

Supporting international students to make the most of their studies

Young people from all over the world are beginning their postgraduate degrees at the University of Southampton School of Management. For many, it is the first time they have travelled abroad. But, while everything is new and exciting, studying overseas also brings challenges.

Oscar De Mello and Lulu Xiao are there to help. They graduated with master's level degrees last year and know what it's like to embark on advanced studies at a new university.

"Our job is to help almost 700 new postgraduates, mostly from overseas, settle into Southampton and make the most of their studies," explains Oscar. "We can also support them to make new friends, improve their English and enjoy life in the UK."

Lulu arrived in Southampton from China for the first time in autumn 2009 to start her degree in International Banking and Financial Studies. It was a real culture shock. "Generally, Chinese students work very hard, we know our parents want us to do well and get a good degree. But sometimes we miss out on meeting people, socialising and learning more about our new country," she says. "From my own experience, I know it can be difficult for international students at the beginning so I'm pleased to be able to help."

Oscar and Lulu started making contact with the students through social media, then organised meetings to get to know them better. They are also available in person or via email.

"We are here to help students cope with all the everyday problems, big and small, that students encounter during their time at Southampton. As we were students ourselves just a short time ago, we know what it's like, so we can signpost people to individuals who can help further," says Oscar. They are now organising a day trip to Hampton Court after polling postgraduates on their preferences.

School of Management Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator Jean Leah is delighted "This is a pilot scheme, part of the University's student transition project to support MSc and MBA students and it's going very well. We have postgraduates from more than 30 countries in the world and we want all of them to have the best-possible experience of education at Southampton."