

Indian students and their integration into the academic community of Groningen.

**-Bachelor Thesis Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning-
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1. Summary.

Internationalisation is one of the key parts of the policy of the University of Groningen and as a result the university is offering education to students from 120 foreign countries. However, the university would like to improve the number of foreign students studying at the university. There are only 37 Indian students studying at the University of Groningen, therefore learning more about the ways in which these students integrate into the academic community of Groningen might give good policy implications to increase this number of Indian students at the university.

The existing body of literature divides this academic integration into four categories, which can also be seen as barriers for academic integration: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and attachment. The level of academic integration is determined by a set of educational experiences, competences and skills, values and family and community backgrounds that a student has acquired before entering higher education.

10 Indian students were contacted via the Faculty of Spatial Sciences and via students that agreed to participate in the interviews. In order to get to know the barriers that were encountered by the Indian students, they were interviewed by means of a semi-structured interview. The results were analysed by coding them according to the themes of the previously drawn up theoretical framework.

The results show that most students initially did encounter a few barriers to academic adjustment. However, these would be overcome after quite a short stay in Groningen. Examples of this are skills with using certain computer software, and familiarity with research methods. The language barrier tends to be a barrier for a longer time, as students do not learn a new language very quickly. This influences the social life of a student. Also the student's attributes that are acquired before entering higher education seem to influence a student's academic integration.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Internationalisation is one of the key parts of the policy of the University of Groningen. According to the university internationalisation is a good way to increase quality, diversity and innovation. Nowadays the university is offering education to students from over 120 foreign countries. The university's goal was to increase the number of international students from 4000 to 5000 in 2015 (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2015). However, the figures of the University of Groningen (2016) show that this number has not been reached yet. Therefore, policy implications for ways to increase the desired number of international students might be helpful to the university.

The article of Rienties et al. (2014) shows that academic integration, particularly academic integration, of international students results in students getting better grades (Rienties et al., 2014), which is good for the rating of a university. Making clear how and to what extent international students integrate into the academic community can thus give the university knowledge on which they can base policy to increase this academic integration and the number of international students at the university.

The university's figures also show that the countries from the Global South send less students to the University of Groningen than some countries from the Global North (University of Groningen, 2016). This shows that there can still be learned about ways to attract more of these students to Groningen.

A good case study would be Indian students, because currently there are 37 students from India studying at the University of Groningen, which is only 0.13% of the total number of students at the university (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2016). Learning more about the way these students integrate into the academic community of Groningen might give good policy implications to increase this number of Indian students at the university.

2.2 Research Problem.

The aim of the research is to let students from India who study at the University of Groningen and who also live in Groningen, tell what barriers for academic integration they have encountered. Accordingly the aim is to investigate how and to what extent these students have overcome these barriers to finally be able to formulate an answer to the following central question:

“How and to what extent do international students from India overcome barriers to integration into the academic community of Groningen?”

In order to be able to answer the central question, it is necessary to first answer the following secondary questions:

- How does the existing body of literature define academic integration (of international students)?
- What barriers to integration are identified by Indian students within the academic community of Groningen?
- How do the Indian students attempt to overcome the barriers to academic integration?

2.3 Structure

In the next section, chapter 3, the relevant theory will be outlined. Accordingly, chapter 4 discusses the research methods and analysis tools that are used and which ethical issues have been taken into consideration. The chapter also contains a paragraph that discussed the quality of the acquired data. Chapter 5 discusses the acquired data. This section gives an overview of the barriers to academic integration and how personal attributes have influenced the respondents' academic integration.

The conclusions section in Chapter 6 will give a short overview of the results and will give policy implications based on these results.

3. Theoretical framework

This section gives an overview of the existing body of literature that is relevant for this research. It also discusses why this theory is helpful for processing the acquired data and answering the research questions.

3.1 International students

According to King and Raghuram (2013) International Student Migration/Mobility (ISM) can be split up in different categories. The type of movement abroad for less than a year is called *credit mobility*. In this case, students do a part of their programme of study abroad and return to the country of origin to complete the programme. Studying abroad for the entire duration of a degree is usually for 3 to 4 years and is called *degree mobility*. The third category implies a voluntary or mandatory stay in a foreign country for a shorter period of time such as a field trip and summer schools (King and Raghuram, 2013).

In this research a focus will be placed on international students from India that fit in the category '*degree mobility*', because these students have stayed in Groningen for a longer time than for instance the '*credit mobility* students'. Students that have come to Groningen for an entire degree program are able to define how they perceive the barriers and will be better able to tell to what extent they have overcome these barriers. Also the fact that they have been here for a longer period of time, may have caused these students to have encountered more barriers than students who stay in Groningen for a shorter period of time.

3.2 Acquired personal attributes before entering higher education

Tinto states that students have a set of educational experiences, competences and skills, values and family and community backgrounds before they enter into higher education. These attributes differ per student and will influence the student's integration into higher education (Tinto, 1975).

For instance with educational experiences one can understand the student's performance in high school, which can be a predictor of future performance in higher education (Astin, 1971, in Tinto, 1975). Also characteristics of the high school for instance, facilities and academic staff, can be influential (Dyer, 1968). This will influence the student's perception of his own ability and his expectation of further college education (Davis, 1966). In terms of competences and skills, one can think of difficulties with the use of certain research methods. In this light, Rienties et al. (2014) found that a bewildering 50% of the international students in Dutch master programs that participated in their research, had trouble using the required research methods. Values can be measured by looking at how a student feels like his morals are congruent with the morals of his fellow students (Spady, 1970). Finally, family characteristics, such as the family's socio-economic status (Astin, 1964; Panos & Astin, 1968) can be of influence: a high level of the parent's education, wealth and urbaneness makes sure that students persist in college (Chase, 1970). Also the type of relationship of the student with his parents is influential (Tinto, 1975).

In this research every respondent will be asked about their experiences in India and how they think this might have influenced their academic integration. Examples of the questions asked can be found in the Interview Guide in appendix 2.

3.3 Barriers within the academic integration

Baker and Siryk (1984) have developed an instrument to measure the extent of adjustment to college, in which according to them all shortcomings of the previous measurements are eliminated. The goal of this measurement is to contain a sufficient number of items to allow establishment of a suitable level of reliability and that covers the various aspects of adjustment (Baker and Siryk, 1984). The aspects to academic integration are outlined in the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which Baker and Siryk developed in 1984 and improved in 1986 (Baker and Siryk, 1986; Baker and Siryk, 1984). The SACQ detects problems early in the student's college career. It also indicates the reason for these problems, which provides universities with policy implications (Baker and Siryk, 1984).

According to Tinto (1975) academic integration is the extent to which students adapt to the academic way-of-life (Tinto, 1975). According to Baker and Siryk (1989) there are four subscales in academic integration: academic-, social-, personal & emotional adjustment and attachment (Baker and Siryk, 1989). Every of the four subscales of academic integration consists of clusters. These clusters represent different aspects of each subscale. A full overview of the subscales, clusters and the aspects of the clusters can be found in Appendix I: the SACQ.

The first subscale, *academic adjustment*, concerns the student's success in coping with a variety of educational demands (Baker and Siryk, 1989, in Rienties et al., 2014).

The second subscale is called *social adjustment*, which handles aspects that relate to how well students deal with the interpersonal and inter- societal demands of a study (Baker and Siryk 1989, in Rienties et al., 2014).). The third subscale, *personal and emotional adjustment*, consists of questions about how the students feel psychologically and physically (Baker and Siryk, 1989, in Rienties et al., 2014). The final subscale, *attachment*, asks questions about commitment to educational-institutional goals (Baker and Siryk, 1989, in Rienties et al., 2014).

The more a student meets the various aspects in the survey, the more he is integrated in the academic community (Baker and Siryk, 1989). Not meeting these aspects of academic integration will hinder the extent to which a student is integrated into the academic community. Therefore these aspects of academic integration can also be seen as the barriers within the academic integration. This is how the theory of Baker and Siryk (1984) will be used in this research. The theory of Baker and Siryk (1989) will be supplemented with the things that the respondents perceive as barriers within the academic integration.

The conceptual model in Figure 1 displays a summary of this theoretical framework.

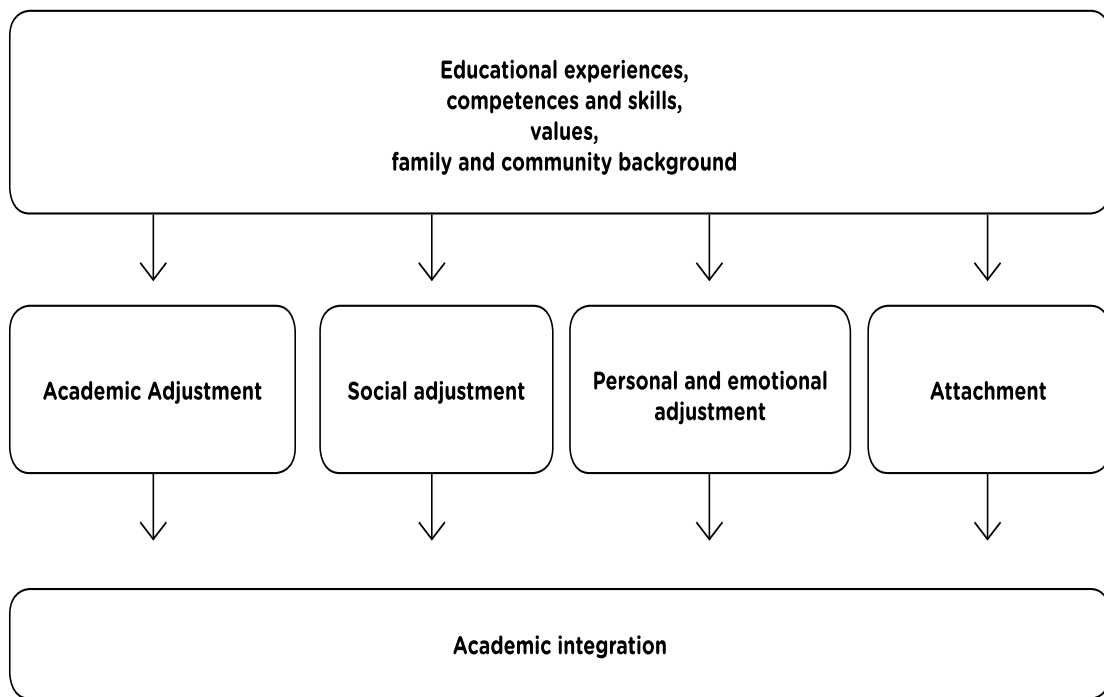


Figure 1. Conceptual Model.

4. Methodology

The following section discusses which methods for data collection are deemed most appropriate for understanding how Indian students in Groningen perceive barriers for academic integration and how these are overcome. This method will be discussed below. As will be the sampling strategy, ethical considerations, the way of data analysis and a discussion of the quality of the data.

4.1 instrument for data collection

Given the theoretical framework and the research aims, the most suitable strategy for data collection is conducting semi-structured interviews. These interviews consist of a set of predetermined questions. However the structure of the interview is still flexible in the way that issues are addressed by the interviewer (Dunn, 2005:80, in Clifford et al., 2012). This way, the respondents are free to elaborate further on some issues which they consider important, and this might lead to some surprising discoveries about their perception of barriers for academic integration.

The research aims to find out more about the extent of academic integration of the Indian students in Groningen. This could also be investigated by means of a survey by using a Likert scale. This method is used by Baker and Siryk (1984). However, the research will also investigate how personal attributes of students before they enter higher education influence their integration. These attributes are defined by Tinto (1975, 1998 in Rienties et al., 2011). Barriers to academic integration will be defined and there will be found out how Indian students attempt to overcome these barriers. These are questions that would need further discussion, for which there is room in the semi-structured interview.

In order to be able to answer the research question, an interview guide was created. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 2.

Valentine (2005, in Clifford et al., 2012) suggests to have the interview take place in a neutral environment. Other characteristics of the venue should be informal (but not noisy) and easily accessible (Valentine, 2005, in Clifford et al., 2012). Therefore a silent conference room in a university building was used. The room is quiet, neutral and because it is in a university building, the student is already familiar with it. This could make the student feel more comfortable.

4.2 Sampling strategy

The extent to which international students from India overcome the barriers to academic integration is investigated by interviewing ten Indian students who study at the University of Groningen. In determining the number of interviewees, the criterion of theoretical saturation, suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967, in Flick, 2014), is used. This means that no more cases were added when no additional data was being found (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, in Flick, 2014).

For recruiting the participants of the interviews Longhurst (2001, in Clifford et al., 2012) suggests 'cold calling'. A way to use this method in this research was to contact the Groningen Indian Student Association (GISA) and the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen. The Faculty of Spatial Sciences was able to provide some names and e-mail addresses of Indian students. Unfortunately GISA was not. The students from the faculty were contacted via e-mail for an appointment. In this e-mail the aim of the research was outlined. After the respondents participated in the interview, they were asked if they knew any more Indian students, who might want to participate. They brought in e-mail addresses of other students, who were contacted accordingly.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Clifford et al. (2012) suggest to stick to ethical issues before and during the research. The first issue is *consent*. According to this advice, before starting the interview, the respondents were asked to give a consent to use the information that they give during the interviews. As Clifford et al. (2012) also suggest, the respondents were informed on matters such as purposes, methods, demands, risks, other participants, time involved, discomforts, inconveniences and potential consequences. The respondents were also asked to give consent for recording the interviews (Clifford et al., 2012). This consent was recorded.

Another issue suggested by Clifford et al. (2012) that has been taken into account, is *confidentiality*. The participants were told that the information would be stored in a database accessible by password only and that their information will remain anonymous. It will not be possible to trace the student back to the person based on the information that is given during the interview. The participant was also able to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving a reason for it (Clifford et al., 2012).

The third aspect to consider was *harm*, for which it is among other things important to consider potential physical, psychological, cultural, social, legal and environmentally harmful effects of the study or its results (Clifford et al., 2012). Especially in the case of which an interviewed student has not succeeded to integrate in the academic community very well, this might make the student feel embarrassed or another negative emotion. This can be harmful to the student. In order to take this negative feeling away, the student will be told that for this research it does not make a difference and that the student will not be judged for the information that is given. Also, keeping the students anonymous will help the student feel less insecure.

In every research there should be *cultural awareness*: the personality, rights, wishes, beliefs and ethical views of the individual subjects and communities of which they are part should be considered (Clifford et al., 2012). Because the interviewed students are from India, they might have different standards than the Dutch interviewer. Hence, in the interview the interviewer tried to stay as neutral as possible, so the interviewee was not interrupted by cultural differences and the respondent felt more free to tell about what he or she thinks. Some questions related to cultural differences. In this case and during the entire interview, the interviewer did not make any statements about their personal attitude towards the opinions of the interviewed student.

4.4 Data analysis

The recorded interviews have been transcribed precisely and in order to be able to guarantee the respondents confidentiality, both the recordings and the transcripts have been stored in the encrypted database of the University of Groningen.

In order to identify categories and patterns in the acquired data, a coding method is used. Cope (2012, in Clifford et al., 2012) states that a good way of formulating codes is to base these on the existing body of literature. Accordingly these codes can be made complete with categories that come up in the acquired data itself, or there can be thought of by the researcher himself with the data in mind (Cope, 2012, in Clifford et al., 2012). In accordance to this the codes in this research were be acquired from the pre-existing literature that is used in the theoretical framework. These are also the concepts that are featured in in the conceptual model. After the data collection, the data was scanned for additional codes. Adding the 'in vivo' codes, as they are called by Strauss and

Corbin (1990, in Flick, 2014), may lead to surprising discoveries about how the students perceive the barriers for academic integration. Accordingly the results that are found after the coding, were be linked to the theoretical framework in order to be able to conclude.

4.5 Quality of the data

Given the fact that the respondents have been found through the secretary of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences and by the respondents their selves that suggested their friends as other respondents, a few things have to be taken into account. For instance, because these students know each other, it might be that they have a similar life style or personality, which could cause the respondents to be alike and thus give the same responses to the interview questions. This did make it easier to gain the trust of the potential respondents because they were asked by one of their friends. This made them cooperate more easily.

Also, the acquired data contains more PhD students (6) than master students (4). No bachelor students were interviewed. This can cause the results to be less fitting for the group of students that was a minority in this research. It might also be that the respondents of this interview happen to differ from the other Indian students in Groningen, who were not interviewed. However, this cannot be found out easily, because conducting semi-structured interviews with many more Indian students in Groningen is not possible, because of time constraints. Therefore, it is best to view the results as exemplary for specifically the group of respondents of this research.

Luckily, it was possible to interview students from nine different universities in India, which might have given some variety in the respondents. The only university to deliver two students to the University of Groningen is the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC). An overview of the universities can be found in figure 2.

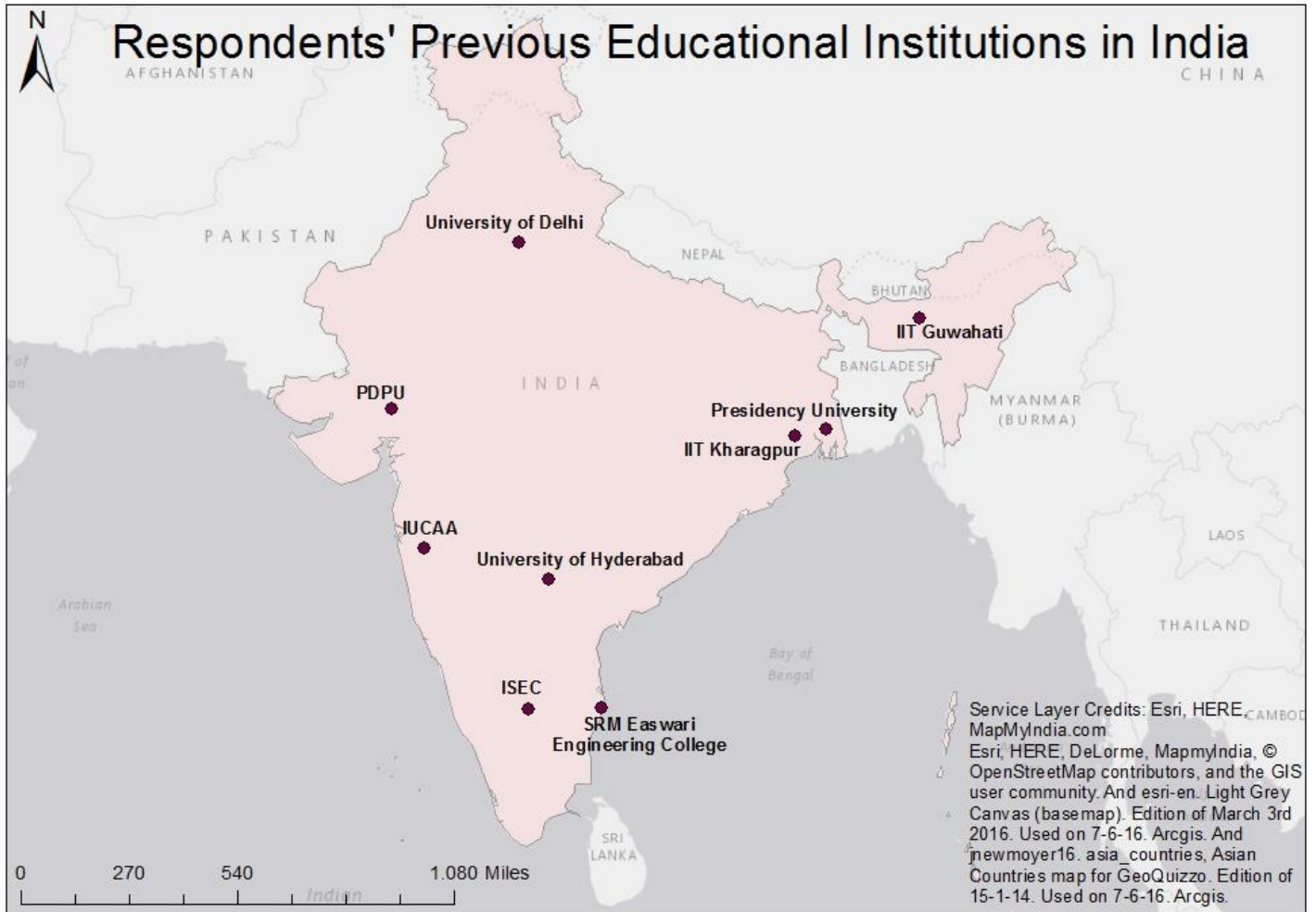


Figure 2. Respondents' Previous Educational Institutions in India.

5. Results

This section gives an overview of the acquired data that is relevant for answering the research question. The data is divided into paragraphs that correlate with the themes in the theoretical framework. The discussion of the theory will be linked to the acquired data.

5.1 Academic adjustment

The subscale of academic adjustment measures the level of motivation and performance of a student. It also looks at the amount of effort a student puts into his academic work and his or her satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker and Syrik, 1989).

Two respondents encountered a barrier in the fact that they sometimes have some difficulties with planning their academic work and finishing it in time. One reason is that a respondent worked for three years, so he had to get used to deadlines again. The other students also felt like he had to get used to the academic environment before he could overcome the barrier in planning.

Three other students were initially not sure what was expected from them. In two cases this was because the terms and conditions of working on their PhD and working together with colleagues was not clear enough. However, all three students got clarity later on, so this barrier disappeared.

Three students encountered a barrier in the fact that they had to catch up on knowledge that was needed for performing well in their education in Groningen. Examples are learning how to use software like GIS, programming and learning a computer coding system other than the one used by the respondent in India. However, the respondents felt motivated to learn these new skills, and so they did. One respondent is after half a year still in the process of catching up. However, she thinks learning these new skills is an adventure.

Two respondents encountered a barrier in their motivation to do the academic work. Reasons to feel this way can be the bad weather and the fact that the supervisor is being very perfectionistic, or the fact that there are many distractions in Groningen. Despite the motivational problems, the respondents do feel like they have performed well so far. In fact, all ten respondents think that they have performed well so far. The two respondents with the occasional motivational problems feel like they can do even better. The reason that most of the students can find motivation to do the academic work is the fact that usually the respondents came to Groningen with a clear goal in mind. For instance, three respondents chose their education very carefully and think they will find a particular job that they want after their education in Groningen. Three others really enjoy their education, which makes them want to do their academic work and keep up to date with their work. Two respondents are very happy to have the first world experience, and all respondents are very happy with the quality of their courses and professors, so that has definitely not been a barrier.

Only one respondent did not encounter a barrier.

These barriers were mostly barriers that were overcome after being in Groningen for a short while. The respondents have all had academic educations before, and because of that it has not taken them long to get used to the university. Therefore, the respondents do quite well in satisfy the demands of academic adjustment that are outlined in the questionnaire of Baker and Syrik (1989) in appendix I.

5.2 Social adjustment

The subscale of social adjustment measures a student's social skills and ties, and how well the student gets along with others like fellow students and professors. Also nostalgic feelings about home and the satisfaction with the social environment are taken into account (Baker and Siryk, 1989).

Two respondents say that the fact that their educational program takes a lot of time causes a barrier for social interaction. They do however feel like there are many nice people at their faculty. One respondent even finds a little time to hang out with them on the weekends.

50% of the respondents sometimes miss their friends and family. However, two of these respondents say that once they found new friends at their faculty and via the Groningen Indian Students Association (GISA), this took away the problem a little, because now they had people to talk to in Groningen. The others feel like missing their friends and family in India does not have any influence on their performance in Groningen.

The other half of the respondents feels like they have met many nice people at their faculty and via other ways. Also the contact with the professors, and administrative personnel of the faculty is very good. Even though all respondents are happy with their social contacts, three of them would like to increase the number of social contacts. This however, is sometimes very difficult because of the (Dutch) language problem. They often miss out on symposiums, because they are in Dutch, and also having regular conversations with a Dutch person is sometimes difficult. This causes the respondents to have fewer opportunities to increase the number of social contacts.

Two other students encountered barriers when working together with fellow students. One respondent liked to get high marks, just like in India. However, his fellow students did not want to put in more effort than just enough for getting a sufficient mark. This was a cultural difference that the respondent had to get used to. Now he does not have any problems with that anymore. For another student it was difficult to find a group to do the group assignments with. The reason for this was the fact that most of his fellow students knew each other from a previous bachelor degree and therefore wanted to work together. When the respondent got to know his fellow students better, this problem was solved.

One respondent felt a little shy, and therefore he had difficulties with getting to know people. However, he has started to open up, which eliminated the problem.

The final respondent feels like he has enough social contacts. However, sometimes he does feel like they think differently than him. Therefore the respondent does not see many people as his friends, which sometimes makes him feel a little cut off. However, he does not think this influences him much.

Looking back at the demands of the social adjustment subscale of Baker and Siryk (1989), many of the demands for social adjustment have been met. However, not as many as in the academic adjustment scale. This is because not all the respondents feel satisfied with their social contacts. So, this could be improved. Also missing friends and family in India can still sometimes be an issue.

5.3 Personal-emotional adjustment

The personal-emotional subscale in the theory of Baker and Siryk (1989) looks at a student's physical and psychological discomforts due to studying at the university.

Two respondents have experienced negative consequences of the fact that they have a lot of work to do. One of them starts feeling low when she has too much to do. It also

makes her miss her family. The other respondent feels irritated when he plans to finish a piece of work on a certain time and does not manage to do so. Also the long hours behind the computer cause him eye irritation and tiredness. Another student sees the work pressure as something positive, because it makes him work. Therefore this stress barrier is perceived as something positive by this respondent.

Two other students felt a little lost when they first arrived in Groningen. One of them felt a general sickness because of everything he had to do on his own from now on, such as cooking dinner and studying. The other respondent also felt an initial anxiety. Another students only felt excitement because of everything that was coming. After a short while they all felt normal again.

Other barriers that were encountered are stress because of not being able to find a group to do a group assignment with, or not knowing what was expected from the respondent in the university, as also outlined in paragraph 5.1. This was solved after getting to know the fellow students and the university a bit better.

One respondent experiences stress for no reason every time she has a meeting with her supervisor. She also feels like bad academic performance makes her feel moody.

Four respondents say that they have been negatively affected by the weather. Two of them feel less happy when there is less sun and two respondents experienced physical complaints due to the cold. However, one of them managed to get used to it.

It is clear that some barriers to personal-emotional adjustment were overcome after getting used to the fellow students and the academic environment. However, also many stress factors like the workload, and the weather stay present. Therefore the respondents have not entirely managed to meet the demands of the Baker and Siryk's (1989) personal-emotional adjustment scale.

5.4 Attachment

The attachment subscale measures a student's attachment to the university (Baker and Siryk, 1989).

All respondents feel attached to the educational program that they are following at the university of Groningen. They are also determined to finish the program and do well. The reason for this is the fact that every respondent chose his or her educational program in Groningen very carefully. Three respondents chose the program with a particular job in mind after they completed the program. Others chose the program because it fitted them best or simply because the program was ranked very highly. They grew fond of it because they like the courses in the program. This makes seven of the ten respondents feel attached to the University of Groningen. The other three either feel attached to their faculty, or expect that they will feel attached to the university after studying in Groningen for a bit longer.

So, overall, no respondent encountered a barrier in the fact that he or she does not feel attached. Therefore, the respondents also do well in meeting the requirements of the attachment subscale of Baker and Siryk (1989).

5.5 Other barriers

The respondents also came up with barriers that were not included in the theory of Baker and Siryk (1989). However, they did have influence on some aspects that were covered by the subscales of academic integration of Baker and Siryk (1989). Therefore they did influence the respondent's process of academic integration.

The first barrier is the language, which is also discussed in paragraph 5.2. Seven out of ten respondents experienced the Dutch language as a barrier. Three of the respondents

say that the language is not a problem when academic matters are discussed, however, outside the university the language does form a problem. The other respondents tell that also within academics the language is a problem, for instance, when working together in a group with solely Dutch students. Also missing out on science exhibitions that happen to be in Dutch and having casual conversations with fellow Dutch students sometimes is an issue. Two of the respondents are learning Dutch to be able to be a little more social and have less problems outside of the university. Another respondent would like to learn Dutch if she would stay in Groningen for a PhD after her current master program. As also discussed in paragraph 5.3 the fact that the respondents are not used to the cold Dutch weather causes some problems. Six out of ten respondents were influenced by it. One respondent says that many days without sun make him feel a little depressed. In this case another respondent feels less enthusiasm to do the academic work. Others were physically affected by the cold weather. Seven respondents miss the Indian food. However, most of them do not get affected by it. They simply try to make the Indian food with Dutch ingredients or try to adapt by eating some Dutch food every now and then. However, one respondent does feel sad when she does not eat Indian food for a long time. It makes her have less enthusiasm to do the academic work. One other respondent had to get used to the demographics of Groningen.

5.6 The students' attributes before entering higher education.

When looking at the previous *educational experiences* of the respondents, seven of ten respondents feel like they have always performed well in their education until now. The three remaining respondents also feel like that, however one of them felt like he had a little dip in his bachelor in India, because he did not like the exam system. After that, until now in his PhD, he performed very well again. The second respondent feels like she is doing even better now in her master at the university of Groningen and the last respondent feels like he did very well in his master before he started his PhD in Groningen. Seven of the ten respondents think that the facilities at the University of Groningen are better than the facilities at their previous educations in India. For instance the availability of more equipment and a higher budget for equipment in a PhD are very much appreciated. Another PhD was very happy with the presence of a daily supervisor, which was not available in India. Others think that the facilities in India were just as good. Nine out of ten respondents think that the professors at the University of Groningen are better than at their previous educations. One thought that the quality of his professors was just as good in India. The main difference is that professors in India are less approachable and that they can become a professor with just a master's degree. The students performed well in their high school period and also throughout their academic career. Even now, as discussed in paragraph 5.1, at the University of Groningen the respondents feel like they are performing well. This is corresponding with the theory is Astin (1971, in Tinto, 1975), who says that a student's performance in high school can be a predictor of future performance in higher education. Davis (1966) says that the characteristics of previous educations can influence the student's perception of his own ability and his expectation of further college education. Most of the respondents do feel like University of Groningen's facilities are better, however, this did not influence the respondents negatively.

In terms of *competences and skills* two respondents felt completely prepared for their education in Groningen. The other eight students all ran into something that they did not learn in India, whereas their fellow students did have these skills. Examples are learning how to work with GIS software, new coding systems, SPSS, and research methods.

Everything was learned by the students quite quickly. They either learned it their selves or had a good teacher. One respondent feels like she had quite a big deprivation. She has been in the process of catching up for half a year already and she thinks it is adventurous.

According to Rienties et al. (2014) a shocking 50% of the international students in a Dutch master programs in their research had trouble with using the required research methods. Also this research shows that two of the four respondents following a master program in Groningen had to learn some extra skills. This was also the case for five of the six PhD students who took part in the research. In the case of the master students, this number corresponds with the findings of Rienties et al. (2014). However, the population on which this was tested in this research is too small. In the case of the PhD students the number of students that has to catch up goes beyond the 50%.

Three of the respondents think that their *values* are the same as the values of their fellow students. One of them even thinks that some Dutch values are better, like the Dutch punctuality. The rest of the respondents think their values might differ, but not in a way that has caused any problems. This is because they tend to be very accepting, because they met many different people during their university campus life in India. Two of them think that the values of their fellow students have broadened their horizon. When looking at *family characteristics*, five respondents from a middle-class family are found. One of these respondents tells that in his family money was sometimes an issue, which made him study very hard. The other five respondents come from an upper middle-class family. All respondents come from a family in which the parents were both well educated. The parents also encouraged the respondents to do well in their education. There are two exceptions, where only the father, instead of both parents, was well educated. However, these parents have not been less encourages towards their children. In fact, maybe they encouraged their children even more to do well in their education. In one case the money issue might also have been a reason for this strong encouragement. Also the fact that their parents were well educated was for some respondents an incentive to also do well in their educations. This shows that a part of the theory of Chase (1970) applies to this research. He claims that the parents' education and the family's wealth can make sure that a student persists in higher education. Tinto (1975) states that also the student's relationship with his parents is influential. This research shows that indeed the encouragement of the parents seems to influence their children's academic performance.

6. Conclusions

This section aims to answer the central question “How and to what extent do international students from India overcome barriers to integration into the academic community of Groningen?” Therefore, this section first gives an overview of the barriers that were encountered by the respondents and which correlate with one of the barriers from the theory of Baker and Siryk (1984) (academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and attachment). After that the barriers that do not fit in any of these categories will be discussed. In both categories also the way of overcoming the barriers is discussed. After that, there is also given a short overview of a student’s personal attributes that influence his academic integration. Finally policy implications for attracting more international students to the University of Groningen are proposed.

When looking at the academic adjustment subscale of Baker and Siryk (1989) most respondents have been able to meet the requirements. This means that all students feel motivated for doing their academic work and they also put in enough effort. Almost all of them are satisfied with their academic performance and their academic environment. However, this good academic adjustment only happened after the respondents overcame the initial barriers, such as getting used to the academic environment, which made clear what was expected from the students and made planning the work easier. Also catching up on knowledge was done quickly.

Also many requirements of the social adjustment subscale of Baker and Siryk (1989) are met by the respondents. They have managed to find new social contacts at the faculty and outside the university. However, not all the respondents are happy with the number or quality of their social contacts. So, there is some room for improvement. However, the language barrier often gets in the way of making these new contacts. Also missing friends and family in India is still sometimes an issue. Therefore, the requirements of this subscale have not been met as well as the requirements of the academic adjustment subscale.

The personal-emotional subscale in the theory of Baker and Siryk (1989) looks at a student’s physical and psychological discomforts due to studying at the university. Although many of the stress factors of respondents disappeared after getting used to the academic environment, also many stress factors remained present. Examples are the stress over workload and the weather. Therefore, the respondents have not entirely managed to tick the boxes of the requirements in this subscale.

However, when looking at the attachment subscale, the respondents seem to do very well. The subscale measures a student’s attachment to the university (Baker and Siryk, 1989). The data shows that seven respondents feel happy to attend the University of Groningen and therefore attached to the institution. The others either expect to feel attached in the future or feel attached to the faculty of the educational program that is followed. Reasons for this are the fact that the respondents chose their education carefully and that they enjoy their current education.

As already outlined above, the additional barriers that were not defined in the theory of Baker and Siryk (1989) also influence the respondents’ academic integration. The two main barriers are the weather that causes physical and psychological problems and the language, which is mostly a problem in social interaction.

It has also become clear that a student’s attributes before entering higher education have influence on the student’s academic integration. Especially the encouragement of the family to do well in their education has caused all respondents to do well in their

education. A correlation between the relationship of a student with his parents and his performance in higher education was also suggested by Tinto (1975).

Also the respondents' competences and skills appeared to be of quite some influence, because when students did not have the required level of skills at arrival at the University of Groningen, they had to catch up. This initially caused quite some barriers in the academic adjustment subscale. A correlation of the student's educational experiences in terms of facilities and staff, was suggested by Dyer (1986). However, the fact that a respondent rated the facilities and the staff of the University of Groningen higher than the facilities at his previous institutions has not had a negative influence. Also differing values has not had much of an influence on the respondents.

The results show that the respondents encounter numerous barriers, which already start at their arrival at the University of Groningen. These initial barriers were overcome quite quickly by some of the respondents, but others took a little longer. For instance, the respondents who had to learn how to use a new software. Policy of the University of Groningen could aim to take the initial barriers away. This can be done by providing very detailed information about what is expected from the future students. This gives the future students an opportunity to prepare himself at his institution in India before entering the University of Groningen. This way the students will feel less stress and perform better from the start of his education in Groningen.

The language barrier is also a problem that should be solved. Therefore it would be good to create an international environment at the University of Groningen in which everyone, including Dutch students, thinks it is normal to speak English. Ways to reach this would be to make all communication of the university to the students in English. Also attracting more international students to the University of Groningen would eventually create a more international academic community. These plans could be incorporated in other internationalisation plans of the University.

Differences in weather and culture could be addressed by current students who could share their own experiences with future students. This way future students arrive better prepared.

It could also be good to do a follow up research in about five years, to see if international students at the university still experience the same barriers, or if these barriers are being encountered less frequently or less severely. Also looking at students from countries other than India can give provide for surprising insights.

All together these policy implications could make an international student's academic experience at the University of Groningen even better, which could be an attraction for future international students attending the University of Groningen.

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Appendix I

Subscales, clusters and aspects of the clusters from 'The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)' (Baker and Siryk, 1989)

Subscale Academic Adjustment

Cluster 1: Motivation

Is definite about reasons for being in college
Has well-defined academic goals
Considers college degree important
Doubts value of college degree
Enjoys academic work
Most interests are not related to course work

Cluster 2: Application

Keeps up-to-date with academic work
Does not work as hard as he or she should
Is not motivated to study
Attends classes regularly

Cluster 3: Performance

Finds academic work difficult
Does not function well during exams
Is satisfied with academic performance
Does not feel smart enough for course work
Does not use study time efficiently
Enjoys writing papers for courses
Has trouble concentrating when studying
Does not do well academically, considering effort
Has trouble getting started on homework

Cluster 4: Academic Environment

Is satisfied with variety of courses
Is satisfied with quality of courses
Is satisfied with program of courses
Is satisfied with professors
Is satisfied with academic situation

Subscale: Social Adjustment

Cluster 1: General

Fits in well with college environment
Is very involved with college social activities
Is adjusting well to college
Has several close social ties
Has adequate social skills
Is satisfied with social participation
Is satisfied with social life

Cluster 2: Other People

Is meeting people and making friends
Has informal contact with professors
Gets along well with roommates
Has difficulty feeling at ease with others at college
Does not mix well with opposite sex
Feels different from others in undesirable ways

Cluster 3: Nostalgia

Is lonesome for home
Feels lonely a lot
Would rather be home

Cluster 4: Social Environment

Is pleased about decision to attend this college
Enjoys living in a dormitory
Is satisfied with extracurricular activities

Subscale: Personal-Emotional Adjustment

Cluster 1: Psychological

Feels tense or nervous
Feels blue and moody
Being independent has not been easy
Is not able to control emotions well lately
Has thought about seeking psychological help recently
Gets angry too easily lately
Sometimes thinking gets muddled too easily
Worries a lot about college expenses
Has trouble coping with college stress

Cluster 2: Physical

Feels tired a lot lately
Appetite is good
Has a lot of headaches
Gained or lost a lot of weight lately
Is not sleeping well
Feels in good health

Subscale: Attachment

Cluster 1: General

Is pleased with decision to go to college
Thinks a lot about dropping out of college permanently
Is thinking about taking time off from college

Cluster 2: This College

Is pleased about attending this college

Would prefer to be at another college

Expects to finish bachelor's degree

Is thinking about transferring to another college

Appendix 2

Interview guide

As a way of breaking the ice, the interviewee will start talking about the weather, if it was easy to find the room in which the interview takes place, and whatever comes up. After sitting down, the recording will start.

1. First question: is it okay if I record the interview?

Introduction

2. Could you tell me something about yourself, like what you study and what study you did before you came here?

Prompts:

- Name
- Age
- Current education
- Previous education and institution
- Length of stay in Groningen
- Where did you live in India?
- Living conditions (e.g. with family, hostel, etc.)
- Why did you decide to study abroad?
- Why did you choose Groningen?
- Why did you choose this particular education?
- How do you feel about studying in Groningen?
- How does studying in Groningen compare to studying in India?
- Did you do undertake other activities next to your education in India?
- How does this compare to the activities you do in Groningen
- Do you feel like you were integrated in the academic community in India? And in Groningen?

3. You know that the interview is about academic integration. Do you have a clear definition of academic integration in your mind?

Prompts

- Let the respondent answer
- Give the definition that is used in this research to the respondent (can be found at the bottom of this interview guide).

Questions about student's background before entering higher education in Groningen, related to Tinto (1975)

Educational experience

4. Do you feel like your educational experience in India has influenced your way of integrating in the academic community in Groningen? How?

Prompts:

- Performance in high school, bachelor, etc. Performance throughout education until now. How well do you perform now compared to then?
- Characteristics of previous education (e.g. facilities and academic staff) compared to university of Groningen.
- Perception of own ability (e.g. personal characteristics)

Competences and skills

5. Do you feel like your competences and skills before entering higher education in Groningen have influenced your way of integrating in the academic community in Groningen? How?

Prompts:

- Do you feel that you are well prepared at your education in India to study in Groningen?
- In case no: Why not? What problems did you encounter? Does the education in India differ from the education in Groningen a lot?
- In case yes: What are the competences and skills you learned in India and why are they helpful?

Values

6. Do you feel like your values have influenced your way of integrating in the academic community in Groningen? How?

Prompts:

- Do you feel like your morals are the same the morals of other students in Groningen? Why/why not and how did this influence your academic integration/you?
- Influence of differing morals on for instance, working together.
- What do you consider important in your academic life in Groningen? (e.g. just getting good grades/passing tests or also social activities?)

Family and Community backgrounds

7. How do you feel like your family ad community backgrounds from India have influenced your way of integration in the academic community in Groningen?

Prompts:

- Socio-economic status of your family.
- Did your parents also do a very good education?
- Living conditions with parents: urban/rural.
- Relationship with parents: parent's expectation of the student, moral/financial support. Does relationship with parents influence student? Do your parents give a lot of advice?
- What was the community in India like that surrounded you during your education?
- What was the role of your family in your education in India? And how is their role now?

Student's perception of barriers for academic integration

Give a short introduction of the new section of the interview: students' perception of the barriers for academic integration.

8. Have you encountered any things that might have kept you from integrating into the academic community of Groningen?

Prompts:

- Academic adjustment
- Social adjustment
- Personal-emotional adjustment
- Attachment
- Extent to which the barrier is overcome
- Strategy for overcoming the barrier

If the student starts talking about one of the subscales of academic integration that is defined by Baker and Siryk (1984), there is a list below of things to talk about. If the student leaves a few of these subscales out, questions will be asked about these subjects later on.

Questions to make clear the overall extent of Academic Integration, based on the definition of Baker and Siryk (1984)

First introduce the new section in the interview to the respondent. Make clear that these are predetermined barriers, that they should give their opinions about.

Academic adjustment

The success in coping with a variety of educational demands such as motivation, application, performance and satisfaction.

There will be given a short explanation of every subscale in academic adjustment and this question will be asked:

9. Do you think that you have encountered barriers that could be qualified as a barrier for academic adjustment? Which ones?

Prompts:

- How much do you think you have adjusted to the university of Groningen?
- To what extent do you think you have overcome the barrier of adjusting to higher education in Groningen in general? And how have you done that?
- If you have not succeeded: do you mind this? How much? Would you like to change that? How would you change that?

Other prompts that can be used are the subscales of academic adjustment and the aspects in every subscale:

Motivation

Prompts:

- Is definite about reasons for being in university
- What are your academic goals?
- Do you consider getting a university degree is important?
- How much do you value this particular college degree?

- Do you enjoy doing academic work? Why (not)?
- Or do you like doing other things better? What things?

Application

Prompts:

- Do you keep up to date with your academic work? Why (not)?
- Do you work as hard as you should? Why (not)?
- To what extent do you experience a lack of motivation to study? What is the cause?
- Do you attend your classes regularly? Why (not)?

Performance

In terms of how well you do in your education, how high do you rate yourself?

Prompts:

- Do you find the academic work difficult?
- How well do you function during your exams? What is the reason for that?
- To what extent are you satisfied with your academic performance? What could be better/why is it so good?
- Do you feel smart enough for the courses you follow at the university?
- Do you use your study time efficiently? Why (not)?
- How much do you enjoy writing papers for your courses? Why (not)?
- How often do you experience trouble with concentrating while you are studying? Why (not)?
- Do you feel like you get good grades, considering the work you do for the study? Why (not)?
- Do you ever have trouble getting started on homework? How much? Why (not)?

Academic Environment

Are you happy with the way things are done at the university and the quality of the education that is offered?

Prompts:

- Are you satisfied with the variety of the courses? Why (not)?
- Are you satisfied with the quality of the courses? What could be better?
- Are you satisfied with the programme of the courses? Why (not)?
- Is satisfied with professors? Why (not)?

Social Adjustment

Dealing with the interpersonal-societal demands of a study.

There will be given a short explanation of every subscale in social adjustment and this question will be asked:

10. Do you think that you have encountered barriers that could be qualified as a barrier for social adjustment? Which ones?

Prompts:

- To what extent do you think you have overcome the barrier of adjusting socially in Groningen? How have you done this?
- If not succeeded: Do you mind this? How much? Would you like to change that? How?

Other prompts that can be used are the subscales of social adjustment and the aspects in every subscale:

General

In general, do you think you are socially adjusted to your education in Groningen?

Prompts:

- How well do you think you fit in with the college environment? Why?
- How much are you involved in college activities? How and Why?
- How well are you adjusting to your current education? How?
- How have you developed close ties in the academic community? How?
- How good do you consider your social skills to be? Can you explain this?
- To what extent are you satisfied with your social participation?
- Are you satisfied with your social life? Why?

Other People

Do you meet a lot of new people in Groningen that become friends?

Prompts:

- To what extent are you meeting new people and making friends?
- To what extent do you have informal contact with your professors?
- How well do you get along with your roommates?
- Do you experience difficulties with feeling at ease with others at the university? Why?
- To what extent do you feel like you mix well with the other sex? Why?
- Do you feel different from others in undesirable ways? Why?

Nostalgia

Do you miss India a lot?

Prompts:

- To what extent are you lonesome for home? Why?
- Do you ever feel lonely? Why? What/who could make you feel better?
- Would you rather be at home or studying in Groningen? Why?

Social Environment

Prompts:

- How happy are you with the decision to study at the University of Groningen?
- How much do you like/would you like living in a dormitory?
- How satisfied are you with your extracurricular activities?

Personal and Emotional Adjustment

What level of psychological and physical distress is experienced while adapting to the local academic way-of-life.

There will be given a short explanation of every subscale in personal-emotional adjustment and this question will be asked:

11. Do you think that you have encountered barriers that could be qualified as a barrier in personal-emotional adjustment? Which ones?

Prompts:

- To what extent do you think you have overcome the barrier of adjusting personally and emotionally to studying in Groningen? How have you done this?
- If not succeeded: do you mind? How much? Would you like to change this? How?

Other prompts that can be used are the subscales of social adjustment and the aspects in every subscale:

Psychological

Prompts

- Do you ever feel tense or nervous? Explain why?
- Do you ever feel blue and moody? Explain why?
- How have you experienced being independent? Why?
- Have you had any problems with controlling your emotions lately? Why?
- Have you ever thought about seeking psychological help recently? Why?
- Have you experienced getting angry quickly lately? Why?
- Have you experienced that sometimes thinking gets muddled too easily? How much? In what circumstances?
- Do you ever worry about college expenses? Why?
- Do you ever have trouble coping with college stress? Why?

Physical

Prompts:

- Do you feel tired a lot lately? Why do you think that is?
- Have you experienced a change in appetite? Why do you think that is?
- Do you experience a lot of headaches? Do you know the reason?
- Have you gained or lost a lot of weight lately? Do you know the reason?
- Have you experienced trouble with sleeping? Why (not)?
- Do you feel like you are in good health? Why (not)?

Attachment

Reflects the degree of commitment to the educational-institutional goals.

There will be given a short explanation of every subscale in attachment and this question will be asked:

12. Do you think that you have encountered barriers that could be qualified as a barrier for social adjustment? Which ones?

Prompts:

- To what extent do you think you have grown attached to studying at a university? And how attached are you to the university of Groningen? Why?
- Do you think that more attachment would lead to better integration in the academic community in Groningen? Why? Have you managed to accomplish this? How? If not: do you mind? How much? Would you like to change that? How?

Other prompts that can be used are the subscales of social adjustment and the aspects in every subscale:

General

How attached do you feel to higher education in general?

Prompts:

- How happy are you with the choice to go to university? Why?

- Have you thought about dropping out lately? How much? Why?
- Have you thought of taking off of college lately? How much and why?
- Do you still have the same educational goals?
- Educational expectations
- Career expectations. Do you think there are good job opportunities for you if you finish your education?

This College

And how attached do you feel to the University of Groningen?

Prompts

- Are you happy with attending the University of Groningen?
- Or would you rather be at another University? Why?
- Do you expect to finish your (bachelor) degree here in Groningen?
- Or are you thinking about transferring to another university? Why?

Definition of academic integration

The extent to which students adapt to the academic way-of-life (Tinto 1975, in Rienties et al., 2011).

Good academic integration can be reached by ticking the boxes of four sub categories of academic integration, which are academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal and emotional adjustment, and attachment (Baker and Siryk, 1984).