

## **ADAPTATION CHALLENGES WITHIN UK HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: INSIGHTS INTO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSE STUDENT BACKGROUNDS**

SL108, 10:30 – 10:55

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### Presentation

In today's globalized world, the movement of students across borders for higher education has become increasingly common, enriching the cultural diversity and economic vitality of host institutions (Morrison, 2024; Lisa et al., 2024). However, the UK's diverse international student body—comprising individuals from countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Malaysia, and ethnic groups like South Asian, East Asian, and Middle Eastern—faces significant challenges related to cultural adjustment and social integration (Alma et al., 2024; UKCISA, 2023). These challenges include language barriers, differing academic expectations, and difficulties in forming social connections, which can hinder students' overall success (Azilah et al., 2018; Khawaja & Howard, 2021). Acculturation theory, first proposed by Berry (2005), offers a valuable framework for understanding the adaptation challenges faced by international students. However, existing research highlights gaps in our understanding of these challenges. Most studies focus primarily on initial culture shock and early adaptation, neglecting the long-term evolution of students' acculturation (Abdulrahman, 2015; Chiamaka, 2022). This study aims to explore the challenges faced by international students in UK higher education through the lens of acculturation theory. Specifically, it will investigate how this theory explains the adaptation processes of students from diverse backgrounds, analysing challenges related to cultural adjustment, social integration, and academic performance. Moreover, the proposed study is crucial for advancing theoretical understanding, informing practice, and shaping policy in international higher education. By applying acculturation theory, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the adaptation processes and challenges faced by international students in the UK.