

A Study on Satisfaction Evaluation and Improvement Paths for ASEAN International Students in Guangxi, China



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Abstract: Based on survey data from 100 ASEAN students studying in Guangxi, this study applied a satisfaction evaluation model and conducted correlation and regression analyses to examine overall satisfaction and its influencing factors. The results show that the overall satisfaction level is relatively high, with an average score of 3.74 and a satisfaction rate of 62%. Four main factors influence the overall satisfaction of ASEAN students in Guangxi: study status, living conditions, school evaluation and academic expenses. In addition, significant differences exist among students at different academic levels, students pursuing higher degrees tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. The education and teaching departments should address common issues faced by ASEAN students in Guangxi by improving the quality of international student recruitment, enhancing service levels for international students, and organizing regional competitions, so as to effectively improve the satisfaction of ASEAN students studying in Guangxi.

Keywords: Guangxi, ASEAN, international students, satisfaction

1. Introduction

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region holds a unique strategic position in China's international engagement, serving as the nation's sole provincial-level administrative unit that shares both land and maritime borders with the ASEAN. This geographical advantage has historically fostered robust exchanges and cooperation. In the contemporary era, this partnership has been significantly amplified by the implementation of the RCEP, further integrating Guangxi within the ASEAN economic and social sphere. The strength of this relationship is evidenced by trade figures; in 2024, the total import-export volume between Guangxi and ASEAN reached 397.82 billion yuan, a notable year-on-year increase of 17.2%. This sustained growth has cemented ASEAN's position as Guangxi's largest trading partner for an impressive

Beyond economic ties, this proximity and deepening relationship have profound implications for educational mobility. Influenced by a confluence of economic complementarity, geographical adjacency, and cultural and environmental similarities, Guangxi has emerged as a premier destination for ASEAN students pursuing higher education in China. As of the end of November 2024, official statistics recorded over 9,000 international students formally registered in Guangxi. Strikingly, more than 6,000 of these students originated from ASEAN member states, constituting 67% of the total international student cohort in the region ([Guangxi Foreign Affairs Office, 2025](#)). This demographic dominance underscores the critical importance of the ASEAN students to Guangxi's international education landscape.

Given that ASEAN students represent the primary cohort of international learners in Guangxi,

25 consecutive years ([Nanning Customs, 2025](#)).

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several pivotal questions demand scholarly and administrative attention. To what extent are these students satisfied with their academic and living experiences? What are the principal determinants that shape their levels of satisfaction? Furthermore, what strategic measures can institutions and policymakers adopt to enhance this satisfaction, thereby improving the overall quality and attractiveness of Guangxi's international education offerings for ASEAN students? Addressing these questions carries significant practical value for strengthening educational diplomacy and regional cooperation.

This study aims to empirically investigate the satisfaction levels of ASEAN students in Guangxi through a mixed-methods approach incorporating survey data and literature analysis. It seeks to delineate the underlying reasons for their satisfaction evaluations, identify the key influencing factors, and, based on these findings, propose a set of targeted strategies. The ultimate objective is to enhance Guangxi's institutional capacity in the recruitment, cultivation, and holistic support of international students, to deepen the special bond of Guangxi-ASEAN educational cooperation, and to contribute substantively to the construction of an open, inclusive, and mutually beneficial regional education community.

2. Research Methods

2.1 Questionnaire design

To facilitate this research, the author designed a comprehensive instrument titled the "Survey on China (Guangxi)-ASEAN Educational Exchange and Cooperation". The questionnaire was administered anonymously and provided in both Chinese and English to ensure accessibility and comprehension. It was structured to cover several key domains: basic demographic information (including nationality, host institution, degree level, and major), primary motivations for studying abroad, detailed conditions of study and life, the impact of unexpected public events, overall satisfaction, specific challenges encountered, and open-ended opinions or suggestions. This multi-faceted design was intended to provide a

holistic and nuanced reflection of ASEAN students' satisfaction during their sojourn in Guangxi.

2.2 Data collection

A dual-method sampling strategy was employed to ensure a representative and robust dataset. First, a stratified sampling technique was utilized, with online questionnaires distributed to ASEAN student cohorts across various universities in Guangxi via professional survey platforms. Second, to capture a more immediate and grounded perspective, a random sampling method was implemented through on-site intercept interviews. These were conducted in high-traffic areas such as student dormitories and teaching buildings at institutions with large ASEAN student populations, including Guangxi University, where questionnaires were completed based on direct student responses.

2.3 Evaluation method

Each survey item pertaining to satisfaction was measured using a standard five-point Likert scale, with the following anchors and corresponding numerical values: "Very Dissatisfied" (1 point), "Dissatisfied" (2 points), "Neutral" (3 points), "Satisfied" (4 points), and "Very Satisfied" (5 points). The analysis employed two key metrics:

Satisfaction Score (Ss). A calculated mean score, where higher values indicate stronger aggregate satisfaction. The calculation formulas are as follows:

$$Ss = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{S_i}{n} \quad si \in (1,2,3,4,5)$$

Satisfaction Rate (Sr). The percentage of respondents reporting either "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" with higher percentages indicating a greater proportion of contented respondents. The calculation formulas are as follows:

$$Sr = \frac{(N4+N5)}{n} \times 100\%$$

In these formulas, n represents the total sample size, S_i is the satisfaction score provided by the i -th respondent, and $N4$ and $N5$ denote the number of respondents who selected "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" respectively.

2.4 Data collection and screening

The data collection period spanned from

October 2023 to December 2024. A total of 107 questionnaires were initially gathered. A rigorous screening process was applied, resulting in 100 valid questionnaires (effective sample size $n = 100$) and the exclusion of 7 invalid responses. The criteria for invalidation were: (1) respondents whose nationality was not from an ASEAN member state; (2) respondents studying in Chinese provinces other than Guangxi; (3) questionnaires containing contradictory or inconsistent information in key response areas.

2.5 Sample distribution

The sample of 100 respondents comprised students from seven ASEAN nations: Vietnam (29), Malaysia (21), Indonesia (14), Cambodia (13), Laos (10), Thailand (10), and the Philippines (3). These students were enrolled in six higher education institutions across Guangxi, namely Guangxi University of Finance and Economics, Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Yulin Normal University, Guangxi Normal University, and Nanning Normal University. In terms of academic level, the cohort included 43 undergraduate students, 38 master's students, and 19 doctoral candidates. Their fields of study were

diverse, encompassing Economics (39), Management (33), Engineering (15), Literature (10), and Education (3).

3. Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Based on the questionnaire design and the feedback from the collected samples, the overall satisfaction of international students is assessed across five dimensions: school evaluation, academic expenses, study status, living conditions and emergency response. To ensure the psychometric soundness of the instrument, the survey data were subjected to statistical testing using SPSS 27. The results demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.773, which exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.7, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the scale (see Table 1). Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy yielded a value of 0.716, with Bartlett's test of sphericity achieving a significance level of $p < 0.0001$. These results confirm inter-variable correlations and affirm that the data are suitable for subsequent factor analysis (see Table 2).

Table 1 Reliability Statistics Results

Cronbach Alpha	Sample Size
.773	6

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test Results

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.716
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	215.881
	Degrees of Freedom	15
	Significance	<.001

4. Research Findings

4.1 Results of the satisfaction survey

4.1.1 Overall satisfaction

The aggregate findings indicate a generally positive disposition among ASEAN students in Guangxi. The mean overall satisfaction score (Ss) stands at 3.74, accompanied by a satisfaction rate (Sr) of 62%. This reflects a moderately high and generally favorable level of satisfaction. When

disaggregated by dimension, the satisfaction scores, in descending order, are: study status, living conditions, emergency response, school evaluation, and academic expenses. The ranking based on satisfaction rate follows a slightly different sequence: living conditions, study status, emergency response, academic expenses and school evaluation. The overall dissatisfaction rate is recorded at 10%. With the notable exception of academic expenses, the

dissatisfaction rates for all other dimensions remain presented in Table 3.
below 16%. Detailed results are systematically

Table 3 Satisfaction Scores and Satisfaction Rates of ASEAN Students in Guangxi

	Overall evaluation	school evaluation	academic expenses	study status	living conditions	emergency response
Satisfaction Scores	3.74	3.33	3.29	3.58	3.51	3.42
Satisfaction Rates(%)	62	40	45	58	60	47

4.1.2 Satisfaction across different student groups

The data reveal a discernible correlation between overall satisfaction and the students' academic level. Doctoral students reported the highest mean satisfaction score (4.21), followed closely by master's students (4.13). Undergraduate

students, however, reported a significantly lower score (3.19). This hierarchical pattern is consistently mirrored in the satisfaction rates, which align with the corresponding satisfaction scores across the three cohorts (see Table 4).

Table 4 Satisfaction Rates by Degree Level

Degree	Satisfaction rate(%)	Dissatisfaction rate(%)	Neutral evaluation(%)
PhD	78.9	0	21.1
Master	73.7	2.6	23.7
Bachelor	44.2	20.9	34.9

Analysis by academic discipline reveals another layer of variation. The overall satisfaction scores across majors display the following pattern: Management (4.03) > Engineering (3.80) > Other disciplines (3.77, aggregating Literature and Education) > Economics (3.46). Intriguingly, the ranking based on satisfaction rate does not perfectly

correspond with the score ranking. While Management students exhibit the highest satisfaction rate, students in Engineering report the lowest rate among the groups, suggesting a more polarized response within that cohort. Detailed results are provided in Table 5

Table 5 Satisfaction Rates of ASEAN Students by Academic Discipline

Academic Discipline	Satisfaction rate(%)	Dissatisfaction rate(%)	Neutral evaluation(%)
Economics	56.4	18.0	25.6
Management	72.7	6.1	21.2
Engineering	53.3	0	46.7
Other disciplines	61.5	7.7	30.8

4.2 Correlation analysis between overall satisfaction and influencing factors

To understand the relationship between overall satisfaction and the five predefined dimensions, a correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS 27. The results, summarized in Table 6, indicate that overall satisfaction is positively correlated with all five factors. Applying standard statistical criteria for correlation strength, the analysis reveals strong positive associations between overall satisfaction and

both Academic Experience ($r=0.782$) and Living Conditions ($r=0.603$). The correlations with Institutional Evaluation ($r=0.517$) and Academic Expenditure ($r = 0.407$) are of moderate strength. In contrast, the correlation with Emergency Response ($r =0.159$) is weak, indicating a minimal linear relationship.

Table 6 Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Overall Satisfaction and Influencing Factors

	Overall satisfaction	School evaluation	Academic expenses	Study status	Living conditions	emergency response
Pearson Correlation Coefficient	1	.517	.407	.782	.603	.159
Significance	/	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	.113
Sample Size	100	100	100	100	100	100

4.3 Multiple regression analysis of factors influencing overall satisfaction

To further quantify the predictive power of these factors, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The results are presented in Table 7. The model yields a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.849, with an F-test significance level of $p < 0.001$. This confirms that the regression model is statistically significant as a whole and that the sample data

reasonably approximate a normal distribution. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.721, indicating that the five factors collectively explain 72.1% of the variance in overall satisfaction, which denotes a robust explanatory power. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.816 falls within the acceptable range, indicating that the residuals are independent and confirming that the fundamental assumptions of the regression model are met.

Table 7 Summary of the Multiple Regression Model for Overall Satisfaction and Its Influencing Factors

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Change Statistics				Durbin-Watson
				R^2 Change	F Change	Degrees of Freedom	Significance of F Change	
1	.849	.721	.706	.721	48.480	(5,94)	<.001	1.816

5. Analysis and Discussion

Based on a synthesis of the survey data and relevant scholarly literature, the findings can be analyzed and discussed as follows:

5.1 Drivers of generally high satisfaction

Study status. ASEAN students reported a high level of satisfaction with their learning experience in Guangxi. This is largely due to Guangxi's long experience in educating ASEAN students and its well-developed support system. Since admitting students from Vietnam in the 1950s, Guangxi has accumulated more than 70 years of experience in this field (Zhang & Huang, 2008). Over time, Guangxi and ASEAN partners have built various platforms for academic exchange and cooperation (Ma, 2023), and have jointly developed 42 program standards and 207 course standards (Guangxi Education Department, 2024). These efforts have helped shape a comprehensive system for admission, instruction, and student support. Among the 58 students who expressed satisfaction with their learning experience,

53 stated that they could follow the coursework and found the content practical, while 5 were mainly satisfied with the attentive academic services they received. Twenty-eight students rated their learning experience as average. Fourteen students were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and most of them reported difficulty keeping up with coursework, mainly due to two reasons: weak Chinese or English language skills, and a lack of interest or difficulty in understanding certain course content.

Living conditions. According to the survey feedback, most students were satisfied with the living conditions in Guangxi. Two main reasons explain this finding. First, Guangxi is geographically close to ASEAN countries and shares a similar climate, natural environment, food culture, and customs. This makes it easier for ASEAN students to adapt. For example, students from Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar stated that they found the climate in Guangxi even more comfortable than in their home countries, and that the local food was both familiar and enjoyable.

Second, the strong transportation links between Guangxi and ASEAN countries provide convenience for students (Zhang, 2022). Guangxi's railways and highways connect directly with Vietnam, and flights are available between Guangxi and several ASEAN countries, including Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam. A total of 62 students indicated that travel between Guangxi and their home countries was convenient.

Emergency response. Among the 100 respondents, 56 studied in Guangxi during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of these 56 students, 44 continued their studies mainly through online classes, 7 continued through in-person teaching, and 5 experienced interruptions due to lack of internet access. About 70% graduated on time and received their degrees. Students who stayed in Guangxi also reported that they received good care and support during the pandemic.

Academic expenses. China's current fee policy for self-funded international students—based on the 1997 guidelines of the Ministry of Education—sets tuition levels that are much lower than those in countries such as the United States, Japan, and Australia. In addition, the cost of living in Guangxi is relatively low. As a result, ASEAN students in Guangxi generally face a lighter financial burden compared with studying elsewhere. The survey shows that 45% of students believed their expenses were low, and 18% found them acceptable. Only 37% were dissatisfied with academic expenses, not because the costs were high, but because they did not receive scholarships. Notably, 40% of respondents reported that they had been awarded a scholarship during their studies.

5.2 Sources of dissatisfaction among a minority

Despite the overall positive picture, a minority of students reported areas of concern. A primary challenge is cross-cultural adaptation, manifesting particularly in language acquisition, classroom pedagogy, and academic administration (Li, 2019). This issue is most acute at the undergraduate level, where Chinese language proficiency is often less developed. Limited prior study skills and life experience can exacerbate these difficulties. In this

survey, 52% of respondents cited inadequate language proficiency, 22% struggled to keep pace with coursework, 21% encountered significant life difficulties, and 18% perceived their courses as lacking relevance. Language barriers thus emerge as the core impediment, though in some cases, insufficient academic foundations traceable to variations in home-country basic education systems also play a role, necessitating pedagogical differentiation.

Another significant concern relates to professional development. A number of students reported insufficient internship opportunities and difficulties in securing employment within Guangxi, with 16.7% expressing explicit dissatisfaction linked to the absence of internships. This can be partly attributed to Guangxi's industrial structure, where traditional sectors (e.g., sugar processing, non-ferrous metals) and even emerging industries (e.g., automobiles) may offer a limited number of positions suitable for international graduates. While border trade and cross-border e-commerce are growing, they are still in developmental stages and lack the dense network of leading enterprises and industry clusters that provide ample internships and jobs.

Furthermore, a notable anxiety among some students pertains to the recognition and portability of their academic credentials. They expressed concern that their degrees from Guangxi universities might not be fully recognized by employers or relevant authorities in their home countries. This issue stems from two causes: (1) China currently maintains comprehensive mutual degree recognition agreements with only five of the ten ASEAN countries—Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Ministry of Education of China, 2022)—leaving graduates from the other five in a potential limbo; (2) The universities and academic programs in Guangxi are not highly ranked internationally and have relatively weak global recognition, for instance, Guangxi University is ranked approximately 97th nationwide and between the 300–400 range globally, with other institutions in

the region positioned even lower. This ranking gap is a key factor contributing to the lower satisfaction levels reported by international students.

Finally, several respondents highlighted non-academic quality-of-life issues, including limited extracurricular activities, challenges in social integration with local peers, and feelings of loneliness and isolation. Others experienced academic disruptions, such as delays in graduation, due to external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic or visa restrictions, which negatively colored their overall satisfaction.

5.3 Synthesis of influencing factors

The statistical analyses robustly demonstrate that Academic Experience, Living Conditions, Institutional Evaluation, and Academic Expenditure are significantly correlated with overall satisfaction and therefore constitute its primary determinants. In contrast, “Emergency Response” shows only a weak correlation and does not emerge as a significant influencing factor in this study. This finding indirectly reflects positively on Guangxi’s effective management of public emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the 56% of respondents who experienced pandemic-related disruptions, an overwhelming 91% reported being able to continue their studies through online or hybrid teaching modalities without incurring substantial additional academic expenses.

5.4 Discussion of sample bias and recommendations for future research

While the questionnaire sample size is small, it demonstrates high reliability and aligns well with existing literature. Multiple studies have found that the most significant challenge faced by ASEAN international students is the inability to engage effectively in academic learning due to language barriers (Rany Sam, 2013; Ryan & Twibel, 2000; Miki Sugimura, 2015). This indicates that academic performance is a matter of great concern for these students. Meanwhile, an increasing number of ASEAN international students have expressed growing concern over their living standards, cost of living, and overall convenience—encompassing

factors such as accommodation, diet, cultural environment, daily activities, and geographical conditions (JK Nachatar Singh et al., 2014; Andriani Kusumawati, 2020), these concerns align closely with the findings of the present study. In terms of university evaluation, numerous studies have confirmed the significant influence of institutional reputation on international students’ choices (McCarthy Sen & Fox Garrity, 2012; Lee CF, 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015), the findings of this survey similarly reveal that students tend to report lower satisfaction when their universities have a relatively weak reputation, align closely with and corroborate this established body of evidence. In addition, previous research has shown that international students are increasingly attentive to the financial costs involved when choosing their study destinations and institutions. Lower expenses can help reduce financial stress and enhance the overall study-abroad experience (Maringe, 2006; Nattavud Pimpa, 2003), the findings of this study are consistent with these conclusions.

Nevertheless, Future studies may expand the sample size and consider the following approaches: (1) Enlarge the sample within a single university to improve data accuracy. (2) Conduct in-depth interviews to obtain richer information on international students’ educational experiences, daily life, and psychological well-being, thereby enhancing the depth of the research.

6. Pathways for Enhancing the Satisfaction of ASEAN Students in Guangxi

6.1 Strategically improving the quality of student recruitment

The data suggest that high-caliber students, who typically possess stronger language skills and greater academic adaptability, tend to report higher satisfaction levels. Consequently, Guangxi should formulate a strategic, quality-oriented recruitment plan. Scholarship resources should be allocated preferentially to attract outstanding candidates with demonstrated academic excellence and higher levels of Chinese proficiency (e.g., higher HSK levels).

Leveraging existing networks, including Confucius Institutes, partner education authorities, and reputable third-party recruitment agencies, can help identify and attract such students. Upon enrollment, tailored academic support and training programs should be designed to ensure their smooth transition and sustained academic success.

6.2 Systematically enhancing comprehensive student services

To address the challenges faced by most international students, teaching should be tailored to their English proficiency, Chinese language skills, and existing knowledge, ensuring that their learning proceeds smoothly. In addition, To establish a regional International Student Service Association could facilitate best-practice sharing among institutions. The compilation and distribution of a comprehensive “Guangxi International Student Service Manual” would provide clear guidance. Universities should invest in forming professional, dedicated student service teams to offer holistic, one-stop support covering daily life, legal and visa consultation, part-time work permissions, internship placement, career guidance, and medical services. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of undergraduate students, who are most vulnerable to transition difficulties. Upgrading teaching facilities, learning spaces, and accommodation conditions will also tangibly enhance students’ sense of belonging and well-being.

6.3 Organizing high-impact regional competitions and engagement activities

To bolster students’ practical skills and employment prospects, Guangxi should leverage its China-ASEAN cooperation platforms to host high-profile academic competitions, innovation challenges, and cultural festivals exclusively for or prominently featuring ASEAN students. Awarding certificates of achievement from recognized regional bodies can significantly enhance participants’ competitiveness in the job market. Furthermore, organizing joint competitions or projects in collaboration with ASEAN enterprises can promote valuable two-way communication and serve as a

direct bridge connecting talented students with potential employers. Initiatives such as tourism service projects, cross-border livestreaming commerce, and vibrant student community programs can simultaneously enhance social interaction, alleviate loneliness, and provide income-generating opportunities for financially disadvantaged students.

6.4 Proactively developing robust emergency response mechanisms

In an era of global instability marked by pandemics, geopolitical tensions, and other disruptions, a proactive approach to crisis management is essential. While not a primary satisfaction driver in stable times, its absence can severely damage satisfaction during a crisis. Guangxi’s educational authorities and universities should collaboratively establish pre-arranged, detailed contingency plans and dedicate specific emergency funds. This ensures a rapid, coordinated, and effective response to safeguard student safety and well-being during unforeseen events. Concurrently, distance and online education systems must be further refined and institutionalized to guarantee the uninterrupted continuity of learning, thereby preventing graduation delays and preserving academic progress during disruptions.

7. Conclusion

The overall satisfaction of ASEAN students studying in Guangxi is at a moderately high level, with an average score of 3.74 and a satisfaction rate of 62%. Most ASEAN students expressed high satisfaction with their studies and life in Guangxi. Furthermore, students pursuing higher degrees reported higher overall satisfaction, and those majoring in Management showed significantly higher satisfaction than students in other disciplines. This indicates that the ASEAN students who adapt best to studying in Guangxi are doctoral students and those in the Management field.

Analysis of the relationship between overall satisfaction and influencing factors shows that learning conditions, living conditions, university evaluation, academic expenses, and emergency

response can strongly explain overall satisfaction. Among these factors, learning conditions, living conditions, university evaluation, and academic expenses have high Pearson correlation coefficients with overall satisfaction, whereas emergency response has a low correlation. Therefore, the main factors influencing overall satisfaction are learning conditions, living conditions, university evaluation, and academic expenses. This suggests that ASEAN students' satisfaction is primarily affected by the quality of education and teaching, academic support services, adaptability to life in Guangxi, and the overall reputation of their universities.

The main reasons for lower satisfaction among ASEAN students include language barriers leading to difficulties in learning and daily life, perceived unfairness in scholarship allocation, low international reputation and limited recognition of degrees of Guangxi universities, and a lack of extracurricular activities, which contributes to feelings of isolation.

To systematically enhance the satisfaction of ASEAN students studying in Guangxi, this study proposes four strategic pathways. First, optimize admission quality by adopting diversified selection mechanisms and scholarship incentives to attract applicants with stronger Chinese proficiency and higher overall competence, complemented by personalized training plans. Second, provide differentiated instruction based on ASEAN students' language proficiency to ensure the quality of their coursework, improve service systems by establishing dedicated associations and on-campus support teams that provide streamlined services—ranging from visa processing to daily life and employment guidance—to strengthen students' sense of belonging. Third, enrich cultural and practical engagement by leveraging China–ASEAN platforms to organize competitions, university–enterprise collaborations, and social practice programs, thereby enhancing students' competitiveness and social integration. Fourth, reinforce emergency response mechanisms by developing contingency plans and improving financial support and remote-teaching measures to safeguard student safety and ensure academic

continuity.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by Guangxi Education Science “14th Five-Year Plan” Project (2023): A Study on Deepening China–ASEAN Educational Exchange and Cooperation in the Post-Pandemic Era — A Case Study of a University in Guangxi (2023C633).

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How to Cite: Chen, Y. (2025). A Study on Satisfaction Evaluation and Improvement Paths for ASEAN International Students in Guangxi, China. *Contemporary Education and Teaching Research*, 06(11), 487-496. <https://doi.org/10.61360/BoniCETR252019131104>