

Advanced Education Pathway



“Be prepared for the challenge”

The first signs of starting to settle down in a foreign country are not that you start to feel comfortable with the place but that you start to hate it. Most students who go abroad to study experience this breaking-in process which makes them think why on earth they left home in the first place.... Students need not fear and need not change their plans of going outside their own country to study. I promise that the problem is not insurmountable and in fact it can be turned into a first class challenge.

Upon arriving in a foreign country most international students are forced to deal with the challenge of “how can I cope with homesickness”? Though there is no magic way of making the problem go away there ways of making the problem more palatable.

- For a start, talk to other people about your place, tell them about the similarities and differences between your country and theirs.
- Talk to your international student advisors about your problems, they know what you are going through, as they probably have been through these problems themselves. Every worthwhile school has advisors who are more than willing to listen to the problems of foreign students. Good advisors are more than happy to chat with new students and to see how they can help them get over their problems.
- I strongly advise homesick students to take part in all school programs and to get involved in school life as quickly as possible. Most schools have programmes designed to help international students bring their culture to the college. For example, international students bring food from different counties helping to make a cultural experience for all, as each brings a bit of his or her own country to the feast.
- Meeting other internal students is a good way of dealing with the problem and getting over your homesickness.



The second problem that most international students go through is culture shock, as at first everything in the new country seems unusual and pretty soon the new place becomes overwhelming. Most students are not amused when they try to buy something and the shopkeeper does not understand their accent. Nor is it amusing when the student gets lost every time he or she leaves his house just because the new neighbourhood seems strange.

- Soon, international students realise that they live in a different country and that they HAVE to learn new ways of coping. It is therefore imperative to learn quickly how the system works. Learning how the system works does not necessarily mean that the student fits in with the locals. All it means is that the student no longer stands out clearly as a foreigner.
- Getting to know the locals is a great help as they are part of the system and can provide the student with valuable tips on how to deal with a variety of issues.
- Getting to know the (new) town very well helps students get around easily and makes them feel more at home. The good thing is that eventually, most students view the town as their new home.

Coping with Culture Shock

Different people react differently to culture shock but almost all foreign students must cope with it to some degree. Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

1. Maintain your perspective. Try to remember that hundreds of students have come to Australia from other countries and have survived.
2. Evaluate your expectations. Your reactions to Australia and to your school will be the products both of the way things are here and the way you expect them to be. If you find yourself being confused or disappointed about something, ask yourself "What did I expect?" "Why?" "Are my expectations reasonable?" If you determine that your expectations are unreasonable, you can do much to reduce the amount of dissatisfaction.....and unhappiness....that you feel.
3. Keep an open mind. People here might do or say things that people at home would not do or say. Try to understand that they are acting according to their own set of values, and these are born of a culture different than yours. Avoid evaluating their behavior by the standards of your own country.

4. Learn from the experience. Moving to a new culture can be the most fascinating and educational experience of your life. It is an opportunity to explore an entire new way of living-and to compare it to your own. There is no better way to become aware of your own values and attitudes and to broaden your point of view!

Visit the International Student Office often! A discussion with the foreign student advisor may help you find a good perspective. It is also a good place to meet other foreign students and learn how they are handling problems and making adjustments.

The third problem foreign students are forced to cope with is locals treating them as outsiders.

The student is advised not to take personally what may appear to be ridiculous questions. People often ask 'funny' questions out of ignorance. "Do you have cars in your country or other idiotic questions" in no way is intended to insult the student. It only means that the local has never travelled abroad.

- Try telling people about your country and explaining to them how life is back home. If you see that they are not interested in what you are saying just joke and discretely let them know that their impression of your country is not exactly right.

In closing, I advise the international student not to be intimidated and to remember that at the end all works out well. In fact, on completion of their studies most international students are sad to leave their new country and when they arrive in their home country "homesickness" begins to work in reverse. Oh how I wish I was back overseas!

