

Adjusting to life at the ANU Information for International Students

It can be exciting and rewarding to travel to a new country in order to study.

On arrival in a new country it is quite common for people to experience some culture shock. This is a normal reaction to having many new experiences all at once. Culture shock can make some people feel overwhelmed and homesick. Emotions such as sadness, loneliness, fear, tiredness and confusion can be normal, though at other times you may feel hopeful, pleased, excited, independent and confident.

Here are some tips that others have found helpful while settling in:

- Allow time to become acquainted with different aspects of the Australian culture - don't feel you have to find out everything during your first week.
- Eat well and allow time to recover from jetlag. You may need more sleep than usual.
- As soon as possible, establish some routine to your life.
- Keep active. Physical activity often lifts our mood.
- Fix up your room. Create a place for yourself that's comfortable and familiar.
- Where possible choose to involve yourself in everyday life. Although some aspects of Australian culture may be unfamiliar, over time you will gain greater confidence in your ability to respond to new situations.
- Cultivate your "multicultural identity". Be someone who can understand and acknowledge that there are different ways of seeing and doing things.
- Interacting with local students will help you to learn about life in Australia. You can do this by participating in activities such as:
 - [SET4ANU](#). A free program where new students are assigned to a more experienced student volunteer
 - Clubs and Societies that cater to your interests
 - [Get Up and Go](#). A free program to help manage your mood and feel less isolated by walking regularly with another student (see ANU Counselling website for registration information)
 - Activities run by Halls and Colleges
 - [ANU Counselling](#) group programs
 - It is likely that you will also have chances to meet people through tutorials, labs, or other study related interactions.
- Develop friendships and social networks with other students from your home country, and with other international students who will face similar challenges.
- It is best to avoid isolating yourself, but choose social activities that suit you (e.g. sports or games might work well on days when making conversation feels too difficult).
- Stay in contact with family and friends back home. Write letters, send e-mails or photos and make telephone calls when you can.

More tips to assist you as you settle in:

- Lift your mood by making sure that you have some humour in your life. Read a funny book or watch a comedy. Listen to upbeat music or read something inspiring.
- Write a list of the reasons why you originally decided to study in Australia. Ask others who support your decision to study abroad to remind you why it is worthwhile.
- Think about other times you've been away from home and what helped you then.
- Remember that travel is not always easy. Times of feeling low are part of the normal adjustment to living in a new culture. The 'curve of adjustment' model suggests we often feel initially happy, then go through a period of feeling lonely and unhappy before feeling settled, confident and content.
- Be especially safe in using any drugs and alcohol. You are outside your normal environment and may be putting yourself more at risk. Using alcohol and drugs can increase psychological symptoms such as feeling low, unmotivated or paranoid.
- Seek help and support when needed. ANU Counselling, The Students Associations (ANUSA / PARSA), University Chaplains and the National Health Co-op may be good places to start.
- Talking to, and receiving support from family and friends (even when they are in a different country) is often helpful.
- If you live on campus you can also talk to your Senior Resident, Head or Deputy Head of your Hall, College or Lodge for support and help.

ANU Counselling can help you work out what to do if you encounter any stress or problems.

Some of the things international students talk about in counselling are: loneliness and homesickness, academic difficulties, speaking up in tutorials, confusion and anxiety, relationship problems, financial pressures, and many other things as well.

In addition to individual counselling sessions, we also run psychological health and wellbeing group programs, and provide Talking Tip podcasts on our website. We also run Get Up and Go, a program to help manage your mood and feel less isolated by walking regularly with another student.

ANU Counselling is **free and confidential**. Appointments can be made by telephoning **6178 0455**.