

Session: Difficult situations

Aim of session: The aim is to read two stories involving international students and based on the experience recall stories from participants' institution, then to describe some situations which could be defined as similar.

Material needed: Description of difficult situations involving students and university staff (example below for use)

Time of session: 1,5 hours (reading and writing task to be uploaded in a platform or verified in any other way)

Description of session:

Staff at universities can often be faced with ad hoc situations that they are not prepared for. Being responsible for international students in an institution, they assist them during the process of admission for studies, preparing appropriate documents, finalizing their stay and other. Nevertheless, it is common that they face situations that require non-standard student service, which involves the above-mentioned staff or the institution in general.

Involvement in any difficult situations with international students force administrative staff of universities to be more attentive to their needs and sense of security. The task is supposed to make the participants aware that being sensible to students' needs helps to improve their experience abroad.

Task 1

The participants are asked to read two stories based on real life difficult situations faced by the staff of one of the universities. Next, the learners are asked to think of the solutions to the problems and upload these on the platform.

Task 2

Based on their own experience, the participants prepare a written description of 2 or 3 difficult situations they were involved in or which took place at their institution. The answers are evaluated, and the task is continued during a physical training or while having an online discussion group (to be decided by the teacher); as well as compared – if such situations are common and if the solutions/reactions of other participants would be similar.

Text for learners

Being responsible for international students at your institution, you assist them during the process of admission for studies, preparing appropriate documents, finalizing their stay and other. Nevertheless, it is common that you face the situations different from standard students' service, which involve you or your institution. First, please read two stories of university staff involved in difficult situations concerning international students and then please describe 2-3 situations (15-20 sentences each) that could be presented in a similar way. If possible, please give solutions for the situations you present. The descriptions will be used during physical training for discussion and workshop.

After uploading the answers to the platform, they are to be read and divided into groups with comparable issues by the person leading the training. The materials will be used for a discussion during the physical training, helping to find some conclusions and guidelines for improving the work of staff involved in the life of international students.

The result of the activity are several stories and issues to be discussed. It will give the proof of having similar problems at each university and open a debate about how administrative staff can help the students to have a better experience and how to solve problems while living in a different country and functioning in a different culture.

Other notes: The activity should have a continuation at a physical training or during a discussion group.

The task is thought to be an introduction to the discussion about students' problems while studying abroad. It is supposed to encourage participants to focus on students' needs and to search for solutions if any help is necessary. The assignment will be discussed during the physical training and is supposed to prepare the participants for a discussion about students' needs and how much should the administrative workers engage themselves into students' experience. The discussion should lead to some general conclusions about host university's responsibility and its range.

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS EXAMPLES:

1. Case – Rejected Applicant

Description: An international student taking part in an exchange program within bilateral agreement with no scholarship applied for one more semester but within KA107 Erasmus+ exchange program for countries outside the EU. Taking into consideration all applications received, the mentioned student was rejected. Having received the decision, the student visited IRO's office to claim about rejection adding, that the person who won the scholarship does not deserve it. During the visit the student behaved rude and insolent towards the administrative officer and what's more – the student provided comments on issues and documentation of other applicants, which were known to the coordinators only.

Reaction: Student was informed in a decided manner that presented behavior is not acceptable and that the decision of the commission will not be changed.

Solution: Student was not accepted for the program. IRO has contacted the partner institution and informed about the situation, expressing a request not to share any correspondence or documents with persons not involved in the administration of the program.

2. Case – No program available

Description: An applicant from Latin America has finalized the documentation for MA studies and has received a letter of acceptance. During the trip to Poland the student received an information from IRO that unfortunately the program student chose would not open.

Reaction: Other programs were suggested to the student but did not suit the interest of the applicant.
IRO helped the student to join a different university.

Solution: Student started the studies at the University of Wroclaw in Poland.