

ADD VALUE TO YOUR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS – BEFORE THEY EVEN ARRIVE



Etherton Education's courses for new international students will see them start school with better subject knowledge and more confidence, says Director Peter Etherton

The father picked me up from my hotel, in downtown Shenzhen, and we drove out towards Futian Central Business District in his limousine. I had promised to find a good boarding school for his child.

His English was not great but it was far better than my Mandarin.

He pointed out the sights as we drove along. "My building," he kept saying. "This one – my building, too." He indicated skyscraper after skyscraper. Clearly school fees were not going to be a problem.

The limo pulled up at a five-star hotel and we were ushered through the restaurant, into a private room. Father introduced his wife and other family members.

As usual, I was accorded great respect. I was, after all, a *laoshi* – a teacher.

I asked about his child. "At school – come soon," father said. "Very clever – I want top school – must go to Eden!" Fearful visions of religious mania leapt into my mind. Then I got it. "Ah, yes, Eton! Eton College. Yes, very good school."

Father smiled happily, the door opened and in came his only child, his shy young daughter, Lily. Sadly, I was not able to persuade Eton to accept its first girl, but in the end we were able to help her further her studies in the UK.

Most British boarding schools these days will accept international students, and the main markets are China and the former Soviet republics. Both have very different educational cultures from the one they will encounter in our country.

All international students will suffer some degree of culture shock, and for many it is severe enough to set back their academic progress by half a year. This may result in poorer GCSE or A-level results. I have nothing but admiration for the courage of these students in moving to an alien land. Consider the extent of the changes that, say, a teenage student from China must endure.

Everything familiar is left behind. Goodbye, family. Goodbye, home, pet dog, visits to grandmother. Goodbye to your friends, your favourite TV programmes, your comfort food, your local shops. Your ability to communicate is suddenly



Cambridge success – the result of good preparation

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lost, because now everything happens in English, and you learnt English to pass exams, not to communicate. Where once you could explain a maths problem, barter with a shopkeeper or tease your best friend, now you are tongue-tied.

Values change too. Back home it was clear – work hard for the exams, nothing else mattered. Here in the UK, everyone wants you to take part in House Singing, to join D of E (whatever that is) and turn out for a cross-country run in the rain. Madness!

Thus in 2002 my wife and I decided to design a course which would help international students through this period of transition. We analysed every obstacle in their paths, and tried to provide academic, social and pastoral solutions. We aim to make the difference in the systems explicit, so that students know what is expected of them. Now, Etherton Education offers seven different academic pre-session courses for students aged 10–17 at three school sites in the UK.

If you recommend your new international

students to Etherton Education for the summer, we will pass them on to you in September with better English, better knowledge of their subjects and study skills, and, above all, with much more confidence. You will get back a value-added student, and it will cost your school nothing. Tier 4 is no obstacle with a Home Office-approved partnership.

And as for Lily? She came to our Etherton academic summer course for eight weeks, shed her shyness, went to a West Country school for A-levels, and thence to Cambridge, a talented mathematician. Father was pleased.



For further information about how we can help your students, contact:
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