

Personalised Support Strategies for Welcoming African International Students at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences

By: Vida Asabea Ohene (r0889859)

Bachelor In Business Management
International Business and Trade

Thomas More Supervisor: Eduardo da Silva Oliveira
Company Supervisor: Martine Michiels
Campus: Thomas More Mechelen

PREFACE

Let us be honest, when I first opened a blank document titled “Bachelor Project,” my heart dropped just a little. How was I supposed to take a single research idea and turn it into 30+ pages of knowledge, insight and structure?

However, here we are. What started as a final-year assignment has turned into something that matters deeply to me. This is more than a paper. It is a piece of my story, stitched together with experience, empathy and the belief that every student deserves to feel like they belong from day one.

Of course, this journey was not a solo mission.

First and foremost, I would want to express my sincere gratitude to Eduardo da Silva Oliveira, who served as both my supervisor and the most outstanding academic mentor someone could wish for. I appreciate your candid criticism, your belief in my concepts, and your refusal to let the creative flame die behind the layers of in-text citations and formatting.

To Martine Michiels, we appreciate you being a shining star at the International Support Team. I would also want to express my thanks to the whole International Support Team. Your support, wisdom, and soothing certainty provided me the strength to continue developing this idea.

To my parents and sister, thank you for always believing in me on days when I did not believe in myself. And to Richmond- Derek Lochutu, thank you for being my anchor, my cheerleader, and occasionally my human deadline reminder. You have all made this journey a little lighter, a lot brighter, and filled with love.

If this preface tells you anything, let it be this: serious research can be joyful. Reflection can be empowering. Moreover, with the right people behind you, big ideas can become real solutions.

So, let us dive in.

ABSTRACT

This Bachelor Project targets the unique problems that African international students deal with at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences and suggests suiting solutions for every aspect of their integration. Using a mixed-methods approach which involves combining literature review, institutional benchmarking, and survey results from African students, lecturers, and administrative staff, the study identifies critical gaps in current support services. It afterwards suggests AfricaConnect@ThomasMore, running for a full semester to ensure culturally relevant and continuous support from the time students are accepted until the end of the semester.

Based on information from top Belgian universities, the proposal combines buddy systems, digital orientation, time management resources and provides social activities. It recommends ways that help all students and strive for the university's continued good reputation. Following the framework, Thomas More can address the needs of African students as they change and develop its reputation for inclusivity in international education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

I am Vida Ohene, a third-year student at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences studying international business and trade. As part of my final semester, I completed an internship with the International Support Team (IST) at Thomas More. Over the last three years, I have developed a strong foundation in international business principles, covering topics such as marketing, finance, logistics, and cross-cultural management. This internship provided me with a valuable opportunity to apply my academic knowledge to practical problems, particularly in assisting and enhancing the experiences of international students.

Thomas More University of Applied Sciences is a reputable school that accepts students from all around the world. By providing support with academic integration, cultural integration, and administrative processes, the International Support Team serves as the first point of contact for international degree students. This support is essential in helping these students successfully navigate the challenges of studying in Belgium. However, despite these initiatives, the office still struggles to meet the unique requirements of its expanding number of international students. Although the current support systems are ideal for European students, they sometimes lack the uniqueness required to meet the needs of students in other continents, particularly Africa. This support system gap may hinder the capacity of international students to adjust, achieve academic success, and ultimately integrate into the Thomas More community.

This topic is important to me because I have experience with the difficulties faced by students from other countries as they adjust to a new country and educational system. When I was fourteen, I relocated from Ghana to Belgium. I enrolled in the *OKAN program (Onthaalklas voor Anderstalige Nieuwkomers)*, a welcome class for immigrants who were unfamiliar with Dutch. Despite providing a foundation in language learning, this program made my transfer into the standard Belgian high school system more difficult because it lacked a customised support network. Adapting socially and intellectually was challenging for me without specialised assistance or tools to overcome cultural and academic gaps. This experience has deepened my understanding of the value of individualised support networks and motivated me to concentrate on this topic for my Bachelor's Project.

This bachelor's project focuses on creating tailored strategies to assist international students according to their continent of origin, with a specific focus on Africa. While this research aims to bridge the gap in existing support systems, it has challenges. Not all students openly discuss their concerns, which may make data collection difficult. Additionally, the research must be carefully scoped to ensure feasibility within the project timeline. Another potential challenge is accessing relevant data from IST within a limited timeframe. Obtaining pertinent data from the International Support Team in the short amount of time allotted for this project might be another difficulty.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, this research aims to offer workable and significant ideas that can improve the experiences of foreign African students at Thomas More University. This study will help create a more effective and inclusive framework for accepting international students from Africa by locating and filling in the holes in the current support system. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the integration challenges of African international students at Thomas More and to propose personalised support strategies.

The methodology combines primary and secondary data collection to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the problem. Initial problem exploration was guided by informal conversations and brainstorming sessions with the company supervisor at the International Support Team (IST), which helped identify key concerns experienced by African students. A comprehensive review of academic literature and benchmarking reports was then conducted to explore best practices and relevant theoretical frameworks in student support services. To ground the research in current realities, primary data was collected through a digital survey distributed to African students, lecturers, and IST staff, aimed at capturing lived experiences, perceptions of support, and areas needing improvement. These methods together provide both theoretical context and real-world insight, allowing for the development of actionable and evidence-based recommendations presented in the later chapters of this project.

2. PROBLEM DEFINITION

To maintain its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and academic excellence, Thomas More University of Applied Sciences must enhance its support systems to better address the unique needs of African international students who face challenges such as legal barriers, language difficulties, academic integration, and social integration. While current services effectively cater to European students, they fall short in providing tailored assistance for African students, potentially hindering their academic success, social assimilation, and overall satisfaction, factors that are crucial for strengthening the university's reputation as an inclusive and globally responsive institution. Therefore, the problem statement for this research is communicated as: Personalised support strategies for welcoming African international students at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences.

2.1 Actual Problem

The International Support Team of Thomas More University of Applied Sciences (IST) serves a broad and diverse population of international degree students. While the present support systems are excellent for European students, which is reasonable as Belgium is in Europe, they are not adequately adapted to address the unique requirements of students from other areas, specifically Africa. These students encounter legal obstacles such as financial verification and visa requirements, language barriers, curriculum adaptation, social integration challenges like fostering connections, organising welcoming events, student-to-student support, and varying academic standards.

This problem falls under the category of customer service, as it directly affects the experience and satisfaction of African international students who rely on the International Support Team for guidance and support. It is also a diversity and inclusion challenge, as African students require fair and tailored support to ensure their successful integration into Belgian academic and social life. From a broader perspective, this is a global education challenge, reflecting institutions' growing need to meet the unique needs of an increasingly diverse foreign student body. If these issues are not addressed, African international students may struggle to assimilate successfully into Thomas More's academic and social atmosphere. This might result in decreased student satisfaction and retention rates, as well as a negative impact on the university's reputation as an inclusive institution.

2.2 Desired Solution

The desired situation would be to establish a comprehensive and inclusive support structure adapted precisely to the unique requirements of international students from Africa. By prioritizing Africa, the International Support Team can significantly improve student integration, retention and satisfaction.

These strategies include a model that strives to provide region-specific administrative

assistance, such as help with financial documents, immigration processes, and other bureaucratic roadblocks. It should also include culturally appropriate orientation activities that assist students in adjusting intellectually and socially to life in Belgium. Furthermore, effective communication techniques should be established to convey relevant and accessible region-specific information.

The establishment of this project is consistent with the SMART goals framework (*Figure 1*):

- **Specific**: Develop support techniques that address the challenges faced by African students.
- **Measurable**: Deliver a clear framework with actionable recommendations, enabling the International Support Team to assess feasibility and relevance.
- **Achievable**: Gather necessary data from the International Support Team to provide viable solutions that can be executed within the project's timeframe.
- **Relevant**: Focus on Africa, integrating the study with the university's commitment to diversity and meeting the requirements of the third-largest foreign student population.
- **Time-bound**: By May 2025, I expect to complete the research, analysis, and framework creation, including actionable recommendations and feasibility assessments. From an optimal scenario perspective, I expect that by the beginning of the AY 2025-2026, a plan will be provided for piloting the most critical recommendations in collaboration with the International Support Team.



Figure 1: SMART Goals Framework

2.3 Research Objective

The primary goal of this Bachelor Project is to develop and propose personalised support strategies for international students from Africa, addressing their unique challenges in bureaucratic processes, cultural adaptation, and academic integration.

The primary research objective is to identify the unique needs of African students through data collection and analysis, which will include feedback from the International Support Team and the students themselves. Based on these findings, a set of practical recommendations will be proposed to the International Support Team of Thomas More University of Applied Sciences to assist African international students in achieving better integration, academic success, and increased overall satisfaction.

The goal is to develop a structured framework that enhances Thomas More's international student experience while reinforcing the university's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This will focus on three key areas: academic support (addressing language barriers, curriculum adaptation, and mentorship opportunities), social integration (fostering community connections, strengthening student-to-student support, and expanding welcoming events), and administrative assistance.

This project will equip IST with practical tools and strategies to enhance its services, ensuring that African students receive the individualised support they need to thrive academically and socially.

3. EXPLORATION

3.1 Theoretical exploration

3.1.1 Cultural Adaptation and Acculturation Theories

Berry's Model of Acculturation (1997)

John W. Berry's acculturation model provides a theoretical framework to analyse how people adapt to a new cultural environment. Berry found that the desire to preserve one's own culture and the desire to interact with the host culture are the two most important elements influencing the adaptation process. Based on these dimensions, he describes four distinct acculturation strategies:

- **Assimilation** is the process by which people relinquish their original cultural identity and ultimately adopt the host culture.
- **Separation** is when people minimise their interaction with the host culture and maintain their cultural heritage.
- **Integration** is when people actively engage with both cultures and form a bicultural identity.
- **Marginalisation**, which results in feelings of loneliness, where people struggle to relate to both cultures.

Integration is the fundamental approach or method for African students at Thomas More, allowing them to participate in Belgian social and academic life while retaining their cultural identity. However, due to differences in institutional frameworks, cultural norms, and instructional approaches, many students may initially feel alienated or excluded. If these concerns are not handled, students may feel excluded, which can harm both their overall well-being and academic performance. Students can successfully deal with acculturation barriers through culturally adapted programs and orientation activities that facilitate their academic adjustment and cultural integration.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980)

Geert Hofstede developed a cultural framework that identifies multiple traits, such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence versus restraint, and others, to interpret cultures. Each cultural factor shapes how people interact socially and learn while determining their communication methods. Belgian culture encourages individual expression, whereas the typical African way focuses on building community and solidarity values. Diverse learning attitudes between these cultures shape the way students interact with each other in school. An understanding of cultural differences allows Thomas More teachers to modify their teaching practices and develop welcoming learning spaces that welcome diverse ethnic backgrounds (*Figure 2*).

Rienties and Tempelaar's (2013) research examined how Hofstede's cultural aspects affect the social and intellectual integration experiences of international students in the Netherlands. The research demonstrated that students from cultural backgrounds characterised by substantial power distances, who dislike uncertainty, need additional time to adapt. Statistics allow Thomas More to develop specialized programs and academic workshops that will assist African students in overcoming cultural difficulties.

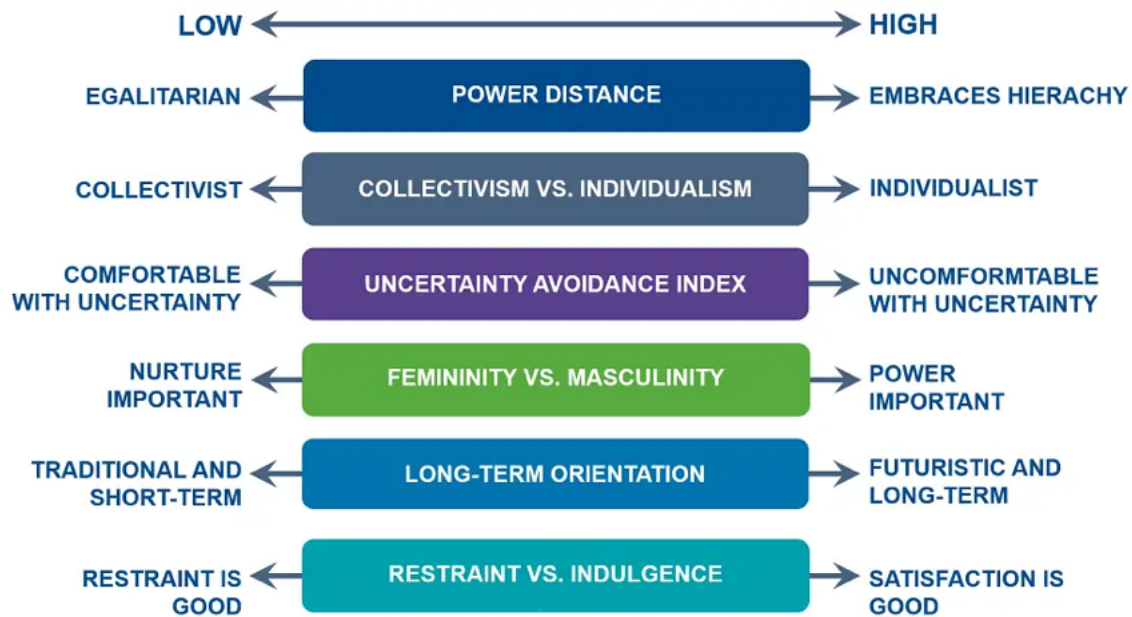


Figure 2: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

Integrating Foreign Students into University Settings in Flanders

Sercu (2022) explains that Internationalisation at Home (IaH) activities such as language exchanges and intercultural seminars serve as valuable tools for the enhancement of intercultural competencies among Belgian university students. Thomas More can enhance student integration by forcing African students to attend these multicultural events, which will assist both parties in building intercultural understanding and correcting false perceptions.

The combination of online and in-person education through blended learning methodology enhances flexibility for the learning process and language acquisition, according to Kuzmina et al. (2021). Thomas More could establish blended learning systems that provide flexible educational spaces to support African students when dealing with language differences and various learning patterns.

According to Kemper et al. (2020), new immigrant children face social isolation because Flemish schools tend to place them among local populations upon arrival. Thomas More must implement policies for fostering effective communication between students from the local

community and international students through collaborative assignments and regular school social events.

According to Vandebussche (2020), the mismatch between official language policies at Flemish higher education institutions and actual practice affects the learning experience of international students. Academic writing seminars combined with conversational language instruction at Thomas More would decrease the gap between its policies and practices by improving academic performance while promoting social integration for African students.

3.1.2 Student Retention and Integration Models

Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975, 1993)

The academic and social connectivity of students to their institution, according to Vincent Tinto, plays a primary role in their educational persistence. Social integration means how students belong to the university community through both friendship networks and a sense of community, while academic integration ensures intellectual growth meets university academic demands.

Widespread linguistic differences, cultural incompatibilities, and novel educational structures present significant barriers to African students when they seek academic and social integration at Thomas More. According to Rienties and Tempelaar (2013), international students from cultures that value high power distance and uncertainty avoidance experience more significant adjustment challenges, which affect their social integration and academic performance. Specialized support programs developed to address these specific cultural elements should be provided to African students to enhance their integration and retention rates at Thomas More University.

SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988)

The model evaluates service quality by measuring the gap between customer expectations and perceptions, using five core dimensions: Reliability – The ability to deliver promised services dependably and accurately; assurance – Staff's knowledge, courtesy, and ability to inspire trust and confidence; tangibles – The physical facilities, equipment, appearance of personnel, and quality of communication materials, empathy – Providing individualized attention and demonstrating genuine care for customers' needs and responsiveness – The willingness and ability to offer prompt assistance and resolve issues effectively. The methodology will help Thomas More's administrators detect unmet expectations of their student support initiatives among their foreign student population. This involves, for example, ensure timely, accurate, and consistent delivery of services such as visa processing, registration assistance, and academic advising.

In addition, it also implies training staff to understand cultural differences better and address the unique challenges African students face, fostering greater trust and confidence and offer personalized, culturally sensitive support that acknowledges the diverse needs of African students, including social and academic adaptation. Student dissatisfaction arises when delays or unclear administrative support fail to match their expectations of prompt and culturally adjusted help with university procedures. The university's service quality evaluation framework should be used regularly to create enhanced student offerings more suitable for African students and improve retention and satisfaction rates.

3.1.3 Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education

Equity Theory (Adams, 1963)

Equity theory states that people evaluate justice by measuring the relationship between their work inputs compared to the recognition and support they receive versus what others receive. People experience unhappiness alongside motivational decreases when they perceive that injustices occur. African students perceive unfair treatment at Thomas More when they feel the school fails to properly support their distinctive challenges, including immigration protocol navigation and adapting to foreign educational standards. The institution needs to resolve misinformed beliefs through appropriate support systems designed for African students while ensuring they feel their unique challenges receive due credit.

Inclusive Higher Education Models (Ryan & Slethaug, 2010)

Higher education models support programs that intend to establish courses and campus locations which demonstrate a range of student communities. A successful implementation requires instructors to adopt culturally sensitive educational approaches, integrate diverse perspectives across the learning content, and arrange opportunities for students to interact across cultures. Sercu (2022) demonstrates that 'Internationalisation at Home' programs effectively build university students' intercultural competencies in Belgian institutions. Such programs' formal and informal curricula incorporate international and intercultural elements to develop better comprehension and mutual respect between local and international students. The implementation of matching programs at Thomas More will develop an inclusive space which enhances African student integration throughout the university community.

3.2 Situational exploration

The Meso-Level Analysis (sub-section 3.2.1 - higher education and internationalization) and Micro-Level Analysis (sub-section 3.2.2 - Thomas More's International Support) align closely with the primary objectives of this Bachelor Project. As a result, the macro-level analysis (PESTEL) has seldom been explored in this project. However, I acknowledged that considering the broader factors influencing international education, a macro-level perspective can provide valuable insights into the external environment shaping the experiences of African international students.

At the macro level, several key factors impact the accessibility and success of international students in Belgian higher education. Political aspects include government policies on international education, visa regulations, and migration laws, all of which influence the ease of student mobility and integration. Economic factors such as tuition fees, cost of living, and financial aid opportunities determine the financial feasibility of studying abroad. On a social level, challenges related to cultural adaptation, language barriers, and institutional diversity policies significantly shape students' experiences. Technological advancements also affect international education, mainly through digital learning platforms and online resources, which can either facilitate or hinder academic success. From an environmental perspective, sustainability policies and climate adaptation concerns can impact campus life and well-being, especially for students from different climatic regions. Lastly, legal considerations, including student work rights, residency permits, and discrimination laws, influence international students' academic and professional opportunities.

While the PESTEL framework is not the primary focus of this research, recognizing these macro-level influences provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that shape African international students' experiences at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences.

3.2.1 Meso-Level Analysis (Higher Education & Internationalization)

Trends in International Student Mobility

European university-based international student mobility shows significant modifications in its trends. The Erasmus Programme has supported international student exchange since its launch in 1987 and has enrolled 14 million participants until now. This program provided students with better employment prospects and enhanced academic networking opportunities. The current global political environment has reshaped customary international travel behaviours. The presidential decision to leave the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit, triggered a substantial 81% reduction in EU student enrollment at Scottish universities starting in 2016 (The Times, 2024).

To support international student mobility, Thomas More University operates various active Erasmus Student Network (ESN) branches across its two campuses, Mechelen and Geel. ESN enables international students to join the campus community through their activities, which include peer support, cultural exchange events, and networking programs. The Erasmus Student Network at Thomas More is an essential platform for enhancing student involvement and cultural adaptation, as it runs structured programs connecting domestic and international students (ESN, n.d.).

Best Practices in International Student Support

European universities operate extensive support systems to welcome students from foreign countries. Student adjustment becomes easier when institutions establish complete orientation programs which show students both academic processes and cultural uniqueness. Language assistance services, in the form of seminars and courses, enable students to advance academically while integrating socially through improved language comprehension. University international offices dedicate themselves to providing personalized support for students by helping with accommodation along with visa needs and administrative tasks. A peer mentorship program within universities helps new international students by connecting them with older peers for community building and transitioning advice (Lemmens Medien GmbH, 2010).

Comparison with Competitor Institutions

KU Leuven is part of Una Europa. Una Europa is an international network of European research-intensive universities. Launched in early 2019, the alliance is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium and connects eleven universities, nine of which are in the European Union (Una Europa, n.d.). Through their collaborative partnership, international students gain unified support in degree programs and research projects, along with enhanced student movement capabilities.

Collaboration with Government and Private Organizations

Students need outside organizations to facilitate their integration process. Through European Union funding from the Erasmus+ Program, educational institutions receive support by obtaining financial help and developing partnerships. [Campus Europae](#) under the European University Foundation uses its division to establish mobility solutions and policy innovations that create support systems for international students.

European institutions respond to changes in student demographics by establishing comprehensive support systems, fostering public and private partnerships, and enhancing international student satisfaction.

3.2.2 *Micro-Level Analysis (Thomas More's International Support)*

Current Support Mechanisms

The International Support Team (IST) of Thomas More University provides academic, social, and administrative assistance to overseas students pursuing degrees, acting as their main point of contact. To ensure a seamless transition into life in Belgium, the team helps students with town hall registration, visa applications, housing advice, and bank account setting. Furthermore, IST hosts Welcome Week events that give students important information about university resources, cultural acculturation, and academic expectations. To promote cultural interaction and facilitate assimilation, the buddy program also pairs international students with local peers (Thomas More University, n.d.).

Even though these support systems are well-established, Welcome Week 2024 provided a direct experience that highlighted opportunities for improvement. Although the registration procedure was quick, it might be made even more efficient by reminding students to prepare their student numbers (r-numbers) beforehand. Furthermore, some students had trouble accessing their university accounts since they were deactivated, which implies that sending out pre-arrival emails with reminders would be helpful. More focus on the buddy system's value, especially for non-European students, may also help them feel more included and adjust (Personal Observation, 2024).

Gaps in Student Support

The experience of international students is impacted by IST's shortcomings in student aid, despite its wide range of offerings. Language barriers remain a significant issue since students struggle to understand different accents, affecting their participation and comprehension in class. Furthermore, because Belgium and their home countries have distinct approaches to education, students usually find it challenging to adapt to coursework and academic requirements (Alavi & Mansor, 2023).

During the Welcome Week workshops, many students had trouble accessing university services because they were unfamiliar with Thomas More's two-authenticator login procedure. Despite the presentation's netiquette portion, several students were unaware of professional email communication standards, which could impact how they engage with staff and instructors (Personal Observation, 2024). Housing support functions as a distinct domain of inequality. According to the European Migration Network (2023), international students face extensive challenges to find proper housing despite IST advice because of scarce options combined with financial constraints and communication barriers. An organized housing assistance framework linked with local housing organizations would help diminish these challenges.

Stakeholder Perspectives based on Survey Findings & Observations

This section presents insights gathered from the student survey and personal observations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges African students face at Thomas More and areas where IST support can be improved. The survey findings (*see appendices*), highlight key issues regarding administrative processes, academic engagement, and social integration, shaping recommendations for enhancing IST's support strategies.

- **Students:** Survey results confirmed that many African students are unaware of IST's full range of support services, leading to low engagement with available resources. Several students reported difficulties in navigating visa applications, housing, and municipal registration, reinforcing existing research on administrative challenges faced by international students (European Migration Network, 2023). Additionally, language barriers remain a recurring issue, with multiple respondents stating that they struggle with accents and academic terminology rather than overall comprehension. This affects class participation, communication with lecturers, and engagement in discussions.

During the Welcome Week workshops, it was found that many students had trouble accessing university services because they were unfamiliar with Thomas More's two-authenticator login procedure. Social integration also emerged as a major challenge. Many students indicated that they do not actively engage in university-led peer support programs such as the Buddy System or Erasmus Student Network (ESN). A common reason cited was that students were unaware of these initiatives or felt that they were not structured in a way that encouraged active African student participation. This aligns with Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Model, which highlights that both academic and social engagement are crucial for student success. Enhancing the visibility of peer mentorship programs and introducing networking events tailored to African students could significantly improve their integration experience.

- **Faculty (lecturers at the level of the University of Applied Sciences within the Flemish higher Education system):** Research on faculty-student interactions in multicultural academic environments suggests that international students may hesitate to ask questions or participate actively in classroom discussions due to cultural differences in communication styles and hierarchical teacher-student dynamics (Beelen & Jones, 2023). Additionally, international students often struggle with academic writing and referencing practices, which differ significantly from their home country's academic expectations.

This highlights a need for targeted academic support initiatives, including writing workshops and classroom participation training. Future interviews with faculty members will help determine how they perceive these challenges and identify teaching strategies that can better support African students. Survey findings suggest

that African students often hesitate to participate in discussions due to differences in classroom dynamics and teaching styles. Research on faculty-student interactions in multicultural settings (Beelen & Jones, 2023) supports this, indicating that international students may be less likely to ask questions or actively engage in class discussions due to cultural differences in communication norms and hierarchical teacher-student relationships. Additionally, some students reported difficulties with academic writing and referencing, reinforcing previous literature that highlights differences in citation styles, critical thinking expectations, and independent learning requirements across education systems.

- **Administrative Staff:** Reports on international student support services indicate that visa-related inquiries, housing challenges, and administrative complexities remain among the most common issues international students face in Belgium (European Migration Network, 2023). The demand for personalized assistance continues to increase, necessitating more streamlined, digitalized solutions to improve accessibility and efficiency. Additionally, while peer mentorship programs, such as the buddy system, have been shown to enhance integration, administrative staff often report that these initiatives remain underutilised due to a lack of awareness or active promotion (Thomas More University, n.d.). Survey responses highlighted that many African students struggle with time management and punctuality, resulting in missed visa appointments, housing application delays, and registration issues. This aligns with internal observations from the Welcome Week activities, where several students faced technical issues accessing university services due to unfamiliarity with the two-factor authentication system.

The demand for administrative assistance continues to grow, with students frequently seeking clarification on financial requirements, visa renewals, and residence permits. However, a gap remains in student awareness of digital tools designed to facilitate these processes. Some students indicated that they would benefit from pre-arrival onboarding programs that provide structured guidance on administrative requirements before arrival in Belgium. Additionally, while IST offers peer mentorship and social engagement initiatives, survey findings confirm that these remain underutilized due to a lack of awareness and targeted promotion.

Tentative Opportunities for Improvement

- **Enhanced Orientation Programs:** Including more interactive elements, such as student panels where returning international students share experiences, could provide practical insights for new students (Personal Observation, 2024).
- **Expanded Academic Advising:** The academic performance of international students is expected to improve when combined with faculty mentorship services that provide

guidance on managing their coursework load successfully (Beelen & Jones, 2023). The accessibility of housing support is also expected to improve when educational institutions collaborate with nearby housing providers, developing rental agreement translation services (European Migration Network, 2023).

- **Improved Digital Support:** Administrative bottlenecks would decrease through the development of multilingual AI bots that assist with typical housing-related and course enrolment and visa application questions (Alavi & Mansor, 2023).
- **Cultural Integration Initiatives:** Implementing a larger, more extensive buddy system, coupled with more networking events for students with local community members, will strengthen connections within the school environment (Personal Observation, 2024).

3.2.3 Best Practices

Culturally Inclusive Student Support Strategies

- **Africa-Specific Advisory Services:** Establish an advisory program dedicated to supplying African students with targeted mentoring regarding cultural integration in addition to administrative processes and academic adjustment. The program provides specific assistance for African students to overcome academic and administrative challenges as well as financial obstacles and visa-related hurdles they face in Belgium according to Beelen and Jones (2023).
- **Enhanced Language Support Programs:** Students require focused language tutoring and accent adaptation classes. Understandable participation in classes becomes challenging for African students when they encounter various accents alongside unfamiliar academic language (Alavi & Mansor, 2023). Strategic language support resources enable students to build confidence when communicating both within and outside their academic activities.
- **Strengthening the Buddy System for African Students:** Thomas More already has a Buddy System, but its importance is not sufficiently emphasized for African students. The university should actively promote the Buddy System as a key support structure, ensuring that African students understand how it can ease their transition into Belgian academic and social life. This initiative can be further enhanced by pairing African students with buddies who share a similar cultural background or have previous experience supporting African students (Thomas More University, n.d.).

Support Services

- **AI-Driven Chatbot Assistance:** Users can access AI-driven automated answers for standard visa policy questions, as well as questions about student housing, financial

support, and academic policy matters. Implementing AI-driven student support systems diminishes administrative workloads and provides students with quick replies to their routine questions (Hsain & El Housni, 2024).

- **Pre-Admission Online Portal for International Students:** Thomas More operates KU Loket through which students enrolled at the institution can acquire authorisation documents comprising both registration documents and verification of enrollment status. The system becomes available only after prospective students obtain admission to the institution. A new online portal will provide pre-admitted African students with an opportunity to monitor their application progression as well as document submission while receiving pre-arrival advice and visa-related details before their university admission. A new system that integrates online functions will automate administrative work and decrease international student paperwork, making the enrollment procedure more straightforward and accessible (European Migration Network, 2023).

Stronger Pre-Arrival and Integration Programs

- **Personalized Pre-Departure Webinars for African Students:** Thomas More currently offers pre-departure webinars, but these should be grouped by region to provide targeted guidance for African students. A continent-specific webinar can cover African-specific visa requirements, housing solutions, financial planning, and cultural adaptation tips. This personalized approach ensures that students receive relevant and actionable advice before arriving in Belgium (Beelen & Jones, 2023).
- **Networking and Cultural Adaptation Workshops:** Hosting Africa-themed social networking events will allow African students to socialize with each other and with local student communities. These workshops can include topics such as cultural adjustment, academic life expectations, and Belgian social life. Additionally, an association with African alumni for mentorship and career support can advance the long-term success of African students (Alavi & Mansor, 2023).

4. MODELLING

4.1 Conceptual model

The conceptual model (*Figure 3 and Table 1*) illustrates the key factors that directly address the central problem of insufficiently tailored support for African international students at Thomas More University, as defined in the problem statement. It draws upon established theories to present the core independent variables (IVs) that influence the successful integration of these students. These include academic and cultural adaptation, administrative support, and social networking, all derived from the theoretical and empirical literature on student integration and support in higher education. The model positions *IST Accessibility & Student Engagement* as a mediating variable (MeV), reflecting the pivotal role of active student participation in enhancing the effectiveness of support mechanisms. Moderating variables (MoVs), such as time management and language barriers, represent contextual influences that shape the extent to which students benefit from institutional support, even though they may fall partly outside of IST's direct control. At the centre of the model lies the dependent variable (DV): successful student integration, understood as a combination of academic achievement and social belonging. This outcome aligns with Tinto's Student Integration Model (1993), which underscores the importance of both academic and social dimensions in student persistence and retention.

Table 1: Explanation of the variable type of conceptual model

Variable Type	Short definition	Role in the Conceptual Model (Figure 3)
Independent Variables (IV)	Academic Adaptation	Students' ability to adjust to different educational systems, learning methods, and assessment styles.
	Cultural Adaptation	Adjustment to Belgian norms, communication styles, and social protocols.
	Social Support & Networking	Access to peer relationships, student groups, and integration activities.
	Student Administrative Support	Institutional help with housing, visas, and documentation through IST services.
Mediating Variable (MeV)	IST Accessibility	The degree to which students are aware of and actively engage with the International Support Team (IST) at Thomas More services.
Moderating Variables (MoV)	Language Barriers	Challenges with academic vocabulary, classroom accents, and overall communication.
	Time Management & Punctuality	Difficulties adapting to Belgian scheduling norms and meeting deadlines.
	External Policies & Regulations	Visa restrictions, financial solvency requirements, and legal constraints affect student mobility.

Dependent Variable (DV)	Successful Integration of African Students	The final outcome encompasses both academic success and social belonging, aligned with Tinto's Model.
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African students need academic integration and adaptation, which demonstrates their ability to adjust to independent learning approaches and educational approaches and grading systems. Most students experience difficulties transitioning into self-directed learning because they have been taught under traditional teacher-led educational systems. Students can transition through the offered systematic programs of faculty assistance alongside tutoring services and writing workshops. The success of students heavily relies on their ability to adjust according to cultural differences. The acculturation model proposed by Berry (1997) shows that students use different adaptation strategies to establish their integration in a new environment. Studies have shown that African students often face challenges in achieving full academic and social integration due to misalignments between their prior educational experiences and the institutional structures, pedagogical expectations, and social norms prevalent within the Belgian social and higher education context.

Students require structured multicultural events and peer relationships and orientation programs to develop their self-confidence in cultural adaptation. Student administrative assistance provided by IST regarding the completion of official documentation, housing services and visa applications in addition to other bureaucracy, plays a critical role in student achievement. User satisfaction experiences substantial modification through service quality as per SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). The effectiveness of ministry officials in delivering organized available and unambiguous instruction directly determines African students' successful use of university resources.

Social networking along with social support affects student integration rates significantly. According to Tinto's model students need strong peer connections to get social success and academic results. Survey results suggest numerous African students experience isolation while struggling to match with local student environments. The limited usage of Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and the Buddy System remains a problem because students lack proper knowledge about these programs. The participation of African students will improve through IST by organizing events suited to their needs and running social projects that strengthen peer mentorship initiatives.

The mediating variable of this model named IST Accessibility & Student Engagement enhances the effectiveness of its independent variables. Survey data shows many African students fail to use accessible IST resources because they do not seek help or are unaware of what IST offers. Active involvement enhances academic achievements alongside social student success as per Tinto's model. Student engagement requires IST to improve its outreach efforts through

better communication as well as pre-arrival onboarding and focused student connection initiatives to increase student participation.

The research institutions maintain direct command of social networking but administrative assistance and cultural adaptation while certain modulating variables represent external factors not within their control. Students who face language barriers experience consequences which affect their ability to engage in class as well as their social comfort level and standard academic understanding. Academic terms and accents often lead to difficulty for numerous African students when they try to participate in group discussions. Poor time organization and late arrival problems stem from students adapting to open scheduling in their home countries which results in non-completion of deadlines and missed appointments. The student mobility framework at IST does not govern external regulation but these regulations such as financial solvency rules and visa controls strongly influence student participation and mobility.

The conceptual model excludes time management and language difficulties as well as external policies but these elements remain important because they originate from external sources. IST delivers support to students through time standard education and language training along with mentoring services to help learners manage external barriers when the institution has no control over these elements. The support system at Thomas More for its African students through IST will become both accessible and organized with an emphasis on connecting students as well as adapted academics and social dynamics along with strong institutional backing.

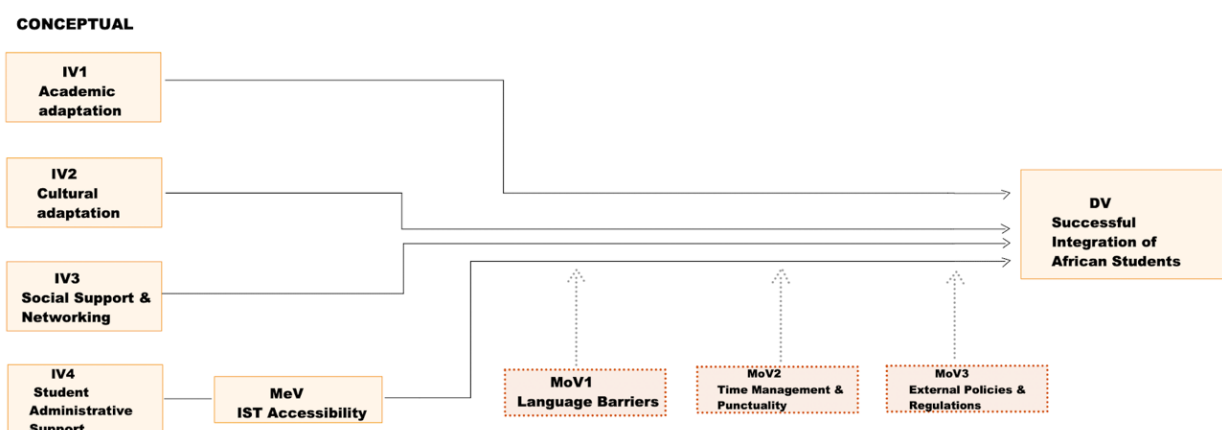


Figure 3: Conceptual Model

4.2 Contextual model

The theoretical findings from the conceptual model are converted into practical applications inside International Support Team (IST) via the contextual model (Figure 4). It focuses on how IST can effectively implement measures or procedures to improve the support system for African students, while modifying parameters based on IST's operational capabilities and student survey responses. This survey, as mentioned, was conducted online between March and April across the English programmes at Thomas More Business School. Fifteen students responded to this survey (sample size) out of the universe of approximately 200 international students.

Since many African students find it challenging to adjust to Belgian academic protocols and social norms, the first independent variable, cultural adaptation remains in the model. The survey findings indicated challenges with peer involvement, professor communication, and classroom participation all of which affect on overall integration. IST may tackle these issues by growing peer mentorship programs, cultural seminars, and social integration initiatives that offer students organized assistance, since it has a direct impact on student orientation and engagement.

Another important independent variable is student administrative support, as survey results showed that many African students had trouble with financial documents, housing procedures, and visa applications. Clear, organized counsel is crucial since bureaucratic obstacles lead to tension and delays. IST can assist students finish these procedures with the least amount of misunderstanding by increasing administrative efficiency, offering multilingual resources, and improving support through detailed instructions.

Social support and networking, the third independent variable, is still included in the model. According to survey data, African students frequently feel isolated and disconnected from their peer groups. This is mainly due to many students' lack of awareness of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and Buddy System. Strong social ties are linked to academic achievement and student retention, hence IST has to focus on increasing awareness, customizing peer mentorship programs, and planning networking events for African students to create a feeling of community.

IST Accessibility & Student Engagement, the mediating variable (MeV) at the core of this model, guarantees that students actively utilize the services that are offered. According to the study results, many students do not utilize IST's assistance merely because they are reluctant to ask for help or are unaware that these services are available. Even the best networking, administrative, and cultural adaption initiatives will be ineffective without participation. Improved communication, pre-arrival onboarding, and outreach initiatives that guarantee students actively utilize the tools at their disposal are all necessary for IST to increase accessibility.

Time management and punctuality, the moderating variable (MoV), is still included in the model since survey results showed that many African students find it difficult to adjust to Belgian time standards. Academic and administrative progress might be negatively impacted by major delays caused by missed appointments. Even while IST has little influence over students' time management, it may emphasize the value of time management by reminding students of appointments importance, holding organized orientation sessions, and running awareness campaigns that inform them about Belgian scheduling customs.

Several factors were excluded from the contextual model due to their limited amenability to institutional control. Academic adaptation was removed as an independent variable because IST does not have authority over curricular design, assessment methods, or grading standards. Nevertheless, IST can play a supportive role by guiding students toward academic resources such as tutoring services, faculty mentoring, and writing workshops. Similarly, language barriers were excluded, as survey data indicated that the primary difficulties were related to academic terminology and accent comprehension rather than general language proficiency. While IST cannot directly provide language instruction, it can continue facilitating access to relevant language training programs. Finally, external policies and regulations including visa controls and financial solvency requirements were also omitted from the contextual model, as they fall under the jurisdiction of governmental bodies. Although IST may support students in navigating these constraints, it lacks the authority to influence or modify such external frameworks.

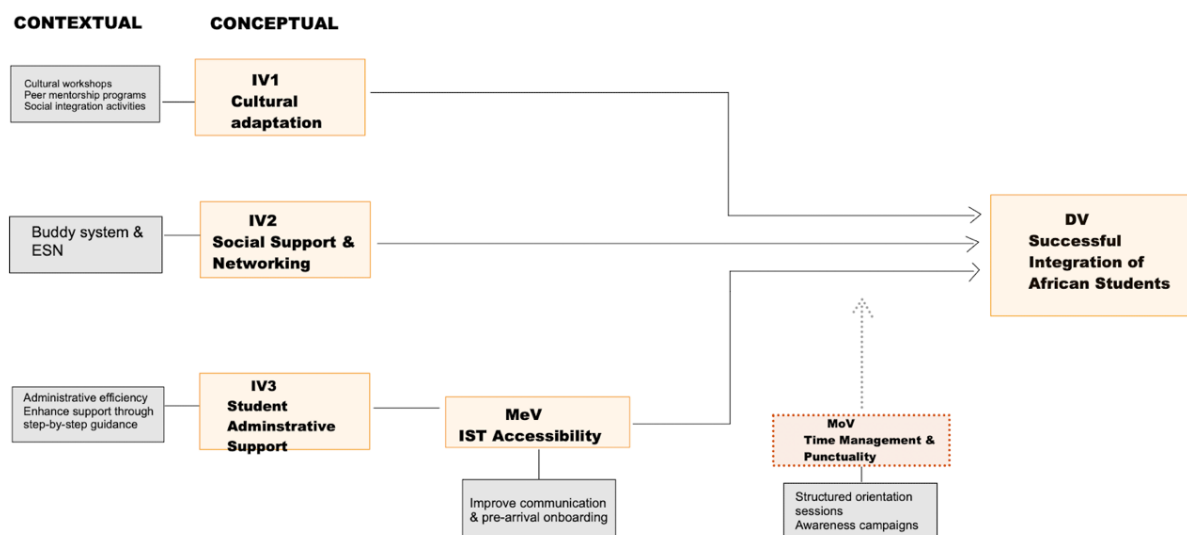


Figure 4: Contextual Model

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Proposed Solution – AfricaConnect@ThomasMore

An international student's journey can be marked by both excitement and anxiety. Transitioning to Thomas More University of Applied Sciences for African students entails more than simply adjusting to a new academic system; it also entails navigating an entirely new culture, making friends, and gaining confidence in an environment that may feel quite different from home. Despite Thomas More's efforts to promote international inclusion, African students frequently lack the consistent, organized, and culturally sensitive help that they require from the current support groups.

Returning to the central problem of this study, the key challenge confronting the International Support Team (IST) at Thomas More University of Applied Sciences lies in the inadequacy of current support systems to effectively meet the specific needs of African international students. While these systems have proven effective for European students, an understandable focus given the university's geographical context, they fall short in addressing the legal, academic, and socio-cultural complexities that African students often encounter. These include visa and financial verification procedures, curriculum adaptation, language barriers, and challenges related to social integration and intercultural belonging. This support gap directly impacts student satisfaction and academic success and presents broader institutional concerns related to customer service, diversity, and inclusive internationalization. If not strategically addressed, it may lead to reduced retention, hinder successful integration, and compromise the university's reputation as an inclusive academic environment. In response to this challenge, the present study proposes an initiative titled AfricaConnect@ThomasMore, specifically designed to bridge these gaps through a structured and culturally responsive support framework.

AfricaConnect@ThomasMore is a semester-long student-focused experience designed to meet the needs and strengths of African students, not merely a support program. In a single, ongoing support approach, the program combines academic orientation, social belonging, administrative direction, and personalized participation. It starts prior to the student's arrival and lasts the whole semester. If introduced, the program could hypothetically launch in September 2026 on the Mechelen campus, starting with a small group of African students and trained Ambassadors. Based on feedback and measurable outcomes, it could then be gradually expanded to other campuses and adapted for broader international student groups.

AfricaConnect's reform of Thomas More's Buddy System, which current students feel lacks structure and visibility, is at its core. For example, the University of Antwerp's robust peer mentorship programs will serve as inspiration for the pairing of each African student with a trained buddy, ideally someone with comparable cultural knowledge or life experiences. These partnerships will be structured around a schedule that includes monthly catch-ups,

shared group activities, and a warm greeting during Welcome Week (the first week of each semester). They will not be casual or one-time. Returning African students will act as AfricaConnect Ambassadors to further elevate this, assuming roles of leadership in WhatsApp support groups, co-hosting seminars, moderating conversations, and bridging the gap between students and IST staff. This strategy fosters community and consistency, two things that are essential for ongoing involvement (Beelen & Jones, 2023).

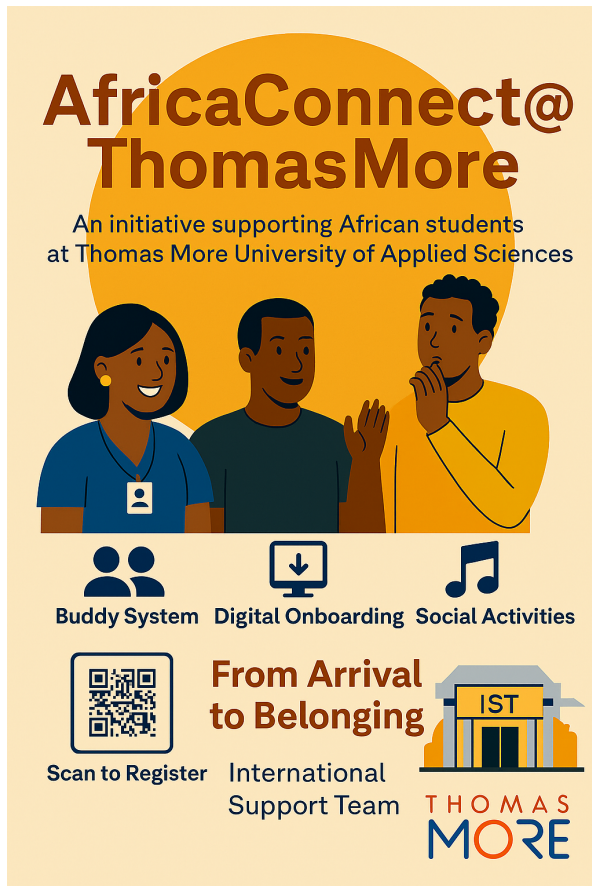


Figure 5: A draft and illustrative flyer promoting the AfricaConnect@ThomasMore initiative. Source: Own prompt, AI-generated image.

An additional essential element of the solution (AfricaConnect@ThomasMore initiative, see also Figures 5 and 6) is a digital onboarding centre that is based on the organised welcome platform at KU Leuven. This resource will walk students through real-world tasks, including registering for town hall, KU Loket activation, opening a bank account, and health insurance setup step-by-step. This digital gateway will be accompanied by a pre-arrival email series that provides one job each week, which will be straightforward, manageable, and customized to address frequent challenges encountered by African students.

5.1.1 AfricaConnect@ThomasMore and time management

Another area of concern is time management. Many African students are not familiar with Belgium's strict appointment culture, as evidenced by survey findings and experiences during

Welcome Week. Due to cultural disparities in time expectations, students frequently miss important administrative deadlines, as mentioned earlier, AfricaConnect@ThomasMore will address this by launching a fun and entertaining onboarding video called "Time in Belgium: What You Need to Know," which will be distributed before arrival. A "Get Organised" course in Week 2 will also assist students in making their schedules and comprehending the value of timeliness in administrative and academic settings.

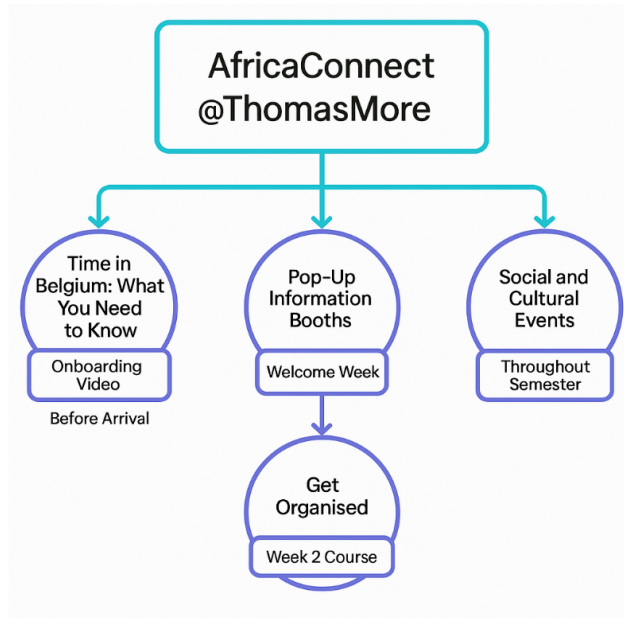


Figure 6: AfricaConnect@Thomas More and Time Management. Source: Own prompt, AI-generated image.

Accessibility and IST engagement are also important issues. To address this, AfricaConnect hosts pop-up information booths throughout Welcome Week where students may interact with staff, obtain resources, and ask casual inquiries. Additionally, IST will be able to send event invites and brief, cordial updates using WhatsApp broadcast lists, something they already do. Monthly mini-polls (one or two questions) will let IST monitor student experience and make real-time assistance adjustments.

AfricaConnect also introduces a comprehensive schedule of social and cultural events. Students will participate in activities such as "Africa@ThomasMore" mixers, cultural evenings, and themed dinners that showcase storytelling, cuisine, and music from throughout the continent, all of which are inspired by Ghent University's ongoing orientation policy. In addition to giving Belgian and other foreign students a chance to learn about and respect African traditions, these activities provide locations for African students to feel welcome. An essential component of any internationalization plan is the promotion of respect for one another and shared experiences. These components have been shaped not only by surveys and institutional reflection but also through benchmarking.

5.2 Benchmarking the AfricanConnect@ThomasMore Initiative Against Leading Belgian Universities Practices.

I conducted a benchmark analysis comparing the services of International Support to those of leading institutions in Belgium, namely the University of Antwerp and Ghent University. This analysis highlights the services that Thomas More already provides, those it lacks, and what lessons can be learned from these top institutions (*Table 2*).

Table 2: Benchmarking the AfricaConnect@ThomasMore

SUPPORT SERVICES	Ghent University, Flanders, Belgium	University of Antwerp, Flanders, Belgium	Thomas More University of Applied Sciences, Flanders, Belgium
International Support Team	Dedicated International Students Office	International Relations Office	International Support Team
Financial Aid & Scholarships for International Students	Offers dedicated financial aid and scholarships for international students	Offers dedicated financial aid and scholarships for international students	Tuition Fee Waiver for Non-EEA students (non-monetary)
Student counselling	Psychological support, stress management & study coaching	Personal study support & mental health services	Student counselling available
Welcome Days and Orientation	Offers Welcome Days & ongoing orientation programs	Provides semester-based Welcome Days & cultural integration events	Conducts Welcome Week but lacks semester-long structured integration
Academic Writing & Language Support	Provides Dutch and English language courses & academic writing help	Offers language courses, tutoring, and academic writing workshops	Language support is available, but not comprehensive
Cultural Exchange & Peer Mentorship	Cultural events and Buddy Program	Strong peer mentorship initiatives	Buddy System exists but is not widely promoted

- Thomas More's Lessons to be learned and gaps:** Thomas More should have more departments dedicated to cultural integration. By developing specialized financial assistance packages and expanding the number of scholarship opportunities, Thomas More might take a cue from Antwerp and Ghent. Thomas More can also enhance its

orientation by offering continued cultural integration events beyond the first week, like Ghent's approach. Thomas More provides language support, but should expand its services to include structured academic writing workshops and tutoring programs. Lastly, the Buddy System at Thomas More is underutilized. More substantial promotion and structured buddy events throughout the semester could increase engagement between international and local students.

- **Partnerships with International Education Agencies:** Through partnerships with international student unions and universities, African students can improve their access to scholarships, visas, and integration schemes. Partnerships with institutions such as [Study in Flanders](#), [Campus France](#), and [DAAD, or the German Academic Exchange Service](#), could provide increased outreach and Thomas More experience for African students (Beelen & Jones, 2023).

This benchmarking confirms the need for more structured and ongoing integration support. By learning from these institutions, Thomas More can evolve its approach without starting from scratch, leveraging what works and adapting it to the African student experience. learned from these top institutions.

5.3 Implementation Plan Snapshot

The following timeline outlines how AfricaConnect@ThomasMore could be introduced during the first semester of the 2026–2027 academic year. Designed as a recurring, long-term initiative, this structure ensures that each new badge of African students benefits from consistent and sustainable support from pre-arrival to end-of-semester reflection (*Table 3*).

Table 3: Timeline of the Implementation of AfricaConnect

PHASE	ACTIVITY	PROPOSED TIMELINE
Pre-Arrival	Digital onboarding hub, buddy matching, WhatsApp broadcast setup.	4 – 6 weeks before arrival
Welcome Week	Buddy introductions, IST pop-up booths and video on time expectations.	Welcome week (1st semester of an Academic Year)
Early semester	“Get Organised” workshop, cultural mixer, monthly poll.	Week 2 – 6 (one week)
Mid semester	Peer-led study group, culture exchange night.	Week 6 – 8 (one night)
Ongoing support	Group activities, feedback loop, AfricaConnect wrap-up event	Week 8 – 12 (one week)

The scenario of AfricaConnect@ThomasMore is based on structure, empathy, and tried-and-true best practices. In addition to recognizing African student's genuine worries, it also builds a support structure that encourages self-assurance, community involvement, and academic readiness. Through this initiative, Thomas More gives its African students the tools they need to succeed in addition to welcoming them.

5.4 Recommendations and Conclusion

5.4.1 Key Recommendations

Several significant recommendations emerge from this research to ensure that AfricaConnect@ThomasMore is not only well-intentioned but also successfully implemented. Most importantly, the Buddy System needs to transform from a passive pairing to a structured, proactive activity. AfricaConnect Ambassadors, returning students who can act as mentors and engagement leaders, will help boost the system's impact, awareness, and reliability. Buddies should adhere to a schedule of supervised check-ins and group activities during the semester rather than restricting communication to sporadic meetings.

To prepare students for life in Belgium before they arrive, a Digital Onboarding Hub should be set up. This platform would provide comprehensive, multilingual guidance on crucial administrative processes, such as housing, setting up a bank account, town hall registration, and student account activation. Sending out a series of pre-arrival emails with this information will help students arrive in Belgium feeling more secure and less nervous. Welcome Week is minuscule, despite its significance. One of AfricaConnect's key benefits is that it offers continuing support beyond the first week. To ensure that students remain engaged rather than merely informed, the program should include cultural mixers, student-led study sessions, and informal gatherings during at least the first semester.

Time management and punctuality are additional issues that should be addressed early on, as survey results indicated that they are a persistent problem. Different cultures have different expectations regarding time, and many students are not accustomed to the rigid schedule of Belgian appointments. When combined with an early semester "Get Organised" session and printed academic calendars, a brief, amiable onboarding film can assist students in adjusting without feeling rushed or scrutinised. The effectiveness of any assistance system depends on students' ability to locate and use it. For this reason, IST outreach and visibility need to be increased. The use of Welcome Week pop-up booths, WhatsApp updates, and monthly check-in polls will increase the effectiveness, approachability, and personalisation of assistance. Help will be provided to students gently and regularly, so they will not need to seek it actively. It is necessary to establish external alliances to make this program genuinely viable. Collaborations with organisations like Study in Flanders and DAAD may broaden the reach of AfricaConnect and give access to scholarship channels, visa information, and professional mentorship programs for African students.

Lastly, it is critical to start small and develop intelligence. Before the program is expanded university-wide, a test deployment on the Mechelen campus might yield insightful information and allow for improvements through feedback loops. AfricaConnect has the potential to become a model for assisting international students in general as well as African students in particular with careful assessment.

5.4.2 Conclusion

This Bachelor's Project has been more than an academic exercise. It has been a path of reflection, understanding, and direction. What started as a research topic about how Thomas More might better assist African international students turned into something far more significant and intimate. It turned into an opportunity to reflect on my own experience, hear what others had to say, and imagine how things could be done better, not just for me, but for everyone who has yet to arrive.

Without a personalised support system, I progressively navigated the Belgian educational system. However, it was not simple. Navigating new systems and expectations frequently left me feeling overburdened, misinterpreted, or just alone. It would have made all the difference if there had been a platform like AfricaConnect@ThomasMore back then, where I could connect with individuals who shared my perspective, where knowledge was delivered in digestible, timely steps, and where someone was only a message away.

That is the heart of this project: the belief that integration should not depend on chance, luck, or struggle. I have created a concept that is both innovative and workable through thorough research, a contextual study of IST's function, stakeholder input, and comparison with leading Belgian institutions. The goal of AfricaConnect@ThomasMore is not to increase complexity, but to make what we already do more deliberate, transparent, and human.

From a reimagined Buddy System and buddies to digital onboarding tools, semester-long engagement, and culturally responsive programming, this proposal offers Thomas More a concrete path toward becoming a more inclusive, student-centered institution. It is not just for African students but built with them at the centre because inclusion starts with listening, continues with structure, and ends with empowerment.

Above all, I want this project to demonstrate that small, deliberate adjustments may have a significant, lasting effect. As someone who has travelled this journey, in addition to being a student, I support this suggestion. I think it can help international students feel more like complete, visible, and appreciated members of the Thomas More community rather than like outsiders.

Furthermore, this effort will have been well worth it if even one student is inspired, encouraged, and seen by something like AfricaConnect.

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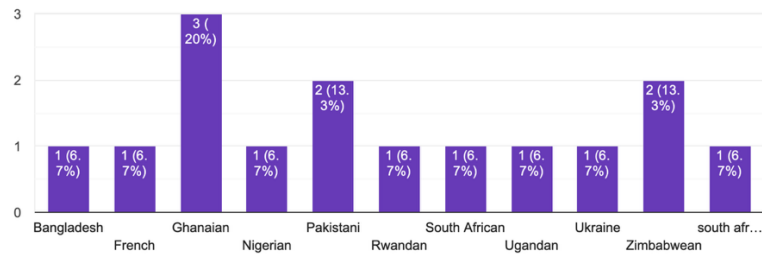
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APPENDICES

Survey Responses (for students):

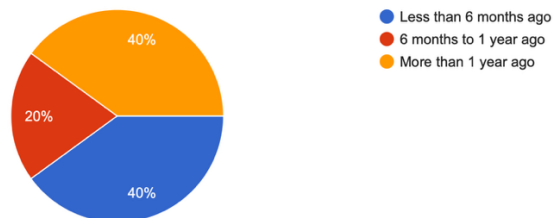
1. What is your nationality?

15 responses



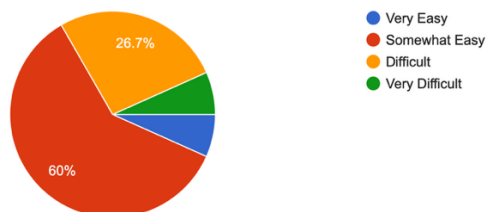
2. When did you arrive at Thomas More?

15 responses



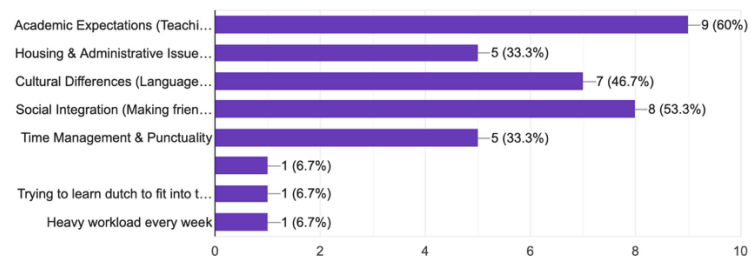
3. How easy was your transition to studying at Thomas More?

15 responses



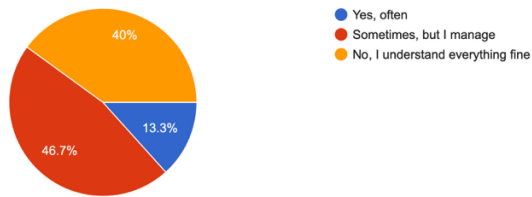
4. What was your biggest challenge when adapting to Thomas More?

15 responses



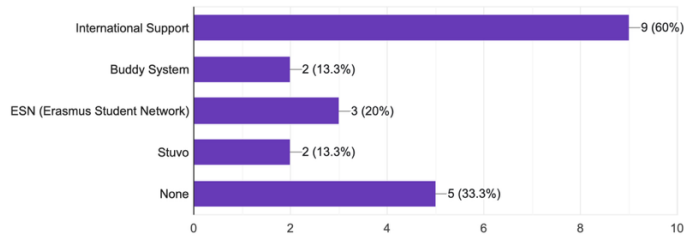
5. Have you faced difficulties understanding lectures due to language or accents?

15 responses



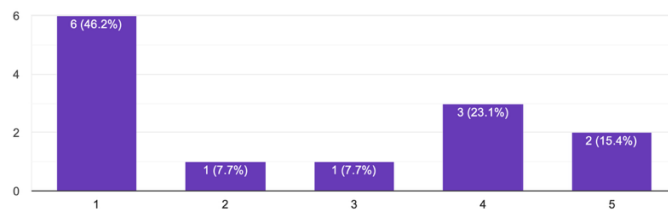
6. What support service has helped you the most?

15 responses



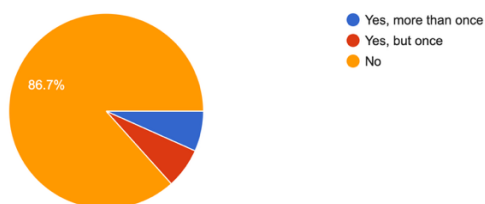
7. How useful was the Buddy System for your integration?

13 responses



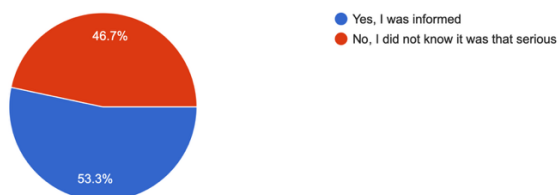
8. Have you ever missed or arrived late to a town hall or bank appointment?

15 responses



9. Did you know that missing appointments in Belgium can cause administrative problems?

15 responses



10.What would have made your transition to Thomas More easier?

8 responses

Events to meet and get to know people outside of my program being planned more during the weekend and more opportunities to interact with fellow internationals.

Learning Dutch

It was just easy

Having the sharepoint website be fully in English for international students and not some parts in Dutch versus others in English

more social events with non eu international students in mind

I stay with my family currently and commuting to school each day is tiring and hectic considering the distance so I would appreciate if they are school owned hostels or something of the sort at much more affordable prices. It would help me save time going that long distance home and have more focus on my school work.

Explaining more about the grading process and explanation of more tools , explain how the ISP works

Survey Responses (for Professors):

1. What faculty/department do you teach in?

5 responses

Business School

International Business & Trade IBT Thomas More Mechelen

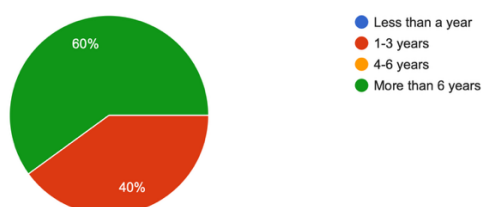
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Communication

International Business & Trade

2. How many years have you been teaching at Thomas More?

5 responses

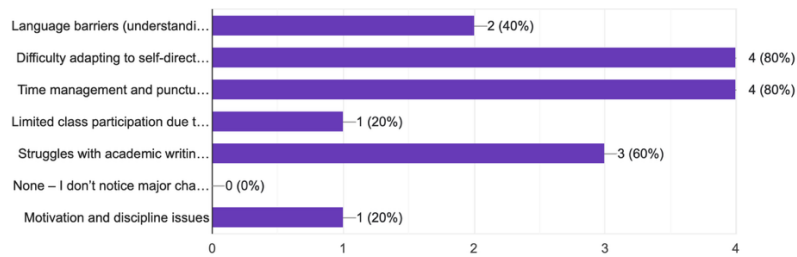


3. Have you taught African students in your courses?

5 responses

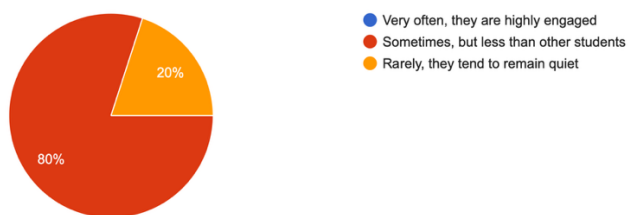


4. What are the most common academic challenges you observe among African students? (Multiple selection possible)
5 responses



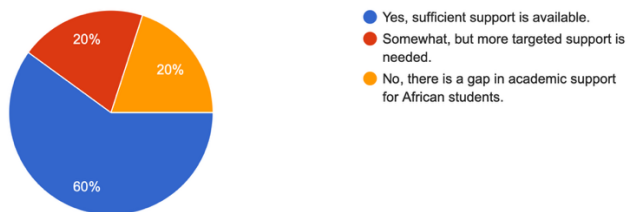
5. How often do African students actively participate in class discussions?

5 responses



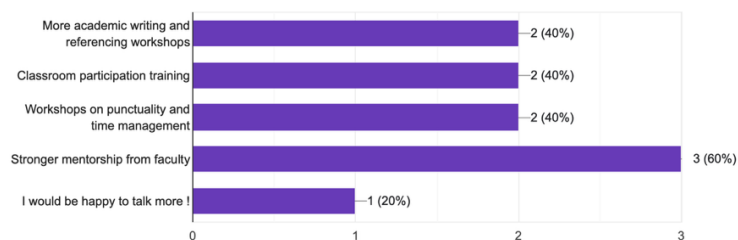
6. Do you think Thomas More provides enough academic support for African students?

5 responses



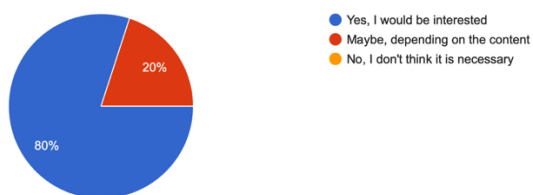
7. What could improve the academic experience of African students at Thomas More? (multiple selection possible)

5 responses



8. Would you be open to attending a workshop on teaching strategies for multicultural/international students?

5 responses



9. Do you have any additional suggestions for improving the integration of African students?

4 responses

The survey is excellent. However, there are still issues related to promotion involving the Thomas More Marketing Team, the recruitment office, which imposes unnecessary bureaucracy, and the integration process managed by the International Office. While the International Office seems to be effectively welcoming students and supporting their integration, the Marketing Team appears to be misaligned with the internationalization strategy.

It's not possible to give one and the same opinion about "all African Students" at Thomas More. There are of course many differences among these students.
I should say that the biggest issue is the understanding that we work in Thomas More in several projects, homeworks and examintaion with clear timings. (cfr deadlines) .

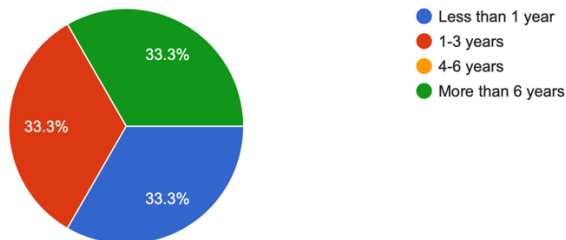
NONE

The integration problem is broader than just for African students

Survey Responses (for IST)

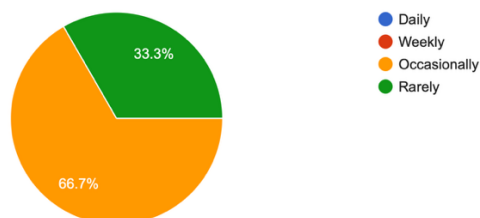
1. How long have you been part of the International Support Team?

3 responses



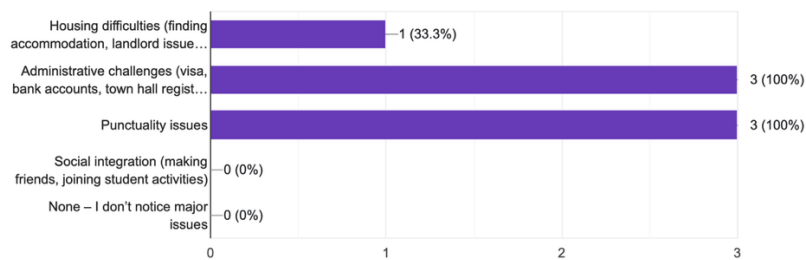
2. How often do you interact with African students?

3 responses



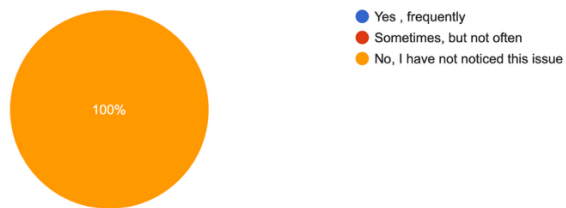
3. What are the most frequent concerns raised by African students? (multiple selection possible)

3 responses



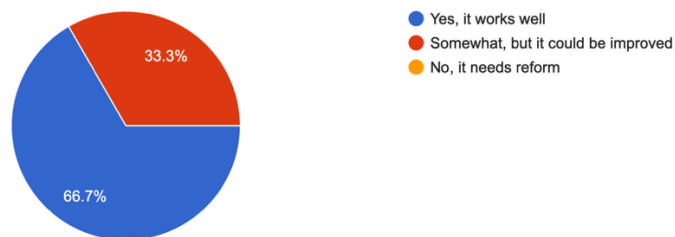
4. Have you received complaints from town halls or banks about African students missing appointments?

3 responses



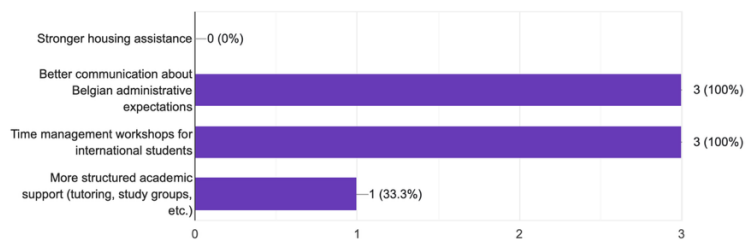
5. Do you think the Buddy System is effectively helping African students integrate?

3 responses



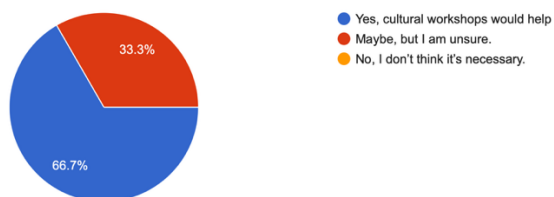
6. What additional support do you think African students need at Thomas More? (multiple selection possible)

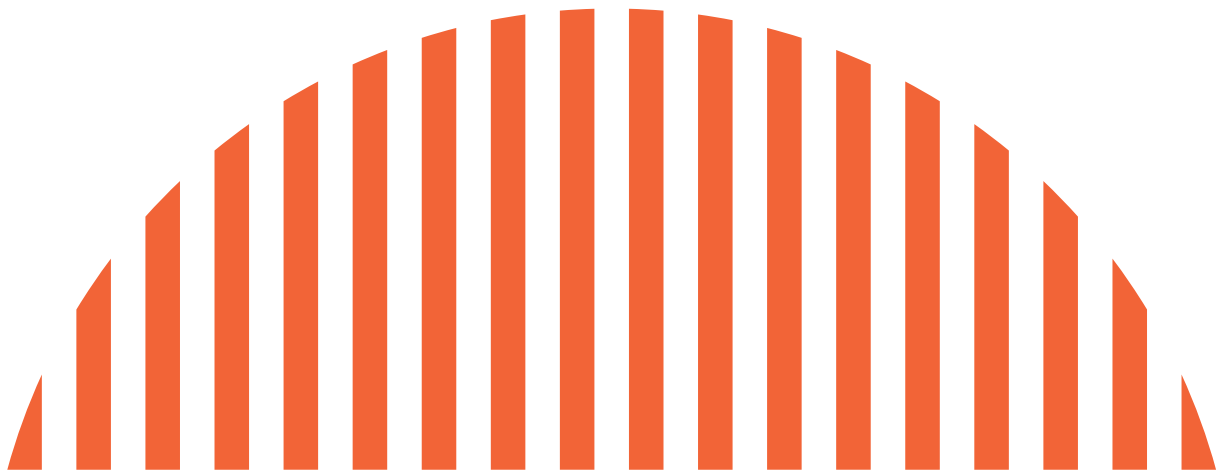
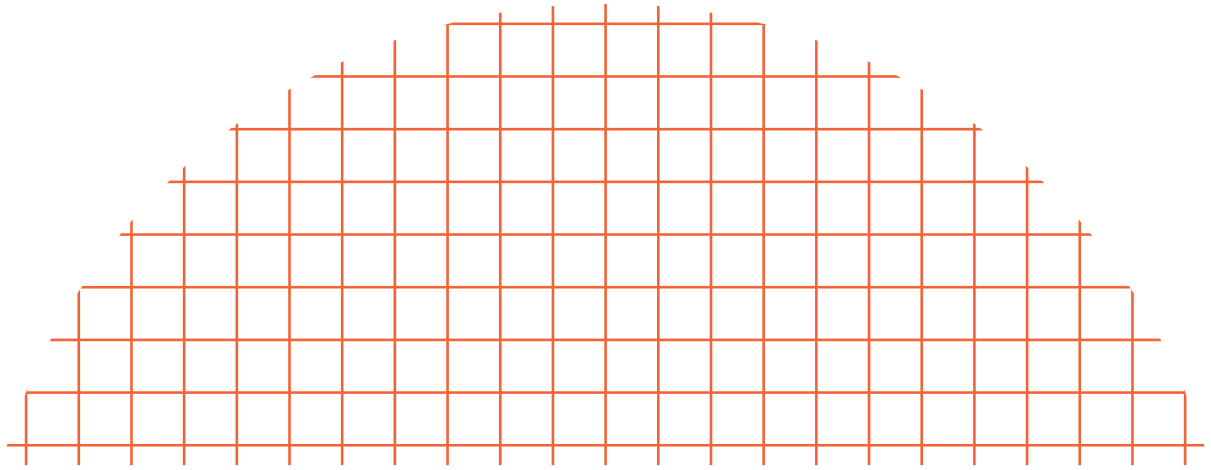
3 responses



7. Do you think Thomas More should provide better cultural orientation sessions for African students?

3 responses





CONTACT

Vida Asabea Ohene | Student

vidaohene@icloud.com

Tel. + 32 46 53 11 859

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