

# Welcome



# Stenden university



Thinking ahead recruitment & advising international students with disabilities



# Counselling International Students

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# Main Points

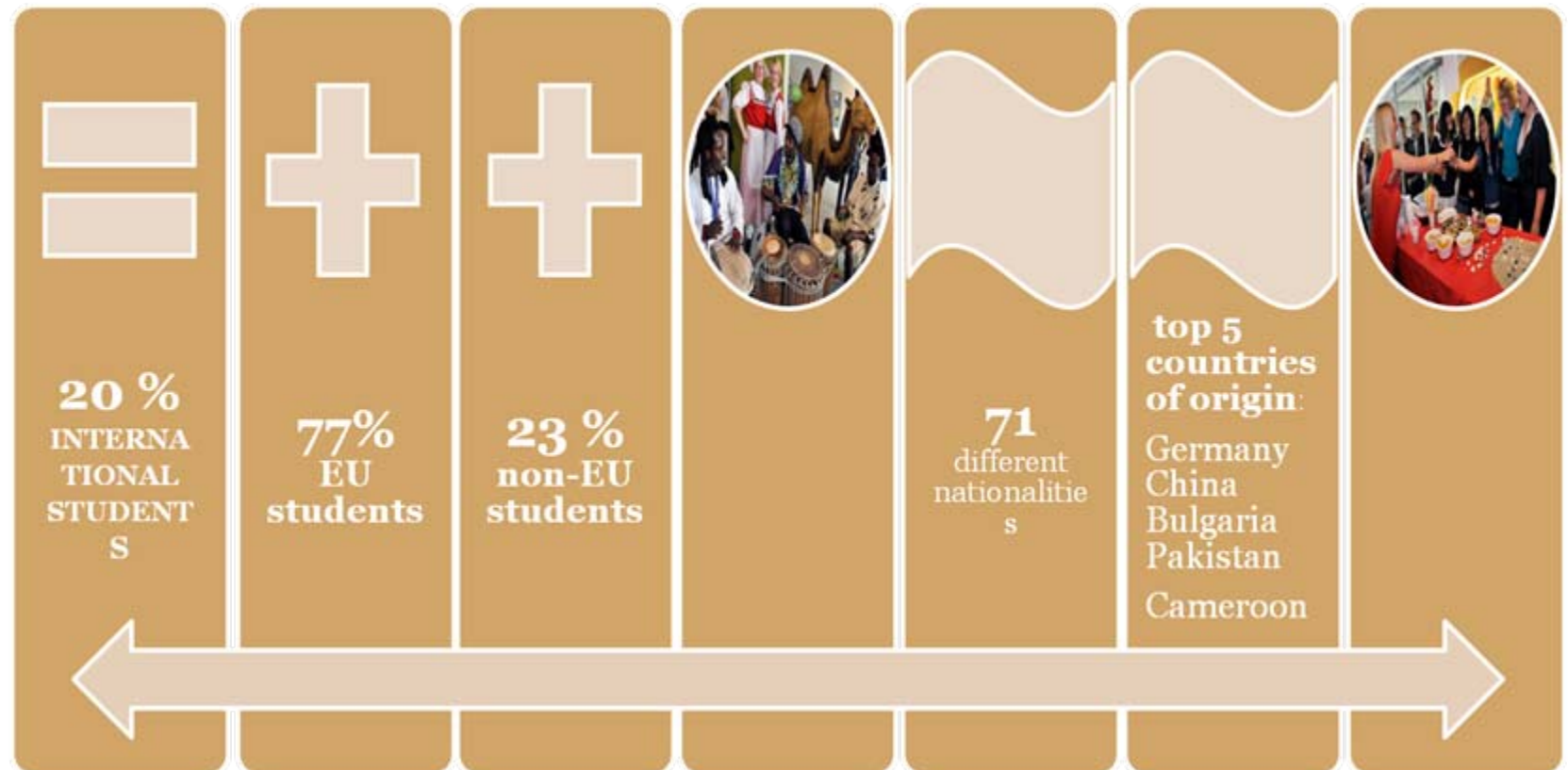
1. Facts and Figures
2. The Student Counselling Office at Stenden University
3. Challenges in counselling international students
4. Dilemmas of a student counsellor
5. Conclusions and suggestions

# Locations and Programmes

## **Stenden University of Applied Sciences**

- › 5 locations inside Netherlands
- › Grand Tour: campus sites in Qatar, South Africa, Thailand and Indonesia
- › 8 international bachelor and 3 master programmes
- › About 10.000 Dutch and international full-course students in 2008-2009

## International Students: Statistics



# Support Services

**Individual level** - direct contact to student counsellor

**Programme level** - obligatory contact with mentor

**Stenden level** - student counsellor, International Office

**External referrals** - psychologists, social support and legal advice

# The Student Counselling Office

- › Independent and confidential
- › Individual talks
- › Group training

# Areas of Counselling

1. Academic problems
2. Study choice questions
3. Financial and legal issues
4. Personal and cultural problems

# Academic Problems

## Different academic culture

- › Group-work
- › Problem-based learning
- › Teacher-student relation
- › Plagiarism
- › Self organised and individual learning
- › Planning problems
- › High ambition vs. low ambition

# What the counsellor does

- › Makes differences in academic systems explicit
- › Encourages students to speak up in class
- › Provides training in time management and planning
- › Provides training in study skills

# Study Choice Questions

Choice of studies are often

- › not based on own decision and passion
- › the wish of parents
- › due to status of (European) certificate
- › not well enough prepared
- › due to less access to good information

# Change of Programme

- › Restrictive immigration laws
- › Financial problems
- › Parents and family

Quit study or temporarily stop: loss of face

# What the counsellor does

- › Advises on study choice respecting cultural restrictions
- › Employs a “soft empowerment” approach
- › Offers support in making difficult choices

# Financial and Legal Issues (1)

## International students (especially non-EU)

- › Many structural financial problems
- › Circumstances at home create financial problems
- › Housing problems
- › Weak social network

# Financial and Legal Issues (2)

## Immigration and educational laws

- › Higher tuition fees
- › Few structural grants
- › Restrictive working permits
- › Limited emergency funds
- › Restrictive immigration laws
- › Less support by Dutch educational laws

# What the counsellor does

- › Pioneering in finding solutions
- › Cooperating with the International Office
- › Informing decision makers about missing (financial) support
- › Creating network of dedicated counsellors
- › Communicating bad news

## Personal Problems

*International students can have  
all the personal and psychological  
problems domestic students have*

—

*plus some extra ones*

# Stress

More stress due to practical and financial problems

- › Some might “choose” for illegal work or worse
- › Small problems become big (buy stolen bike)
- › Catch 22 situations

# Cultural Adaptation Problems

- › Culture shock (liberal Dutch life in and outside university)
- › Lack of balance in sex, drugs, partying
- › Some feel discriminated against
- › Contact limited to own ethnic group
- › Learn how to run household (cooking, cleaning)
- › Loss of social status

# Home-sickness and Loneliness

- › Isolation at home with computer
- › Difficult to make contact with domestic students
- › No family and friends around for practical and emotional support

# Some Culture Related Problems

- › Pressure from family to be successful  
(financial aspect and loss of face)
  
- › Honour related issues/violence

# Health Problems

- › Limited health insurance coverage
- › Less support services provided for temporary & chronic illnesses and disabilities
- › Cultural differences in dealing with illness
- › Lack of trust in Dutch health system

# What the counsellor does

- › Maintains a respectful and open minded attitude
- › Makes cultural differences explicit
- › Informs about rights and duties
- › Looks for unusual solutions
- › Helps to find balance in value conflict
- › Creates/uses network of cultural experts inside university
- › Makes external referrals to culturally sensitive organizations

# The Dilemmas of a Student Counsellor (1)

- › Not knowing the underlying causes of failure to use support services offered
- › My attitude towards students as a self-reliant individual  
How far should I go in helping and supporting?
- › Individualistic culture vs. group culture ?

## The Dilemmas of a Student Counsellor (2)

- › How do I make a good diagnosis? Is it culture shock, home-sickness, a psychological or even a psychiatric problem?
  
- › To whom can I refer students? How do I find culturally sensitive English speaking psychologists, social workers, etc.?

## The Dilemmas of a Student Counsellor (3)

- › Support services still don't cover basic needs of international students
- › Leads to extremely difficult Catch 22 situations (pregnant students, chronically ill students, complex special circumstances)  
My feeling of injustice and helplessness

# Conclusions and Suggestions

1. Offer low-cost support services inside university
2. Create emergency fund for international students
3. Raise cultural awareness and knowledge inside university
4. Refer externally to culturally aware partners
5. Improve information policy for incoming students
6. Advise decision makers and create networks

Thank you  
for your  
attention



**Stenden**  
university

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