

CULTURE SHOCK

The feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes. (Oxford Languages)

iWISE 7 February 2025
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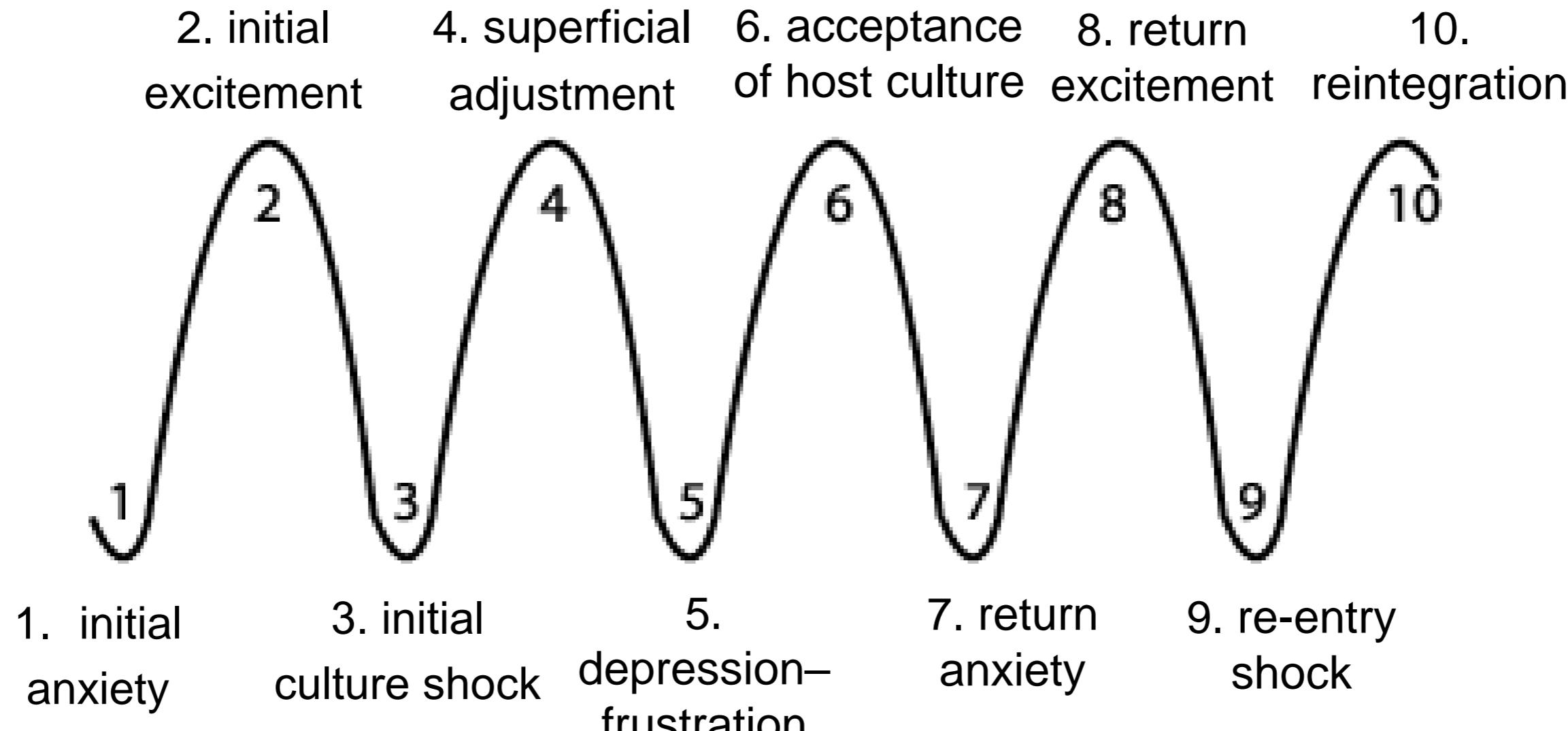
ADJUSTMENTS AND CULTURE SHOCK

"Just as you can't really describe the taste of a hot fudge sundae to someone who has never experienced one, it is difficult to actually convey just how disorienting entering another culture can be to a student without any cross-cultural experience."

(Bruce La Brack)



RHINESMITH'S TEN STAGES OF ADJUSTMENT



= rollercoaster!

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE SHOCK: THREE KEY AREAS

1. Personal shock
2. Social shock
3. Academic shock

PERSONAL SHOCK

- sadness
- loneliness
- homesickness
- frustration
- anxiety

SOCIAL SHOCK

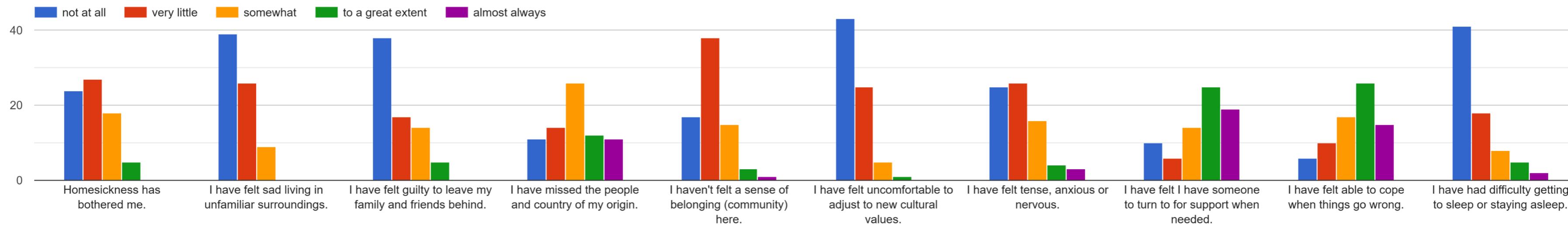
- feeling left out
- feeling misunderstood
- developing negative views of local people
- searching for company among people of your own region
- homesickness

ACADEMIC SHOCK

- Not used to the types of lectures
- Not understanding the lecturer
- Underestimating the amount of work
- Misunderstanding assignments, exams

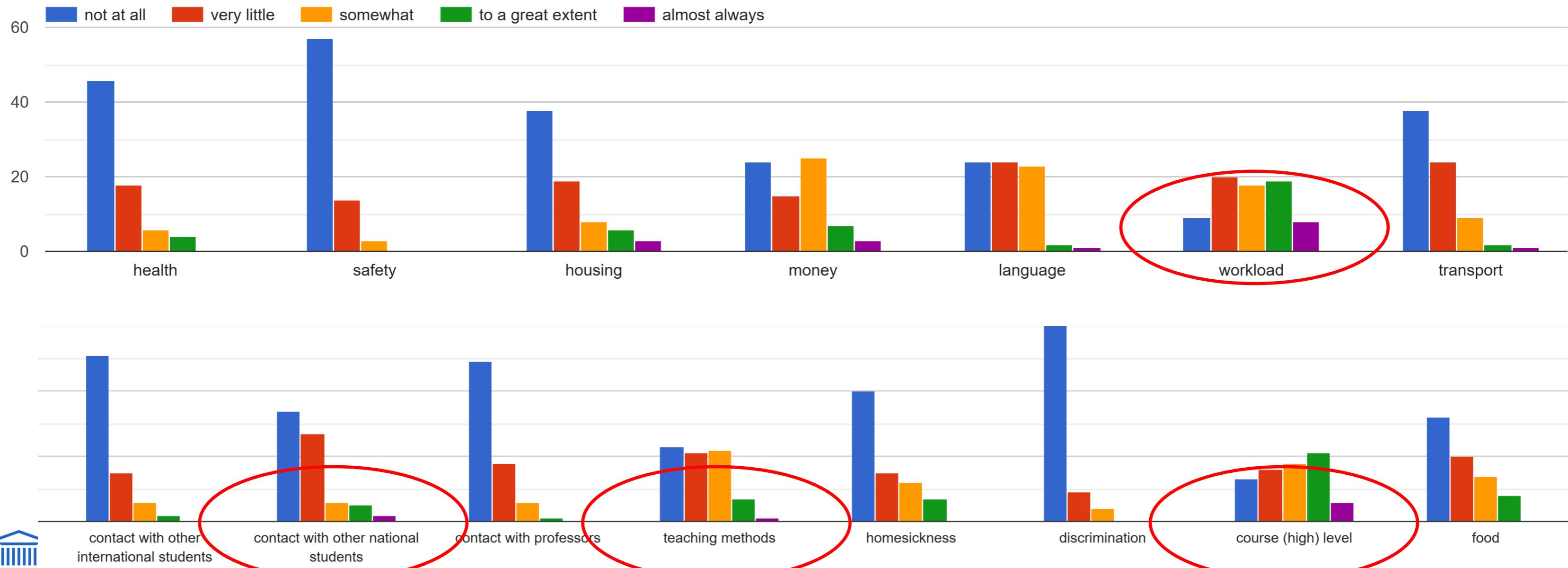
YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Rate the feelings you've experienced so far.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

What has caused you the most stress recently? Please rate your level of stress.



TIPS

- patience
- remember your personal goals
- see the adventure in it
- use your sense of humor
- deal with stress as it arises: games & sports
- ask for help if you need it
- ask if you don't understand habits
- be self-aware of your own habits

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

1. at Ghent University
2. in society:
 - social behaviour
 - interpersonal relations
 - daily life

AT GHENT UNIVERSITY

- **Monday 10-02-2025 through Saturday 05-04-2025:** 8 weeks of teaching activities 2nd term (including feedback first term exam period through Saturday 22/02/2025)
- **Easter recess: Monday 07-04-2025 through Monday 21-04-2025** (2 weeks + Easter Monday)
- **Tuesday 22-04-2025 through Saturday 17-05-2025:** 4 weeks of teaching activities 2nd term
- **Monday 19-05-2025 through Wednesday 21-05-2025:** catch-up activities
- **Thursday 22-05-2025 and Friday 23-05-2025:** no teaching activities or catch-up activities
- **Saturday 24-05-2025 through Saturday 05-07-2025:** 6 weeks second term examination period (including exam preparation, deliberations, proclamations through Thursday 03/07/2025 and feedback second term examination period)



AT GHENT UNIVERSITY

- Be on time!!
- Active participation!
- Ask questions!



SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: WHAT DO BELGIANS NOT APPRECIATE?

- showing off or bragging
- looking away when talking to someone, snapping your fingers, putting hands in pockets, yawning, scratching, back slapping, putting feet on tables or chairs
- giving too many compliments
- showing up without warning
- to insist on something after you've been told it is not possible



SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: WHAT DO BELGIANS APPRECIATE?



- simplicity and modesty
- eye contact (but don't stare either)
- calling and making an appointment before showing up
- being (right) on time
- small presents when visiting for dinner (e.g. wine)
- helping out (a little bit) when being a guest

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HABITS

- sneezing → “Gezondheid” = “Bless you”
- burping → unpolite → ‘sorry’
- coughing → into your elbow
- blowing your nose → no problem, handkerchief
- spitting → unacceptable
- smoking → forbidden indoor, clearly marked with signs

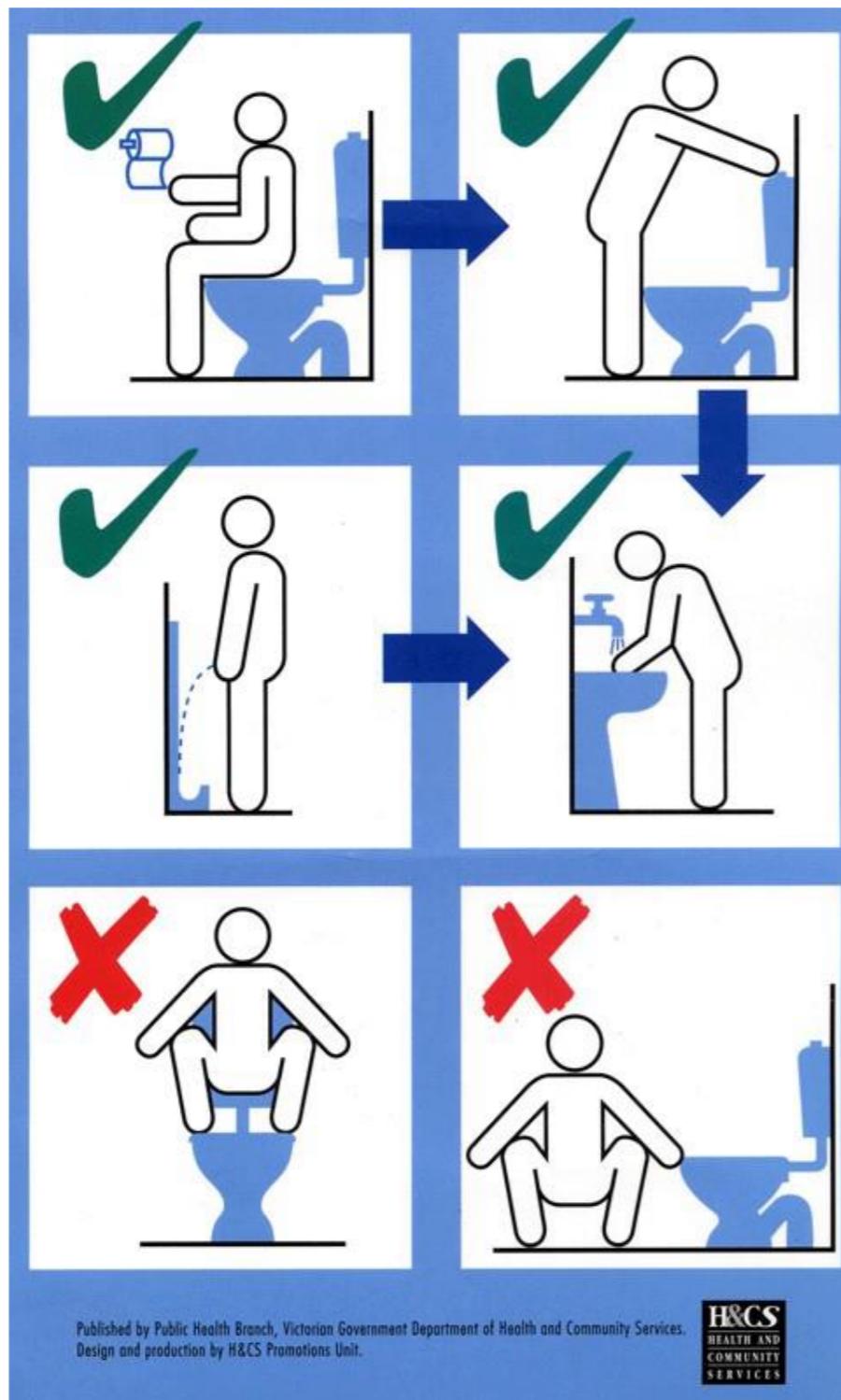


SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HABITS

- daily personal hygiene:
 - showering/bathing
 - washing hair
 - fresh shirt/underwear
 - deodorant
 - brushing teeth



SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HABITS



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: EQUALITY M-F-X

- women = men = X (professionally, rights, thoughts...)
- liberal/flimsy dress code is allowed
- unappropriate behaviour → no go



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: LGBTTQQIAA

- love is love
- equal rights (marriage, adoption, protected by law...)



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

- hate crimes (e.g. verbal or physical violence) against people (based on sexism, discrimination, homophobia, racism,...) are severely punished
- if you are a victim of discrimination or a hate crime:
 - go to the police

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

- plenty of nationalities (\pm 150 in Ghent)
- mixture of cultures
- enriching our culture & science



DAILY LIFE: GREETINGS

- first time: shake hands → nice to meet you
- more familiar → one kiss on the right cheek or three kisses, especially for women, family, to congratulate
- men: usually a handshake
- Wallonia: men kiss their male friends



DAILY LIFE: FOOD

- Breakfast (6AM – 8AM): bread, cereals, coffee/tea, juice, sometimes pastries
- Lunch (12PM – 2PM): hot meal, sandwich, salad, soup ...
- Dinner (between 6PM and 8PM): sandwich, bread, or hot meal

DAILY LIFE: FOOD



DAILY LIFE: FOOD



DAILY LIFE: SHOPS

- clothing, gifts, furniture, books ...:
open from 10AM until 6PM: closed on Sunday and
Public Holidays
- food:
open from 8AM until 7PM/8PM/9PM, some of them are open on
Sunday morning

DAILY LIFE: WEATHER

- Very changeable



DAILY LIFE: CLOTHING

- formality depends on the occasion
- formal clothing during exams is not mandatory but sometimes appreciated
- wear what you feel comfortable in!

DAILY LIFE: WINTER CLOTHING

- waterproof jacket
- rain pants (when biking)
- gloves (!) (when biking)
- sturdy shoes



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: DAILY LIFE: SPORTS

- UGent Sports Centre
- HOGent Sports Centre
- various fitnesses (Jims, Basic Fit, Stadium Coupure)
- climbing and bouldering
- various dance studios
- water sports
- running tracks



DAILY LIFE: PUBLIC SPACE

- No noise in the streets between 10PM and 7AM
- Drink responsibly
- Public parks
- Blaarmeersen, Bourgoyen



IWISE - Introduction WEEK for International Students in Engineering

Culture shock

Fien Porrez, International Relations Officer