

# ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

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- UNUSUAL
- CONFUSING
- FRUSTRATING

**THIS IS COMPLETELY NORMAL!**

It's as much about  
learning about yourself  
as it is about learning  
about others.

Culture shock

Academic culture shock

Revers culture shock



- 1) Who has already noticed something surprising, unusual or unexpected in Ghent or Belgium?
- 2) Who has already felt a bit of a culture shock in daily life?
- 3) Who thinks the academic culture at Ghent University will be different from their home university?

OUR CULTURE IS  
LIKE THE WATER  
WE SWIM IN

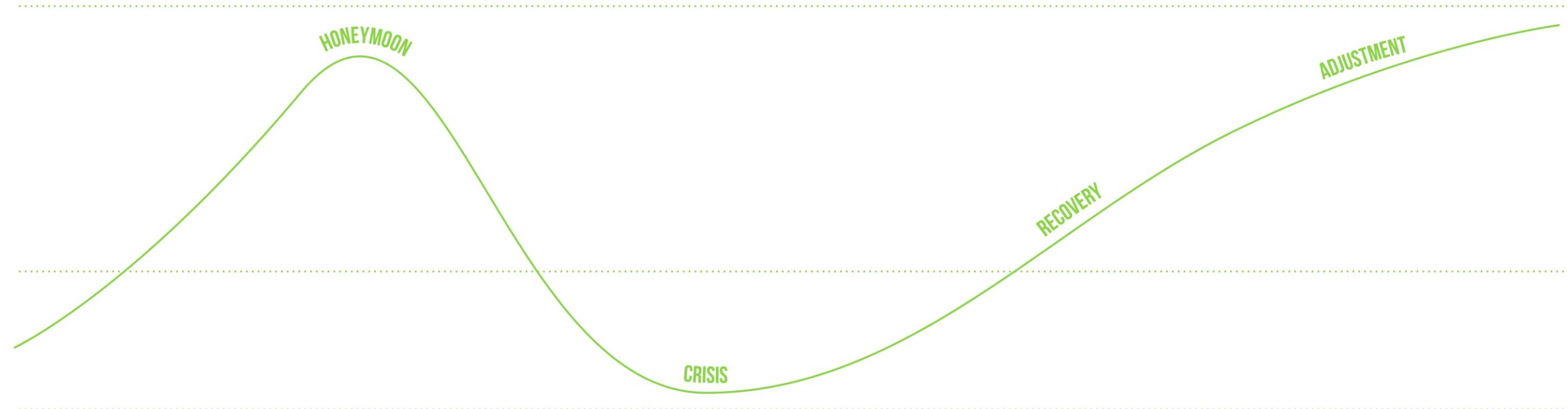


# CULTURE SHOCK

= refers to the stress and disorientation you experience when entering a new culture



# CULTURE SHOCK



## TIPS for the crisis phase:

- ✓ Try to avoid constantly comparing to your home country
- ✓ Try not to contact friends and family back home too often (homesickness)
- ✓ Avoid judging too quickly during this phase
- ✓ Be aware that during this phase you may discriminate, judge or hold prejudices
- ✓ Don't isolate yourself too much in this phase

# What helps with the culture shock?

- ✓ Building a social network
- ✓ Communicating with the locals
- ✓ Adjusting your expectations
- ✓ Accepting differences
- ✓ Reflecting on your own culture
- ✓ Acknowledging that culture shock is normal

# Positive aspects to learning how to cope with the culture shock

- Improved well-being
- Higher self-esteem
- Emotional richness
- More effective social behaviour and social competences
- Flexibility in thinking

# ACADEMIC CULTURE SHOCK

= academic cultures can differ between countries and even between institutions within countries due to variations in:

- Teaching methods
- Student-professor relationships
- Research expectations
- Approaches to assessment
- .....



Ji-woo, an international student from South Korea, arrives at Sweden for her engineering degree. In South Korea, her education was strongly focused on memorizing study material, taking exams, and maintaining a respectful distance from professors. She excelled by following clear rules and expectations.

She is shocked by the Swedish academic culture, where active participation and discussion are encouraged and students often voice opinions or challenge ideas directly even with professors. Collaboration with professors and fellow students is central. She is expected to ask questions and share her opinions, which she experiences as uncomfortable and disrespectful. Grading also includes a significant emphasis on class participation and collaborative projects. She was not prepared for this and feels isolated. Her discomfort with speaking up affects her confidence and grades and she also struggles with the lack of clarity in the instructions compared to the structure she was used to.

### **Discussion questions:**

- 1. What were Ji-woo's initial academic challenges and why did she struggle with them?**
- 2. How could Ji-woo improve her experience and adapt to the Swedish academic culture?**
- 3. Have you ever experienced similar academic culture shock? How did or would you handle it?**

# REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK

This reverse culture shock often comes unexpectedly.

What can help?

- ✓ Truly expressing your needs to your family and friends
- ✓ Engaging with other students who understand your situation
- ✓ Participating in activities with international degrees students at your home university
- ✓ Looking for a buddy system



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