Известия Гомельского государственного университета
имени Ф. Скорины, № 5 (158), 2026

УДК 378:378.115 EDN: JWYKZK

# The model of facilitation of international student adaptation to the university

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This article explores the model of facilitation of international student adaptation to university education as a structured pedagogical process within the higher education environment. It conceptualizes facilitation as a system of pedagogical accompaniment that ensures continuous guidance of international students during their academic, psychological, sociocultural and daily life adjustment. The study outlines five stages of facilitation and discusses the roles of all participants involved in the accompaniment process.
**Keywords:** facilitation, international student, pedagogical accompaniment, pedagogical process, university education.

В статье рассматривается модель содействия адаптации иностранных студентов к университетскому обучению как структурированный педагогический процесс, реализуемый в условиях высшего образования. Фасилитация трактуется как система педагогического сопровождения процесса адаптации иностранных студентов в академическом, психологическом, социокультурном и повседневном контекстах. В исследовании описываются пять этапов педагогического сопровождения и рассматриваются роли участников данного процесса.
**Ключевые слова:** фасилитация, иностранный студент, педагогическое сопровождение, педагогический процесс, университетское образование.

**Introduction.** Over the past decades, higher education institutions have seen a steady increase of international students. These students enter universities with diverse linguistic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. Such diversity shapes their learning experiences and patterns of academic engagement. In this context, the issue of student adaptation has gained particular pedagogical significance, as it is closely connected with both the quality of university education and the effectiveness of institutional practices.

Within contemporary pedagogical research, international student adaptation is conceptualized as a complex and multidimensional process resulting from the interaction between individual characteristics and the educational environment [1]. Academic achievement and sociocultural participation, together with students' psychological well-being, are widely regarded as closely interconnected factors shaping success in higher education. Difficulties arising in any of these dimensions may negatively affect learning motivation, academic engagement, and persistence of international students.

Despite the growing emphasis on internationalization at the policy level, institutional support for international students in many universities remains fragmented. Support measures are often confined to administrative or consultative services and insufficiently integrated into teaching and learning processes. Such an approach limits the recognition of adaptation as an integral pedagogical phenomenon and reduces the overall effectiveness of support initiatives.

In this context, pedagogical facilitation is understood not as a set of isolated support measures, but as a system of pedagogical accompaniment [2]. This system ensures continuous guidance of international students throughout different phases of their academic experience and reflects the shared responsibility of the university for the adaptation process. In this study, pedagogical facilitation is considered as the core analytical concept and denotes the process-based organization of accompaniment within university education. An analysis of different works demonstrates that international student adaptation is commonly addressed either through fragmented support measures or through separate accompanying practices [3]–[5]. However, existing studies rarely conceptualize pedagogical accompaniment as a coherent, process-oriented system integrated into university education. The purpose of this article is to present a model of facilitation of international student adaptation and to analyze main stages and the roles of all participants.

**Main body.** Researchers conceptualize facilitation not merely as a communicative strategy, but as a pedagogical principle organizing interaction within the educational environment and creating conditions for self-development of all educational process participants and collaborative knowledge construction [2], [6]. Drawing on the analysis of studies devoted to international students, pedagogical facilitation is con-

ceptualized in this article as a system of pedagogical accompaniment that describes the processual organization of international student tracking, support, assistance, guidance and mentorship. This system integrates academic, psychological, sociocultural and daily life dimensions of adaptation and is developed as a continuous pedagogical process within the university. Its value lies in maintaining pedagogical interaction as a continuous and internally coordinated process across international students' academic trajectories.

The concept of facilitation of international student adaptation unites and integrates their accompaniment, tracking, support, assistance, guidance, and mentoring [2]–[7]. According to previous studies, assistance denotes targeted, situation-specific adaptation aimed at overcoming concrete difficulties [3], [6]. Support is the most comprehensive concept and refers to a systemic set of academic, social, psychological, and administrative measures ensuring student integration and retention. While these studies provide valuable insights, they often conceptualize both assistance and support as fragmented services rather than as an integrated pedagogical process.

The previous research rarely conceptualizes accompaniment of international student adaptation as a coherent, stage-based system of tracking students throughout their entire period of study. In our case, we consider the concepts of facilitation and accompaniment in the context of international student support as close and interchangeable terms. Besides, pedagogical accompaniment within our model includes four interrelated dimensions:

1. Psychophysiological accompaniment concerns emotional stability, stress regulation, and adaptation to new environmental conditions, aiming to ensure psychological safety and resilience.

2. Sociocultural accompaniment involves integration into communicative norms, institutional values, and cultural practices of the host academic community, fostering participation and a sense of belonging.

3. Academic accompaniment refers to guided mastery of disciplinary standards, learning strategies, assessment systems, and academic communication conventions, supported through diagnostics and systematic feedback.

4. Everyday accompaniment addresses practical aspects of housing, campus navigation, and administrative procedures that indirectly influence academic performance.

Within this theoretical model, accompaniment is defined as an institutionally regulated and pedagogically coordinated form of interaction between students and the educational environment. It is not confined to compensatory or remedial support mechanisms; rather, it represents a continuous and structured process of guided participation in the academic community. Academic accompaniment refers to the systematic mediation of disciplinary standards, epistemic norms, and instructional formats. Psychological accompaniment concerns the stabilization of personal identity, development of self-efficacy, and maintenance of emotional equilibrium under conditions of educational transition. Sociocultural accompaniment is directed toward structured integration into communicative practices, normative expectations, and value systems of the host academic community. These dimensions shouldn't be viewed as discrete categories; rather, they function in close interrelation within a broader pedagogical system.

In the proposed model, facilitation functions as the organizational principle governing accompaniment. In practical terms, facilitation influences the distribution of teaching responsibilities among the participants of the institutional structure, and how accompaniment processes unfold over time within everyday university practice. Consequently, the model transcends the description of isolated support activities and establishes a coordinated structure that links academic instruction, administrative regulation, and everyday institutional interaction.

A defining structural characteristic of the model is its staged organization. The differentiation into stages reflects the temporal dynamics inherent in accompaniment and the progressive transformation of students' institutional positioning. The stage-based configuration enables the systematic regulation of pedagogical interaction in accordance with varying degrees of vulnerability, institutional embeddedness, and emerging academic autonomy.

The model comprises five analytically substantiated stages: preventive facilitation, operational facilitation, adaptational facilitation, integrational facilitation and supportive facilitation. Each stage corresponds to a distinct phase in the student's trajectory within the higher education system and fulfills specific pedagogical functions within the overall structure of accompaniment.

*Stage 1: Preventive Facilitation (Before arrival of international students).* Preventive facilitation denotes the preparatory stage preceding students' physical entrance into the host university. It begins several months before students' physical arrival and usually lasts from three to six months. Its main task is to reduce uncertainty and form realistic academic expectations before students enter

the host educational environment. The theoretical rationale of this stage is grounded in research demonstrating that expectations, informational awareness, and psychological preparedness significantly influence subsequent accompaniment outcomes [8]. Therefore, the facilitation process must be initiated in advance in order to construct cognitive and motivational readiness.

At this stage, university managers design institutional admission strategies, coordinate interdepartmental cooperation, and ensure the availability of digital information platforms for international applicants. The International Relations Department accompanies students through visa procedures, enrollment documentation, and preliminary academic orientation, functioning as institutional mediators between students and the university system. Teachers prepare introductory academic materials, explain disciplinary standards, and clarify assessment expectations in advance, thereby reducing future academic shock. Dormitory staff provide detailed information on accommodation rules, living conditions, and campus infrastructure, which supports students' early psychological security. In practice, these preparatory measures create the conditions under which subsequent stages of accompaniment can unfold more smoothly.

*Stage 2: Operational Facilitation (First month after arrival).* Operational facilitation refers to the most intensive and sensitive phase of adaptation, covering approximately from the first four to six weeks of study abroad. The designation of this stage reflects its transitional nature, as students simultaneously encounter a new academic system, sociocultural norms, and living conditions. Empirical studies indicate that this period is associated with the highest levels of stress and disorientation [9].

At this stage, pedagogical accompaniment takes the form of continuous chaperone-based accompaniment. In this study, the term chaperone is used as a functional synonym for pedagogical accompaniment, emphasizing constant presence, guidance, and personal pedagogical support during the most vulnerable phase of accompaniment.

During this stage, university managers should organize institutional orientation programs, coordinate support services, and ensure rapid administrative response to emerging difficulties. The International Relations Department accompanies students in legal registration, academic integration procedures, and communication with university services, providing institutional continuity. Dormitory staff are to offer daily chaperone accompaniment in everyday matters, helping students navigate housing rules, campus facilities, and daily routines, thereby reducing everyday stressors. Teachers diagnose academic readiness, clarify learning expectations, and provide individualized guidance in the first learning encounters. Through these coordinated chaperone functions, operational facilitation contributes to the stabilization of students during the most vulnerable stage of transition. In some institutional contexts, however, elements of this stage may extend beyond the first month and overlap with subsequent phases.

*Stage 3: Adaptational Facilitation (2–6 months after arrival).* Adaptational facilitation designates the phase of functional stabilization during the 2–6 months after arrival. It primarily reflects the consolidation of adaptive processes within regular academic routines, while broader institutional integration typically develops at a later stage. The theoretical basis of this stage is supported by longitudinal research demonstrating that stable academic functioning develops gradually and requires sustained pedagogical interaction throughout the first year [1].

During this period, teachers assume the role of primary academic chaperones by monitoring learning progress, adapting instructional strategies, and providing systematic feedback that supports students' academic confidence and routine learning competence. The International Relations Department coordinates academic advising and institutional procedures, ensuring regulatory clarity. Dormitory staff maintain stable living conditions that support emotional balance and daily routine formation. University managers align academic policies and student services to ensure procedural consistency. Adaptational facilitation thus secures functional academic stability without yet presupposing full institutional embeddedness. In practice, the duration and intensity of this phase may vary depending on institutional context and students' prior educational experience.

*Stage 4: Integrational Facilitation (7–12 months after arrival).* Integrational facilitation characterizes the phase during which students move beyond functional stabilization toward institutional embeddedness and identity consolidation within the university community. Unlike the previous stage, which secures routine academic functioning, this phase emphasizes durable integration into institutional structures and communicative networks.

This stage typically covers months seven to twelve after arrival. Students refine academic strategies within broader academic communities and increasingly participate in institutional life. The primary objective of integrational facilitation is to strengthen structural belonging and long-term academic positioning. The boundaries between stages should be understood as analytical rather than strictly empirical.

In the later months of the first academic year, teachers gradually shift from stabilization-oriented guidance to developmental mentorship, encouraging independent participation in academic discourse and collective scholarly activities. The International Relations Department promotes engagement in intercultural and extracurricular initiatives that expand institutional involvement. Dormitory staff facilitate community-building practices that enhance social cohesion. University managers ensure inclusive governance and strategic coordination. In this phase, the emphasis gradually shifts from stabilization toward deeper institutional embeddedness.

*Stage 5: Supportive Facilitation (Second year of study and beyond).* Supportive facilitation characterizes the stage in which adaptation evolves into long-term academic and professional development. It begins in the second year and continues until graduation, when students gradually shift toward academic autonomy and professional self-determination. Studies show that deeper academic independence and professional identity formation typically develop from the second year onwards.

At this stage, teachers act as academic chaperones in research supervision, professional orientation, and career-related guidance, supporting students' transition to independent academic work. The International Relations Department facilitates participation in mobility programs, international projects, and professional networking, facilitating long-term academic integration. Dormitory staff encourage student self-governance, leadership development, and community engagement within campus life. University managers support strategic inclusion of international students in institutional development initiatives and alumni networks. At this stage, adaptation is no longer perceived as a problem to be resolved, but as a foundation for further academic and professional growth. Although the model is presented as analytically structured, its implementation inevitably depends on specific institutional resources and organizational culture.

**Conclusion.** The analysis presented in this article allows facilitation to be regarded as a systemic pedagogical model for accompanying the adaptation of international students in higher education. When facilitative teaching practices are combined with an accompaniment-oriented educational environment, universities are better able to address the academic and sociocultural challenges of international students, as well as difficulties related to their psychological well-being, at different stages of study. The proposed model develops and systematizes existing approaches to international student accompaniment described in different research by presenting facilitation as a coherent pedagogical process. It should be noted that the model offers a conceptual framework adaptable to diverse institutional environments.

The proposed model includes five stages: preventive, operational, adaptational, integrational, and supportive facilitation, each corresponding to distinct phases of international students' academic trajectories. These stages involve differentiated pedagogical tasks and clearly defined roles of university managers, teachers, dormitory staff, and the International Relations Department. Over time, students transition from recipients of pedagogical accompaniment to active and autonomous participants in the educational process.

This study underscores the strategic importance of pedagogical facilitation as an essential element of university practice, rather than an auxiliary set of fragmented practices. The model emphasizes facilitation as a coherent system of pedagogical accompaniment integrated into the core educational practices of the university. From this perspective, the practical significance of the proposed model lies not only in theoretical systematization but also in its applicability to everyday university teaching practice.

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Поступила в редакцию 04.03.2026