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# Introducing British Culture

Sue O'Hara, International Student Experience





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# Welcome to Exeter

What is culture shock?

Some possible differences between your home country and the UK

What you can do to help yourself through culture shock and to settle into life in Exeter

Questions and Answers (Q&As) at the end – you can submit your questions at any time during the presentation



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# Meet the International Student Experience Team

Sue O'Hara

Sophie Meadows

Emily Crocker (Penryn)

Over 20 years experience welcoming  
and working with international  
students at Exeter.



# Supporting you at Exeter

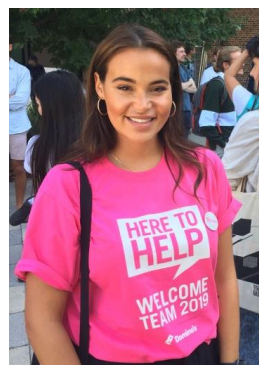
At the  
beginning of  
your studies



Welcome to  
Exeter booklet



Student clearance  
and immigration



International  
Welcome  
Programme



Global Chums  
Mentoring



International Welcome  
Programme

Settling in,  
making friends  
and  
connections



Monthly email: Your  
International News



International  
Student  
Ambassadors



Intercultural Cafe



Cultural events on  
campus



Intercultural Cafe



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# What is culture shock?

- The emotional and psychological impact of moving to a new and unfamiliar environment.
- Adapting to new customs, spoken and unspoken rules, and daily routines.
- Feeling homesick and missing familiar faces, foods, and places.

Arrival: honeymoon stage



Acceptance and integration



Initial integration



Culture shock!



Mental Isolation



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## Build connections

- Attend welcome events
- Join a university society
- Come to Intercultural Café
- Use the chaplaincy



### Coping with culture shock

## Stay in touch with home

- Call friends and family
- Makes foods from home
- Share your culture!

## Take good care of yourself

- Eat well, exercise, get enough sleep
- Do things that bring you joy!
- Get outdoors! 🌂 ☀️ 🏖️ 🌊
- Seek support from the Wellbeing Service

## Embrace Difference!

- Join local events
- Explore Devon
- Try new things
- Keep an open mind!



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# Navigating difference:

what to expect from life in Devon and the UK



**Weather**



**Food**



**Queuing!**



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# Getting to know the Brits: 4 Nations in 1

## Scotland

Highlands, Edinburgh,  
Glasgow  
Very cold in the winter,  
midges in summer

## Wales

Lots of countryside and coast  
Cultural heritage and castles

## Northern Ireland

Troubled relationship with UK  
Folklore, historic sites

## England

London + regional centres  
Royal family and everything  
else!



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# Devon in particular

## Top 10 facts!

- Home to the Jurassic Coast, UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Exeter has the narrowest street, Parliament Street, just 64cm wide!
- Sir Walter Raleigh and Agatha Christie born in Devon
- Diverse wildlife on Dartmoor and Exmoor
- Devon famous for cream teas and Devon pasty
- Dartmoor is the only place in UK you can wild camp
- Eddystone Lighthouse was the first offshore rock lighthouse, 1698
- Exeter Cathedral dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century
- Plymouth was the departure point for the Mayflower to the New World in 1620
- Biggest Naval Base in Western Europe



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# Communication

- Typically indirect:  
'Would you mind ...'; 'Maybe'
- Avoid confrontation, understate problems, needs, or even positives:  
Not bad!= very good  
I'm not sure that's a good idea = terrible idea
- We are not trying to be evasive or confuse you, it's just part of our version of 'politeness'!

WHAT THE BRITISH SAY	WHAT THE BRITISH MEAN	WHAT OTHERS UNDERSTAND
■ I hear what you say	■ I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	■ He accepts my point of view
■ With the greatest respect	■ You are an idiot	■ He is listening to me
■ That's not bad	■ That's good	■ That's poor
■ That is a very brave proposal	■ You are insane	■ He thinks I have courage
■ Quite good	■ A bit disappointing	■ Quite good
■ I would suggest	■ Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	■ Think about the idea, but do what you like
■ Oh, incidentally/by the way	■ The primary purpose of our discussion is	■ That is not very important
■ I was a bit disappointed that	■ I am annoyed that	■ It doesn't really matter
■ Very interesting	■ That is clearly nonsense	■ They are impressed
■ I'll bear it in mind	■ I've forgotten it already	■ They will probably do it
■ I'm sure it's my fault	■ It's your fault	■ Why do they think it was their fault?
■ You must come for dinner	■ It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	■ I will get an invitation soon
■ I almost agree	■ I don't agree at all	■ He's not far from agreement
■ I only have a few minor comments	■ Please rewrite completely	■ He has found a few typos

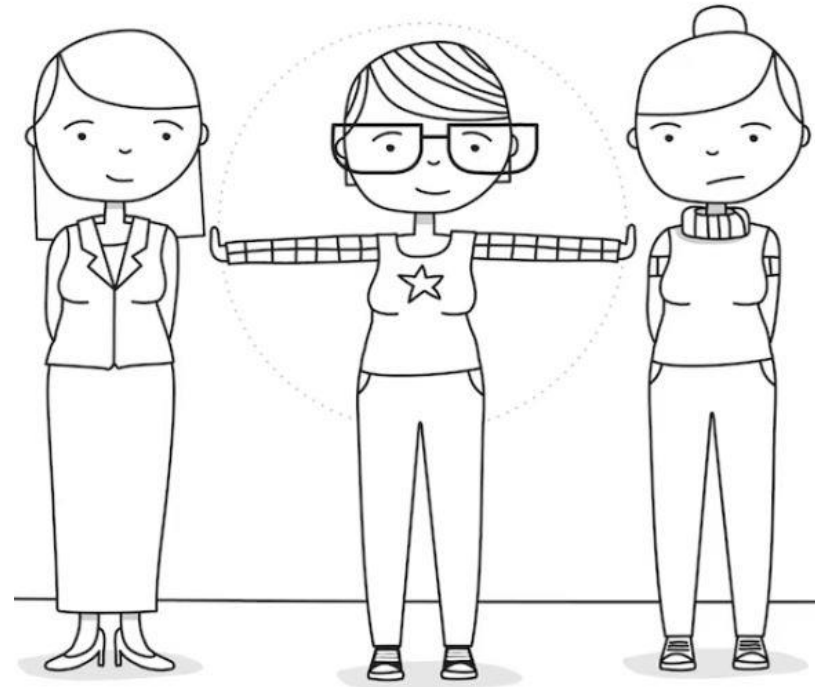
**If you are not clear what someone means, just ask for clarification**



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# Communication

- Please, thank you, sorry
- Language can include a lot of swearing. Swear words may indicate really good or really bad situation. Most are used except...
- Personal space: arms length
- Greetings: 'alright?/'how are you?' and people keep walking! Answer: 'Yeh, OK, you?' If they stop and ask, you have more time!
- It's OK to say if things aren't great.



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# British Manners

'Sorry', 'please', and 'thank you' are used very often

If someone is right behind you, hold the door open for them



Stop a bus by waving your arm as it approaches

TOP TIPS!

Arrive at the time stated or agreed



You can call university staff by their first names!

Queueing is important!



'Jumping the queue' is considered rude



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# Support and Report

- Devon is friendly and welcoming, but less diverse than major UK cities.
- Some local people will not have met any people from around the world before.
- The University of Exeter is a diverse and inclusive community, and harassment goes against all we stand for and will not be tolerated.
- We hope you will not experience any negativity around being international, but in the case that you do, there are University resources to support you:
- [Support and Report](#)
- If you need the police, call 999 for immediate help, or use 101 or visit Exeter Police Station between 10am-3pm for non-urgent matters.



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# Food and drink

- British people typically eat 3 meals a day
- Meals are typically prepared at home; restaurants are occasional (little street food).
- Most food is bought from a supermarket – locally we have all major and larger supermarkets on outskirts of city.
- We can recommend international food stores to help you find foods you may miss from home



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# Eating alfresco

- Is good, especially fish and chips at the beach or a pasty on a walk but..... don't wave your food around and don't leave it unattended

**SEAGULLS ARE EVIL!**



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# Social Life

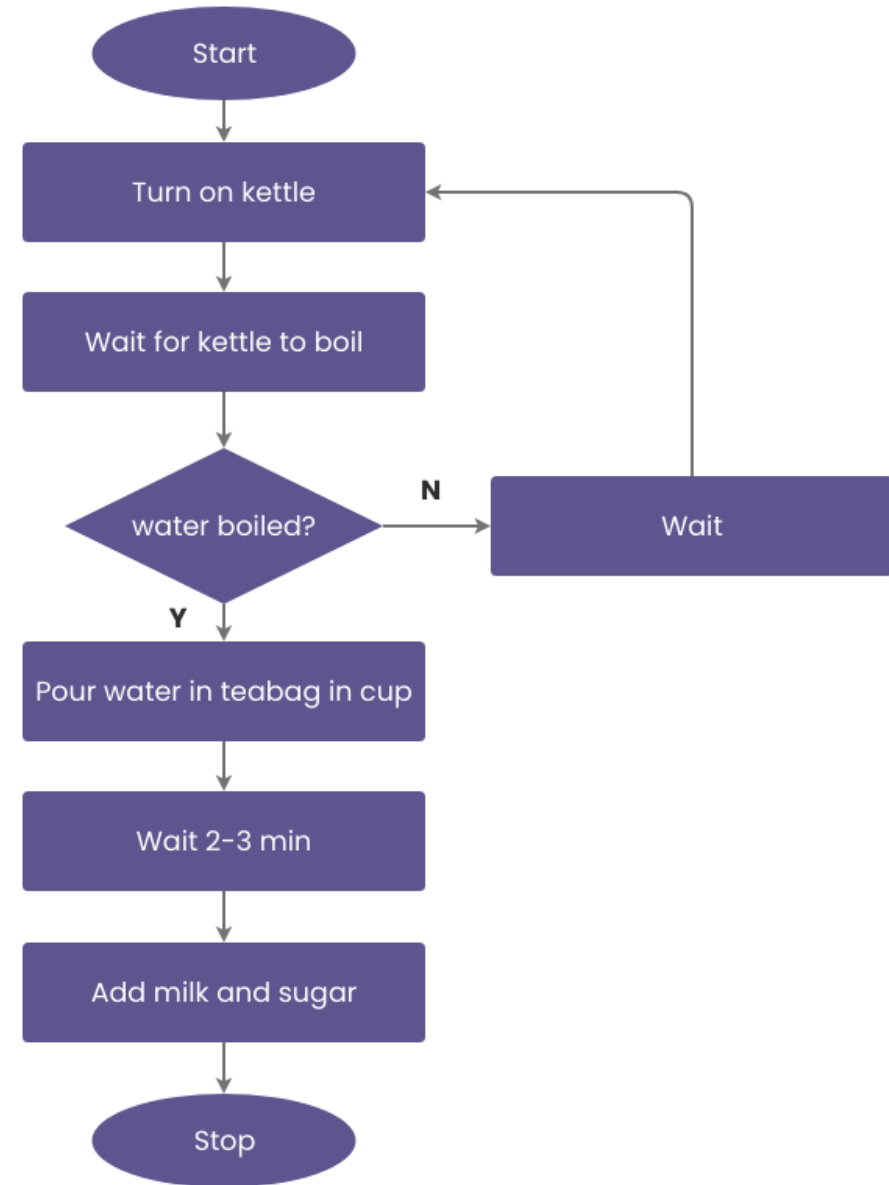
- Offering 'a cuppa' is a sign of hospitality and welcome – 'a cuppa' usually means a tea or coffee, it can also mean a social catch up.
- Pubs are social spaces which serve alcohol but also soft drinks, food, and increasingly teas and coffees.
- UK does have an alcohol drinking culture but there are plenty of alternatives and plenty of people who choose not to drink alcohol.
- The Student Guild has many welcoming societies.



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# Tea translator

- NEVER microwave a cup of tea!!!!
- 'Cup of tea?' = welcoming a guest
- 'Tea?' = I find this situation awkward
- 'Spot of tea?' = an honoured guest has activated Hyper-English, Mary Poppins mode!
- 'Pot of tea?' = trying to impress
- 'I'll make some tea.' = there has been complete devastation



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# Popular Culture

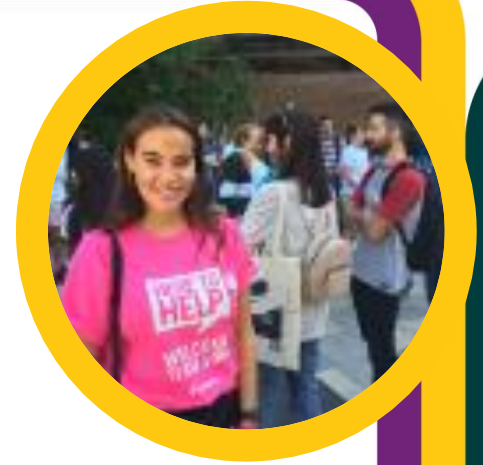
Great TV (don't forget your TV license!)

- Great British Bake Off
- Strictly Come Dancing
- Love Island
- Gogglebox
- News
- The Crown!





# Any questions for the team?



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