Building Rapport Between International Graduate Students and Their Faculty Advisors: Cross Cultural Mentoring Relationships at the University of Guelph

by

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ABSTRACT

BUILDING RAPPORT BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR FACULTY ADVISORS: CROSS CULTURE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

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Most graduate students are required to work closely with their faculty advisors to successfully complete their graduate studies. Mentoring graduate students is very challenging, even when both the student and faculty have similar cultural values. To the degree most international students have a different culture from that of Canadians, the challenge for international graduate students to adapt to their new environment, and for their faculty advisors to understand and work well with them is significantly increased. This research explored the relationships, experiences and challenges of international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph, through focus group discussions, semi-structured face-to-face interviews and online surveys. Language barriers and financial difficulties were among the major challenges international students face adapting to their academic and social environment and working with their faculty advisors. Understanding graduate student and advisor formal responsibilities and expectations are important to building good student-advisor relationships.
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List of Terms and Abbreviations

AI: Academic Integrity
BUDDY: Office of Intercultural Affairs Mentoring Program
CBE: College of Business and Economics
CBS: College of Biological Science
CHROMA Project: Office of Intercultural Affairs Mentoring Program
COA: College of Arts
COU: Council of Ontario Universities
CPES: College of Physical and Engineering Science
CSAHS: College of Social & Applied Human Science
LINK Program: Office of Intercultural Affairs Mentoring Program
OAC: Ontario Agricultural College
OIA: Office of Intercultural Affairs
OpenEd: Open Learning and Educational Support
OVC: Ontario Veterinary College
U of G: University of Guelph
Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of Purpose

This research explores relationships between international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph; including both the challenges international graduate students face adapting to their new academic and social environment and the challenges faculty advisors face advising these students. Also described are the major benefits and challenges to cross-cultural mentoring in graduate school, as well as best practices to building effective advisory relationships. The primary purpose of this study is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and their international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication.

Introduction

International students are defined as “students who are not permanent residents of their country of study, or students who received their prior education in another country regardless of their citizenship” (World Education Services, 2010, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, international students are defined as people who are on student visas in Canada and pay international student fees at the University of Guelph. Faculty advisors refer to faculty members who supervise graduate students at the University of Guelph. The terms students and international students will be used interchangeably to refer to international graduate students throughout this paper. Student/advisor rapport is defined as the “support and encouragement” provided by the advisor, “the emotional bond between the advisor and the student outside of their academic work relationship” (Rice et al., 2009, p. 377). The faculty advisor/graduate student
relationship is very crucial for graduate studies; it is therefore important to help students and advisors in building rapport and effective work relationship irrespective of cultural differences. “Graduate programs contribute to the strength of multicultural democratic society by producing high quality researchers and professionals who advance economic and innovative agendas of their institutions and countries” (COU, 2012, p. 3). Under the ‘Putting Students First’ initiative by the Council of Ontario Universities, COU (2012), Ontario is committed to creating 6,000 new spaces to increase the number of graduate students in universities across the province by the year 2016, this will mean increase in financial support for graduate studies (p. 2). Ontario is known for its undergraduate education; however, the province is falling behind in some areas of graduate education, and there is the need to elevate graduate studies by meeting the demands and needs of graduate programs in the province (COU, 2012, p. 2). Research by OECD, Education in Glance, 2011 discovered that “Ontario has a very small number of international students in its graduate programs; only 15% of graduate students are international compared to the average of 20% in Canada” (COU, 2012, p. 8). For graduate programs in Ontario to remain competitive globally, it is essential to increase the number of international graduate students in Ontario universities (COU, 2012, p. 3). “International graduate students play an important role in creating, transferring and distributing knowledge in universities” (Guo & Chase, 2003, p. 306).

The Institute of International Education and National Center for Education Statistics found that, “44.6% of international students in United States are graduate students; which makes up 13.5% of the total number of graduate students in the United States” (Adrian-Taylor, Noels & Tischler, 2007). Australia has a reputation for recruiting a lot of international students, “30.5% of Australia’s international students are registered in graduate programs and this accounts for 20.4% of all graduate students in Australia” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007). The Canadian Bureau
for International Education (CBIE), 2002 and Statistics Canada, 2002 noted, “35.0% of
international students in Canada are enrolled in graduate programs, making up 12.3% of all
graduate students in Canadian universities” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007). Canada increased its
number of international students to 70,000 in 2006; 22,000 of these were in graduate programs,
and accounted for 20% of graduate students in Canada (Guo & Chase, 2011, p. 306). Citizenship
and immigration Canada reported that in 2007, there was about “4.6% increase over the number
international students enrolled in Canadian postsecondary institutions in 2006” (Zhang & Zhou,
2010, p. 43). The numbers of international students in Canada continue to increase over the
years; CDIE reported an increase by 94% in 2012 (CBIE Report, 2013). “The number of
international students in post secondary institutions in Canada has significantly increased by 94%
since 2001 to a total of 265,377 in 2012, which is slightly less than one third of the number of
international students in the United States” (CBIE Report, 2013). China, India, South Korea and
Saudi Arabia were reported as the top four countries of origin of international students in
Canada” (CBIE Report, 2013). CBIE surveyed 1,509 international students across Canada and
discovered the following:

91 percent of international students are satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to
study in Canada. Nearly half (46 percent) plan to become permanent residents in Canada, another 25 percent hope to stay in Canada and work for up to three years before returning home. More than two-thirds of students described opportunities to work full-time in
Canada post-graduation and to obtain permanent residency as either “very important” or
“essential” factors in their decision to study in Canada. 78 percent of students said they’d
like more opportunities to experience Canadian culture and family life. However, nearly a
third of students (31 percent) said they prefer to mix with people of their own culture. Slightly more than half of students (55 percent) said their friends primarily consist of other international students, including 23 percent who said they were primarily friends with others from their own country; seven percent said they are primarily friends with Canadian students. While 82 percent agreed with the statement that Canada is a
welcoming and tolerant society, minorities of students reported experiencing racial or
cultural/religious discrimination in their interactions with faculty members, institutional
staff, students and the broader community (CBIE Report, 2013).
According to the University of Guelph, Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA), there are 952 international students at the university as of January 2014, of which 341 are graduate students with the highest population coming from China, United States, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Brazil. This is consistent with CBIE’s report of top countries of origin of international students in Canada. On the whole international students at U of G have a very positive experience and are reported to be very satisfied with their learning environment. A news release on April 1, 2013 about a new Barometer survey conducted by the International Graduate Insight Group, ranked University of Guelph “Number 1 for the second year in a row among universities in Ontario” (O’Flanagan, 2013; Hunt & Gonsalves, 2013). The survey was based on living and learning environments, and the support services available to international students (O’Flanagan, 2013; Hunt & Gonsalves, 2013). There were 161,781 international student participants from 193 post secondary institutions in 15 countries; this included 14 universities across Canada with 10 from Ontario, Ontario universities included University of Waterloo, Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier, and Ryerson” (O’Flanagan, 2013; Hunt & Gonsalves, 2013). “Out of the nearly 900 international students at U of G, 338 participated in the survey that ranked U of G first among Ontario universities, and seventh in the world among the 193 institutions in terms of overall satisfaction” (O’Flanagan, 2013; Hunt & Gonsalves, 2013). Lynne Mitchell, the director for international programs at U of G noted that the university community is committed to meeting the needs of international students (Hunt & Gonsalves, 2013).
**Problem Statement**

Students preparing for graduate studies tend to experience “increased feelings of insecurity, decreased self esteem, and high levels of stress and anxiety” (Ku, Lahman, Yeh & Cheng, 2008, p. 366). Graduate school can be particularly more stressful for international students because they have to learn the social and academic styles of their new environment (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366). Most graduate students are required to work closely with their faculty advisors to successfully complete their graduate studies. Mentoring graduate students is very challenging, even when both the student and faculty have similar cultural values. To the degree most international students have a different culture from that of Canadians, the challenge for international graduate students to adapt to their new environment, and for their faculty advisors to understand and work well with them is significantly increased. This research assumes international graduate students and their faculty advisors face some challenges working together. International graduate students may experience challenges adapting to their new environment and cultural differences are believed to lead to some of the challenges international graduate students may face in their host institutions. Therefore, this research mainly explores these assumptions and describes the experiences, challenges and best practices of international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph.

**Primary Research Goal**

The main goal of this study is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and their international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication.
Research Objectives (Descriptive and Exploratory)

1. To determine the challenges international graduate students face in adapting to academic and social life at the university of Guelph and the challenges faculty advisors face mentoring these students, as well as determine strategies and ways of handling these challenges.

2. To determine the extent to which different cultural values influence the relationship between international graduate students and faculty advisors.

3. To suggest strategies to promote effective relationships between faculty advisors and international graduate students.

General Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used to collect data from faculty advisors and international graduate students at the university of Guelph on building effective student/advisor relationships and communication. Key informant interviews were held with faculty advisors, international graduate students, graduate studies, open learning and educational support, student life, and the office of intercultural affairs to determine key issues of advisory relationships. Key issues identified during these discussions included language barriers, difficulties interacting with other students and faculty, cultural differences, academic integrity, finding on campus jobs, high tuition and living expense, as well limited scholarships available to international graduate students. These key issues and the research goal and objectives formed the basis for the literature review and the data collection process of this research. Focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews and online surveys were conducted to determine the challenges international graduate students face working with their respective faculty advisors and
adapting to their new academic and social environment, and the challenges faculty advisors face working with these students. The mixed methods and the triangulation of data collection techniques were used to ensure trustworthiness, authenticity, and reliability of the findings. More details of the data collection process can be found in chapter three of this paper.

Organization of the Research Thesis

Chapter two is an overview of literature conducted for this research. The literature review is focused on international graduate students’ experiences in North America, particularly, Canada with respect to the advising relationships they build with their faculty advisors, as well as adapting to their new environments. Academic cultures of transnational institutions and of graduate programs in and outside Canada are also highlighted.

Chapter three provides a background to the research methods and findings for this research. The chapter describes the rationale behind the research, methodology, data collection process, design of focus group, interviews, and online survey questions, data analysis and coding of research findings, and the benefits and limitations of the data acquisition and analysis process.

Chapter four describes the main findings of the research. The chapter starts with an overview of the findings, two major themes namely; academic transition and social transition are then used to describe the experiences, relationships and challenges of international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph. Another theme (financial challenges) is also described in relation to the academic and social transition.

Chapter five discusses the findings of this research, draws conclusions and makes recommendations to improve faculty advisor / international graduate relationships, and to improve the academic and social transitions, and financial challenges of international graduate students at the University of Guelph.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of literature review conducted for this research. The review starts with faculty/student advising relationships and academic challenges of international students studying North American and transnational Universities. International graduate students’ cultural and social adaptation to their new environment is then discussed.

Academic Transition: Advising Relationships and Academic Challenges

Lechuga (2011) noted, “faculty/graduate student advising relationships are a significant part of the graduate education experience that foster student success” (p. 757). Graduate students’ academic success and professional development for most part are dependent on the kind of relationship and interaction they have with their faculty advisors. According to Ives and Rowley (2005), faculty advisor/graduate student communication “is the most important component in the development of graduate students”, and Lee (2008) highlighted that faculty advisors can ‘make’ or ‘break’ graduate students (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 311). Some studies have found good advisor/graduate student relationship and an “apprenticeship approach to learning” enhance positive student experience and academic success (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 252). In a research on satisfied and unsatisfied graduate student advising, Schlosser, Knox, Moskovitz, and Hill (2003) showed that, more satisfied students described more positive and improved relationship with their advisors and were more comfortable discussing career enhancement and academic challenges with their advisors. (Rice et al., 2009, p. 377). “Unsatisfied students described their advising relationships as shallow, businesslike, or negative, and are less likely to discuss professional information” (Rice et al., 2009, p. 377). However, both satisfied and unsatisfied students expressed some level of reluctance in discussing personal information with their
advisors (Rice et al., 2009, p. 377). Positive relationships between faculty and graduate students have numerous benefits, including increased student career opportunities, academic and professional skills development (Lechuga, 2011, p. 757). Graduate students find career and psychological support as beneficial to their mentoring relationship with their faculty advisors (Lechuga, 2011, p. 759). The importance of advisor/grad student relationship to academic and student success have many highlighted in many literatures. Good advisors are expected to be available to their graduate students, create industry connections, serve as mentors and support students to successfully complete their graduate programs in timely manner (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 111 & 112). “The two most important things mentors can do for graduate students are to communicate clearly and effectively, and to provide honest feedback” (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366).

Faculty/graduate student relationship may be even more crucial for international students because they are dealing with higher levels of language barriers, and academic and cultural adjustment (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366; Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 311 & 312). Graduate students in North America are faced with various challenges, including; “language difficulties, difficulties adjusting to the academic culture, misunderstandings and complications in communication with faculty, feelings of isolation, culture shock, and adapting to their new environments” (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 310). Other major challenges international students face are, “difficulty with English language, separation from family, social and cultural adjustment, and academic role conflict” (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366). Having fewer social supports, international graduate students tend to have difficulties managing the many challenges they may face in their host institution and country during their graduate studies (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 92). They may therefore value advisor support and rely more on their faculty advisors in building social networks, achieving academic success, and in meeting their professional and personal needs than domestic
graduate students (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 312; Curtin et al., 2013, p. 113). A transnational study on mentoring international doctoral students also found that international doctoral students tend to need their advisors support more, at both academic and personal level, and would be happier if their advisors were “more accessible” (Ku et al., 2008, p. 373). It is important for graduate students to have the option of changing their faculty advisors if they are unable to build an effective advisory relationship with their advisors. According to international graduate advising relationships research in the U.S, “94% of over 300 diverse student participants did not anticipate changing their advisors within the next year, and a small proportion of students pointed out they would change advisors if they could” (Rice et al., 2009, p. 381). In the same research, some international students expressed “concerns about their relationship with their advisors, including: insufficient social support and impersonal relationships, advisor’s prejudice and abusive behavior, mismatch of research interests, and lack of financial support” (Rice et al., 2009, p. 385). A recent research on international graduate students isolation from host communities showed that international students are likely to perceive or experience isolation from host universities either in the classroom environment or in social interactions outside the classroom (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 309). Various studies on advising relationships between international graduate students and their faculty advisors have highlighted interpersonal and cross-cultural difficulties, differences in student and advisor expectations, and communication challenges. All of these factors can influence international graduate students’ perceived feelings of academic and social isolation (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 312). Some international students experience feelings of “dislocation and isolation and yearn for social contact”; there is therefore the need for “caring and friendly” advisors, and for advisors who recognize the “uniqueness” of every international student (Ku et al., 2008, p. 375 & 376). Good
advisory relationship enhances graduate student “sense of belonging and connection”, and promotes departmental networks (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 112). “Recognizing that international students are faced with various challenges as learners in their new environment is an essential step to improving international graduate students learning environment and experiences” (Olshen, 2013, p. 3). It is also important not to view international students as a homogeneous group, but rather see them as individuals coming from varying cultural backgrounds who may have different academic and cultural challenges even if they are from the same country or region (Olshen, 2013, p.8). An international student’s positive experience goes a long way to benefit “domestic students, faculty members, staffs, and members of the institution and community, and the international student benefit from the enriched learning and social environment that results from intercultural interaction” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007 p. 91). When international graduate students have good relationships with their faculty advisors, they are more likely to experience “low stress levels, minimal psychological and physical problems, and overall satisfaction with graduate school” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 92). It is again important to consider improving the learning environment for academic success, and professional development of international graduate students (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 311).

**Academic and Social Culture**

“American social anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century saw a close relationship between cultures and the personalities of people (the national character or modal of personality), this is what we now call the national culture” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 39). Brown (2007) described academic culture as an extension of national culture and highlighted that to achieve academic success, international students would have to adjust to the culture of their new
environment (Olshen, 2013, p. 8). Brown further argued that faculty advisors play an important role in international graduate students’ adjustment since they tend to interact more with these students. While it is important for international graduate students to adjust to their new academic expectations, it is equally important for faculty members to recognize the needs of these students and make necessary adjustments to ensure effective interactions and student academic success (Olshen, 2013, p. 13). Faculty members have to consider the cultural differences of international students, and take into account that international student needs and advisory relationships may differ among disciplines and departments (Trice, 2003, p. 382). Teaching, learning and linguistic challenges heighten when students or faculty members leave to study or teach outside of their home county; it is essential for students and faculty to recognize these challenges and cultural differences to ensure inclusiveness and students’ academic success (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson 2013, p. 82). “Ethnic or cultural backgrounds and gender may influence the mentoring relationships /interactions graduate students prefer” (Lechuga, 2011, p. 760). For instance, Asian or Pacific Islanders and Mexican–American students, prefer faculty advisors who require hard work and frequent interactions (Lechuga, 2011, p. 760). African-American female graduate students prefer African-American female faculty advisors because they believe they will relate better with them (Lechuga, 2011, p. 760). Considering the differences in “the Chinese Confucian-oriented teaching (obedience and deference to authority, but not critical thinking), and the Socratic- oriented North American education (debates, questioning and critical and original thinking), Chinese graduate students in North America are likely to face culture shock and challenges” (Hu, 2010, p. 61). According to a research finding on the learning styles of Canadian faculty and Middle-Eastern students at the University of Calgary in Qatar (UCQ), “the learning style preferences of Middle-Eastern students are quite different from their Western-trained
faculty members, this could be due to differences in cultures and post-secondary educational systems” (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013, p. 67 & 82). The majority of Canadian faculty are more oriented in “abstract conceptualization (AC), thus thinking, analyzing and planning systematically, and Middle-Eastern students are more oriented towards active experimentation (AE), a preference for getting things done, taking risks and influencing others and events through action” (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013, p. 72). It was noted that new students enrolled at the University of Calgary Qatar (UCQ) in the Middle-East, are stronger in AE learning styles than returning students, and graduating or final year students adapt strongly to AC learning styles (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013, p. 72). International graduate students usually face challenges of finding suitable faculty advisors or mentors with similar cultural background as theirs to provide the academic and social support they require (Lechuga, 2011, p. 760).

Graduate Student / Advisor Conflict

Having different academic cultures can be challenging to both the graduate student and the faculty supervisor, for instance, “Western universities value problem solving and analytical or critical-thinking skills, and East Asian education systems value tradition, history, and authority” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 93). These differences in beliefs and expectation can lead to misunderstandings between an East Asian graduate student and his or her Western faculty supervisor (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 93). East and South Asia students may not be aware that graduate programs in Western universities expect them to take initiatives in developing and designing their own research (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 8). However, “most students are able to and willing to adapt once this expectation is clearly defined or made explicit for them” (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 8). The difference in learning styles and expectations of faculty and students are a reflective of their cultural backgrounds and values, and these may result in disconnect between
faculty teaching methods and student learning styles (Hu, 2010, p. 61). Chinese graduate students rely strongly on reading and learning writing styles from model journal articles, and on their supervisors to edit their written work and provide support in addressing their academic challenges (Hu, 2010, p. 61). “It is important to identify students’ specific learning styles in order to develop more effective teaching methods that eliminates learning barriers and foster students academic success (Lemke-Westcott & Johnson, 2013, p. 67). Conflict between graduate students and faculty advisors may occur as a result of but not limited to “lack of information, lack of feedback or useful feedback, lack of time, excessive control on the part of a supervisor, discrimination or unfair treatment based on cultural background, lack of openness or honesty, and gender-based discrimination” (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 93). Comparative studies have shown that different expectations of the graduate student/faculty advisor’s roles and responsibilities, poor oral and written English communication, lack of respect and lack of feedback may also cause conflict between a graduate student and his or her faculty advisor (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 93).

**Language and Communication**

Language is an essential aspect of graduate student / faculty interaction, and this is a major challenge for students studying outside their home country (Olshen, 2013, p. 13). Trice (2003) also noted that linguistic competence is a major challenge among international students, and this makes it challenging for universities to develop “standard teaching methods and assessments” (p. 381). Many research on Chinese graduate students in North America have shown that “Chinese graduate students have linguistic challenges such as oral presentations, class discussions, and sentence-level difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, and usage in writing
(Hu, 2010, p. 60 & 61). However, language and cultural challenges are more prominent during the first one or two semesters of graduate studies (Hu, 2010, p. 60 & 61). Hu further argued that the Chinese language is considerably different from English when compared to languages such as French, Spanish, and German. As a result Chinese students in North America are more likely to have more linguistic challenges than European students (Hu, 2010, p. 68). “Chinese students are also considered more introverted, more polite, and better at implementing instructions, but less critical, innovative, confident, and aggressive than non-Asian international students such as Africans and Europeans” (Hu, 2010, p. 66). For instance, Chinese students may be reluctant to say ‘NO’ to their professors; this could be to questions asked about whether they understood or have covered a particular material (Hu, 2010, p.64). Hu stressed that saying ‘NO’ could be due to shyness (shyness also limits the ability to ask/answer questions or express concerns), or respect for authority, lack of critical thinking, or not wanting to be seen as ignorant (Hu, 2010, p. 65). When international graduate students have language issues, and are unable to express themselves fluently in English in their new environment, they may “develop self-doubt, low self-esteem, and may be less confident” (Liu, 2011, p. 80). These experiences may affect international graduate students’ ability to interact with others and make it more difficult for them to adapt successfully in their new environment (Liu, 2011, p. 80). Hofstede (2010) highlighted that “language and culture are not so closely linked that sharing a language implies sharing a culture, nor should a difference in language always impose a difference in cultural values” (p. 389). However if an international students does not understand the language of his or her new environment, he or she will have difficulties understanding a lot of the features of that new culture, such as understanding jokes and humor, particularly understanding the academic culture since language facilitates teaching and learning (Hofstede, 2010, p. 390 -393). A research on
cross culture mentoring at Western University, London, Canada, highlighted that, soft skills such as “interpersonal communication, presentation skills, effective writing, and project management” are very important skills international students have to develop in order to communicate effectively and succeed academically (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 5). These soft skills complement the technical skills international students acquire during their graduate studies and prepare them for careers in Canada (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 5). A recent study on international students experience at the University of Windsor in Canada revealed “weak English language proficiency, both oral and written, as one of the major challenges faced by international students” (Zhang & Zhou, 2010, p. 44). Other challenges included ability of international students to make friends with domestic students, to have their opinions respected by others during group work or classroom interactions, and participation, to adjust and adapt to working in groups (Zhang & Zhou, 2010, p. 44). There is also some level of disconnect between international graduate student writing ability and the expectation of linguistic competence of writing at graduate school level (Olshen, 2013, p. 13). Offering preliminary language courses and sessions on academic culture to students, either in their home country or host country before enrolling them in any graduate program is an important step to dealing with the linguistic challenges of graduate students studying abroad (Hu, 2010, p. 75 & 76).

**Academic Integrity (AI)**

The University of Guelph’s academic integrity website defines AI as a code of ethics for teachers, students, researchers, and writers. This includes, not claiming credit for the work of another, not falsifying documents, not obstructing another person's ability to perform academic tasks in order to gain an unfair advantage, and not disobeying the rules of ethical research, or improperly obtaining access to privileged information or disseminate that information (http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/integrity.cfm).

There is a rising concern about academic misconduct among English-speaking countries; this is in part due to the easy access to academic papers and materials on the internet (Abasi & Graves, 2008, p. 221). A survey conducted in a Canadian university revealed that, “over half of the student respondents had committed at least one act of academic dishonesty” (Griffith, 2013, p. 3). A study about plagiarism among Iranian language students reported majority of the research respondents defined, “plagiarism is using the results, works and ideas of others, as well as copying and pasting without acknowledging the original source” (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013, p. 280). Some participants indicated that, they plagiarized because they received no form of training on academic integrity and were not aware of the consequences of plagiarizing (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013, p. 288). A research conducted about AI websites of Ontario universities, highlighted that to effectively educate students about AI, institutions need to clearly define and explain AI, and AI information “physically and or digitally, and linguistically accessible to students and faculty” (Griffith, 2013, p. 3). Universities in Ontario, including the University of Guelph use various methods in educating students about Academic Integrity; these include “photographs, videos, quizzes, tutorials, comic, posters”, and more (Griffith, 2013 p. 5 & 6). According to the Canadian Association of University teachers, “more than four hundred North American colleges and universities have subscribed to an online database called Turnitin.com to assist professors in detecting plagiarism in students’ written work” (Abasi & Graves, 2008, p.221). In 2005, Australia launched the international journal for educational integrity to address issues of academic integrity, particularly because of the country’s historically
high number of international students (Abasi & Graves, 2008, p. 222).

If academic culture is an extension of national culture, then separating education from culture might be difficult because “educational systems are part of cultural traditions” (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013, p. 287). For instance, “Iranian educational system encourages students to memorize to a large extent”, students are therefore likely to plagiarize if copying others work is not viewed as academic dishonesty from the educational system they were trained (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013, p. 287). “Memorization is regarded as promoting deep cognitive and affective learning among Chinese students” (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013, p. 287). Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) further noted it is important to recognize that perceptions and definitions of plagiarism may vary from different individuals across institutions, disciplines and countries (p. 277).

Social Transition: Culture and Adaptation

Hofstede (2010) noted, “no group can escape culture and that there is normally a continuity in culture”, he emphasized his point with the example below:

*If you were caught in a gale at sea and found yourself stranded on an uninhabited island with twenty-nine unknown others, what would you do? If you and your fellow passengers were from different parts of the world, you would lack a common language and shared habits. Your first task would be to develop a common language and some shared rules for behavior, cooperation and leadership. Role divisions will emerge between young and old, men and women, conflicts will arise and somehow be handled. Whose responsibilities would be whether two people mate? Who would take care of the sick, the dead, and the children born on the island? (Hofstede, 2010, p. 11& 12).*

This example shows how new norms and cultures are continuously created for group survival and adaptation, some of the new norms created may be informed by existing cultures (Hofstede, 2010, p. 11 & 12). Looking at this from the lens of international graduate students’ adaptation
and advisor relationships, international graduate students may have to develop a new culture with their fellow domestic and international students, as well as with their professors and faculty advisors in order to successfully adapt to their new environment. This may mean unlearning some old habits, sharing some of their cultures with their host, learning new habits and culture from their host, and creating new cultures with host counterparts (Hofstede, 2010, p. 11 & 12).

Cultural and Social Adaptability / Adjustment

When people leave their home county, they begin to unlearn some patterns and habits in order to learn and adapt to the patterns of their new environment, and this can be a very challenging transition for most people (Hofstede, 2010, p. 4 & 5). “Adaptability is the capacity of an individual to suspend or change behavior common to his/her native culture, to learn and accommodate new cultural norms” (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 249). Adaptability could also mean developing coping strategies to deal with the dynamics of cultural differences and the stress that comes with it; communication is central to this cross-cultural adaptation (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 249). International students may adapt or experiences adaptation in three stages. (1) “Cognitive adaptation: learning to understand the behaviors and cultures of people in their host environment; (2) Behavioral adaptation: learning to behave according the norms of their host culture and; (3) Affective adaptation: adopting some of their host cultures values” (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 3). It is important for international students to understand acceptable and non-acceptable norms of their new environments, host institutions and countries (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 3). For instance, international students in Canada have to learn the academic expectations of their institutions, learn how being late to appointments is perceived, and understand how non-acceptable norms impact their career and academic success (Dimitrov,
2009, p. 3). It may take at least six months for Canadian graduate students fully adapt to their new university and graduate program, considering the various challenges international students face, it may take up to two for international graduate students to fully adapt (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 5). During this adaptation process, international students may experience culture shock in their first 6 to 12 months of graduate studies in host country; the symptoms and intensity of culture shock may vary among individuals (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 32 & 33). Culture shock is described as the “psychological response to living in a new environment in which everything is unfamiliar, from food through rules of casual conversation to the way one participates in classroom discussion” (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 32). Hofstede (2010) described culture shock as the experience of intercultural encounters between an individual and his/her new cultural environment. A cultural environment can include people, communities and institutions, the individual may have to learn to adapt to this new cultural environment (p. 384). Symptoms of culture shock may include “fatigue, distress, helplessness, loneliness, lack of interest in trying new things, inability to work effectively, too little or too much sleep, irritability, strong sense of loyalty to home culture, unexplainable crying, aches and pain, loss of appetite and hostility towards the new environment” (Dimitrov, 2009; Hofstede, 2010). These experiences can affect one’s physical and psychological functioning, some international graduate student tend to terminate their graduate programs as a result of intense culture shock (Hofstede, 2010, p. 385). New Canadian permanent residents who come straight from their home countries and enroll in a graduate school in Canada may experience the same challenges and culture shock as international students on visas or study permits (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 33). People in the host environment may also experience some form of “psychological reaction” during their reception of the new individual. Just as the international graduate student may have to learn about his/her new academic and social environment, the host
institution may also be curious about the new culture they encounter with international graduate students, and may have to also adapt to some extent. People in the host institution are likely to evaluate the behavior of international graduate students according to the standards of their own cultural environment (Hofstede, 2010, p. 387). In order to adapt successfully to their host institution, international graduate students must develop “interactional language competence and participate in various social activities with both domestic and international students and faculty” (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 249). According to Hofstede, “the acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases: awareness, knowledge, and skills” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 419). Awareness is recognizing that you have different cultural values from that of your new environment; the way and the environment from which you were brought up may be different from those of others. Once you accept that differences exist, you can then acquire knowledge by learning the cultures of your new environment, there is the possibility that you may not share the values of this new environment, but you will at least understand where the differences in values and cultures lies. Finally you acquire the skills that will enable you put your knowledge to practice, “skills are based on awareness and knowledge, plus practice: recognize their heroes, practice their rituals, and experience the satisfaction of getting along in the new environment” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 419 & 420).

Cultural adaptation, such as finding housing, getting around, social isolation, climate change and understanding American norms, are among the challenges international students face while studying in the U.S (Trice, 2003, p. 390). Interestingly, faculty participants in Trice’s study identified some of these issues as common concerns among their American students as well. It was further noted that differences may exist among international students from the same country, and generalization of domestic or international students may not be ideal (Trice, 2003, p. 390).
“Every individual carries within him/herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout the person’s lifetime which most of it was acquired in early childhood” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 4). It is crucial not to stereotype or characterize individuals according to their country of origin, race or religion (Hofstede, 2010, p. 40). This emphasizes the importance of recognizing the special needs, strengths, and cultures of each international graduate student in order to ease the challenges of the transition period and to successfully develop effective advisory relationships. In a research about advisor support and sense of belonging in the U.S, international doctoral student participants expressed that adjusting to the academic and social culture were their biggest challenge, and “family and friends, office of international education and their advisors were their main source of support” (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 113). International graduate students may need more guidance and advice from their faculty advisors on “building learning plans relevant to their career development” from the outset of their graduate studies (Huang, 2012, p. 145). International graduate students may also face “personal challenges such as financial limitations and family support; psycho-social challenges such as social isolation, understanding social conversations and slangs, making new connections and friends, and learning to manage academic challenges successfully” (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 248). Most international students who apply to study in English speaking countries are required to take some form of standard English test to ensure that they meet the language requirements to enroll in their respective graduate programs. Chinese graduate students in the U.S may score high on English standard test TOEFL, and still face major language and communication problems, and difficulties adapting to their new academic environment (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 250). International graduate students who become teaching assistants (ITAs) tend to encounter challenges communicating with their domestic undergraduate students,
domestic students with previous international experience and those who have experienced other cultures have more positive experience with ITAs (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 254). From a research conducted by Fallon & Brown in the United Kingdom, faculty members and UK students appreciated the opportunity to work with international graduate students and to learn about different cultures (Trice, 2003, p. 381). International students enhance the international business and research networks of their host institutions and they create a broader and more diverse classroom discussions (Trice, 2003, p. 381). “Forming and maintaining friendships, taking initiatives in conversations and making effort to communicate with domestic students helps with international graduate students’ social adjustment and adaptation” (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 250). International graduate students who develop “strong relationships with other people from a common or similar cultural backgrounds, tend to adjust and adapt better in their host environment and subsequently raises their self-esteem” (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 248). International graduate students studying in North America are also faced with immigration and employment uncertainty, for instance, Chinese graduate students in the U.S are “confronted with a great deal of uncertainty about future employment both in the U.S and China” (Huang, 2012, p. 142). The immigration policy in the U.S is not favorable for international students to stay and work after their graduate studies (Huang, 2012, p. 142). International graduate students who stay and work as faculty in the U.S. add some international aspect to the academic culture and graduate school experience, and this enhances the ability of their domestic students to adapt and work outside their home countries and with diverse groups (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366).

A study by the Council of Graduate Schools on graduate programs in Canada and the U.S, revealed that despite the many challenges international graduate students face during their graduate programs, they tend to complete their graduate programs faster than domestic students
International PhD students were found to have a higher rate of completing graduate school - 67%, compared to 54% for domestic PhD students (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 111). PhD students who have regular meetings with their advisors are more likely to successfully complete their PhD programs in timely manner (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 112). Graduate students with advisors who are “less interested in them as people, their research ideas, and in their professional development are not likely to complete their graduate programs” (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 112). Incompletion of graduate school have also been attributed to “financial difficulties coupled with poor working relationships with advisor and or advisory committee” (Curtin et al., 2013, p. 112). An open environment that “promote dialogue about cultural differences in all areas of communication” is created when faculty advisors show interest in their international graduate students’ prior experiences, academic and cultural knowledge, and encourage them to share these experiences (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 5). Faculty advisors have to learn the cultures and differences of their graduate students in order to become aware of their own ethnocentric behavior (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 252). Recognizing the cultures of others prevents us from making assumptions and judgments about the behaviors of people and limits our possibility of judging the behaviors of people according to our own cultural values and norms (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 252). An effective support system that encourages mentoring relationships between new international students and experienced or continuing students can go a long way in enhancing international graduate student social participating and adaptation (Huang, 2012, p. 144). This will give experienced graduate students the opportunity to share their experiences and coping strategies with new students, and will give new students the opportunity to learn from the experiences to others (Huang, 2012, p. 144). Unclear or “lack of understanding” of academic and cultural expectations may lead to fear and lack of confidence in
international graduate students to participate and adapt fully in the classroom or in social settings of their new environment and host institution (Huang, 2012, p. 144). The cultural and educational backgrounds of students may have some influence on their learning and how they perceive their new academic environment (Zhang & Zhou, 2010, p. 43). In describing power distance, Hofstede argued, “parents, teachers, managers, and rulers are all children of their cultures, and their behaviors can be understood only if one understands the mental software of their offspring, students, subordinates, and subjects” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 79).

**Culture and Power Distance**

Power distance is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 61). Power distance can be rooted in families, educational systems, organizations, healthcare, countries, and in ideas (Hofstede, 2010, p. 67). For instance, in high power distant families, children are supposed to respect to their parents, the elderly and other older children or siblings; children are not encouraged to be independent (Hofstede, 2010, p. 67). In low power distant families, “children are more or less treated as equals and are encouraged to take control of their own affairs as soon as they are able to act”, children are encouraged to express their opinions or contradict their parents (Hofstede, 2010, p. 67). Respect and deference to authority is not actively practiced in low power distant families and children learn to say “no” very early (Hofstede, 2010, p. 67). Similarly in schools, the parent-child relationship is extended to the classroom, where the child (student) is able to exhibit same dependent or independent cultural behaviour instilled in him/her at home (Hofstede, 2010, p. 69). “Teachers are treated with respect or even fear in high power distant societies, students may have
to stand when a teacher enters the classroom, and teachers are expected to be in charge of the classroom” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 69). Students are not expected to contradict their teachers or share their views; they are only encouraged to speak when asked to, “the quality of students’ learning is highly dependent on the excellence of their teachers” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 69). On the contrary, low power distance societies “treat teacher and student as basic equal, the educational system is more student centered, students are expected to find their own intellectual paths, ask questions and express disagreement in front of their teachers” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 69 & 70). In this system, student-teacher communication is essential, and students take credit for their academic achievements (Hofstede, 2010, p. 70). Hofstede (2010) calculated the Power Distance Index (PDI) scores from survey responses by IBM employees in over fifty countries (p. 55). Countries such as Malaysia, Philippines, Slovakia, Russia, Panama, Mexico, France, Wallonia-French speaking Belgium, Arabic speaking countries and African countries were shown to have high power distance values; and low power distance countries included Austria, Germany, German speaking-Switzerland, Israel, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Ireland, Australia and Canada (Hofstede, 2010, p. 60). Some examples of the PDI scores were: Malaysia (104), Russia (93), China (80), Arabic speaking countries (80), West African countries (77), India (77), France (68), East Africa (64), Iran (58), Japan (54), Southern Africa (49), United States (40), Canada (40), Germany (35), Great Britain (35), Ireland (28), Israel (13), and 11 for Austria (Hofstede, 2010, p. 57 – 59). It is important to note these scores are “relative, not absolute, they are measures of differences only, and do not represent positions of countries” (Hofstede, 2010, p. 56).
PDI scores inform us about dependence relationships in a country. In low power distance countries, there is limited dependence of subordinates on bosses, and there is preference for consultation. In high power distance countries, there is considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses, subordinates are unlikely to approach and contradict their bosses directly (Hofstede, 2010, p. 61).

New faculty members in Canada from other countries for instance, may experience difficulties working with their domestic graduate students, a faculty advisor from a society with high power distance (where subordinates are expected to take instructions from the boss) may have challenges understanding and working with his/her independent low power distant Canadian graduate student (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 12). Dimitrov (2009) highlighted the differences between high power and low power distance students and supervisors (p. 13 & 14); these differences are shown in table 1 and 2 below with suggested strategies to help close the power gaps.
Table 1: High power distance student and low power distance supervisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High Power Distance Student</strong></th>
<th><strong>Low Power Distance Supervisor</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expects formal communication with supervisor, student will usually address supervisor by a title and use formal language in emails</td>
<td>Expects relatively informal communication with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant to ask for help or impose on supervisor’s time</td>
<td>Expects student to ask for help when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student tend to agree with the supervisor as sign of respect</td>
<td>Expects initiative from student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions may imply that the “supervisor didn’t do his/her job well”, student will therefore prefer to ask for help from peers instead</td>
<td>Sees student questions as a sign of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student expects research direction to be set by the professor</td>
<td>Open to ideas and critique of the research project from student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student may not be used to supervisors saying “I don’t Know”</td>
<td>Willing to admit if he/she does not know the answer to the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student will normally ask open ended questions such as “what approach would you recommend?”</td>
<td>Consults student about direction of research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student goes out of his /her way to save face for the supervisor</td>
<td>Expects contribution of original ideas from the student</td>
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</table>

Faculty advisors from “low power distance culture should encourage their high power distance students to come up with their own deadlines, encourage them to do some background research, and encourage them to ask specific questions rather than open ended questions” (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 15). It is important for faculty advisors to encourage students to come prepared to meetings, be ready and open to contribute and suggest their ideas and opinions (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 15).
Table 2: Low power distance student and high power distance supervisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Power Distance Student</th>
<th>High Power Distance Supervisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takes initiatives in class</td>
<td>Does not expect students to take much initiatives in class, students are expected to listen and learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects direction from supervisor through discussion</td>
<td>Expects to tell students what to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects relatively independence in his/her work</td>
<td>Expects students to depend on him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects to be consulted about decisions that impact his/her research or progress</td>
<td>Expects deference from students and expects privileges as a supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees questions as a sign of interest and involvement</td>
<td>May see student questions as challenge to his/her authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects supervisor to admit if he/she does not know the answer</td>
<td>Believes that supervisors should not show if they do not know the answer to a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects to contribute to research direction of the lab or research group</td>
<td>Expects students to follow instructions closely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, faculty advisors from “high power distance culture should ask their low power distance students to check in with them on regular basis before they begin new initiatives, and they should also give their students some smaller projects that they may work on independently” (Dimitrov, 2009, p. 15). Dimitrov (2009) also suggested the following strategies for both high and low power distance supervisors when mentoring graduate students across cultures (p. 14). Faculty advisors should:

- Clarify how they want students to address them
- Explain what respect means to them and what type of professional behavior they expect from their students
- Meet with all their graduate students (both domestic and international) to discuss their research projects, this provides opportunity for international students to observe interactions between domestic students and faculty advisors.
- Model how to accept and respond to constructive criticism, and be willing to share personal stories on how students’ contributions are valuable to achieving research and academic success. This will encourage students to ask questions and share their own ideas rather than just nodding and agreeing to everything faculty advisors say.
Financial Support

The position paper of COU (2012) reported that 39,000 of the more than 52,000 graduate students in Ontario universities are eligible for government funding (p. 3). “The number of government funded graduate students have increased by 45% over the last decade, resulting in 17,500 new graduate students” (p. 3). The same cannot be said about international graduate students in Ontario. There is a need for Ontario government to consider creating investment opportunities for graduate programs to attract qualified international graduate students in order to maintain the province’s competitive position in graduate education both inside and outside Canada (COU, 2012, p. 8). The position paper further noted, “Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan fund international graduate students at the same rate as domestic graduate students, and Quebec and British Columbia provide partial financial support to international graduate students” (COU, 2012, p. 8). A recent research on academic success challenges of international graduate students at York University revealed that international graduate students do not receive adequate financial support considering the desire to increase the number of these students in Ontario Universities (Olshen, 2013, p. 7). Olshen continued to argue that “a discrepancy exist between Ontario’s goal and the actual enrollment of international graduate student because of insufficient funding” (Olshen, 2013, p. 7). A study on faculty perceptions of international graduate students found that while faculty perceived language, both oral and written and cultural differences as major challenges, international students described financial constraints as their greatest challenge studying the United States (Trice, 2003, p. 390).
Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter highlighted key issues to international graduate students’ academic and social transitions at North American and Transnational universities, and their relationships with faculty supervisors.

1. Academic Transition: Advising Relationships and Academic Challenges
   - Academic and Social Culture
   - Language and Communication
   - Academic Integrity

2. Social Transition: Culture and Adaptation
   - Cultural and Social Adjustment
   - Culture and Power Distance

3. Financial Support

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology and rationale behind the research, the data collection process, data analysis and the benefits and limitations of the data acquisition and analysis process.

Methodology

The rationale behind this study is to find out the experiences and challenges of international graduate students adapting to the University of Guelph’s social and academic environment and the relationship they build with their faculty advisors (the experiences and
challenges of faculty advisors working with these students). This research also seek to determine the extent to which cultural differences impact international graduate student/faculty advisor relationships, and to develop a wide range of strategies and recommendations to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building effective communication and relationships. The descriptive and exploratory nature of this research is appropriate for understanding and describing the experiences and perspectives of international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph and determining specific areas for further research. Descriptive research uses methods that aim at determining and describing the characteristics particular individuals and/or groups in a particular social context (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 40). Exploratory research involves direct interaction with a particular population to gain new insights into events, happenings, or phenomena, often to develop more precise research questions and serve as basis for further research (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 39 &40).

Qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used to collect and analyze data from faculty advisors and international graduate students at the university of Guelph on building effective student/advisor relationships and communication. Key informant interviews were held with the University’s international graduate students, staff and faculty members to determine key issues of advisory relationships at the university of Guelph. Key issues identified during these discussions together with the research objectives formed the basis of the focus group discussions and the reviews of literature for this study. With the varying opinions gathered from faculty advisors and international graduate students from the focus groups, a semi structured face to face interviews were scheduled with the participants who consented to participate and with other faculty and international graduate students who did not participate in the focus groups. The
Interviews were an opportunity to further understand and explore the issues raised during the discussions. Finally two similar but separate survey questionnaires were designed for international graduate students and faculty advisors from the information gathered in the key informant interviews, focus group discussions, semi-structured face-to-face interviews and the research objectives. The mixed methods and the triangulation of data collection techniques used in this study are to ensure trustworthiness, authenticity, and reliability of the findings.

Research Participants

The Office of Diversity and Human Rights (DHR), formerly known as the Human Rights and Equity Office (HREO) at the University of Guelph is committed to creating an “inclusive campus culture where all people are treated with respect and can reach their full potential irrespective of their different characteristics” and cultural backgrounds (Ngobia, 2014, p. 1). As part of DHR’s mandate to create an inclusive campus, the office initiated this research to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help international graduate students’ academic and social adjustment at U of G, and to further contribute to the accessible living, learning and work environments at the university. The participants of this study were recruited using purposeful sampling technique. Purposive sampling is when “people and locations are intentionally sought because they meet some criterion for inclusion in the study” (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 124). The research identified a number of key informants (international graduate students, faculty and staff members) and invited them to participate in a short interview; those who agreed to participate formed the participants for the key informant interviews. International graduate students and faculty participants were recruited by sending a personalized email to every one on the sampling frame (complete list international graduate students and faculty members at U of G
as at January 2014), interested participants who consented to participate became the participants for focus group discussions and interviews as well as potential participants for the online surveys.

The study participants were international graduate students (students who are an student visas and pay international students’ fee at U of G) and faculty advisors (faculty members who have advised or currently advising international graduate students) at the University of Guelph. For privacy reasons, the research team didn’t have access to the contact lists of international graduate students; therefore, with the help of the Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA), graduate studies, and departmental graduate secretaries, an official email invitation was sent to all the list of international graduate students in March 2014. Graduate secretaries also sent out email invitations to faculty members in their departments (See Appendix A for letter of invitation and consent to participate in the research). Only a few people responded to the first call, a second call was then sent out, this time with personalized emails, from OIA to international graduate studies, and to faculty advisors from the principal investigator on this study, Dr. James Mahone, and this resulted in a much larger response rate. The contact list of faculty members from all seven colleges of U of G were collected from the official university and departmental website. Interested international graduate students and faculty advisors signed and returned the consent for participation by email to the research team. A total of 49 faculty members and 21 international graduate students responded positively to the two invitations for call of research participants. Reminders and call for participation in focus group discussions, interviews, and surveys were later sent out to interested participants and to the pool of target population again during the period of March and June 2014. A total 72 international graduate students and 147 faculty members participated in this research, some of whom participated in two data acquisition
process (focus groups, interviews), others participated in only one of the two. It is the assumption of the research team that some of the focus group and interview participants may have also completed the online surveys, this is however not known since the only surveys were completely anonymous. Participants were from across all seven colleges of the university, with the majority of participants from the Ontario Agriculture College (OAC), College of Biological Science (CBS), and College of Physical and Engineering Science (CPES). International graduate student participants were from various countries: China, Argentina, Mexico, United States, Jamaica, Kenya, Japan, Germany, Egypt, Thailand, Botswana, Sri-Lanka, Mali and United Kingdom. Most of the faculty participants were Canadian born with a few from other countries including, United Kingdom and Kenya. The rest of this chapter outlines the detailed data acquisition and analytic process of the study.

**Key Informant Interviews**

One-on-one key informant interviews were held in the early stages of designing this research to identify key issues to advisory relations directly from the target participant population. The purpose of this discussion was to ensure that the research is based on the realities of the target population (international graduate students and faculty advisors) and people who worked closely with them. Discussions were held with six administrative staffs at U of G who worked with faculty members and international students in various capacities; three faculty members who are currently advising international graduate students; and six international graduate students. Administrative offices consulted were the Open Learning and Educational support (OpenEd), Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA), and Student Life. Faculty members were from OAC, and all Canadian born; and the international graduate students were from Sri Lanka, China, Jamaica, Mali, and Japan who were either studying in OAC or College of Social
and Applied Human Sciences (CSAHS). Key issues identified included language barriers (oral and written communication), difficulties interacting with other students and faculty, cultural differences, academic integrity, finding on campus jobs, high tuition and living expense, as well limited scholarships available to international graduate students. These key issues with the research objectives guided the review of literatures and the questions for the first data collection process (focus group discussions) of the study. The focus group discussions raised various issues, some of which were already raised during the key informant interviews, and these subsequently guided the nature of the two data acquisition process (interviews and surveys) and the continued review of literature for this study (See Appendix B for key informant interview questions).

Data Collection Methods

Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions were effective and quick way of collecting a lot of data from 21 international graduate students and 20 faculty members between March and April 2014 at the University of Guelph. This method is usually used to collect public opinion on particular topics or areas within a short time period or at one seating (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 160). The 21 International graduate students and 49 faculty advisors who initially agreed to participate in the study were sent an email invitation to participate in a focus group discussion. Positive responses were received from 13 international graduate students and 15 faculty members for the first call of participation, and two separate focus group sessions each were conducted for international graduate students and faculty advisors. A second invitation was sent out to the non respondents and to the pool of international graduate students and faculty members, which attracted 8 international graduate students and 5 faculty advisors, and a third focus group discussion was conducted separately for each group. A total of 21 international graduate students pursuing their
Masters or PhD programs in the OAC, CBS, CPES and CSAHS, and 20 faculty advisors in the OAC, CBS, CPES and OVC (which included graduate coordinators and departmental heads and chairs) participated in the three focus group sessions from March to April 2014. Focus group participants were from 5 of the 7 Colleges at U of G. Each person participated in only one of the focus group sessions.

The six focus group discussions, three for international graduate students and three for faculty advisors were conducted by the principal investigator and the graduate student researcher on this study with the help of three other graduate students who had received training in Facilitation and Conflict Management. Each Participant signed a consent form at the beginning of each focus group discussion and participants provided their names, country of Origin and departments (Appendix C for focus invitation and consent form). All the discussions were conducted in the same way in the Landscape Architecture Building at the University of Guelph; each discussion had one facilitator and one note taker who recorded the opinions of participants visibly on a flipchart. Participants were given the opportunity to take a moment and write down their thoughts first when each question was asked. Participants then shared their thoughts with the whole group and these were recorded and verified with the respondents, participants were also asked to submit the papers they wrote their opinions on and any additional comments they may have to the facilitator at the end of the focus group discussions. This is to ensure the opinions recorded accurately represented the views of the participants, and to ensure participants who didn’t get the chance to express all their views within the 1 hour focus group session, had the opportunity to submit their opinions in writing. All focus group participants were asked three questions about graduate student/advisory relationships. The first question was about the experiences of international graduate students working with their faculty advisors and vice versa,
the second question focused on the challenges international graduate students and faculty advisors face working with each and the challenges international graduate students face adapting to U of G, and the last question was on the measures participants took or suggest to help address the challenges mentioned in question 2 (See Appendix C for focus group questions).

The first focus group discussion for international graduate students was held on March 20, 2014, there were 8 participants from China, Egypt, Germany, Jamaica, Sri-Lanka, Mexico and United States, the session lasted for 1 hour 15 minutes; this was the only session that went beyond the 1 hour scheduled. The second international graduate student discussion was held on March 27, 2014 and there were 5 participants from China, Japan and Argentina, and lasted 1 hour. The last student discussion was on April 22, 2014 with 8 participants from China, Botswana, Kenya, United Kingdom, Thailand, Mexico and Iraq, this session lasted 1 hour as well. The first faculty focus group discussion was held on April 7, 2014 with 7 participants in the OAC and CPES, the session lasted for 1 hour. The second faculty discussion was on April 15, 2014 with 8 participants in CBS, OAC and CPES, this lasted 1 hour as well. The last faculty advisors session was held on April 22, 2014 with 5 participants in OAC, CBS, OVC and CPES, this session lasted for 50 minutes, it ended earlier than the scheduled time. At the end of each focus group discussion, participants were given 10 dots each to vote on the last two questions, 5 dots each for the most important challenges and 5 dots each for the most important measures that were successful or needed to be addressed sometime soon. The facilitator passed a piece of paper round and asked participants who are interested in participating in the next phase of data collection, the 30 minutes face to face interviews, to write down their names and they will be contacted later to arrange interviews at their place and times of convenience.
Semi Structured Face to Face Interviews

This research employed semi structured and open-ended questioning method in the interviews because we were interested in collecting responses privately, in participants’ own words and capturing concerns that are important to participants (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 160 & 171). Some closed ended questions such as countries of origin, and U of G colleges and departments were asked to collect specific and factual information to give a better understanding and description of participants opinions (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 172 & 173). The interviews were conducted to clarify and have an in-depth understanding of the issues raised in the focus groups, and to collect information from the target population who were unable to attend the focus group discussions. Focus group participants who agreed to participate in the face-to-face interviews were contacted by email to schedule a time and place for the interviews. Emails were also sent to all potential participants inviting them to participate in the interviews as well. Positive responses were received from 13 international graduate students (12 of whom participated in the focus group discussions), and 26 faculty advisors (16 of whom participated in the focus group discussions). One-on-one interviews were conducted for each of these participants from March to May 2014; one of the faculty interviews was done over phone. All interviews were conducted at the University of Guelph, mostly in the offices of faculty participants, and in the Landscape Architecture Building and departments of international graduate students, a few of the interviews were done over coffee at coffee places on campus, and interviews lasted between 20 minutes to 45 minutes. Each participant signed a consent form at the beginning of the interviews, 3 international graduate students and 2 faculty advisors interviewed submitted signed consent by emails (See Appendix D for invitation and interview consent form).
Based on the focus group responses and the research objectives, a list of semi-structured interview questions were designed by the research team, the graduate student researcher asked each participant 10 to 20 open ended questions, all participants were interviewed by the same person. Interview participants were asked the same questions, however, first time participants were asked the focus group questions in addition (See Appendix D for interview questions). During the interviews, participants were also asked indicate their country of origins, number of years as faculty or graduate student, departments and programs. International graduate student interview participants were from the same countries as the focus group participants, and most faculty participants were Canadian born with a few who were Canadian citizens born in other countries such as Kenya, United Kingdom and United States. Knowing the country of origin of faculty participants gave the researchers the opportunity to compare responses for any differences or similarities. The interviewer typed responses from participants and read the responses recorded to participants for clarifications after each interview to prevent any misinterpretations. Interviewed and focus group participants were again invited to take a short online survey, and the general population of faculty advisors and international graduate students were also be invited to participate again

**Online Survey Questionnaires**

The online surveys were conducted to provide additional support to the data collected through focus groups and interviews to increase trustworthiness of the data collected. Email invitations were sent to all international graduate students and faculty advisors in June 2014 with a link to complete the survey online, including focus group and interview participants. Participants were informed that once they complete and submit the survey they have consented
to participation (See Appendix E for survey invitation and consent). Key issues identified during the focus group discussions and interviews together with the research objectives were used to design both close and open-ended survey questions. The survey questions were designed by the research team with help from Dr. John FitzSimons (A Professor, U of G). The university of Guelph online survey tool (Lime Survey) was used to deliver the online surveys to participants. Two separate and similar questions were developed for international graduate students and faculty advisors; there were a total of 27 questions for the international graduate student survey and 22 questions for the faculty advisors (see attached Appendix E for survey questions). The survey was expected to take between 15 to 30 minutes to complete, all the survey questions were made optional and very user friendly, participants could go to the next question without having to answer the previous question, additional comment boxes were long enough and there were no character or number restrictions. The online survey was completely anonymous, however participants were asked to indicate their Colleges and country of Origin (optional). Participants had the option to print a copy of the survey for their records after completion. 120 faculty advisors and 48 international graduate students responded to the online surveys, the researchers are unable to determine how many of the respondents participated in the focus groups and interview sessions, and gender, since the survey was anonymous and participants cannot be identified. The remaining part of this chapter focuses on how data collected for this study was analyzed, the benefits and limitations of the data collection and analysis process.

How the data was analyzed

The qualitative data for this research, the focus group discussions and the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were manually analyzed using a coding strategy. Using a line-by-line coding strategy, relevant areas were highlight from each sentence and paragraph to develop
categories. The data collected was then coded into three major categories, academic transition, social transition and financial challenges, sub categories were developed for each of the major categories (Saldana, 2009).

Since our purpose for this research is to describe the experiences and challenges of international graduate students and their faculty advisors, descriptive statistics was used to summarize the quantitative data for this research (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p.332) using SPSS quantitative analysis software. The frequency distribution tables and figures created for each variable, and the numeric code assigned to each comment and string variables helped in visualizing how the data to be described are distributed (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 334 – 338).

Merits and Limitations of the Data collection Methods

Merits

Focus group discussions provide direct and new insights and perspectives from participants. Focus group “determines issues of importance to those in the research settings or acquires insights about the phenomenon from those who have experienced it, and different perspectives can be analyzed, highlighted and negotiated” (Palys & Atchison, 2008) This method allows participants to share their opinions and perspectives directly with the researcher, and gives opportunity to the participants to share issues of concerns to them, and the opportunity to be heard (Palys & Atchison, 2008).

Face-to-face interviews can be used to collect “privately held opinions” this one-on-one interaction with research participants increase the rate and accuracy of responses and helps clarify any misunderstandings as well as prevents misinterpretation of participant responses.
Participants are more comfortable sharing their opinions and are not concerned so much about sharing private information as compared to focus group discussions (Palys & Atchison, 2008).

Online surveys are effective in collecting substantial amount of data quickly and it is less expensive, and anonymous surveys increase the accuracy and rate of responses (Palys & Atchison, 2008).

**Limitations**

Focus group discussions can intimidate participants, some participants might be shy or might not be comfortable expressing their opinions publicly and privacy of information is not guaranteed. Information collected from participants might not be accurate representation of the problem or phenomena (Palys & Atchison, 2008). To limit the misrepresentation of data, participants in this study were asked to record their opinions on paper without their names in order for the researcher to capture all of the opinions not expressed publicly in the discussions. Participants were also asked to sign consent forms that prevents them from sharing any information from the discussion, this was emphasized at the beginning of each focus group discussion. Participants were further invited to participate in face-to-face interviews and this helped clarify some of the issues raised the focus group discussions.

Face-to-face interviews can be problematic when ambiguity is not caught during the interactions, this may lead to misinterpretation of the information collected. The interviewer can also influence the nature of the data collected depending on how he /she ask the interview and on how the questions are structured (Palys & Atchison, 2008). In an attempt to prevent misinterpretation and misrepresentation of data, the same interviewer interviewed all the
participants and interviewees were asked the same sets of questions. In some cases, participant responses led to other questions, mainly to clarify responses.

Online surveys have the possibility of low rate of responses, online surveys can also generate misrepresented data when questions and the language used are ambiguous, and misunderstanding of questions can create misleading responses. Unfortunately ambiguities cannot be clarified and this may be subject to researcher’s own interpretation (Palys & Atchison, 2008). Questions were asked in clear English language as much as possible to avoid ambiguity. Emails with the link of the survey were sent directly to each potential participant on the sampling frame (complete list of international graduate students and faculty advisors) to avoid any impersonation of data and to ensure the surveys are completed by persons intended for.

A general limitation is that findings presented in this study are not representative of the entire population of the international graduate students and faculty advisors at the University of Guelph. The number of participants is not large enough to provide significance and confidence for generalization of the findings; as well participants for the study were not randomly selected. Another limitation is that since the surveys were anonymous and participants cannot be identified, we are unable to determine how many of the students and faculty survey respondents participated in the focus groups and interview sessions.

The triangulation of data provided authenticity and trustworthiness to the findings of this research, and limited the possible disadvantages of the data collection methods used.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

Introduction and Overview of Findings

This Chapter describes the major findings of the study (international graduate students/faculty advisor relationships). Data was collected from 147 faculty advisors from 12 countries and 72 international graduate students from 23 different countries at the University of Guelph (U of G) through focus group discussions, semi structured face-to-face interviews, and online surveys. Note that both the terms “students” and “international students” are used in this thesis to refer to international graduate students. In the first stage key informant interviews were held in February 2014 with 6 administrative staff, 6 students and 3 faculty advisors to help identify the key issues in advisory relations and cross-cultural adjustment at U of G. The identified key issues with the research goal and objectives formed the basis of the focus groups, interviews and surveys.

Academic, social and financial challenges were the key issues raised in the focus group discussions. At the end of each focus group discussion, participants were given 10 votes each represented by dots, and were asked to select 5 academic and 5 social challenges they perceived as most pressing or important (Table 3).
Table 3: Key issues and votes of student and faculty participants in the focus group discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students (n=21)</th>
<th>Faculty (n=20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges working with faculty advisors and adapting to U of G</td>
<td>Challenges working with students and perceived students’ social challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic challenges</strong></td>
<td><strong>Academic challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive responses</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear and undefined expectations of advisor on research projects</td>
<td>Academic writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>Language barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor availability and Receiving timely feedback from advisor on research</td>
<td>High tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High tuition</td>
<td>Lack of technical competence and confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different academic backgrounds and expectations</td>
<td>Different educational background and academic expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving professional guidance from advisor</td>
<td>Students’ acceptance by domestic students in classroom group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty inability to take on more international students due to funding limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Challenges</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance (living expenses scholarship &amp; opportunities)</td>
<td>Students have issues expressing own opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty interacting with domestic students and the university community</td>
<td>Advisor time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty assessing information at the university</td>
<td>Students’ work ethic and understanding expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and understanding accents</td>
<td>Academic integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition into Canadian job industry</td>
<td>Students’ ability to transfer to U of G academic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High living expense and family needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ cultural deference to authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural differences and adaptability, including religious belief and gender issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ culture shock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviews clarified issues raised during the focus group discussions and more in-depth information was collected. Language barriers were seen as inhibiting international graduate students’ academic success and social transition. The discussions in the focus groups and interviews were all centered on the same themes (academic transition, social transition, and financial challenges). Two online surveys were developed from these themes and from the research objectives to support and ensure the trustworthiness of data collected.

A total of 48 international graduate students from 14 different countries and 120 faculty members from 6 different countries (with Canadians in the majority) participated in the online surveys. Survey participants were drawn from all 7 colleges at U of G, with the exception of students from the College of Business and Economics (CBE). Responses reported from the online surveys exclude non-responses; only valid percentages are reported. Out of the 120 faculty survey respondents, 67 (56%) were currently supervising international students and 53 (44%) had supervised international students in the past but did not have any students at the time of the survey. Student participants were full time graduate students either pursuing a Masters or PhD, with some have funding and others self funding their graduate program. A majority of students surveyed (58%) were studying full time, and none were part time students. A large percentage of the students anticipated living and working in Canada after their graduate studies (Table 4). The number of survey participants who might also have participated in the focus groups and interviews are not known since the surveys were anonymous.
Table 4: International graduate students’ program and financial status, and post graduation plans at U of G (Online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ program status</th>
<th>Students (n=48)</th>
<th>Students (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time students</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD program</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters program</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising a family and pursuing graduate school</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Students’ financial status                                    |                 |              |
| Scholarship/funding from a department at U of G                | 15              | 31%          |
| Self-funded                                                   | 13              | 27%          |
| At least one guaranteed TA position at U of G                  | 12              | 25%          |
| At least one guaranteed RA position at U of G                  | 10              | 21%          |
| Full scholarship from home country                             | 9               | 19%          |

| Students’ post graduation plans                                |                 |              |
| Live and work in Canada                                        | 23              | 48%          |
| Return to home country and find work                           | 7               | 15%          |
| Have job waiting in home country                               | 1               | 2%           |

The study identified three major themes: academic transition, social transition, and financial challenges. For this study, academic transition refers to how international graduate students adapt to working and building academic relationships with their faculty advisors, and how they understand and adapt to their teaching and learning environment at U of G. Social transition is how international graduate students adapt to living in and understanding their new social environment at U of G and in Guelph. These include but not limited to how they interact and communicate with other students, faculty and administrative offices, and how they adapt to differences and power dynamics at U of G, the Canadian work system, climate and food. The academic and social transitions involve the experiences, challenges and best practices of international graduate students and their faculty advisors. Financial challenges refer to how international graduate students adjust to high tuition at U of G and living expenses of their new
environment, their challenges accessing scholarship and job opportunities, and the inability of faculty to take on more international students due to limited funding. Through out the consultations with faculty and students, financial challenges came out strongly as impacting the academic and social transition of students, as well as heightening any other challenges faced by students and their faculty advisors. The social transition (including personal challenges) of students was also reported to impact the academic success of students. Figure 1 below summarizes the findings in a simple model that describes the themes.

Figure 1: Three main themes of findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapting to U of G academic culture:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student /faculty relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic writing and academic integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language barriers (oral and written communication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different academic backgrounds, and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social and cultural adjustment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Language barriers (oral &amp; written communication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social interaction / social isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural differences and power dynamics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tuition fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scholarships and Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living Expenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On campus jobs, TA, RA and work study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Off campus job – finding jobs after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Funding to recruit more international students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of the staff and faculty participants were reluctant to generalize the specific challenges they face working with international graduate students. They indicated that each
student was different and they had encounter different challenges with different students. It was noted that the challenges of graduate students (both international and domestic) might vary across disciplines and programs regardless of their country of origin:

Every case is different depending on personalities; you can never treat international graduate students as homogenous, treat them as individuals and recognize that every country and every individual has different set of cultures and values (A faculty member, CPES).

It is important not to see international graduate students as a homogeneous group, but rather as individuals from varying cultures with different challenges, and develop strategies and provide supports that suit individual needs (A staff at OpenEd).

However, faculty and staff participants perceived funding, time for research completion, stress management and balancing school and family life as common challenges among international graduate students and graduate students with families. Other common challenges among international students were identified, in agreement with Ku et al., as language barriers, and adapting to academic and social culture of their host institutions and new environments.

Graduate school can be particularly more stressful for international students because they have to learn the social and academic styles of their new environment (Ku et al., 2008, p. 366).

Characteristics of the Research Population

Of the 341 international graduate students attending U of G during the 2013/2014 academic year about 20% participated in this study and of 790 faculty members at U of G as of May 2014, 18% participated. Faculty participants included college deans, departmental heads, chairs, and regular faculty. Both student and faculty participants were from across all seven colleges of University of Guelph, the majority of participants were from OAC (Figure 2). The 6 key informant administrative participants were from Open Learning and Educational Support.
(OpenEd), Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA) and Student Life. All student participants were in either a Master’s or PhD program and most of the faculty participants were either the primary advisor or had sat on advisory committees of students and a few had supervised students in a lab setting. Faculty respondents had supervised or were presently supervising graduate students from more than 30 countries: Australia, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Columbia, Egypt, Germany, Granada, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Jamaica, Kenya Korea, Libya, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey, USA, UK, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. One faculty member also reported supervising students remotely from their home countries. According to OIA, the top 6 country of origin of students at the U of G during the 2013/2014 academic year were China, United States, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Brazil. As detailed in Table 5, graduate students from four of these top 6 countries and from 19 other counties participated in this research. Majority of faculty members who participate in the study were Canadians with a few from 11 other countries (China, Kenya, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Greece, Belgium, Austria, Nigeria, India, United States and Germany).
Table 5: University of Guelph top 6 countries of international graduate students and countries of students who participated in this research from the top countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries of students</th>
<th>U of G student population</th>
<th>U of G Student population (%)</th>
<th>Student research participants</th>
<th>Student research participant (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes: Mexico, Thailand, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom, Argentina, Bangladesh, Japan, Germany, Jamaica, Botswana, Iraq, Egypt, Kenya, Jordan, Chile, Israel, Costa Rica, Ghana and Mali.

According to OIA, countries under the “other” category for the U of G population are in single digits. Only 50 (69%) of the total 72 student participants reported their countries of origin.

International graduate students and faculty members who participated in both the focus group discussions and the interviews were counted only once, but this was not possible for the online surveys since it was anonymous. Of the total 147 faculty participants, 107 (73%) reported their colleges at U of G, and of the 72 students, 36 (50%) reported their colleges (figure 2).
Figure 2: Number of international graduate students and faculty advisors who reported their colleges at U of G.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges of Research Participants</th>
<th>Total Number of Student &amp; Faculty Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COA</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPES</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAHS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAC</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVC</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COA</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPES</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSAHS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVC</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See glossary of terms for full names of colleges

Academic Transition

International Graduate Student / Faculty Advisor Work Relationships

The University of Guelph has defined roles and responsibilities that guide the academic relationships graduate students and faculty members build. These formal responsibilities are described on the university website under section III of each academic year’s Graduate Calendar (Appendix F). During our interviews with students, a majority reported not being aware of the formal responsibilities required of them or of their faculty advisors by the university.

*I am not aware of any guidelines on what my advisor is here for and what I am supposed to do as a graduate student, no terms of reference to guide me (An international graduate student).*
Only 3 out of the 13 students interviewed said they became aware of these formal roles through their departments, faculty advisors and by checking the university webpage. However, these students also reported not completely understanding the described roles and responsibilities and suggested a more specific description of graduate students roles and responsibilities. Others noted that they found out about these responsibilities during their second year of graduate program.

*I got guidelines, policies and responsibilities from my department. When I came I didn’t know about these responsibilities until after 1 year when my department sent the guidelines. It will be useful to introduce students to these roles and responsibilities during orientation (An international graduate student).*

Some students also reported that there is so much information provided during orientation that it could be overwhelming. All 26 faculty advisors on the other hand indicated during the interviews that they are aware of their responsibilities and roles, more than half of them reported discussing these responsibilities and expectations with their graduate students. Few faculty advisors also reported not consciously discussing roles and responsibilities with their graduate students, they expect graduate students to find information on their own and ask for help if they need to.

*Graduate students should be immersed in their graduate experience, they have to be self-directed, seek information, work hard and seek for help, advisors offer guidance when needed (Faculty, OAC)*

Questions about faculty advisors’ formal responsibilities and students’ perceived roles of their advisors were also asked on the online surveys. More than 79% of the 120 faculty survey respondents from all seven colleges reported being aware of the range of formal responsibilities required of them towards their graduate students. More than 50% of the 48 student survey participants perceived and understood the same range of formal responsibilities and roles of their advisors. A majority of faculty advisors (92%) and students (79%) agreed that part of a faculty
advisor’s formal responsibilities is being reasonably accessible to students. About 90% of faculty and 73% of students understood examining student written material as formal responsibilities of faculty advisors. While 84% of faculty recognized chairing advisory committees as their responsibilities, only about 50% of students perceived this as the role of their advisors. Table 6 shows details of faculty awareness of their formal responsibilities, and students’ awareness and perceived roles of their faculty advisors. In addition to the defined formal responsibilities of faculty advisors, 75% of student survey participants perceived assisting students in the development and execution of research and helping with availability of resources as responsibilities of their advisors. About 56% perceived assisting students in securing scholarships and awards and 50% perceived connecting students with industry and helping with student professional development as their advisor’s roles. About 46% perceived assisting students with personal challenges that may affect their academic success as their advisor’s roles as well. These perceived roles of faculty advisors came up in the focus group discussions and interviews with students. A majority of students expressed the need for non-academic guidance from their advisors, especially in areas that affect student academic success.

*It is important to have guidance from an advisor in all areas, not just academic. Encouraging student and recommending them to apply for some jobs and to attend conferences that will benefit them (An international graduate student)*

Students who are on full scholarships from their home countries and have guaranteed jobs upon their return after graduate study did not perceive providing professional guidance as a formal responsibility of their advisors. A student interviewed indicated that he is being sponsored by his organization and has to return home and work. However, he acknowledged that students who do not have this opportunity have different expectations and usually expect to receive professional guidance from their advisors. Other students thought that advisors should take responsibilities
and be open to advising students in different areas even if that does not form a component their formal responsibilities.

The advisor has to be open to all other areas beyond academic and provide guidance; professional development and personal problems affect academic success. Good relationship built in a long term can be beneficial after school, such as getting reference letters (An international graduate student).

Table 6: Faculty awareness of formal responsibilities required of them U of G and students’ perceived roles and responsibilities of their faculty advisor (Online surveys)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal responsibilities and roles of faculty members</th>
<th>Faculty awareness of their roles (n=120)</th>
<th>Faculty awareness of their roles (%)</th>
<th>Students’ perceived roles of their advisors (n=48)</th>
<th>Students’ perceived roles of their advisors (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being reasonably accessible to students</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding students with their advisory committees</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining student written material</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisting students in understanding/ learning about appropriate deadline dates</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairing advisory committee</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving students notice of absence and making advising alternatives</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerting student to any personal risks during research and providing guidance to manage risks</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating student growth</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising students of safety and workplace regulations and policies</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who responded to the survey also reported their levels of awareness of the formal responsibilities required of them by the university. A majority of students (79%) reported being aware of their formal responsibilities as: fulfilling all course requirements, producing a thesis or research that is a student's own work, and meeting and communicating regularly with advisor (Table 7). Out of the 48 student survey participants, only 42% reported being aware of their
responsibility to change advisors if conflict arises, and a healthy work relationship cannot be maintained. This means more than 50% of students surveyed were not aware of this responsibility, educating students about their responsibility of changing advisors becomes very important to building good relationships with their advisors. A majority of students reported that they are not comfortable changing their advisors and also do not anticipate doing so because they are happy with their current advisors, this is consistent with what some studies have shown.

94% of over 300 diverse student participants in the United States did not anticipate changing their advisors. A small proportion of students pointed out they would change advisors if they could (Rice et al., 2009, p. 381).

My advisor is awesome! I will never think about changing my advisor (An international graduate student)

I am fully comfortable with my current Advisory Committee, and therefore do not intend for any revisions in these members. However, if I were to ask for a change in any of them, I would only feel comfortable if I knew the person well, both inside and outside academic settings, and had full trust in their judgment. My current committee fits this need of mine very well so I could not ask for a better committee as I see it no (An international graduate student).

Only 3% of the 48 student survey participants indicated being completely comfortable changing advisors, 18% reported being mostly comfortable, 6% said they were somewhat comfortable, another 18% reported being slightly comfortable. A significant majority (55%) said they are not comfortable at all changing their advisors even when there is conflict or misunderstanding.

You know difficulty or conflict needs the change but I personally I'm not comfortable with that because beyond the walls of education we are interpersonal beings so it means that the conflict resolution should be amicable to foster sincerity of relationship and not hatred (An international graduate student).

Coming close to the point of considering changing my advisor will be extremely difficult and will bring a considerable emotional consequence, since we've come through a long process of establishing relationship and certain degree of trust and my advisor has made considerable devotions in assisting my research design (An international graduate student).
Table 7: International graduate students’ awareness of formal responsibilities required of them by the University of Guelph (Online surveys)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal responsibilities of graduate students</th>
<th>Students’ awareness of their roles (n=48)</th>
<th>Students’ awareness of their roles (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill all course requirements</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce a thesis or research that is a student's own work and which meets university and department standards</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet and communicate regularly with advisor</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider and respond to advises and criticism by advisor/advisory committee</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive progress evaluation every semester by advisor/advisory committee</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize that thesis must be within the scope of approved graduate program</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be prepared to communicate first with advisor, then graduate coordinator or chair about any perceived problem to research or graduate studies</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose research topics with adequate available resources, including finance and advisor expertise</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for changing advisors: I must submit the specified reasons for replacement of my advisor/advisory committee to my department graduate coordinator should any personal or professional conflict arise and in cases where an appropriate academic relationship cannot be maintained.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International graduate student and faculty participants generally reported pleasant experiences and relationships. A few students and faculty however, did not report a good experience. Most faculty advisors in the focus groups and interviews indicated supervising at least one or two international graduate students per year and were generally satisfied with the work of their students. A faculty advisor from CPES commented, "part of my best experiences has been with international students". Faculty advisors expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with and learn from international graduate students, they said by working with students they learn to adapt to differences and diversity. A faculty member in OAC said that working with students increased his number of publications, “my publishing records is what is it
is because I had the opportunity to work with many international graduate students”. A large number of the faculty said they like having more international graduate students because they are very hard working and bring a wide range of professional experiences and expertise to the programs. However many said they have limited financial resources and opportunities to recruit more students, particularly in doctoral programs where the number of graduate students (especially domestic enrollment) is declining. The very few faculty advisors who were unhappy with their international graduate students said they prefer having domestic graduate students because they are more easier to work with and have very good writing and critical thinking skills compared to the international students. “I have had two international students, one was a landed immigrant but recently arrived). Both failed to complete the program. One failed her comprehensive exam and the other was asked to leave for lack of progress” (A faculty member). Majority of students (about three quarters) were generally happy with the relationships they have with their advisors, they reported receiving continuous support and guidance from their advisors and advisory committee. When asked about their relationships with their advisors, students in the focus groups and interviews described their experiences using various terms such as: good and positive, strictly academic, friendly and casual, supportive, warm and welcoming, academic and social support, encouraging and inspiring, challenging, intellectually stimulating, organized and restrictive.

It has been a good relationship with my advisor, I feel confident talking to my advisor and I feel we can always arrive to an agreement even if one of us has a different opinion. My advisor is always interested in how I am doing with my research, classes, the new culture and the weather (An international graduate student).

More than half of the students highlighted that their professors and faculty advisors are very helpful and open to meeting them to discuss issues related to their research and other areas.
Some reported feeling better after meeting with their faculty advisors because they get advice and support on how to deal with respective challenges. An student reported, “I noticed how helpful the whole faculty was towards me, the head of the department guided me several times about what courses to take and actually helped me to shape the area of my research”. Students who reported positive experiences with their advisors during the focus groups and interviews also indicated that they got more comfortable with their advisors with time. The majority were unsure the kind of relationship to build with their advisors; they reported not knowing how personal, informal or formal they are expected to get with their advisors.

I didn’t know how much personal interaction with my advisor is too much; it is difficult to know what the appropriate relationship to build with an advisor is (An international graduate student)

A common concern among focus group and interviewed student participants was calling their advisors and professors by their first names. As one student described: “I am accustomed to saying Sir or Mr. in Jamaica, here it is OK to refer to professors on a first name basis”. Many students reported experiencing high power distance relationships with their previous professors in their home countries, and it is difficult for them to make the transition from what a student from Germany described as “steep hierarchy” to “flat hierarchy”.

Hofstede (2010) described steep hierarchy and deference to authority as common in high power distance societies.

Power distance can be rooted in families, educational systems, organizations, healthcare, countries, and in ideas. Teachers are treated with respect or even fear in high power distance societies (Hofstede, 2010, p. 67).

Similar experience of authority was reported by faculty participants; they reported deference to authority as common traits among their international graduate students. Most faculty advisors described their international graduate students as respectful and formal.
I could not call a professor who was so older than me by his first name. In my Chinese culture, the youth not only respect the elderly but also those who are more educated (An international graduate student).

While majority of students in the focus groups and interviews described their faculty advisors as friendly and open, few perceived them differently. A student noted that compared to Argentina, supervisors in Canada are not so friendly, “in Argentina we are so close to our faculty advisors and supervisors and we talk about personal issues”. Students highlighted that it is easy to work with and communicate with advisors who have some international experience. Students who described the relationship with their advisors as strictly academic during the focus groups and interviews expressed having an excellent academic experience and a weak personal relationship. They noted having lots of academic guidance as well as autonomy to work in the area of their research interests. They appreciated the opportunity to be able to actively engage with their advisors about their research and grow as researchers, as well as the opportunity to work on their advisors’ project that allow them to apply theory into practice. However, these students wish they could relate more to their advisors on a personal level, especially when their personal and financial challenges are likely to affect their academic success. Responsibilities of faculty advisors and areas of guidance came up several times during this study. Students noted that the relationship they build with their advisors largely depend on the individual advisor and the official responsibilities of faculty advisors. Not knowing what the roles of an advisor are can contribute to skepticism about the kind of relationship to build with the advisor.

My advising relationship has been strictly academic and related to my thesis or assignments. There is limited discussion regarding other financial or social constraints, partly because I am not fully sure what the limitation of the advisor is in terms of their responsibility to the student guidance (An international graduate student).
A very small of number of students in the focus groups and interviews described their relationships and experiences with their advisors as disappointing, unpleasant and uncaring. One student reported, “not a good experience and not flexible to my needs, my advisor doesn’t know much about my project, doesn’t give me any guidance on my project and not very supportive considering that I am new in this environment”. Almost three quarters of the faculty advisors who participated in the focus groups and interviews indicated providing both academic and professional guidance to their students. About a quarter also said they engage with their students on a personal level. One faculty advisor reported teaching his international graduate student how to drive to help with collecting research data out of the city of Guelph and to speed up the data collection process within the city. Most faculty participants expressed the need to appropriately balance between formal and informal relationships with graduate students, one faculty captured this is as “not too friendly and not too strict”.

On the online surveys, participants were also asked to rate and describe their respective relationships with advisors /students. On a scale from excellent to poor, 35% of students rated their relationship with their advisors as excellent, 33% rated as very good, 14% rated as good, another 14% rated as fair and only 5% rated their relationship with advisor as poor. Out of the 120 faculty survey responses, 41% rated their relationship with their students as excellent, another 41% rated as very good, 12% rated as good, 5% rated as fair and only 1% reported a poor relationship with their students. Participants described their relationships according to four criteria: strictly academic; both academic and career development; both academic and personal; and academic, personal and career development. A large disconnect was noted between students and faculty advisors perception of their respective relationships. Even though most student respondents (42%) reported having a strictly academic relationship with their advisors, only 6%
of faculty reported a strictly academic relationship with their students. While 51% of faculty described their relationships with students as both academic and career development, only 19% of students described their relationships with their advisors as academic and career development. About 12% of students experienced both academic and personal relationships with their advisors and 1% of faculty reported a both academic and personal relationship, 26% of students and 42% faculty said their relationships had all components of academic, personal and career and development. Majority of both students and faculty participants related their relationship to individual personalities. Faculty members indicated that the level of interaction one can have with his/her student depends largely on the personality of the individual, their relationship with some students is formal and for others it is more informal. One student reported:

*Comparing my relationship with Mexican and Canadian advisors, the experience is not culture based, it is more of individual attitudes. I had a good experience with one Mexican advisor and am currently having a good experience with my Canadian advisor, but I also had a bad experience with another Mexican faculty.*

Survey participants were asked if they perceive any cultural differences between themselves and their advisors or students and how these differences affect their relationships. Participants generally did not perceive much difference in cultural values and majority thought their cultural differences have very little negative impact on their relationships, they recognize there are some differences and are aware of those during their interactions. Out of the 48 students and 120 faculty survey respondents, only 5% of students and 2% of faculty perceived a great difference between their cultural values and those of their faculty or students. The majority of respondents, 28% of students and 33% of faculty reported a moderate difference, 23% of students and 22% of faculty thought there is slightly less difference. Another 23% students and 20% of faculty perceived a much less difference, and 23% of students and 22% of faculty did not perceive any difference at all between their cultural values. Faculty participants noted that
differences might exist in religion, reverence for authority, expressing individual opinions, gender disparities and the role of women in some cultures. However, faculty participants highlighted that there may be cultural differences between faculty and domestic students, among international and domestic students; they therefore treat each student differently, since every individual comes with his/her own religious and cultural values irrespective of country of origin. This is in agreement with Hofstede’s argument:

Every individual carries within him/herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout the person’s lifetime which most of it was acquired in early childhood. It is important not to stereotype or characterize individuals according to their country of origin, race or religion (Hofstede, 2010, p. 4 & 40).

Faculty participants further responded that these differences do not have much influence on their relationships with both international and domestic graduate students. Comparing the influence of cultural differences on their relationship between their international and domestic students, 62% of the 120 faculty survey respondents said their relationships are neither negatively nor positively affected by differences in cultural values. A very small number of faculty (6%) reported that their relationships with international students are very positively affected by cultural differences compared to domestic students, 19% reported a somewhat positively affected relationship and 13% said their relationships with international students compared to domestic students are slightly negatively affected by cultural differences. Most students, 53% also reported that their relationships with their faculty advisors are neither positively nor negatively affected by cultural differences, 25% reported a very positive influence, 14% noted a somewhat positive influence, 6% saw a slightly negative impact and only 3% said their relationships with their advisors are very negatively affected by cultural differences. Student participants recognize that differences may exist, and are therefore cautious of this when interacting with their faculty.
advisors. “I am aware of the cultural differences between China and Canada, so am careful when communicating with my advisor not to say anything embarrassing” (An international graduate student). Majority of faculty surveyed (38%) are mostly aware of cultural differences during their interactions with students, 29% are somewhat aware, 20% are fully aware, 11% are very slightly aware and 2% are completely unaware of any differences when interacting with their students. Students and faculty generally reported same level of comfort working with both international and domestic students. Most student survey participants (47%) reported having same level of comfort working with both international students and domestic students, 16% of respondents said they are more comfortable working with other international students, 32% said they are moderately comfortable and 5% are slightly less comfortable working with other international students compared to domestic students. About 80% of faculty advisors also reported same level of comfort working with domestic and international students, 6% are more comfortable working with domestic graduate students compared to international students, 8% moderately comfortable, 3% are slightly less comfortable. Only 1% said they prefer working with international students, they are much less comfortable working with domestic graduate students compared to international students.

Participants interviewed described their expectations of their students or faculty advisors. Faculty expectations of students ranged from concerns about academic and research excellence to time management and technical competence. Student expectations of their advisors included concerns about research and professional guidance and timely feedback. Table 8 shows details of faculty and student expectations reported in the interviews.
Table 8: Faculty expectations of their international students and students’ expectations of their faculty advisors reported in the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Advisors’ Expectations of their International Graduate Students</th>
<th>International Graduate Students’ Expectations of their Faculty Advisors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be able to read and synthesize literature.</td>
<td>Provide academic guidance throughout research project and graduate program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate work must be of a good and reasonable standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a successful thesis and be successful in their career</td>
<td>Edit academic papers and provide clear, detailed and timely feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become independent and critical thinkers, creative, organized, passionate and honest</td>
<td>To be more available to students and make alternative advising arrangements when advisor is busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To invest themselves in the learning process and show up for meetings, clinical work and labs</td>
<td>Meet regularly to discuss academic/project progress and other challenges student may be facing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish or co-author in a good journal (e.g., scientific journal) especially PHD students-at least 2 papers</td>
<td>Advice student on publishing and co-author on academic papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take an active role in communicating with advisor, ask questions, discuss problems they may have and ask to discuss expectation</td>
<td>Discuss expectations with students. Understand that international students may have additional transition challenges, such as finance and language barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To do the highest level of work to their ability. Complete research and course work in timely manner</td>
<td>Provide organizational support to make sure projects and graduate work is completed on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build strong level of independence over time – discussing and deciding the direction of their research</td>
<td>Build long-term relationship with advisor even after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to distinguish between research approaches, experiments &amp; hypothesis</td>
<td>Provide professional guidance – recommend jobs and conferences and provide references for jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To build an excellent communication ability, both oral and written. Use their other committee members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop their own intellectual, technical and professional capacity and have the highest ethical standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These expectations are not representative of all faculty members and students at U of G. Expectations may depend on several factors including the student or faculty research interests, the research project, student skills and capabilities and the type of relationship between advisor and students, these may vary across colleges, disciplines and departments.

I focus my expectations on student’s personality traits because it makes it easier to train them in technical skills. For instance, PhD students have higher independence and critical thinking skills compared to masters students (A faculty member).

Unclear and/or undefined advisor expectations were some of the major issues raised during the student focus group discussions and interviews. Students indicated not being aware of what their advisors’ research and academic expectations are, most students did not recollect having a direct communication with their faculty advisors about research and academic expectations. A number of faculty focus group and interview participants also said they do not explicitly discuss expectations with their graduate students, and that students learn about these through regular meetings and mostly expectations and responsibilities are defined by student projects. A few students said they are aware of what their advisors expected from them, however some of the expectations are clear and others are not. For some students, they sometimes misunderstand expectations and communications because of language barrier. Two students indicated that they usually email their faculty advisors ahead of any meeting to inform them about what they would like to discuss during the meeting and ask for any clarifications and expectations for the meeting. During the interviews, we found that most faculty members discuss their research and academic expectations with their graduate students (both domestic and international), and they have some graduate students who inform them of what they expect as well. Faculty advisors indicated having preliminary discussions about research expectations, expectations of scientific literacy and philosophy of advising during the recruitment of their students and they continue to have
these discussions through out their students’ graduate studies. A faculty member noted that she intends to have a more formal discussion about expectations with her future graduate students instead of the informal discussions she usually have with students. Faculty advisors meet regularly with their graduate students, some said they meet weekly or bi-weekly, either in lab meetings or one on one. Others do not meet their students as frequently, at least once a month, and students sometimes pass by their offices for a quick discussion and through email communication. All faculty interviewed emphasized the importance of laying out a progress plan for student’s program and reviewing that every semester with the student as well as discussing academic expectation from the onset and through out student’s program. Equally important is for advisors to understand what their graduate students expect from them, for instance, understanding student’s research timelines and ability, and financial expectations can help reduce misunderstandings and facilitate good graduate student/advisor relationships. A faculty commented, “international students often require more initial close supervision just to be sure that they understand our graduate system and the associated responsibilities of both student and supervisor”.

\textit{I have a two-way discussion with my graduate students from the onset about expectations, planning and timelines, I call it visualizing} (A faculty member)

About 75% of the 26 faculty interviewed reported having the same expectations for all their graduate students, faculty advisors recognize international students may have additional transition challenges therefore they are more accommodative in terms of timelines, language competences and technical skills. Other faculty advisors said their expectations change almost every semester depending on student’s academic and research progress, and that there are hard working international students who are as competent as domestic students. One faculty noted that
she used to expect less from international students until she realized they are as capable as
domestic students because they usually work very hard to succeed academically.

*Previously, I thought their backgrounds are different and I can’t expect more, however, with my experience working with international students and how much they work hard to succeed, I have to come expect the same as domestic students. Generally I have more expectations of good students, irrespective of whether they are domestic or international* (A faculty member, OVC).

When asked whether their expectations of international graduate students are different from their domestic graduate students, 53% of the 120 faculty members who responded to the online survey said they have the same expectations for both their international and domestic students. Only 1% said their expectations are greatly different, 17% reported somewhat different expectations and 20% said their expectations of their international students were slightly different from those of their domestic students. Survey participants were also asked about the levels of awareness of their students and faculty expectations on a scale of fully aware to not aware. Faculty advisors and students reported almost the same levels of awareness of their expectations, students who responded to the survey reported being more aware of their advisor’s expectations than those who participated in the focus groups and interviews. Of the 120 faculty surveyed, 25% were fully aware of their students’ expectations and only 10% % of the 48 students surveyed reported being fully aware of their advisor’s expectations. A majority, 55% of faculty and 57% of students reported being mostly aware, 15% of faculty and 29% of students were somewhat aware, 3% of faculty and 5% of students were slightly aware. Very few faculty advisors, about 2% were not aware of what their students expect from them and none of the students were completely unaware of their advisor’s expectations.
Students and faculty participants reported that their expectations have generally been met. Few students felt their advisors could do more to guide them particularly in editing their research papers and providing professional guidance, they noted that their advisors are very busy and sometimes ask other graduate students to edit their work. Students generally thought their faculty advisors provide them with lots of support, 35% of students surveyed perceived their advisors as extremely supportive and another 35% perceived as very supportive. About 23% thought their advisors were neither supportive nor non-supportive, 5% perceived them as marginally supportive and only 2% thought their advisors were not supportive at all. Faculty advisors noted on the online survey that they perceive each of their students differently, and are unable to generalize about their perceptions of their students for most times. Faculty advisors reported that their respective international students have an excellent work ethic and are highly dependable, talented, outstanding, hardworking, focused and as intellectually capable as domestic students. They are motivated and dedicated, sometimes overly thankful and appreciative, less independent, have more financial challenges and usually need more help with writing and critical thinking.

I have been fortunate to work with very talented graduate students during my career and the international students with whom I worked were equally talented. They were engaged, thoughtful, reflective, wrote well for the most part (at least at the same level as my Canadian students) and communicated effectively. My perceptions, overall, are quite positive (A faculty member, CSAHS)

Most faculty participants were impressed with their international students’ ability to succeed academically despite the many challenges they face adapting to their new environments, dealing with financial difficulties and learning to live in a different cultural environment from theirs. For these reasons and more, international students “require a greater degree of structure in terms of
laying out their program and expectations, because they are less familiar with how things work at Canadian universities” (A faculty member).

Faculty advisors were generally satisfied with the work ethic, academic integrity, academic writing, interaction and communication of their students. Faculty focus group and interview participants described most international students as having a very good work ethic. Students in the focus group and interviews also reported being satisfied with the work ethic of their faculty advisors, they noted that their advisors are professional and open to listening to student’s opinions and thoughts on research projects. In the online surveys, students and faculty reported their levels of satisfaction in various areas. Students were asked to rate the degree to which their advisors role in communicating, providing timely guidance and feedback, availability and work ethic have generally been met on a scale of completely met to not met all (table 9). Faculty advisors rated their level of satisfaction with students on a scale of completely satisfied to not satisfied (table 10). A majority of faculty, 56 (47%) were completely satisfied with the work ethic of their students and a majority of students 24 (50%) said their advisor’s role in terms work ethic is completely met (Table 9 and 10).

Table 9: International graduate students’ levels of satisfaction with their faculty advisor’s roles (Online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of satisfaction</th>
<th>Students’ level of satisfaction with faculty advisor's role (n=48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CM (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely guidance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor availability</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely feedback</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key for table 9:
1. CM - Completely Met
2. MM - Mostly Met
3. SWM - Somewhat Met
4. SM - Slightly Met
5. NM - Not met at all

71
Table 10: Faculty advisors’ levels of satisfaction with their international graduate students (Online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of satisfaction</th>
<th>Faculty level of satisfaction with students (n=120)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CS (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic integrity</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research competence</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical skills</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence to express personal ideas &amp; opinions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key for table 10:
1. CS - Completely Satisfied
2. MS - Mostly Satisfied
3. SWS - Somewhat Satisfied
4. SS - Slightly Satisfied
5. NS – Not Satisfied

**Academic Challenges**

Academic writing, language difficulties and financial difficulties were the major academic challenges faced by the students as noted by both faculty and student participants. Students reported their academic challenges at various intensities, faculty members noted that each student is different and experiences different challenges at different levels. Faculty participants reported that some international students lack technical competence and confidence, they are also unable to express their own opinions publicly or to their advisors, partly as a result
of too much deference to authority and language barriers. Faculty participants also reported having different academic backgrounds from those of their international students. Due to language barriers, students sometimes do not understand expectations of their advisors, and defined academic expectations and roles of graduate students such as academic integrity. Other challenges reported by faculty included, finding time for students, the acceptance of international students by domestic students during group work and international students’ ability to transfer to U of G academic culture, which faculty described as innovativeness, independence and critical thinking.

Faculty members who responded to the online survey also reported the following as challenges they face working with international students: academic writing, different academic background and English proficiency, students’ ability to express themselves, critical reasoning skills and level of creativity, among others. Table 11 provides details about the challenges faculty advisors reported on the survey. Student survey participants reported unclear expectations, availability of advisors, getting professional guidance, difficulty expressing themselves and asking questions, among others as major academic challenges they face working with their respective faculty (table 12). Unclear expectations and language barriers were some of the challenges students said they are comfortable discussing with their faculty (Table 12).
Table 11: Major challenges with advising international graduate students reported by faculty in the online survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges faculty advisors face working with students</th>
<th>Faculty (n=120)</th>
<th>Faculty (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic writing</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency &amp; Different academic background</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ confidence to express themselves openly</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical reasoning skills &amp; level of creativity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Canadian academic culture</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to express themselves and ask questions</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing whether they understand you or not</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student deference to authority</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ knowledge of their rights, roles &amp; responsibilities</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different academic expectations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic integrity</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting to and understanding international students’ cultures</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student time management</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of time for students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: International graduate students major challenges working with their faculty advisors and the challenges students are comfortable discussing with their faculty advisors (online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ major Challenges working with faculty advisor</th>
<th>Students (n=48)</th>
<th>Students (%)</th>
<th>Students who would be comfortable discussing with advisor (n=48)</th>
<th>Students who would be comfortable discussing with advisor (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisor very busy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty expressing my own opinions and asking questions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting professional guidance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different research interests and expectations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barriers (oral and written communication)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty communicating and interacting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear expectations on research project / undefined student and advisor expectation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate follow up and timely feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student and faculty survey participants were asked to select all the challenges they face working with each other. Each of the 48 student participants selected at least 1 of the challenges listed. Each of the 120 faculty participants selected at least 2 of the challenges listed in the survey, many of the faculty selected between 3 and 5 challenges.

**Academic writing**

During focus group discussions and interviews, faculty participants noted lack of academic writing skills as common among international graduate students, other faculty noted that some students have very good writing skills. They acknowledge domestic students also have writing problems, however, international students are faced with writing problems more, particularly those with English as a second language.

*Some international graduate students write very poorly, the same can be said about domestic students; however, writing is a common challenge among international students (A faculty member, OAC)*

Faculty advisors emphasized the importance of editing the papers of students meticulously and providing them with additional support such as making them write progress reports every week, referring them to university’s library writing clinic or advising them to hire editors. According to faculty participants, some students show enormous improvement in their written communication with time because they make every effort to learn and improve. More than half of the international graduate students who participated in the focus groups and interviews also noted academic writing, specifically grammar, vocabulary and writing styles as their major academic challenges, particularly because English is their second language. These students reported relying a lot on the library writing workshops and GSLI to improve their writing skills. Student participants recommended English as a second language (ESL), graduate student learning
initiatives (GSLI) workshops, and the library writing clinics at U of G as useful resources for improving their academic writing and professional skills. Open Learning and Educational Support (OpenEd) also provides several teaching and learning workshops students can take advantage of to improve their academic and professional skills in teaching.

"Academic writing has been a challenge for me because English is not my language; English has certain grammars that I can’t understand well, such as when to use ‘a’ and ‘the’. My advisor suggested I take workshops provided by GSLI, and also pays extra attention on my grammar when reading my papers (An international graduate student)."

Some students indicated that the library writing clinics need to expand the hours of services they offered to students, students described the 2 sessions a week per student and the 1hour per session as “very limiting”, they suggested expanding services to the weekends as well. Other students said in attempt to improve their writing skills, their advisors ask them to submit a written report every week, and they receive comments and feedback from the advisors. Some also said their advisors asked them to hire editors to edit their academic papers, but this was an expensive option student said they couldn’t afford.

"Writing is a challenge for me, in terms of grammar and wordiness, I spoke to advisor once about it but can’t always get help because my advisor is busy. I paid for an online tool to check my grammar and that is expensive, this is because I couldn’t get help from the library. (An international graduate student)"

Other students said that their advisors expect the same writing standard from them as domestic students, one student commented, “my advisor expects the same inputs from me just as his domestic students, but my reading and writing is very slow and hard to catch up”.

**Language barriers and learning environments**

Language barriers, such as ability to clearly communicate orally or in writing were also revealed to be common problem among international graduate students. Students in the focus
groups and interviews noted that they are dealing with several academic and social problems in transitioning into their new environment and having English as a second language makes the transition much more challenging. Students also perceived having different academic backgrounds as part of their language challenges; some say they recognize there are differences but the differences in academic background do not have great impact on their academic adjustment. Others on the hand experience difficulties interacting in the classroom and adjusting to their new academic culture. Some students said they are not used to participating in class, a student interviewed described, “I am more passive, and less active in group discussions, I agree with what everyone says and I talk less like am in China”. These experiences have been captured in the literature, Lui (2011) argued:

When international graduate students have language issues, and are unable to express themselves fluently in English in their new environment, they may develop self-doubt, low self-esteem, and may be less confident. These experiences may affect international graduate students’ ability to interact with others and make it more difficult for them to adapt successfully in their new environment (Liu, 2011, p. 80).

These are how some students described their experiences interacting in the classroom and adapting to their new academic culture:

*Learning environment here is different, too much information at one time and it is hard to keep up. In China it is not as active and participatory in class. It is hard to get involved and interact with Canadian student; they talk too fast and hard to follow (An international graduate student)*

*My learning background from my program was different from here and the transition is hard, switching from international stream to Canadian stream. I am afraid to ask questions, if others understand, I feel shy I don’t and can’t ask questions. In China, is more like teacher speaks, student listens, the teaching module is different, I am used to just accepting what the professor tells me and no judgment or challenging professors (An international graduate student)*
In Canada, every student has the opportunity to develop creativity and critical thinking skills. I really like the Canadian education system, I noticed that Canadian students always have many ideas to contribute because of this critical/creativity skills (An international graduate student)

All student participants expressed the need for more guidance from their faculty advisors and the university community. Some noted receiving very little support from their advisors on improving their language and research abilities, they think their advisors do not understand the challenges they go through. A student expressed, “I just wish my advisor has more time and is more involved in my research, and my advisor does not understand the challenges of international students”.

Academic writing is a challenge and my advisor is not supportive in helping with my writing. It is my first time writing at Canadian university, and the topic is new, haven’t done much in the lab to guide me in my writing. Without guidance, the process is longer and takes so much time to complete graduate studies (An international graduate student)

Others said their advisors are very supportive and help them in overcoming their academic and social challenges, one student reported, “my advisor and I work on eliminating language and cultural barriers, we are like friends but keep it professional as well, especially for academic discussion”. Some faculty and staff participants commented that even though international students may need more support from their advisors, they tend not to always ask for help and usually try to be independent.

Communication seems to be a major challenge for international graduate students, some tend to interact less with faculty or other students. Domestic graduate students tend to interact more with faculty compared to international graduate students (A staff at OpenEd).

A faculty member in CBS reported sending one of her student to English language training at the Guelph continuing education, and this helped improved the student’s oral and written communication enormously. Some faculty members suggested doing an intake interview with
prospective students to access their language ability before taking them on. It was noted though international students pass the English standard exams for graduate school admission, they still face language challenges in their new environment.

**Academic integrity (AI)**

Academic misconduct and plagiarism was not perceived as a major challenge among most international graduate students who participated in the focus groups and interviews, only few found AI as a challenge. Two students noted that academic integrity at U of G is the same as what they were familiar with in Germany and Mexico and there are also systems available to check plagiarized work. Another student said he transferred from China to Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada to complete the final 2 years of his undergraduate degree and he learned about academic integrity at Dalhousie before starting his graduate studies at Guelph. He added that the turnitin.com software for checking plagiarized papers was available to students at Dalhousie and wish this was same at U of G. One interviewed faculty said he usually gives his students access to turnitin.com to help them detect any plagiarized work before submitting their papers. One other student indicated that she learned about academic integrity during her undergrad at a transnational university in China that is affiliated with a Western university and this was not different from academic integrity rules at U of G. A different student reported learning about academic integrity during his undergrad in China. However, some faculty and staff members noted that academic misconduct is more common among international graduate students; some related it to culture and others to language difficulties.
There is an acceptable culture of plagiarism in some cultures and they are not so concerned about copyrights. Domestic students also practice plagiarism, but probably more common among international students because of varying cultural values (A faculty member)

Plagiarism is a problem among international graduate students and I do not believe culture is an excuse (A faculty member).

A student from Thailand said even though academic integrity is not a challenge for him, what he experienced in Thailand is much different, “there is so much emphasis on intellectual property, plagiarism, copyright here”. Another student made this comment, “In China, copyright in academic work is not as intense in Canada, it’s a challenge for me here because of language barrier, and choosing the rights words and style can be difficult”. Faculty members highlighted that domestic students plagiarize as well, however this is more common among international students. Faculty members noted with proper guidance and support, international students learn to understand the academic integrity system at U of G, they also indicated using ‘turn it in’ and other tools to detect plagiarized papers. Students interviewed reported that the academic integrity course at U of G has been helpful in making them understand the academic integrity at the university. A student said she is glad there are strict rules on copyright and plagiarism at U of G, she noted that in Mexico, academic integrity rules are only “on paper but practically students cheat, it is more flexible in Mexico and there are no huge penalties like here”.

I like that U of G has academic integrity course to guide me, I never had specific instructions on plagiarism in Argentina. With language issue and academic writing a challenge for international students, it is likely that they plagiarize without noticing, its good there are rules to guide (An international graduate student)

The University of Guelph defines Academic Integrity (AI) as "a code of ethics for teachers, students, researchers, and writers" (Appendix G). This includes; "not claiming credit for the work of another, not falsifying documents, not obstructing another person's ability to
perform academic tasks in order to gain an unfair advantage, and not disobeying the rules of ethical research, or improperly obtain access to privileged information or disseminate that information”. The online survey asked student participants how much they agreed with the definition of AI at U of G and how this definition conformed with their understanding of AI on a scale of completely agree to do not agree. More than half of the 48 student participants said they agreed with and understood the definition of AI, and none of the participants reported not agreeing or understanding (Table 13).

Table 13: How student survey participants rated their agreement with and understanding of academic integrity definition at the University of Guelph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ level of agreement with AI Definition at U of G</th>
<th>Students (n=48)</th>
<th>Student (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were 7 non-responses for this question; the percentages reported exclude non-responses.

Faculty advisors were also asked the extent to which their international students understand academic integrity at U of G. Of the 120 faculty participants, 44% responded that their students fully understand, 31% said they understand moderately, 20% noted that students somewhat understand, 3% said their students slightly understand and only 2% of faculty reported that their students do not understand AI at U of G. Survey participants were also asked to rate the academic integrity course at U of G. We found that some faculty members were not aware of the academic integrity course at the university, those who knew perceived it as generally helpful. Of the faculty participants surveyed, 8% rated the AI course as very effective, a majority (48%) rated as mostly effective, 38% reported that the AI is neither effective or ineffective, 5% said it
was somewhat less effective and only 2% faculty thought the AI course at U of G is ineffective. Students surveyed generally rated the AI course at the university positively, none of the students rated the course as poor, 19% rated the course as excellent, 41% rated it as very good, 24% rated as good and 16% rated the AI course at the university as fair.

Faculty and student participants used different methods and ways to address the challenges they face working with each other. Faculty members used measures such as: laying out the ideal plan for student’s program and reviewing that with the student every semester, meticulously editing student’s papers and providing timely feedback, having direct communication and connecting students to other students and post docs. Measures by students included: meeting regularly and improved communication with advisor, made advisor aware of research interests and expectations, consulted other students and faculty for help, and consulted the international student advisor. More of these measures and other recommendations are described in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Social Transition

In the focus groups and interviews, students reported that their personal and social challenges to a large extent affect their academic progress and the relationships they build with their faculty advisors, as well as their ability to adapt to U of G successfully. They highlighted that visible minorities are particularly more disadvantaged, a student from Germany described, “visible minorities have less access to opportunities, I have friends who don’t have same opportunity as me, some people have problems getting a study permit from other countries, and I didn’t have any problems with that, some can’t get a visa for families to visit or attend
conferences”. Some interviewed faculty members noted that getting visas for students from the Middle East to attend conferences for instance in the United States is particularly difficult and the University has very little control over that. The personal and social transition issues reported by students included: understanding different accents and communicating clearly, difficulty interacting with domestic students, programs not international student friendly, difficulty accessing information e.g., how to file taxes, getting around the city, adapting to the Canadian climate and finding out about scholarships availability.

On the online survey, students were asked to indicate the challenges they face adapting to their new social environment at U of G and the challenges they comfortable discussing with their faculty advisors. Financial burden and social isolation were reported by majority of respondents, participants were not generally comfortable discussing their social challenges with their faculty advisors (Table 14). However, many students reported consulting the international student advisor for help when it came to their social issues (table 15).
Table 14: International graduate students challenges adapting to and pursuing graduate studies at U of G and challenges students are comfortable discussing with advisors (Online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Social Challenges</th>
<th>Students (n=48)</th>
<th>Students (%)</th>
<th>Students who would be comfortable discussing with advisor (n=48)</th>
<th>Students who would be comfortable discussing with advisor (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance (tuition and living expense)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifying for scholarships and awards</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack a feeling of inclusiveness and sense of belonging</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty finding on campus job</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty finding specific information and programs for international graduate students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty finding foods from home country</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty communicating and interacting with domestic students and the general university community</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty finding information on campus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty adapting to the Canadian climate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty getting around the university and the city</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Measures taken by international graduate students to address their challenges adapting to U of G (Online survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures taken by students to address social challenges</th>
<th>Students (n=48)</th>
<th>Students (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make effort to communicate and interact with other students</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulted the international student advisor for help</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended graduate student workshops and training</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulted student financial services</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in student activities and social events</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought on campus jobs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought help from library writing services</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used Graduate Student Learning Initiative (GSLI)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</table>
Students had the option to select more than one challenge and measure, each participant selected at least 2 challenges and measures; many selected 3 or 4 each. This study has shown various challenges international graduate students face adapting to their new environment at U of G, these challenges have been reported in the literature as described in chapter 2 of this thesis.

International graduate students in North America are faced with various challenges, including; language difficulties, difficulties adjusting to the academic culture, misunderstandings and complications in communication with faculty, feelings of isolation, culture shock, and challenges adapting and adjusting to their new environments” (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 310).

**Language barriers and social interaction / isolation**

Since English was not the first language for many of the student participants in the focus groups and interviews, social interaction in English was a major concern. Students noted difficulties understanding different accents, slang, jokes, and had difficulty communicating clearly. Some students also reported feeling socially isolated, they noted difficulties interacting and making friends with domestic students.

*My lack of understanding of humor in English affects my interaction to some extent, I get uncomfortable and not sure what to say* (An international graduate student)

Students suggested that advisors should help them create social networks when they first arrive by connecting them with other students and faculties; some students noted they have mentorship programs in their departments. Other students recommended the “conversation partner” at the library learning commons as a good way to interact with other students (both domestic and international students), to learn Canadian culture and practice speaking English.
My department has a student mentorship program that match new students with more mature senior students, and we also have a student guide / handbook (An international graduate student, CBS).

More than half of student participants indicated using services at the Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA) and have contacted the international student advisor for advise on at least one non-academic challenge they are facing. Students who felt isolated said they are unable to function well academically and socially because they sometimes feel rejected and unwanted, and are usually afraid to express their opinion, ask questions or interact with others. This is how one student captured her feelings of isolation, “international students, we are the unspoken persons, know one talks for us, we have to fend for ourselves”. Erichson & Bolliger (2010) were in agreement of this likely feeling of isolation among international students.

A recent research on international graduate students isolation from host communities showed that international students are likely to perceive or experience isolation from host universities either in the classroom environment or in social interactions outside the classroom (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2010, p. 309).

Faculty advisors who were once international student said they recognize the importance of understanding the challenges of international students. “As a person who was once an international student, it is important to appreciate and recognize international students and make them feel worthwhile, they enrich academic and social culture and they contribute to the success of communities” (A faculty member). Other students reported very positive social interaction experiences, they said that they make every effort to interact with other students and attend social events on and off campus. Some noted they get invited by their faculty advisors to attend family dinners with other students, and participate in lab socials and summer parties.
I like to talk to international students about their families and get to know them at the personal level. Get them involved in social and community events, take them to banks to open accounts and do groceries (A faculty member, CBS).

One student said he usually discusses politics and soccer with his advisor. Another reported that her advisor organizes surprise birthday celebrations for students in her lab, and to help with feeling part of the department.

Surprise birthday is not common in China, advisor and student are not so close compared to here. I like the relationship and style here because am more comfortable to interact with her and share, and this helps in academic success in the long run (An international graduate student)

Faculty participants reported helping their students with opening bank accounts, finding housing, getting around the city and finding grocery stores where they can get culturally appropriate foods. Others reported participating in social and sport activities with their graduate students such as, organizing potlucks where students share foods from their cultures, playing soccer and basketball. Another faculty reported inviting his students to his cottage over the weekend to help them relax, discuss both academic and personal issues and make them more comfortable and open towards him. Some faculty advisors indicated that engaging students outside of the classroom and official work environment increase their comfort level and openness to discuss personal issues that are affecting their academic success. The students who reported positive social interaction experiences highlighted that all students have to make efforts to participate in activities and programs to make their integration easier. They said some people are easy to interact with and others are not depending on personalities of people, and this is the case even for people “within the same nationality and culture, students are all different in their own way”, an student expressed. She further noted, “I like to mingle with Canadian students and learn Canadian culture so am not so interested in international student specific events”. Another student noted that having intercultural events, where both domestic and international students
can meet and mingle is a good way for international students to interact with the student community. Others recommended the BUDDY program organized by the OIA, they noted the program is very helpful because they are matched with a current domestic or international student. This gives them the opportunity to make a new friend, learn about the city, and a bit of Canadian culture, participate in sports and other social events. Our interview with the OIA revealed that many undergraduate students use the services and participate in the programs at OIA more than graduate students. Other programs such as the LINK and the CHROMA project are all mentoring initiatives by the OIA that match new international students with current students to make their transition both on campus and in the city easier. The mentoring programs also enrich international students’ learning and social experience at the university. The International Student Advisor and the Manager of the OIA, encourage all international students, particularly international graduate students to take advantage of the services and programs at student life, the OIA and other programs at the university (See Appendix G for websites of programs and services at U of G).

**Cultural differences and power dynamics**

Cultural differences such as personal space, direct communication and language, respect for authority, religion and food were the differences both faculty advisors and students have observed and experienced. Student focus group and interview participants said they have a hard time building close relationships with Canadian students, “personal space is very important here, you are not sure if you can hug people or sit so close to them on the bus, you have to respect people’s space”, a student commented. Many said they find that Canadian students are sometimes too friendly and less direct, they unable to tell when Canadian students are being
genuine because they usually give very positive comments like “you are the best, this is awesome, you saved my life”. One student noted that he generally finds Canadians less direct compared to the United States, he is very careful when communicating with his faculty advisor. He noted that there are things he can directly say to his advisor in the US but not sure how much he can say to his Canadian advisor. Other students reported different cultural experiences; some thought Canadian students are less friendly. A student expressed, “people are less friendly here compared to China, difficult finding Canadian students to hang out with, I only have international student friends, different cultures makes it difficult to make friends and get involved in life here”. It is evident that international students are not homogenous and neither are domestic students, each student experiences his /her new environment differently.

On the online survey, student participants were asked how they perceive other student’s cultural values in relation to theirs; respondents generally perceived differences between their cultures and those of other students (both domestic and international). Out of the 48 students surveyed, 21% perceived a great difference, 45% perceived a moderate difference, 5% said their cultural values are same as those of other students, 18% perceived a slightly less differences, and 10% noted a much less difference. These perceived differences were reported to influence social and academic interactions at various degrees; only 8% of students surveyed said different cultural values have no influence on their interactions with other students. Most students (28%) experienced some influence, another 28% experienced little influence, 26% reported a moderate influence, and 10% reported that cultural values greatly influence their interactions with other students. As described earlier in this chapter, faculty members perceive international students as more shy and respectful compared to their domestic students. According to a faculty member in OAC, “international graduate students are more respectful and formal during interactions with
faculty; they won’t speak their mind, they don’t challenge situations and opinions because they think is disrespectful”. Another faculty in CBS highlighted that international students are “occasional hesitant and fearful because they had to adapt to a lot of things”. Some students noted they make lots of effort to adapt to cultural differences.

*I just work harder and try to observe and understand the new culture in order to know what is expected of me, I am always asking questions and try to adapt to the culture and U of G (An international graduate student)*

Some faculty members said they are sensitive to their students cultural differences, and do their best to respect differences such as religious beliefs and religious holidays, others noted that it is difficult to know a student’s background, “you may assume too much or too little”. Faculty reported experiencing similar adaptation to their domestic students’ cultural values and beliefs as they do to their international students. Students recognize and appreciate the efforts their advisors make to help them understand and integrate into their new cultural environment.

*My advisor has been giving me a lot of care in terms of adapting to Canadian life and tries to show me the Canadian culture in her own way (An international graduate student)*

Finding culturally appropriate food was one of the things international students miss most being away from home, they reported difficulty finding food they are used to, and if they do it is expensive, they said it is generally more expensive to live at Guelph compared to their counties. “I can’t find a lot of cultural foods, it is very expensive to live here, food is expensive, however salaries are higher compared to Germany” (An international graduate student). The OIA has a food guide with more than 50 listings of restaurants which serve food from different countries in the city of Guelph to help meet the food needs of international students. Students who eat in these restaurants at least four times in a semester can submit their bills attached to the back of their food guide to the OIA. They are then entered into draws, and have the opportunity to win a $25 gift card to any cultural restaurant of their choice. Student life and its participating offices
such as the OIA and other offices and departments at U of are making a lot of effort to create programs and services that can help the transition of international students and ensure a more inclusive learning and social environment for all students.

**Financial Challenges**

High international student tuition, limited funding and scholarships (including entry scholarships), high living expenses as well as finding on and off campus jobs have been reported to influence international students’ academic and social transition at U of G. Students said they understand that doubling their tuition is standard at the university, however, there should be other job and funding opportunities to enable them manage their financial burden better.

*The tuition cost is more than 2X the normal domestic student tuition, while this is standard not just for U of G, there should be some consideration for international students to get income generating opportunities on campus (An international graduate student)*

They noted that the funding available has so many restrictions and they usually do not meet the requirements and if they do it may be too late to apply because they might almost be finishing their program, this is particularly in the case of 2 year masters students. We found that most students underestimated their financial budget for their graduate programs at U of G; some said they found out that things are more expensive than they expected and prepared for. “Expenses are high and I encountered health expenses I was not expecting, more funding for international student health care or even better insurance coverage is needed” (An international graduate student). Others factored income from guaranteed GTA or GRA positions from their respective departments into their budgets, only to find out after they arrived in Canada that their income and expenditure calculations were not as feasible as thought.
Finance is really a challenge, as an international student and coming from the country where its money is not even comparable to dollars, I was always stressed that I had to pay the difference between my TA income and my tuition fee. (Since all of my teaching income was going towards my tuition in all of the semesters.) Also, since my College does not have enough money to support the students, I did not receive a TA position in the last semester and I am still in debt to my bank (An international graduate student).

Faculty members suggested having a system in place where students become fully aware of financial expectations for their graduate studies, and to prepare them more on what to expect financially. Students said after they have arrived and realized they are not financially prepared to for their programs, they begin to feel stressed about finding other means to help with their expenditures. They seek on campus job, which they reported they were not usually qualified for because they lack Canadian work experience. “Some jobs are very specific and not open to international students with non-Canadian experience” (An international graduate student).

Most jobs on campus ask for Canadian experience and it is hard for international students to gain that experience if not given the opportunity, feels like we are being excluded (An international graduate student).

Until June 2014, international students had to apply for work permit to be able to work 20 hours/week of off campus job, with the new changes to international students program in Canada, students with valid study permit are allowed to work part time without a work permit. The process of getting a work permit without having much information on how to, adds additional pressure on students. Students therefore preferred to find jobs on campus, “as an international student, the biggest challenge is financial burden, it is really hard to get jobs either on campus or off campus, I wish on campus job opportunities give priority to international students since off campus is more challenging”. Students said they are unable to apply for work-study in their first year (jobs offered by the university to students who demonstrate financial need) because they only qualify in the second year of their programs.
Opportunities for employment is limited, first year international graduate students are not allowed to get work-study, and other non-work study funded jobs are difficult to get, I have applied with no response or acknowledgment. I think it is important for the University to acknowledge that many international students and primarily graduate students have plans of becoming a Canadian Resident someday. There should be specific avenues where graduate students through U of G can get the necessary experience to integrate easier in Canada’s labor market after graduation (An international graduate student).

The university should have some programs in place that is specific for international students to work, international students should have their own work program that is not restricted to being in the 2nd year, considering that we pay twice as much tuition as domestic students (An international graduate student).

International students who intend to stay in Canada and work noted the importance of having some Canadian work experience during their graduate studies to enable them integrate into the Canadian job market after graduation. Others want to pursue more studies in Canada but cannot afford to pay international student fee so they plan to stay and become permanent residents in Canada. A student interviewed said that she plans to work in Canada for one year after her masters and apply for her permanent residence in order to enroll as a domestic student in Ontario Veterinary College at U of G. Some also noted that going back home after graduate studies without any guaranteed job requires great readjustment.

I am unsure what opportunities are available after graduation. My current main concern is that I need to extend my study permit (for the second time) and after I am done school I do not have a valid permit that allows me to stay in Canada. I am also not sure what job options there might be available for a newly graduated Ph.D. student in chemistry in my home country. I am interested in teaching, and would prefer to stay in Canada longer, but if I must return home, it would be a large readjustment for me to establish connections with people. I would have a lot of self-learning and preparation to do, which puts me back to almost "square one" and I am slightly uneasy about that idea (An international graduate student).

Participants who did not report major financial challenges had some kind of additional funding to support them, some were either on full scholarships from their home countries or received funding and awards from their respective departments at the university. Others had
guaranteed GTA or GRA positions and they still expressed the importance of gaining
Canadian work experiences.

*I have guarantee funding for tuition, and a TA position, but I would like to find a part time
job to get more experience and support my expenses* (An international graduate student).

Students reported dealing with academic adjustment, communication, language, social
interaction, visas timelines and work permits issues in addition to dealing with high tuition and
living expenses. Most Faculty and staff members interviewed recognize the impact of financial
challenges on students’ academic and social transitions.

*International graduate students do not always have access to funding, and even when
funding is available they have to manage to complete their research within the time period
their visa and funding allows. This influences their ability to choose projects of their
interests and they also have less time for social interactions* (Staff at OpenEd)

Faculty members have also been affected by these financial challenges their students
face. Faculty participants were generally concerned about their inability to recruit the number of
international students they desire or their departments need due to financial constraints.

*I would be happy to take on more international students but our University has made it
economically impractical due to higher tuition costs. In addition, faculty do not receive the
same professional credit for international students at our institution* (A faculty member)

As a result, some faculty members are only able to take on qualified students with their own
funding, this is usually smaller than the number they require. A faculty member noted, “because
of funding situations we are unable to bring a lot of international students, I have had only one
international graduate student for the last 3 years”. Some faculty members preferred taking on
international students because they believe these students bring high value to their programs,
“the perspectives of international students contribute to discovery; they see things differently and
have different experiences”. Faculty participants also said there is very limited number of
Canadians interested in graduate studies in some disciplines, particularly in PhD programs,
“because they find jobs after their bachelors and are paid very well, therefore, limited domestic prospects for PhD students”. Faculty members get some funding for domestic PhD students, but not for international students. This is how a faculty member in OAC expressed concern for the declining number of international student in the department and in Ontario.

The proportion of international graduate students has been declining. I feel dismay about the policies of Ontario on international students, such as taxing universities for recruiting international students – this reduces the quality of programs. We need initiatives to help recruit more international students – there is a discrepancy between Ontario’s goal of increasing the number of graduate students and the increasing decline of graduate students at university, especially international students. University programs are built on the quality of graduate students; we build valuable networks of graduate alumni in different countries when we have international students. Federal government has to create programs for funding the recruitment of international grad students; this can be delivered through provinces. CIDA merging with foreign affairs created limited channels to fund international students.

Both faculty and student participants highlighted that some Universities in Ontario and in Canada have ways of supporting international students through increased scholarship and job opportunities as well as reduced tuition. Faculty members recommended that international students at U of G pay the same tuition as domestic graduate students. Students noted that the university could at least reduce the international tuition fee.

Tuition for international students is very high. I know a lot of Canadian universities have lower tuition. Some of the universities charge tuition based on the year of study, i.e. $12,000 for the first year and $8,000 for the second and third year. Here at U of G we pay almost 18,000 per year (~6,000/semester * 3 semesters) as long as we are on a student visa (An international graduate student)

Faculty members generally felt that University of Guelph needs to create funding initiatives that support international graduate students and enable departments recruit the number of international students they require for the success of their programs and the current projects they are undertaking.
I am in the process of recruiting an international PhD student and it's quite difficult from the financial standpoint. Within my grant, I have $25,000 for a yearly stipend, which covers a domestic but not an international student. The most highly qualified students for this project are international, but we're faced with a $15,000 shortfall in their tuition + cost of living expenses. This is HUGE and I'm not sure we'll be able to overcome it to have an international student come here for the project (A faculty member).

Summary of Findings

Summary of the major findings for this research are:

1. Academic Transition
   - Student /faculty work relationships: student /faculty formal responsibilities, expectations, perceptions and levels of satisfaction
   - Academic Challenges: academic writing, language barriers and learning environments, and academic integrity

2. Social Transition
   - Language barriers and social interaction / isolation
   - Cultural differences and power dynamics

3. Financial Challenges
   - Student high tuition and living expense
   - Limited scholarships and job opportunities for students
   - Faculty inability to recruit international students as a result of limited funding

The next chapter will discuss the findings of this research, draw conclusions and make recommendations to improve the academic and social transitions, and financial challenges of international graduate students at the University of Guelph.
Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the research findings, draws conclusion and makes recommendations to build rapport between international graduate students and their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph. Best practices to faculty/student advising relations and student adaptation to U of G is also discussed. An important finding of this research is how diverse international graduate students are. It became evident that international graduate students at U of G are not homogenous and neither are faculty advisors, each student experiences his/her new environment differently. The results of this research offers insights into improving the relationships international graduate students build with their faculty advisors, and improving their experiences, academic and social transitions at U of G, as well as informing the literature with the most comprehensive study of its type.

Discussion

Academic Transition

The findings of this research indicate that building an effective faculty advisor/graduate student relationship at the University of Guelph is very crucial. It is even more crucial for international students because they are dealing with additional academic and social transition challenges that domestic students are not usually faced with. International graduate students rely more on their advisors to meet their academic, professional and social needs. From the findings and the literature reviewed a positive faculty advisor and student relationship enhances and contributes to the academic success of students and improves their social transition. Even though students who experience strictly academic relationships with their faculty advisors improve
academically, they also experience some social challenges that affect their academic progress but are unable to talk to their advisors about them. Those who build both academic and professional relationships become comfortable discussing career and scholarship opportunities with their faculty advisors and find graduate studies more meaningful. For other students, an advisor relationship that encompasses academic, professional and social support is very important; that means, in addition to academic interactions, advisors and students have a relationship outside the classroom. As the literature and the findings revealed, faculty advisors find inviting their students to family dinners and other social events make their transition easier and create an open environment where students are comfortable talking to them about their academic and social challenges. The relationship international graduate students build with their faculty advisor is dependent on their understanding of the formal roles and responsibilities and the academic expectations of their advisors, as well as on the advising philosophy of their advisors. Making sure students understand their formal responsibilities and those of their advisors, as well as having clearly defined advisor expectations, was revealed as important to building good student / faculty advisor relationship. It is important to continually remind graduate students about information such as their responsibilities and those of their advisors; this should be discussed between graduate students and their advisors from the outset. As discussed in the literature and in the findings, though some students understood their responsibility of changing advisors if a good relationship cannot be kept as a result of conflict, most were not comfortable changing their advisors. Students who were not aware of their responsibility of changing advisor did not report being comfortable changing their advisors either. Both students and faculty envision a long-term relationship with each other even after graduation and some students felt changing their advisor will destroy the relationship they have built over time. Other students were also reluctant about
changing advisors because they assume doing so would create some level of conflict between
themselves and their advisors, and any misunderstanding with their previous advisor may affect
the relationship they build with their new advisor. Another area of discomfort for international
students is in the casual, less formal relationship between student and faculty, example is calling
their faculty advisors and other professors by their first names. For faculty advisors first name
basis help make their students more comfortable and creates an open environment where
students learn and share. Even when students become comfortable working with their faculty
advisors, they are not always comfortable discussing personal issues or their challenges with
their advisors, especially if they do not know what to expect or are unaware of the roles of their
advisors.

Clearly and well defined advisor and student expectations from the onset of students’
program was also found to go a long way to positively impact the relationship students and
faculty build and contribute to academic success of students. Students may have different
expectations for advisor’s role depending on their needs. A disconnect between what students
and faculty perceived their relationship to be was noted in the findings. Students expected both
academic and non-academic guidance from their advisors and as a result perceived a more
strictly academic relationship with their advisors, one that lacked social support compared to
faculty advisors. Faculty advisors indicated that international students at U of G require a greater
degree of structure in terms of laying out their program and expectations, because they are less
familiar with how things work at Canadian universities. Unclear and undefined advisor
expectation on research project was one of the major challenges students face working with their
faculty advisors. Students highlighted that it is difficult to understand advisor expectations and
would like more clear and well-defined expectations right from the first semester of their
graduate programs. As one student described “it is difficult figuring out the goals that my advisor expects in a short time period, and I have doubts about what my advisor expects regarding the organization of my project. Faculty members suggested having direct communication with graduate students, both domestic and international before they start, and throughout their graduate program. This will help prepare them for graduate studies, prepare them for their new academic and social environment and reduce misunderstanding and conflict that may arise with advisors during graduate studies. Students who were satisfied with their faculty advisors and felt their expectations have been met still saw the need for more academic, professional and social support from their advisors. Even though faculty advisors believe international students bring a set of diverse experiences and skills that enrich the programs of their respective colleges and departments, some felt the challenges that come with recruiting international students are major impediments. As much as international and domestic students are likely to encounter the same or similar challenges during their graduate studies, the intensity of the challenges may be higher for international students and this was evident in the findings and the literature reviewed in this study.

Cultural differences such as students’ deference to authority and religious beliefs were shown to exist between international students and their faculty advisors. While some international students prefer working with faculty who had been international students before or those who had travelled and experienced different cultures, most students were generally happy with their respective faculty advisors, who are mostly Canadians. Students did not perceive cultural differences as negatively impacting the relationship they build with their faculty advisors. Most faculty respondents indicated that the best part of their experience is working with international students, some reported maintaining over 30 years of relationship with their
students. While a majority of faculty and student participants expressed having the same level of comfort working with both international and domestic students, they recognize differences during interactions. Students recognize that they have to learn to adapt to the culture of their new environment, and faculty advisors also recognize the diversity of their graduate students irrespective of their country of origin and make necessary adjustments to accommodate their needs.

Academic writing was perceived as a major academic challenge among international graduate students, particularly those whose first language is not English. Though faculty reported that domestic students also have problems with academic writing, 64% of faculty participants in the survey said their major challenge working with international students is academic writing. Faculty participants suggested faculty advisors conduct intake interviews to determine students’ linguistic abilities before admitting them to a graduate program at U of G. To improve students’ writing skills some faculty advisors assign written assignments to their students every week by making them read academic articles and produce a written report. Despite the writing clinics, the GSLI and ESL services provided by the University to help students with writing and improving their language skills, some students continue to face linguistic challenges. Students felt the current writing services available at the University could improve.

Literatures reviewed have mainly revealed oral communication, academic writing and academic integrity as common challenges among international students. Even though this study found language barriers (oral and written communication) as major challenges of students, these were also described to be common among domestic students but at different levels. Most international students improved their linguistic abilities with time; especially those who make every effort to seek improvement. Academic integrity on the other was not seen as a major
challenge among international students at the University of Guelph. Many saw language barriers as contributing factor to academic misconduct among international students at the University. The academic integrity (AI) course at U of G was found to be very useful and has facilitated more understanding of University’s academic integrity rules among students particularly for those with no prior AI knowledge.

Social Transition

Language barriers were shown to affect both the academic and social transition of students and increase the challenges faculty advisors face working with them. Oral communication particularly was found to inhibit the ability of students to interact successfully in their social environment, especially for those with English as a second language. Interacting more with local students and participating in social events at the university, and the Guelph community were suggested ways students could improve their oral communication skills and integrate better at U of G. Student life and its offices such the OIA provide countless services and programs to improve the social interaction, adaptation and experiences of international students at the university. One important aspect to students’ successful adaptation at U of G is having available and accessible information. Students noted having information on how to file taxes, how to apply for social insurance number, how to find housing and culturally appropriate grocery stores are very important to international students social adjustment at U of G. They particularly appreciated that OIA provides services to assist them with filing their taxes. Having good social and support networks were also suggested as very important tools to help students’ social interaction and adjustment. Students have also found the OIA mentorship programs that link new students with existing students and faculty helpful for interacting more with the
university community and for enhancing their academic success. Another important area to social interaction is acquiring soft skills such as interpersonal communication, this was found to be as important as the technical academic and research skills students acquire during graduate studies, particularly if they intend to work in Canada. Our findings and literature reviewed revealed that many international students plan to work and seek permanent residency in Canada. Students expressed frustration about the work and immigration policy in Canada. With the new changes made to the international student program in Canada, international students with valid study permit are allowed to work up to 20 hours/week during study periods and full time during holidays both on and off campus without acquiring work permits. International students are required to apply for “post graduation work permit” after they officially complete their program of studies in order to work in Canada for as long as their work permit allowed. Appendix H provides the link to the details on the new changes made to the international student program in Canada. These changes that took effect from June 2014 are expected to “reduce the potential for fraud or misuse of the program while protecting Canada’s international reputation for high-quality education and improving services to genuine students” (Government of Canada, 2014). Students who do not plan to stay and work in Canada were receiving full funding from their home countries and are expected to return home to work.

**Financial Challenges**

Not many studies have focused on the impact of financial challenges to academic and social transition of students. With the limited financial resources available to students at the University, financial obstacles tend to have more impact on the academic success and social transition of students than language barriers. High tuition, more than twice as domestic tuition
fee and high living expense, leave students wondering if they can successfully complete their graduate studies, particularly when there is limited scholarship and job opportunities available to them at the university. Students with guaranteed funding from their home countries and departments at U of G, and with at least one guaranteed GTA or GRA position expressed less financial, academic and social adjustment stress compared to those without or those with families. Faculty advisors have to recruit only students with full funding from their home countries and if they do recruit students without funding, they have to find money to support them successfully. This is becoming less and less feasible for many faculty advisors, and the quality of PhD programs are particularly beginning to decline because of the declining number of domestic students enrolled and the limited funding available to recruit qualified international students. Our findings and other studies reviewed showed that Ontario Universities have the least funding opportunities available to recruit more international students and to support students already recruited compared to universities in other provinces of Canada. Student and faculty participants suggested the need for the University to create avenues for providing more financial support to international students and to support recruiting qualified international students to its graduate programs.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

While this research does not seek to generalize the findings to the entire population of international graduate students and faculty advisors at the University of Guelph, it determined best practices that have been found to be successful for student adaptation and for building student and faculty relationship.
Best practices recommended by faculty and student participants for academic transition included: students using the library writing services and other research and writing workshops to improve their academic writing. Asking students to read academic papers and produce written reports for advisor feedback also improves students writing skills. Making advanced preparation and communicating with students prior to starting their graduate programs, and having direct communication with students from the outset of their program were found to be very successful to student academic transition. Meeting students regularly to discuss faculty and student academic research expectations and laying out ideal plan for students’ program and reviewing them every semester to reflect student’s research needs. Students also found that improving communication with advisor and consulting other faculty members and graduate students for advise on their academic challenges are very helpful. Connecting new students to existing students, PhD candidates or postdocs, and to outside expertise for technical assistance contributes to student academic success and professional development.

Students found consulting the Office of Intercultural Affairs (OIA) and international student advisor for non-academic challenges and participating in social events at the University contributes to their successful social transition. They make new friends, improve their oral communication in English by interacting with the University community, share their cultures and learn about some Canadian cultures to enrich their experiences at the University. Also successful is interacting with faculty advisor and other students outside the classroom or academic setting, such as lunch and dinner to meet visiting guests, Christmas gathering, barbecues, these create opportunity for social interaction and make students feel part of the community.
Academic Transition

This research established that international graduate students require more guidance from their faculty advisors in building effective relationships and adapting successfully to their new academic environment. To promote academic success and improve the relationship students build with their advisors, it is important students are aware of and understand their formal responsibilities and those of their advisors (Appendix F). It is highly recommended that faculty advisors discuss these formal responsibilities with their graduate students at the beginning of their programs and continuously throughout their graduate studies. Particularly important is making sure that students understand their responsibility of changing advisors in the event of conflict and are comfortable doing so without repercussions. Faculty advisors and departments should also remind students regularly to visit the University webpage for up to date information about their formal responsibilities. In addition to discussing formal responsibilities, faculty members should develop and discuss research and academic expectations with their graduate students from the outset of their graduate programs. These expectations should be reviewed and discussed every semester with students to reflect students’ current research and academic needs.

Another important area to building effective relationship is requiring faculty advisors to provide a more structured advising support where students are guided to succeed academically, develop their professional skills and are prepared to transition into the job industry in Canada after graduation. This is particularly very important for students who do not plan to remain in academia after their graduate program.

Language competency is important to promoting academic success, and improving the oral and written communication skills of students. Even though the library and other services such as Graduate Student Learning Initiative (GSLI) provide writing assistance to students, it is
recommended that the library writing services provide more specified sessions and extend the
hours of service per week to meet the academic writing needs of international graduate students.
Faculty members indicated that the Standard English admission test for international students
with English as second language is not sufficient to determine their linguistic ability for graduate
studies in an English environment. Students should therefore be required to do an intake
interview with their faculty advisors to determine whether they have the required English
language skills to compete successfully in their graduate program at the University. Another way
to improve the language skills for international students is to require them to take an English
communication course in their first semester or first year of graduate program at the University.
This is particularly important for students whose first language is not English or those who did
not have their previous education in English.

Graduate school was found to be more stressful for international students because they
are dealing with additional academic and social challenges. They are likely to get overwhelmed
about what is required of them and what they are expected to do to adapt successfully to their
new U of G environment. Close advisor supervision therefore becomes crucial to keep them
informed and aware of their new academic and social environment. To ensure that faculty
advisors are equipped with the most up to date resources and information to advise students
across cultures, all faculty orientation should be apprized every academic year specifically on
best practices for mentoring international graduate students. The orientation should focus on key
issues such as the challenges and areas of support international graduate students need to adapt
successfully to their academic and social environment at U of G.
Social Transition

To address or eliminate feelings of isolation reported by student participants, it has been recommended that faculty advisors, departments and colleges, and student offices at the University create a strong social and support networks for international students. This would create opportunities for international students to interact more with other students and faculty, and to improve their English communication skills and reduce social isolation. The international graduate student orientation needs to include more specified information for students’ transition into their social environment. Creating a one-stop information system where students can find out how to apply or renew study permit or how to file taxes for instance is highly recommended at the University. Student participants were not aware of all the services and programs available to them at the University. It is recommended that the Office of Diversity and Human Rights and other offices such as student life and Office of Intercultural Affairs, Open Learning and Educational Support, the library learning commons create more awareness of their programs and services. This research has also established that it is important to conduct regular surveys to determine current experiences and challenges of international graduate students and review programs to meet their needs. This can help develop some kind of checklist such as the College of Biological Science Survival Guide for graduate students to assist students with both their academic and social transition at the University of Guelph.

Financial Challenges

High tuition was noted throughout our consultations with faculty, students and staff as a common challenge among students. This is because financial challenges were perceived to have negative influence on students’ academic and social transition. There are significant financial
challenges international students have to deal with such as high tuition and living expenses, limited awards/scholarships and finding job opportunities. Faculty members, departments and the Office of Graduate Studies should develop a standard budget for studying at U of G and living in Guelph to inform and make students aware of what to expect financially before starting their graduate programs. It is highly recommended that the University provide financial resources and develop more funding programs for scholarships, awards and job opportunities, as well as reduce international tuition fee to make students’ academic and social transition at U of G easier. The University should also provide faculty members and departments with the financial resources needed to recruit the desired qualified number of international students they require for their research and lab projects. Another important area of intervention is creating funding programs at federal and provincial levels to assist universities like U of G support international students financially through their graduate programs.

Future Research Required

1. In addition to creating an improved learning and social environment for current students at the University, further research of this nature is needed regularly to constantly inform and reflect the needs and dynamics of international graduate students at the University of Guelph. A research area to consider is how students who work in a lab setting develop and build relationships with their lab managers and supervisors. What resources do lab supervisors need to provide a more advising role to students since they tend to interact more with laboratory research students than faculty advisors do? Another area of research to explore is the differences in mentoring and advising relationships of female students
and male faculty advisors and vice versa, and how gender impact the relationship students and faculty advisors build.

2. Future research is also recommended to determine the experiences of domestic graduate students and the relationship they establish with their faculty advisors at the University of Guelph. The cultural differences that may exist between Canadian students and Canadian faculty / lab supervisors and how this affect the relationship they build could be explored. Also worth exploring is the differences in the experience and challenges domestic students and international students face adapting to their academic program and social environment at U of G. For example, are domestic students faced with similar challenges such as the ability to interact and communicate effectively with their faculty advisors and the university community? Are domestic students comfortable working with international faculty advisors and how can domestic students adapt to working with other students and faculty members from different cultures successfully in and outside the classroom?
References


CBIE, Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2013). *Annual report 2013*


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of invitation and consent to participate in the research

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development & Human Rights and Equity Office
Building Rapport Between International Graduate Students and Faculty Advisors, University of Guelph

Faculty invitation to participate in a cross-cultural research

Dear Faculty Advisor,

We are looking for faculty advisors to participate in cross culture research. The research seeks to find out the challenges faculty advisors face in mentoring and building healthy work relationship with their international graduate students. The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and their international graduate students in building healthy work relationship and effective communication.

Since 2001, the number of international students enrolled in Canada has increased by 94% (Canadian Bureau for International Education, CBIE Report 2013). According to the University of Guelph’s Office of Intercultural Affairs, there are 952 international students at the university, of which 341 are graduate students. International students are defined as students who have been in Canada for 2 years or less. China, United States, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Brazil have the highest population of international graduate students at the University of Guelph. Mentoring graduate students is very challenging, even when both the student and faculty have similar cultural values. To the degree international students have a different culture from that of Canadians, or faculty coming from international backgrounds different from that of their graduate students, the challenge to adapt to their new environment, and to understand and work well with each other is significantly increased. The faculty advisor/student relationship is very crucial for graduate studies; it is therefore important to help students and advisors in building an effective work relationship irrespective of cultural differences.

Your commitment as a participant will be to attend one focus group discussion (1 hour), one face-to-face interview (1 hour) and complete a short online survey, each of these interactions will occur on different days. The total time commitment for each participant to participate in this study is about 3 hours within the period of April and May 2014. Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the focus group discussions, face-to-face interview and online survey will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participants’ privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the research process with no penalty. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign this letter and return to Jim Mahone, Associate Professor, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development (jmahone@uoguelph.ca). You will be contacted with further details about the research process in due time.

Name of Faculty:…………………… Email:……………………
Department or College:…………………… Position:…………………..
Signature:…………………………………… Date:……………………

International graduate student invitation to participate in a cross-cultural research

Dear Student,

We are looking for international graduate students to participate in cross-cultural research. The research seeks to find out the challenges international graduate students face in adapting to their new environment and in building healthy working relationships with their faculty advisors. The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and their international graduate students in building healthy work relationship and effective communication.

Since 2001, the number of international students enrolled in Canada has increased by 94% (Canadian Bureau for International Education, CBIE Report 2013). According to the University of Guelph’s Office of Intercultural Affairs, there are 952 international students at the university, of which 341 are graduate students. China, United States, India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Brazil have the highest population of international graduate students at the University of Guelph.

Mentoring graduate students is very challenging, even when both the student and faculty have similar cultural values. To the degree international students have a different culture from that of Canadians, or faculty coming from international backgrounds different from that of their graduate students, the challenge to adapt to their new environment, and to understand and work well with each other is significantly increased. The faculty advisor/student relationship is very crucial for graduate studies; it is therefore important to help students and advisors in building an effective work relationship irrespective of cultural differences.

Your participation in this research is very important to help make your graduate studies and learning experience at the University of Guelph more rich and meaningful. Your commitment as a participant will be to attend one focus group discussion, a face-to-face interview and complete a short online survey. The total time commitment for each participant to participate in this study is about 3 hours within the period of March and April 2014. Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the focus group discussions, face-to-face interviews
and online surveys will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participants’ privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the research process with no penalty. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email Faiza Omar, MSc. Candidate, Capacity Development and Extension (IDS) at fomar@uoguelph.ca. You will be contacted with further details about the research process in due time.

Please provide the following information in your email

Name of Student:……………………. Email:……………………
Department or College:……………….. Program:………………..
Country of Origin:…………………….
Appendix B: Key informant interview questions

Administration / staff key informant questions
1. Have you worked with international graduate students and for how long?
2. What type of international graduate students are/were you involved with? Country, discipline, Masters, Doctoral?
3. In what ways/capacity are you or have you been involved with international graduate students?
4. What activities at your office involves / have involved international graduate student?
5. What has been your experience working with international graduate students?
6. What specific challenges did you face in working with international graduate students?
7. What measures did you take to address these challenges, and were these measures successful?

Faculty advisors key informant questions
1. How long have you been working with international graduate students? Roughly how many?
2. In what ways/capacity are you or have you been involved with international graduate students
3. What advising activities/ aspects of mentoring have you been involved in with your international graduate students?
4. What type of international graduate students did you mentor? Country, discipline, Masters, Doctoral?
5. What specific challenges did you face in mentoring your international graduate students?
6. What measures did you take to address these challenges, and were these measures successful?
7. Generally, what has been your experience working with your respective international graduate students?

International graduate students key informant questions
1. How long have you been a student at UoG, from which country and what program are you in?
2. Do you have a faculty advisor?
3. What advising activities/ aspects of mentoring have you been involved in with your faculty advisor?
4. What has been your experience working with your respective faculty advisors?
5. What specific challenges did you face in working with your faculty advisors?
6. What specific challenges did you face in adapting to the University of Guelph?
7. What measures did you take to address these challenges, and were these measures successful?
Appendix C: Focus consent and questions

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development & Human Rights and Equity Office

Building Rapport Between International Graduate Students and Faculty Advisors, University of Guelph

Faculty letter of consent to participate in a focus group discussion

Dear Faculty Advisor,

Thank you very much for your interest in this study, this is a follow up consent to participate in a focus group discussion. Focus group discussions will take place at the University of Guelph, Landscape Architecture Building (LA) and will last for one hour. Participants will discuss about student/advisor relationship and challenges in mentoring international graduate students, and all opinions will be recorded on flipcharts. Participants can also submit any additional comments they have to the facilitator after the discussions. Your time, participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Your participation in this focus group discussion is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the focus group discussion with no penalty. For focus group discussions, complete withdrawal of participant information might not be possible since the discussions will be recorded as group responses and no individual identification will be associated with any response in the focus group. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the focus group discussions will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. To ensure that participant privacy is completely protected, focus group participants also have the responsibility to respect the privacy of other participants. Participants must therefore refrain from discussing any details from the focus group discussions with others and must not disclose any names, information and opinions of other participants. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

This focus group discussion has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

Name:………………………… Email: …………………
Faculty focus group questions

1. What has been your experience working with your respective international graduate students?
2. What specific challenges did you face in mentoring your international graduate students?
3. What measures did you take to address these challenges, and were these measures successful?

International graduate student letter of consent to participate in a focus group discussion

Dear Student participant,

Thank you for your interest in the cross-cultural research on international graduate student/faculty advisor mentoring relationship, this is a follow up consent to participate in a focus group discussion. Focus group discussions will take place at the University of Guelph, Landscape Architecture Building and discussions will last for one hour. Participants will have the opportunity to share their opinions and concerns about student/advisor relationships and their challenges as international graduate students at the University of Guelph. Discussions will be recorded on flipcharts and participants can also submit any additional comments to the facilitator after the discussions. Your time, participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the research process with no penalty. For focus group discussions, complete withdrawal of participant information might not be possible since the discussions will be recorded as group responses and no individual identification will be associated with any participant response. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research. All the research findings from the focus group discussions will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. To ensure that participant privacy is completely protected, focus group participants also have the responsibility to respect the privacy of other participants. Participants must therefore refrain from discussing any details from the focus group discussions with others and must not disclose any names, information and opinions of other participants. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

This focus group discussion has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-
International Graduate Students Focus group questions

1. What has been your experience working with your respective faculty advisors?
2. What specific challenges did you face in adapting to the University of Guelph and in working with your faculty advisors?
3. What measures did you take to address these challenges, and were these measures successful?
Appendix D: Interview consent and questions

School of Environmental Design and Rural Development & Human Rights and Equity Office
Building Rapport Between International Graduate Students and Faculty Advisors, University of Guelph

Faculty letter of consent to participate in a face-to-face interview

Dear Faculty Advisor,

As you may recall, we invited you to participate in a research about building international graduate student/faculty advisor relationship a few weeks ago, this is a follow up consent to participate in a face-to-face interview (date and time). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted for each participant by the same interviewer, each interview will last about one hour or less. Participants will be asked about 10 - 20 questions designed by the research team using the research objectives and key issues identified during the focus group discussions. The interview will be centered on your challenges in mentoring and in building healthy work relationship with your international graduate students. Interviews will take place at the University of Guelph, and the interviewer will take notes during the interviews. The time commitment to participate in this interview is one hour or less and your time, participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the interview process with no penalty. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the interviews will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

The interviews have been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

Name of Faculty:……………………………. Email:…………………………
Department:……………………………. College:…………………………
Signature:…………………………….. Date:……………………………

Faculty interview questions
1. What advising activities/ aspects of mentoring have you been involved in with your international graduate students?

2. What type of international graduate students did you mentor? Country, discipline, Masters, Doctoral?

3. Please comment on your experience working with international graduate students in the following:
   a. Academic integrity:
   b. Communication
   c. Interaction:
   d. Work Ethic:

4. What are your expectations?

5. Are your expectations of your international graduate students different from that of your domestic students?

6. Are your international graduate students aware of what you expect from them?

7. Would you say your cultural values are significantly different from that of your international graduate students? How does this impact your relationship?

8. What have you done in advising your international grad students that have been particularly successful?

9. Any additional comments?

**International graduate student letter of consent to participate in a face-to-face interview**

Dear Student,

Thank you for your interest in the cross-cultural research on international graduate student/faculty mentoring relationships, this is a follow up consent to participate in a face-to-face interview. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted for each participant by the same interviewer, each interview will last less than 1 hour. Participants will be asked about 10 - 20 questions designed by the research team using the research objectives and key issues identified during the focus group discussions. The interview will be centered on your challenges in adapting to the University of Guelph and in building healthy work relationship with your faculty advisor. Interviews will take place at the University of Guelph, and the interviewer will take notes during the interviews. Your participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the interview with no penalty. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the interviews will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to
receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

The interviews have been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

Name of Participant:………………………………………………………… Email:……………………………………
Department:………………………………………………………………… College:……………………………………
Signature of Participant:…………………………………………………… Date:……………………………………

**International graduate students interview questions**

1. How long have you been a student at UoG, from which country and what program are you in?
2. Is there any additional comments or concerns you would like to raise following the focus group? Something you didn’t get the chance to mention
3. What advising activities/ aspects of mentoring have you been involved in with your faculty advisor?
4. What are your expectations of your faculty advisor? Would you say your expectations have been met?
5. How you would benefit from a holistic mentoring relationship with your advisor? One that is not strictly academic
6. Would you say your cultural values are significantly different from that of your faculty advisor? Does this affect your relationship? Please list cultural values you perceive as different
7. Please comment on your experience working with your faculty advisor on the following:
   a. Communication:
   b. Interaction:
   c. Work Ethics:
8. Would say academic misconduct /integrity is a challenge?
9. Are you informed about the formal responsibilities required of me by the university as a graduate student?
10. Financial challenge? What help do you need? (Scholarship, TA, RA, funding etc. are you aware of services and programs that can help with your financial challenge?
11. Are you aware of the programs and services at UoG available to graduate students in general and those specific for international students? Which services have you used? And were they successful?
12. What can the university community (including you and your advisor) do to improve the quality of international graduate students’ experiences?
13. Any additional comments?
Appendix E: Online survey consents and questions

Building Rapport Between International Graduate Students and Faculty Advisors,
University of Guelph

Faculty advisors survey consent

Dear Faculty Advisor,

As you may recall, we invited you to participate in a research about building international graduate student/faculty advisor relationship several weeks ago, this is a follow up consent to participate in a short online survey. Participants will complete a 15 to 30 minute online survey consisting of 15 questions. The survey questions are tailored towards your experiences and challenges in mentoring and in building healthy work relationship with your international graduate students. The survey is composed of both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The research team designed the survey questionnaires using the research objectives and key issues identified during the focus group discussions and the interviews. You have the option to print a copy of the survey for your record. Your time, participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the survey with no penalty. It is important to note that the online survey is anonymous, the research team will not be able to identify participant data in the event of withdrawal, therefore complete withdrawal of data from the online survey once submitted might not possible. All findings from the online survey will be described as group responses. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data.

Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the online survey will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to avoid direct identification of participants and responses. Please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

This online survey has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (REB# 14JA051). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1

Please note that by completing and submitting this online survey, you have consented to participate in the survey. You can download or print a copy of your completed survey for your records.

Please click next to start survey
A note on privacy
This survey is anonymous. The record kept of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you unless a specific question in the survey has asked for this. If you have responded to a survey that used an identifying token to allow you to access the survey, you can rest assured that the identifying token is not kept with your responses. It is managed in a separate database, and will only be updated to indicate that you have (or haven't) completed this survey. There is no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses in this survey.

Faculty survey questionnaire

Part I: Responsibilities, Relationships and Expectations

1a) Do you currently supervise international graduate students? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ No answer

If you answered NO to question 1a, please answer question 1b)
1b) Have you supervised international graduate students in the past? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ No answer

2) Overall, how would you rate the relationship with your international graduate students? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Excellent
☐ Very Good
☐ Good
☐ Fair
☐ Poor
☐ No answer

3) How would you describe your relationship with your international graduate students? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Strictly Academic
☐ Both academic and career development
☐ Both academic and personal
☐ Academic, personal and career development
4) Are you aware of what your international graduate students expect from you? Please choose only one of the following:
- [ ] Fully aware
- [ ] Mostly aware
- [ ] Somewhat aware
- [ ] Slightly aware
- [ ] Not aware
- [ ] No answer

5) To what extent are you satisfied with your international graduate students work in the following areas? Please check for each of the following:
Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Completely Satisfied</th>
<th>Mostly Satisfied</th>
<th>About Average</th>
<th>Slightly Satisfied</th>
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5a) Are your expectations of your international graduate students different from those of your domestic students? Please choose only one of the following:
- [ ] Greatly different
- [ ] Moderately different
- [ ] Somewhat different
- [ ] Slightly different
- [ ] Not different
- [ ] No answer
Make a comment on your choice here:.................................................................

5b) If applicable, from the list in question 5, please list and comment on all the areas you have different expectations for your domestic and international students
Please write your answer here:..............................................................................
6) I am aware of the formal responsibilities required of me by the university as follows:
Please choose all that apply:
☐ Facilitating student growth
☐ Chairing advisory committees
☐ Examining student written material
☐ Being reasonably accessible.
☐ Guiding students with their advisory committees
☐ Assisting students in understanding appropriate deadline dates
☐ Giving students notice of absence and making advising alternatives
☐ Advising students of safety and workplace regulations and policies
☐ Assisting students with research, thesis and helping with the availability of resources
☐ Alerting student to any personal risks during research and providing guidance to manage risks

Part II: Academic and Social Culture

7) The difference between my cultural values and those of my international graduate students are:
Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Greatly different
☐ Moderately different
☐ Slightly less different
☐ Much less different
☐ Not different at all
☐ No answer

7a) If applicable, please list the cultural values you perceive as different
Please write your answer here: ........................................................................................................

7b) How is the relationship with your international graduate students compared to domestic students affected by these cultural values? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Very positively affected
☐ Somewhat positively affected
☐ Neither positively or negatively affected
☐ Slightly negatively affected
☐ Very negatively affected
☐ No answer
Make a comment on your choice here: ......................................................................................................

7c) How aware are you about these cultural differences during your interactions with your international graduate students? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Fully aware
☐ Mostly aware
☐ Somewhat aware
☐ Very slightly aware
☐ Unaware
☐ No answer
8) To what degree are you comfortable working with domestic students compared to international students? Please choose only one of the following:
- More comfortable
- Moderately comfortable
- Same level of comfort
- Slightly less comfortable
- Much less comfortable
- No answer
Make a comment on your choice here:.........................................................

9) What are your general perceptions of your international graduate students?
Please write your answer here:.................................................................

Part III: Successes and Challenges

10a) As an advisor, what are your major challenges in advising international graduate students?
Please choose all that apply:
- Oral Communication
- Academic Writing
- Academic Integrity
- Understanding Canadian academic culture
- Different academic background & English proficiency
- Different academic expectations
- Work Ethic
- Critical reasoning skills & level of creativity
- Adapting to and understanding international students’ cultures
- Ability to express themselves and ask questions
- Not knowing whether they understand you or not
- Students’ confidence to express themselves openly
- Student deference to authority
- Student time management
- Availability of time for students
- Students’ knowledge of their rights, roles & responsibilities
- Other:...........................................................................................................

10b) What measures have you taken to overcome the challenges you checked in question 10a?
Please choose all that apply:
- Student intake interviews
- Discuss student/advisor expectations from the onset
- Advanced preparation & communication with students prior to starting their programs
- Layout an ideal plan for a student’s program and review every semester with the student
- Use Turnitin.com and other programs to detect plagiarism
- Allow students to have access to turnitin.com
- Encourage students to hire editors to edit their academic papers
- Refer students to library writing services
- Meticulous in personally editing student work & giving timely feedback
Assess students writing skills by making them write progress reports
- Treat students as individuals and find projects that suit their capabilities
- Improved communication & interaction
- Have direct communication with students from the outset
- Regular individual, group, and/or lab meetings
- Provide opportunity for in house presentations to improve oral presentation skills
- Encourage students and provide opportunities to attend conferences in and outside Canada
- Ask questions to get students talking
- Rephrase what student said in different ways
- Establish strong orientation and support networks
- Connect new students to senior students, PHD students & postdocs
- Connect students to outside expertise for technical assistance & professional development
- Recognizing & respecting different personalities and cultures
- Direct students to the office of intercultural affairs & the international student advisor
- Other: ..........................................................................................................................

11) To what extent do your international graduate students understand or have some knowledge about academic integrity compared to your domestic students?
   Please choose only one of the following:
   - Fully understand
   - Moderately understand
   - Somewhat understand
   - Slightly understand
   - Do not understand
   - No answer
   Make a comment on your choice here: ............................................................................

12) From your observation, do you think the academic integrity course offered by the university has been effective in educating graduate students about academic integrity?
   Please choose only one of the following:
   - Completely Effective
   - Mostly Effective
   - Neither effective or ineffective
   - Somewhat less Effective
   - Ineffective
   - No answer
   Make a comment on your choice here: ............................................................................

13) What do you recommend the university community do to improve the quality of experiences of international graduate students? Please choose all that apply:
   - Require students take a communication course in their first semester of graduate studies
   - Lower tuition or make international graduate students pay domestic students fees
   - Create opportunities to enable departments to recruit more international graduate students
   - Commit resources to international graduate students
   - Provide award and scholarship opportunities for international graduate students
Make international graduate student orientation more specific to the needs of international students
☐ Make services and programs more international student friendly
☐ Create a one-stop shop for information on campus & make it easy to navigate the university website for information
☐ Create opportunities to make industry connections
☐ Create effective online courses and programs that will encourage students to take graduate programs from their home country
Other: ...........................................................................................................................................

14) Please state your college & country of origin
Please write your answer here: .................................................................................................

15) Please provide any additional comments here
Please write your answer here: .................................................................................................

Thank you for your participation in this survey and in our research. We appreciate your time, participation and opinion.

International Graduate Students Survey Consent

Dear Student,

As you may recall, we invited you to participate in a research about building international graduate student/faculty advisor relationship several weeks ago, this is a follow up consent to participate in a short online survey. Participants will complete a 15 – 30 minute online survey consisting of 20 questions. The survey questions are tailored towards your experiences and challenges in adapting to the University of Guelph and in building healthy work relationship with your faculty advisors. The survey is composed of both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. The research team designed the survey questionnaires using the research objectives and key issues identified during the focus group discussions and the interviews. You have the option to print a copy of the survey for your record. Your time, participation and opinions will be very much appreciated.

The goal of this research is to develop a comprehensive learning toolkit to help faculty advisors and international graduate students in building healthy work relationships and effective communication. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to answer only questions you are comfortable with. Participants are also free to withdraw at any time prior to or during the research process with no penalty. It is important to note that the online survey is anonymous, the research team will not be able to identify participant data in the event of withdrawal, therefore complete withdrawal of data from the online survey once submitted might not possible. All findings from the online survey will be described as group responses. In event of any withdrawal, the researcher and the participant will sign a document to the effect of withdrawal or non-withdrawal of data. Any information you share will be used solely for the purpose of this research and your privacy will be protected. All the research findings from the online survey will be grouped into categories and coded to protect participant privacy and to
avoid direct identification of participants and responses. Please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet. After the research is complete, participants will be contacted to receive the coded findings, the learning toolkit and the master’s thesis derived from this study will also be available at the University of Guelph library.

This online survey has been reviewed and approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (REB# 14JA051). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Sandy Auld, sauld@uoguelph.ca Tel: 519-824-4120 Ext. 56606, Fax: 519-821-5236 Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Guelph, 437 University Centre, Guelph, ON. N1G 2W1.

Please note that by completing and submitting this online survey, you have consented to participate in the survey. You can download or print a copy of your completed survey for your records.

Please click next to start survey

A note on privacy
This survey is anonymous.
The record kept of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you unless a specific question in the survey has asked for this. If you have responded to a survey that used an identifying token to allow you to access the survey, you can rest assured that the identifying token is not kept with your responses. It is managed in a separate database, and will only be updated to indicate that you have (or haven't) completed this survey. There is no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses in this survey.

International Graduate Students Survey Questionnaire

Part I: Responsibilities, Relationships and Expectations

1) Overall, how would you rate the relationship between you and your faculty advisor?
Please choose only one of the following:
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- No answer

2) My perceptions about my advisor is that he/she is: Please choose only one of the following:
- Extremely supportive
- Very supportive
- Marginally supportive
- Neither supportive or non-supportive
- Not supportive at all
- No answer
3) Which of the following best describe your relationship with your faculty advisor? Please choose only one of the following:

- Strictly Academic
- Both academic and career development
- Both academic and personal
- Academic, personal and career development
- No answer

4) Are you aware of what your advisor expects from you? Please choose only one of the following:

- Fully aware
- Mostly aware
- Somewhat aware
- Slightly aware
- Not aware
- No answer

5) My faculty advisor’s role in the following areas have been: (Please check for each of the following)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Completely met</th>
<th>Mostly met</th>
<th>Somewhat met</th>
<th>Slightly met</th>
<th>Not met at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Timely Guidance</td>
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<td>Availability</td>
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<td>Work ethic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timely Feedback</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6) I understand the formal responsibilities required of me by the university as follows: Please choose all that apply:

- Fulfill all course requirements
- Recognize that thesis must be within the scope of approved graduate program
- Choose research topics with adequate available resources, including finance and advisor expertise
- Produce a thesis or research that is a student's own work and which meets university and department standards
- Consider and respond to advice and criticism by advisor/advisory committee
- Meet and communicate regularly with advisor
- Be prepared to communicate first with advisor, then graduate coordinator or chair about any perceived problem to research or graduate studies
- Receive progress evaluation every semester by advisor/advisory committee
Responsibility for changing advisors: I must submit the specified reasons for replacement of my advisor/advisory committee to my department graduate coordinator should any personal or professional conflict arise, and in cases where an appropriate academic relationship cannot be maintained.

7) My level of comfort in changing my advisors if I have any conflict or difficulty maintaining an academic and healthy relationship is: Please choose only one of the following:
- [ ] Completely comfortable
- [ ] Mostly comfortable
- [ ] Somewhat comfortable
- [ ] Slightly comfortable
- [ ] Not comfortable at all
- [ ] No answer

Make a comment on your choice here: .................................................................

8) What is your perception of the roles and responsibilities of your faculty advisor?
Please choose all that apply:
- [ ] Facilitating student growth
- [ ] Chairing advisory committee
- [ ] Examining student written material
- [ ] Being reasonably accessible to students
- [ ] Guiding students with their advisory committees selection
- [ ] Assisting students in learning about appropriate deadline dates
- [ ] Giving student notice of absences and making advising alternatives
- [ ] Advising student with safety and workplace regulations and policies
- [ ] Assisting students in the development and execution of research, and helping with the availability of resources
- [ ] Alerting student to any personal risks during research and providing guidance to manage risks
- [ ] Assisting students in securing scholarships and awards
- [ ] Connecting students with industry and helping with student professional development
- [ ] Assisting students with personal challenges that may affect their academic success

Other: ..........................................................................................................................
9) The University of Guelph defines Academic Integrity as "a code of ethics for teachers, students, researchers, and writers". This includes; "not claiming credit for the work of another, not falsifying documents, not obstructing another person's ability to perform academic tasks in order to gain an unfair advantage, and not disobeying the rules of ethical research, or improperly obtain access to privileged information or disseminate that information". How much does this definition agrees and conforms with your previous educational experience? Please choose only one of the following:

- Completely agree
- Mostly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Slightly agree
- Do not agree
- No answer

10) How would you rate the Academic Integrity course offered by the university? Please choose only one of the following:

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- No answer

Make a comment on your choice here:…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

11) The difference between my cultural values and those of my advisor are:

Please choose only one of the following:

- Greatly different
- Moderately different
- Slightly less different
- Much less different
- Not different at all
- No answer

12) How is the relationship with your advisor affected by these values? Please choose only one of the following:

- Very positively affected
- Somewhat positively affected
- Neither positively or negatively affected
- Slightly negatively affected
- Very negatively affected
- No answer

Make a comment on your choice here:…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
13a) I perceive other student’s cultural values in relation to mine as: Please choose only one of the following:
☑ Greatly different
☐ Moderately different
☐ Same as mine
☐ Slightly less different
☐ Much less different
☐ No answer

13b) These cultural differences I have with other students influence my social and academic interactions to the following degree: Please choose only one of the following:
☐ Greatly influence
☐ Moderately influence
☐ Have some influence
☐ Have little influence
☐ No influence
☐ No answer

14) To what degree are you comfortable working with other international students as compared to domestic students? Please choose only one of the following:
☐ More comfortable
☐ Moderately comfortable
☐ Same level of comfort
☐ Slightly less comfortable
☐ Much less comfortable
☐ No answer

Part III: Successes and Challenges

15a) What are your major challenges in working with your faculty advisor? Please choose all that apply:
☐ Unclear expectations on research projects / Undefined student/advisor expectations
☐ Advisor very busy
☐ Difficulty expressing my own opinions and asking questions
☐ Language barriers (Oral & Written Communication)
☐ Inadequate follow-up and timely feedback
☐ Difficulty communicating and interacting
☐ Different research interests and expectations
☐ Getting professional guidance
☐ Other: ..................................................................................................................................................................
15b) From the challenges you checked in question 15a, please check those challenges you are comfortable discussing with your faculty advisor? Please choose all that apply:
- Unclear expectations on research projects / Undefined student/advisor expectations
- Advisor very busy
- Difficulty expressing my own opinions and asking questions
- Language barriers (Oral & Written Communication)
- Inadequate follow-up and timely feedback
- Difficulty communicating and interacting
- Different research interests and expectations
- Getting professional guidance
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................

15c) What measures have you taken to address the challenges you checked in question 15a? Please choose all that apply:
- Improve communication with advisor
- Consulted faculty advisor for help
- Made advisor aware of your research interests and expectations
- Asked advisor to clearly define his/her expectations
- Scheduled frequent meetings with advisor to discuss challenges and go over research progress and clarify any misunderstandings in communication
- Consulted my graduate coordinator for help and advice
- Consulted other faculty members for help and advice
- Consulted other graduate students for help and advice
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................

16a) What are your major challenges adapting to and pursuing graduate studies at the University of Guelph? Please choose all that apply:
- Language barriers (Oral & Written Communication)
- Academic writing
- Difficulty understanding and adapting to the Canadian academic system
- Academic integrity
- Finance (tuition & living expense)
- Difficulty communicating and interacting with domestic students and the general university community
- Difficulty finding information on campus
- Difficulty getting around the university & the city
- Difficulty finding foods from home country
- Lack a feeling of inclusiveness and sense of belonging
- Difficulty finding on campus jobs
- Qualifying for scholarships and awards
- Difficulty adapting to the Canadian climate
- Difficulty finding specific information & programs for international graduate students
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................
16b) From the challenges you checked in question 16a, please check those challenges you are comfortable discussing with your faculty advisor? Please choose all that apply:
- Language barriers (Oral & Written Communication)
- Academic writing
- Difficulty understanding and adapting to Canadian academic system
- Academic integrity
- Finance (tuition & living expense)
- Difficulty communicating and interacting with domestic students and the general university community
- Difficulty finding information on campus
- Difficulty getting around the university & the city
- Difficulty finding foods from home country
- Feeling of inclusiveness and sense of belonging
- Difficulty finding on campus jobs
- Qualifying for scholarships and awards
- Difficulty adapting to the Canadian climate
- Difficulty finding specific information & programs for international graduate students
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................

16c) What measures have you taken to address the challenges you checked in question 16a? Please choose all that apply:
- Made effort to communicate and interact with other students
- Consulted the international student advisor for help
- Consulted student financial services
- Sought on campus jobs
- Attended graduate student workshops and training
- Participated in student activities and social events
- Sought help from library writing services
- Used Graduate Student Learning Initiative (GSLI)
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................

17) What do you recommend the university community do to improve the quality of experiences of international graduate students? Please choose all that apply:
- Reduce international student tuition
- Improve award and scholarship opportunities for international graduate students
- Make international graduate students’ orientation more specific to the needs of international students
- Discuss student/advisor expectations from the outset
- Make services and programs for international students more friendly
- Create a one-stop shop for information on campus & make it easy to navigate the university website for information
- Provide equal job opportunities and industry connections
- Create effective online courses and programs international students can take from home country
- Other: ........................................................................................................................................
18a) Which of the following student status apply to you? Please choose all that apply:
☐ I am raising a family while pursuing my graduate studies
☐ I am a part-time student
☐ I am a full-time student
☐ I am in a PhD program
☐ I am in a Master’s program
Other:..............................................................................................................

18b) Which of the following financial statement apply to you? Please choose all that apply:
☐ I am on full scholarship from home my country
☐ I have a scholarship and funding from my department at University of Guelph
☐ I am self-funding my graduate studies
☐ I have at least one guaranteed Teaching Assistant position
☐ I have at least one guaranteed Research Assistant position
Other:..............................................................................................................

18c) Where do you plan to work after your graduate studies? Please choose all that apply:
☐ I plan to stay in Canada and work after my graduate studies
☐ I plan to go back home and work
☐ I have a job waiting for me in my home country after I graduate
☐ I do not know yet
Other:..............................................................................................................

19) Please state your college and country of origin
Please write your answer here:.............................................................................

20) Please provide any additional comment here
Please write your answer here:.............................................................................

Thank you for your participation in this survey and in our research. We appreciate your
time, participation and opinion.

Thank You
The Research Team
Office of Diversity and Human Rights, and the School of Environmental Design and Rural
Development, University of Guelph
Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.
Appendix F: Formal responsibilities of graduate students and faculty advisors at U of G 
(2013-2014 academic year)

Policy on Responsibilities of Advisors, Advisory Committees and Graduate Students and 
Graduate Student-Advisor Mediation Procedures

Responsibilities of the Advisor

A Faculty Advisor's primary task is to guide and inspire his or her students to reach their scholarly potential. The Advisor should promote conditions conducive to a student's research and intellectual growth, providing appropriate guidance on the progress of the research and the standards expected. Good supervisory practice includes the following:

1. Facilitating the student's intellectual growth and contribution to a field of knowledge.
2. Guiding the student, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee, in the development of a program of study.
3. Assisting in the development and execution of a research program or project.
4. Being reasonably accessible to the student via telephone, electronic communication or in person for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and research problems. What constitutes "reasonable accessibility" may vary according to discipline, stage of research, etc. However, an Advisor must be in contact with the student frequently enough to be able to make an informed judgement on the student's progress on a semesterly basis.
5. Thoroughly examining written material submitted by the student and making constructive suggestions for improvement. Informing the student of the approximate time it will take for submitted written material to be returned with comments. Normally, comments should be returned to the student within two weeks, although circumstances such as absences from campus or unusually heavy workload may require that the Advisor take longer than two weeks to review the student's work. Timing of submission and review should be negotiated between student and Advisor.
6. Advising the student as to the acceptability of the draft thesis or research project prior to submission to the Advisory Committee. If the Advisor believes the thesis or research project is not ready for submission or will not be ready within a particular time, the Advisor should so indicate with written reasons to the student. In cooperation with the Chair or Departmental Graduate Coordinator, helping to organize qualifying and final examinations.
7. Assisting the student in learning about all appropriate deadline dates and regulations associated with thesis review, examination and submission, as specified in the Graduate Calendar and/or by the Office of Graduate Studies and/or the Department or School.
8. Giving ample notice of extended absences from campus such as research leaves, and making satisfactory arrangements for the advising of the student when the Advisor is on leave or on extended absence from the campus. Where a faculty member knows that he/she will be on leave for part of a student's program prior to the start of the program, the student should be informed of this at the outset. Depending on the length of absence and the stage of the student's program, it may be necessary to make arrangements for an interim Advisor.
9 Making reasonable arrangements, within the norms appropriate to the discipline and the limits of the material and human resources of the University, so that the research resources necessary for execution of the student's thesis or major paper research are available.

10 Advising the student of regulations designed to provide him/her with a safe environment. These include relevant safety and/or workplace regulations as well as policies designed to protect individual rights and freedoms. Alerting the student to any personal risks that may be encountered in the course of the research and providing training, guidance and adequate equipment appropriate for those risks.

11 Chairing the Advisory Committee. Responsibilities will include:
   • Holding regular Advisory Committee meetings with the student, normally no less than once per semester
   • Submitting evaluation reports every semester, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, to the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee
   • Formulating a plan of action with the student and the Advisory Committee to address any problems that have been identified as a result of a semester progress review, and
   • When a semester progress rating of "Some Concerns" or "Unsatisfactory Progress" has been assigned, providing written notification, including the signatures of all Advisory Committee members, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Note:

• A "satisfactory" evaluation represents normal progress on course work and research. A "some concerns" report is compatible with an expectation for successful completion of the program, but indicates some specific concerns regarding the student's current performance and/or progress on course work or research or both. An "unsatisfactory" report is a clear indication of concern about the student's ability to complete the program. Such concern may be based on poor performance in course work or research or both. Unsatisfactory progress could include failure to meet agreed research milestones, including the timely preparation of a research proposal, including the signatures of all Advisory Committee members, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

• Complying with any commitment of financial support made to the student as part of the offer of admission. In the event that expected financial support becomes unavailable, the Advisor will work with the Department and Faculty of Graduate Studies to ensure support for the student.

• Acknowledging, in accordance with University policies, the contributions of the student in presentations and in published material, for instance through joint authorship.

• Immediately disclosing to the Department Chair any conflict of interest that arises with the student. Conflicts of interest will arise when there are sexual, romantic, or familial ties between the Advisor and student or when there are irreconcilable interpersonal conflicts, and in such cases it is expected that the faculty member will withdraw from the role of Advisor. Conflicts of interest may also arise when the Advisor or student have a financial interest in the outcome of a research project. In these cases, the decision as to whether withdrawal is appropriate should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.
Graduate Student Responsibilities

From the choice of Advisor, choice of research project and through to degree completion, graduate students must recognize that they carry the primary responsibility for their success. The responsibilities assigned to Advisors, Advisory Committees and Departments provide the framework within which students can achieve success. Students should take full advantage of the knowledge and advice that the Advisor and Advisory Committee have to offer and make the effort to keep the lines of communication open. Specifically, each graduate student has a responsibility to:

1. Make a commitment to grow intellectually, in part by fulfilling course requirements as outlined by the Advisory Committee, and to contribute to a field of knowledge by developing and carrying out a program of research.
2. Learn about all appropriate deadline dates and regulations associated with registration, award applications and graduation requirements, as specified in the Graduate Calendar and/or the Office of Graduate Studies and/or the Department or School.
3. Recognize that thesis and research project topics must be within the scope of the appraised and approved graduate program as set out in the program descriptions in the Graduate Calendar.
4. Choose, with the approval of the Advisor and Advisory Committee, a topic of research for which adequate resources are available, including financial and physical resources and faculty expertise.
5. Conform to University, Faculty and Program requirements, academic standards, and guidelines including those related to deadlines, thesis or research project style, course requirements, intellectual property, academic misconduct and any relevant safety and/or workplace regulations.
6. Produce a thesis or research project which is the student's own work and which meets the University and Department standards for style and quality, reflecting a capacity for independent scholarship in the discipline.
7. Recognize that the Advisor and members of the Advisory Committee have other educational, research and service obligations which may preclude prompt responses to the graduate student. It is expected, however, that the approximate time for submitted written material to be returned with comments is usually two weeks.
8. Consider and respond to advice and criticisms provided by the Advisor or members of the Advisory Committee.
9. Meet or communicate regularly with the Advisor (or designate). The frequency and timing of meetings will depend on the nature of the research being undertaken and the stage in the student's program. However, meetings should be of sufficient frequency that the Advisor can make an adequate assessment of the student's progress each semester and the student receives timely feedback on what is being done well and where improvement is needed. The student should also interact with individual Advisory Committee members and other faculty as appropriate and meet with the Advisory Committee, normally no less than once per semester, to review progress.
10. On a regular basis, make available to the Advisor all original research materials, retaining a copy where appropriate.
11. Be prepared to approach first the Advisor and then the Graduate Coordinator or Chair with any perceived problems or changes in circumstances that could affect performance. (If
circumstances warrant, students may wish to consider a leave of absence on compassionate grounds. Information about this may be obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies or from the departmental Graduate Co-ordinator).

12 Submit, with specific reasons, any request for the replacement of an Advisor or member of the Advisory or Examining Committee to the Departmental Graduate Coordinator should a personal or professional conflict arise. Students should take immediate steps to change their Advisor or a member of their Advisory Committee in cases where an appropriate academic relationship cannot be maintained. In most circumstances, the first step would be to meet with the Graduate Coordinator.

13 Recognize that changing Advisors after program entry may have consequences in terms of the nature and focus of an appropriate research topic, and may alter funding planned prior to the change from the initial Advisor as outlined in the Department's letter of funding.

14 Recognize that the student may be obliged to satisfy specific performance requirements that were agreed to at the time of acceptance to the graduate program. These performance requirements may relate to internal or external funding support that the student receives.

15 Recognize that progress will be evaluated every semester by the Advisor and Advisory Committee, and reported to the Program and in the case of "some concerns" or "unsatisfactory" performance, to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
Appendix G: Websites of University of Guelph graduate programs and services, and teaching and learning materials

Academic Integrity (AI): http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca


Graduate Studies: https://www.uoguelph.ca/graduatestudies/

Graduate student survival guide and handbook – Department of Cellular and Molecular Biology (College of Biological Science): http://www.uoguelph.ca/mcb/graduate/2011_GS_Survival-Guide.pdf http://www.uoguelph.ca/mcb/graduate/2013_GS_handbook-may-2013_JW.pdf

Library Writing Services - Learning Commons: http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/get-assistance/writing

Library Conversation Partners – Learning Commons http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/get-assistance/writing/ealesl-support/conversation-partners

LINK Program: https://studentlife.uoguelph.ca/oia/LINKprogram

Office of Diversity and Human Rights: https://www.uoguelph.ca/diversity-human-rights/

Office of Intercultural Affairs: https://studentlife.uoguelph.ca/oia

Open Learning and Educational Support (OpenEd): http://www.coles.uoguelph.ca

The CHROMA Project: https://studentlife.uoguelph.ca/chroma

The Graduate Student Learning Initiatives (GSLI): http://gsli.uoguelph.ca

Student Life: http://studentlife.uoguelph.ca

University of Guelph services: http://www.uoguelph.ca/services/
Appendix H: Link to the details on the new changes made to the international student program in Canada.

Applying for post graduation work permit in Canada
http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/work-postgrad.asp

New changes to the international student program in Canada
http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-changes.asp