV programs in his native language was how he relaxed himself after the school. He thought to be a more humane way in addition to the formal study at school and English speaking all the time. Every Tuesday he participated in a Chinese Kung-fu class with local British people and had good interaction with the local people. The British Kung-fu teacher became his good friend. His academic performance was good. His girlfriend also studied at USW so he was together with his girlfriend in most of the leisure time. They had traveling experiences to many countries.
and loved it a lot. A bad experience in Peru made him decide to have a cram school in order to teach students how to introduce his home country to people in English. He mentioned that his multiple previous traveling experiences might make his socio-cultural adjustment different from the U-curve hypothesis. A one-year UK Masters program was good for him to finish his studies early.

**Participant 0008** was a first-year PhD student in the College of Humanities. She was single and under thirty. Before her USW studies, she worked in England for one year. Her academic performance was good but she had more expectation for herself. She felt isolated without a very huge social life because she studied and worked a lot and didn’t go out to socialize much. She often used the university insessional English support lessons to improve her language skills. She also taught her mother tongue to the beginners at USW. She also used the university academic resources for teaching and research skills training. In January, she moved to live with a British family and had good interaction with them. Her previous housemates were loud and bothered her peace. Except for a British girl who was her friend’s friend, she did not know many local British people. She also knew other PhD students from her home country. She liked the casual, informal, and flexible interactions and relationships with her supervisor and thought professors in her program were very helpful. Her boyfriend worked in Newcastle so she often visited him during the weekend. She went to a pub in October and did not think pubs in the UK were good places to meet because people were drunken and loud there. She preferred the quiet pubs with light music. She expected to have her own office for studying and teaching although currently she shared an office with her colleagues. She did not plan to follow the traditional pattern to get married although she relied on her boyfriend a lot.

**Participant 0009** was a European Masters student in the Graduate School of Education. She loved to interact with students from different countries but hesitated to interact with local people. She only interacted with her British classmates because she felt they were nice. At the beginning, she could not understand British accent and felt frustrated when local people could not understand her English. She felt British people hid their real emotions and wished they would honestly tell people what they really thought and how they exactly felt. She was not used to this way and preferred the clear way to show one’s real inner emotions as in her home country. Coming from southern Europe, she thought people in northern Europe felt they were superior to people in southern Europe. Sometimes she had arguments with her German housemate but they generally lived together well. She decided to study in England because the economic situation in her home country was not good and she did not have a stable job. She hoped to have a regular job and teach in a public school in her home country after graduation.

**Participant 0010** was a Master student in the Business School. He studied very hard with good academic performance (above average). His spoken English improved significantly by the
second interview. He regularly went to a church near the university dormitory. He managed his
time very well and was very responsible for his studies. The most unforgettable experience for
him was that he studied and read the textbooks everyday on the trip to Spain with his brother and
friends during the Christmas holiday. Through this way, he passed all of his exams after the
holidays. He had good interaction and relationship with other international students. Most of the
time he especially interacted with his study group members. Compared to other interviewees, he
tended to be more satisfied with his academic and socio-cultural adjustments and various life
needs. He advised good language skills and sufficient background knowledge for prospective
international students to gain academic successes. As a postgraduate student, he thought the U-
curve hypothesis related more to undergraduate students and it did not fit his personal situation.

**Participant 0011** was an Asian Masters student in the Business School. Critical thinking and
issues related to plagiarism were difficult for him but he did not actively ask for help or use the
official academic resources to improve the situation. Therefore, these difficulties still somewhat
influenced his academic performance in the second term. He thought the situation needed time
to be improved naturally although he did ask for help from his teachers. He was a leader of the
Black Dance Society and a committee member of the International Society. He was busy for his
studies and the two student societies so he did not have much time for local cultural engagement.
He had higher expectations for what and how he should serve for the two student societies. He
followed his family to live and study in Europe during the high school period and received
undergraduate education in his home country. Many of his friends had study-abroad experience
so he was also influenced by them to receive an overseas postgraduate education.

**Participant 0012** was a Masters student in the College of Life and Environmental Sciences. She
came to the UK for postgraduate studies right after her undergraduate graduation. She was from
an English speaking country in North America but she still found some language differences in
the UK. She knew to ask for academic advice from the relevant professors and had good
interaction with them. She had good academic performance and friendship with both British and
international students. Her career goal was to work in an academic field so she planned to
pursue PhD studies later. Sometimes she participated in activities from student clubs or
societies. She missed driving a car and was used to buying everything just in one store;
however, she had to buy things separately in different stores in South West. Because of cultural
similarity and no language problem, she adjusted well academically and socio-culturally. She
encouraged international students to interact with people from different countries.

**Participant 0013** was a Masters student in the Business School. This was her second time to
study in the Business School at USW. She received the financial support from her government
in her first USW studies so she returned and served her home country after graduation about two
years ago. Desiring to stay and work in the UK, she decided to come back to study in a similar
program at USW. With good academic performance and socio-cultural adjustment, she thought British culture was similar to her home culture. Sometimes she still contacted and interacted with her old friends from her first MA studies. The academic work was not difficult for her because she studied in a similar field before. She did not participate in any student societies. She prayed but did not attend any religious services.

**Participant 0014** was a European Masters student in the Graduate School of Education. She was married but her husband was in her home country. She tended to get nervous easily although her English and academic performance (above average) were very good. She missed her husband and family a lot. Her British friend invited her to a local military music concert and she enjoyed it. She usually interacted with a female student in the student dormitory. Without good mathematical skills, she struggled to answer the additional evaluation questions at the end of the second interview. Her religion was Muslim. She also joined the French Society in the first term because she studied French before. Before studying in the UK, she taught English and French at a university in her home country. Her career goal was to be a teacher. She desired to pursue her PhD after some practical work experiences after graduation. She wanted to broaden her eyes and experience English culture through studying abroad. It was easier for her to understand British elderly people’s English because she felt it was more like British English and the speed was slower.

**Participant 0015** was a Masters student in the College of Social Sciences and International Studies. She participated in the university horse-riding and tennis clubs and had good interaction with the members. She also joined the Politics Society. She went to India as a volunteer before her UK studies and thought that going to India was a big culture shock for her. With traveling experiences to different European countries, she decided to study in England because she wanted to improve her English and increase her future competitiveness. Although the British educational system was different from that in her home country, she greatly appreciated the UK quality of education. Life in the UK was similar to life in her home country because the UK and her home country both are in Europe. She had good interaction with her British housemates and liked British food. She planned and preferred to work in the US in the future. Her British friend in London recommended USW to her. She first came to England as an eleven-year-old exchange student. At sixteen, she came to England again for a one-month visit. Initially she had academic difficulty in criticality but she overcame it later. The university insessional English support lessons were helpful for her English. She felt English people were very welcoming and helpful. She had good socio-cultural adjustment and was satisfied with her UK academic experiences. Her family SES is a little bit above average in her home country and her parents financially supported her to study in the UK. She went to a Catholic church every Sunday so religion was part of her life.
Participant 0016 was a first-year PhD student in the College of Engineering, Mathematics, and Physical Studies. He studied Masters in his home country. His Master’s supervisor worked at USW before so this supervisor introduced him to his current studies. Before his study application, he also frequented his research center at USW for about one month. He was excellent in his home country because his university was one of the top universities and students needed to take exams for pursuing Masters Studies. Studying abroad was a popular trend for students at top universities in his home country. With good academic performance, he had more expectations for himself. He also participated in the university table tennis club as a top player. He was invited to his colleague’s house for a traditional British meal and was curious about the different eating habits. He liked to keep the living styles or cultural habits from his home country and disliked the British eating or food styles.

Participant 0017 was an Asian Masters student in the Business school. He did his school application through an agent. With strong background knowledge in the field, his academic adjustment was quite good. He got 100% for one of his exams in the first term and was sure that he would be admitted to PhD studies at USW. He participated in the community action club and had one experience in doing service. His mother was a professor in a famous university in his home country so his career goal was also to be a university professor. His parents also wanted him to study abroad to broaden his horizon and know new things. They expected him to study a PhD in the UK. He still had some problems related to language skills although he adjusted well academically. He went to Denmark for a 20-day summer school exchange program two years ago. This short-term abroad experience taught him to be brave, to experience Western style education, to try something new, to communicate with Westerners, and to learn things from them. Short-term study-abroad exchange programs were getting popular in his home country because universities had become more internationalized and cooperation more with universities in other countries. He felt the UK educational resources were better. He had good interaction with professors and asked for help from them if he needed.

Participant 0018 was an Asian Masters student in the Graduate School of Education. He felt he experienced culture shock because he had a lot of expectations and his expectations could not be satisfied. He mentioned that it was better not to have any expectations because more expectations only caused more dissatisfaction. As a Buddhist, he was open to any religion. He also participated in some Christian activities with other international students but sometimes he also doubted and questioned Christianity. He was not confident in his English so he liked to tell people that his undergraduate major was in philosophy but not in English. There were not many students from his home country so he interacted with students from different countries. He attended various student activities and tried to obtain various experiences. He also participated in the scuba diving club and did activities with many undergraduate students. He liked philosophy very much and thought the philosophical discussions outside of the formal classroom
setting was more interesting than the regular courses. Generally he had good academic and socio-cultural adjustments.

Participant 0019 was an Asian Master student in the College of Social Sciences and International Studies. He was a police officer in his home country. He found it difficult to build relationships or have interaction with British young people; however, some elderly host people were very nice to him. His relationship and interaction with his international classmates was quite good but he felt that his British classmates seemed to dislike interacting with international students. He invited all of his classmates for a paintball activity but his British classmates did not join. Issues related to plagiarism were not emphasized so much in his home country but he had learned how to avoid plagiarism in the UK. He did not think critical thinking was important in his home country because they only needed to learn how to implement things. Generally, he had good academic experiences and adjustment. He would like to send his sister to study in the UK in the future. He traveled to other European countries during winter vacation and thought Spanish were kinder and friendlier to help him than British. The green and safe environment in South West made him have the deepest impression.

Participant 0020 was a European Masters student in the College of Life and Environmental Sciences. She was a licensed psychological therapist in her home country. She obtained a Masters degree in psychology, psychological therapy, and counseling in her home country. Her USW Masters study was very different from her previous studies so her academic performance was not so good (below average). She needed help with proofreading. A part-time job in a health center allowed her to have some income and keep practicing her previous training. Her English improved with more confidence in spoken English in the second interview. Her career plan was to be an expert in her current study field. She desired to work in animal sanctuaries or shelters in Africa. This was her dream although it was also a challenge for her. She generally adjusted well socio-culturally.

Participant 0021 was a European Masters student in the Business School. She completed her bachelor’s degree in London right before starting her Masters study at USW. Her family was originally from Africa and immigrated to Europe more than ten years ago. She received elementary education in English in Africa because English was an official language. She went to a Christian religious service every Sunday and had good interaction with religious students or local persons. Most of her friends were African students. She had gotten used to the European culture and life style. With quite good socio-cultural adjustment, she did not feel much difference between Britain and her country. Due to a lack of fundamental background knowledge, she especially struggled and needed help with learning a study subject. She finally passed it with a low mark (via her friends’ assistance) although she did not have good experiences with her teachers in the process. She worked hard with good academic performance
and two distinctions in four exams. Her opinions were quite honest and constructive although they sounded negative. She was very mature and rational to analyze things or her experiences.

**Participant 0022** studied in a Masters program in the Medical School. She was married and had three children. She was a medical doctor in her home country. Her husband was a research fellow at USW while she pursued her Masters studies. Her husband studied a Masters in London before so her family stayed there for one year. After her Masters studies, her husband planned to do his PhD. She studied in a UK elementary school when her parents studied in the UK before. Her husband was born in the UK so he had a special visa to stay in the UK. Living near an elementary school allowed her two children to attend the school conveniently. Like other married interviewees, she focused more on her family and children so time management was a difficulty for her studies. She expected to have more taught lessons in her program since it was a taught program. With good academic performance, she expected to get distinction.

**Participant 0023** was an African Masters student in the College of Life and Environmental Sciences. His academic performance was very good. He had full-time work experience in a bank in his home country for few years. He had received a PhD admission from Sheffield University and waited for the scholarship application around the second interview. He mainly interacted and had good experiences with international students in the student dormitory. He started his part-time job in South West from February. Before studying abroad, he had already read the relevant information regarding British life and culture so he had prepared ahead for his UK adjustment. With strong Christian faith and positive attitudes, he was confident of his ability so religion played an important role in his life. Sometimes he contacted his cousin working in Newcastle. He also had an uncle in Scotland but he had not visited him. With very good academic performance, he often expected to use the laboratory facility for experiments but he still had no opportunity. He was surprised that the development of some big cities in his home country was similar to that in the UK. Without scholarship for the PhD studies, he might give up the opportunity.

**Participant 0024** studied in a PhD program in the College of Social Sciences and International Studies. She was married with one child, about ten. USW scholarship was very helpful for her financial situation. She studied in the same program for her Masters degree at USW. Her husband did not live with them when she did her masters studies but had lived with them since she started her PhD. She then had more time for herself because her husband would take care of their child. She was open to her child to immerse in the multicultural environment. She was very busy with her studies and research. She used the university counseling service for an important event in her life. She prepared to go to Turkey for her field work later. She attended a Yoga class outside of the university and did not have any religious beliefs.
**Participant 0025** was a Middle Eastern Masters student in the College of Social Sciences and International Studies. He worked as a school teacher in general sciences and chemistry for four years in an international school in Abitibi before UK studies. His current studies were different from his undergraduate major but he took some relevant courses before. With above average academic performance, he expected himself to write assignments at a native speaker’s level. He shared kitchen and bathroom with other international students and had a very good relationship with one male student studying in the same institution as him. It was normal and common for people in his home country to work or study in a different country. He did not believe in God although he was from a Muslim family. He also went to pubs to drink wine. His responses to the interview questions were honest and helpful although he was very tired physically in the second interview. He had some British friends who introduced him about British culture and still kept in touch with them since he worked in Abitibi. He studied in an American university in his home country before and expected to pursue PhD studies later in an English speaking country. He also did Masters applications to universities in the US but did not get admitted. He participated in the community action club to serve in a local elementary school for children from his home country.

**Participant 0026** was an Asian Masters student in the Business School. Her undergraduate major was completely different from her current studies. Without too much expectation for her academic performance, she did not have clear goals for her studies and recognized she did not push herself to study hard. She only wanted to pass the courses and meet the basic standards. With a part-time job in a restaurant, she felt very dissatisfied with British food. She loved cooking and had learned how to make different Western desserts. She chose and made friends very carefully because she was from a good family with the same emphasis. She went with her Taiwanese friend to a Christian activity every Friday night but did not go to church on Sunday. If given the chance again, she would like to study in a big city instead of USW.


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