

Effective intercultural communication is key to making international students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel supported and comfortable. International students often come from cultures with different **communication styles**, expectations, and social norms. While some cultures prioritize direct communication, others rely on indirect or high-context communication, where meaning is inferred rather than explicitly stated. Another key difference is **the concept of time**. Understanding and respecting these differences can prevent misunderstandings and create a more inclusive environment.

Engaging in **small talk about neutral topics** can make students feel more at ease. It is crucial to remember, however, that cultural norms about small talk topics vary. In some cultures, discussing personal matters, such as family or relationships, may be considered inappropriate, while in others, it is a sign of warmth and interest. Here are some universally safe topics:

- **the weather:** "How are you adjusting to the weather here?"
- **the academic experience:** "How are your classes going so far?"
- **local attractions:** "Have you had a chance to explore the city?"
- **food:** "Are there any local dishes you like?"

These light conversations can create a friendly atmosphere and encourage students to reach out for administrative support when needed. Using **polite and clear language** to ensure students understand procedures and feel respected is also very important.

TIPS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF PART 3

Creating a welcoming environment for international students: intercultural communication in administrative support

Some international students may not be familiar with the bureaucratic terms or formalities common in academic administration. To facilitate understanding:

- **Use simple and clear language - instead of saying,** "Please submit your documentation in due course," **say,** "Please send your documents by (specific date)."
- **Be patient and reassuring - if a student struggles to understand a requirement, rephrase it:** "Let me explain it in another way."
- **Avoid idioms - phrases such as** "it doesn't hold water" **or** "hit the ground running" **may be confusing.**
- **Encourage questions:** "Please feel free to ask if anything is unclear."

To conclude, administrative offices are in most cases the first points of contact for foreign students at the

university. A welcoming and supportive environment fosters a positive experience for international students and contributes to their academic success. By understanding cultural differences, engaging in inclusive small talk, and using polite and clear language, administrative staff can bridge communication gaps and create a more equitable university setting. With thoughtful communication, international students can feel truly at home, no matter how far they have travelled.

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