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direct entry Chinese
students through cross-
cultural awareness,
creativity, enterprise,
scholarship and autonomy

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Introduction

The Greenwich Business School has experienced a significant increase in the number of Chinese Direct Entry (CDE) students. Pursuing higher education in the UK can be a transformative journey for CDE students, however, CDE students may face academic culture shock due to their distinct educational backgrounds compared to those already within the UK education system (Bai and Wang, 2022). This challenge becomes more pronounced for CDE students at the University of Greenwich (UoG), especially since their programme lasts only one year. They find themselves entering the final year alongside peers who are already accustomed to the University's environment.

Upon entering UK higher education (HE), Chinese students commonly experience an adjustment period as they adapt to a new teaching and learning approach. The Chinese education system typically places a strong emphasis on conformity, memorisation and hierarchical relationships between students and teachers. In contrast, the UK education system places a higher value on personal expression, critical thinking and individual initiative. In the UK, students are expected to take responsibility for their own education, actively participate in class discussions and independently engage with the material.

In this blog, we explore the benefits of incorporating the Greenwich Graduate Attributes (GGA), encompassing 'Cross-Cultural Awareness, Creativity and Enterprise, and Scholarship and Autonomy', to support class activities. This integration aims to assist CDE students in adapting to the UK learning environment, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience and future prospects. The GGA represent explicit behaviours, values, skills and dispositions that students are expected to develop to prepare them for their future careers.

Cross-cultural awareness: bridging the gap

Understanding and appreciating cultural differences is crucial in a globalised world. Cross-cultural awareness is a graduate attribute that goes beyond merely understanding cultural differences. It involves actively engaging with diverse perspectives and appreciating the richness that cultural diversity brings. For CDE students, exposure to diverse cultural perspectives fosters a deeper understanding of global issues and prepares them for success in an international context. However, adapting to the UK academic and social environment can be daunting for CDE students. Hence, incorporating cross-cultural awareness in classroom activities would help break down barriers, create a harmonious learning atmosphere, and foster effective communication and a global mindset, which is invaluable in today's interconnected world.

To enhance cross-cultural awareness among CDE students, seminars on culture shock, culture differences and understanding of the impact of culture are organised. Guest speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds are invited to share their experiences and insights. Group global case studies are assigned to the students, with group sizes designed to be approximately five or six students per group to ensure an equitable distribution of

responsibilities. Global case studies require students to analyse and understand the cultural context of business practices, social issues and historical events. Global case studies expose Chinese students to diverse cultures, practices and business environments from around the world. By examining real-world scenarios from various cultural contexts, students can gain insights into the complexities of cross-cultural interactions, enhance their understanding of diverse perspectives and prepare for success in an interconnected and culturally diverse environment.

Creativity and enterprise: nurturing innovation

The rapidly evolving global landscape demands graduates who can think creatively, innovate and navigate complex challenges. The graduate attribute of 'Creativity and Enterprise' equips students with the ability to think critically, solve problems creatively and embrace entrepreneurial opportunities. For CDE students, this attribute not only enhances their academic performance but also prepares them for the dynamic and competitive global job market. Developing a creative mindset and entrepreneurial skills allows these students to approach challenges with innovation and resilience, better preparing them for the dynamic challenges of the professional world.

Group projects are employed to engage students in solving real-world business issues. Instead of relying solely on theoretical concepts, the project encourages CDE students to actively apply their acquired business management knowledge. Through the group project, the students are tasked with developing their own business ideas and formulating appropriate solutions. Actively engaging in group assignments, they must articulate their concepts clearly and adeptly through group presentations. The creativity and communication skills acquired in group work enhance student employability. Incorporating creativity into the project encourages students to think beyond conventional boundaries and generate innovative solutions. This not only enriches the student learning experience but also prepares them to tackle real-world challenges with fresh perspectives. CDE students are also encouraged to join mentorship programs where they can connect with professionals in their field of interest. Mentors can provide guidance, share insights, and inspire students to think innovatively about their future careers.

Scholarship and autonomy: fostering independent thinkers

The emphasis on 'Scholarship and Autonomy' empowers students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. Developing a strong sense of scholarship involves not only excelling academically but also actively seeking knowledge beyond the classroom. Autonomy, on the other hand, empowers students to take control of their learning journey, enabling them to explore their interests and develop a deeper understanding of their chosen field. CDE students come from an educational system that emphasises rote learning and structured environments. Scholarship opportunities provide them with the chance to adapt to a more interactive and research-oriented approach in the UK, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. Autonomy in decision-making and learning enables the CDE students to

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adapt to the UK's academic and cultural environment more easily. It encourages them to take initiative, seek resources and integrate into the broader academic community.

Libraries play a crucial role in supporting students as they navigate through their course of study (Weaver, 2013). Thus, we collaborate with a business-specialised academic services librarian to acquaint CDE students with various library services and demonstrate the techniques for accessing the UoG's resources. In these sessions, academic tutors actively contribute by detailing the information or data required for their modules. This collaborative approach reflects a comprehensive team effort, showcasing the cooperation between academic and non-academic staff to provide essential information to CDE students.

CDE students also receive explanations of Harvard referencing during four one-hour classroom-based support sessions. These sessions are crucial as Chinese students need to learn and adapt to the academic referencing systems used in the UK, which may differ from those used in China. To ensure an engaging and effective learning experience, the content of these sessions is conveyed through interactive question and answer activities. Followed by the library and referencing sessions, case studies are employed to allow CDE students to address real-world business issues. Guiding these case studies, tutors emphasise student-centred learning, encouraging active engagement, personal responsibility for learning, participation in class discussions and a shift away from relying solely on tutors to provide all necessary information (Oseni et al., 2022). The discussions on real business case support CDE students in enhancing their engagement with scholarly research in business management and developing and presenting their critical responses to issues.

Conclusion

Incorporating the graduate attributes of 'Cross-Cultural Awareness, Creativity and Enterprise, and Scholarship and Autonomy' into the education of CDE students at UoG is a strategic investment in their future success. Beyond academic excellence, these attributes prepare the students for the challenges of an increasingly globalised world, instilling in them the skills and mindset necessary for leadership and innovation. As CDE students embrace these qualities, they not only contribute to the diversity and richness of the academic community but also position themselves as well-rounded individuals ready to thrive in a globalised and competitive world.

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