

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

> **Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy**

> **Mental Health & Wellbeing resources**

> **The Mental Health and Wellbeing Team**

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Adjusting to life in Australia as an International Student

Are you an international student who is new to studying in Australia? Here is some information to get yourself comfortable in your new home. If you are feeling anxious, unsettled or disorientated when you first arrive - remember it is completely normal. You are likely experiencing culture shock. It takes some time to adjust, but things will become better as we grow and adapt to our new surroundings!

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What is culture shock?

Living in a new country can be a stressful experience. It is not unusual to experience culture shock and homesickness during your first few weeks, and even months in Australia. You will notice differences in teaching styles, food culture, in the way people interact and dress, and how things are done. This may initially be frustrating but becoming accustomed to these new practises takes time.

Common signs you may be experiencing culture shock include:

- ▶ Missing family and friends from your home country
- ▶ Feelings of loneliness
- ▶ Avoiding people
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Anger and confusion
- ▶ Not being able to eat or sleep (including overeating or oversleeping)
- ▶ Crying for no reason
- ▶ Feeling disorientated

Remember: Everyone experiences culture shock differently. It is completely OK to allow yourself to express it in your own way as long as it is safe and not causing you or anyone else harm

Strategies and adjusting to life in Australia

- ▶ **Allow yourself some downtime:** Most degrees are a minimum of three years and can feel even longer if you don't take some time out to recharge. Include time to relax and enjoy life as a student in your schedule, whether it's a regular night out with friends or non-uni related activities.
- ▶ **Set goals and plan a schedule:** Lecturers will likely not be checking on you for assignments and ensuring you get to class. Freedom feels good, but it also means you need to take responsibility for getting your work completed. Use your calendar and enter all your due dates and extra-curricular events. Break up assignments into smaller goals to prevent the need to stay up all night the day before they are due.
- ▶ **Student village activities:** If you are living at a student village, there are often plenty of activities, including pizza nights, movie nights, barbecues, and other events in the common room. It is a great opportunity for you to meet others, including those from other countries and adjust to life in Australia.
- ▶ **Maintain some of the routines and rituals you had at home:** This can include small things such as continuing to drink a certain type of coffee/tea or eating nostalgic foods. It may also include maintaining involvement in bigger events such as celebrating a national day in your country of origin with a group of friends.
- ▶ **Communicate with friends and family at home:** Regular communication with those at home about your experiences of study and life in Australia, through emails, phone calls, video calls and letters, is vital. Not only does it help to keep you connected with your support system, but it also assists your friends and family to understand your experiences, which will smooth the transition when you visit home.
- ▶ **Listen, observe, and ask questions:** Adjusting to a new culture and way of life takes time. Allow yourself time to observe those around you, including verbal and non-verbal communication patterns. Don't be afraid to ask questions if there are things you do not understand as this will reduce the chance of confusion or any misunderstanding. Learning about the local slang can be a fun way to discover Australian culture and a way to make new friends.

- ▶ **Try to maintain a sense of perspective:** When confronted with difficulties, remind yourself that living and studying abroad is a challenge and it is normal to feel stressed, overwhelmed and out of your depth at times.
- ▶ **Remember your goals and reasons for deciding to come to Australia:** Try to recall or make a list of the reasons you initially wanted to study abroad in the first place.
- ▶ **Focus on the positive:** Listing positive events or changes within yourself that have occurred since you arrived may also assist with putting things into perspective.

Adjusting to life in Australia and university life

University is not just about studying. There are lots of different activities you can do in your university life. Many platforms and societies are available that have opportunities to meet like-minded people:

- ▶ [WesternLife](#) – this is a virtual community where you can find all sorts of activities! From joining clubs, volunteering, playing sports, attending exciting events, resources for your well-being, and seeking help. You can explore a lot more!
 - Make sure you follow the counselling team on [WesternLife](#) where workshops and activities are held that focus on learning new skills and meeting new people
 - Diversity Fest is an annual event that provides opportunities for students to enrich their communities and social networks
- ▶ [Out and About](#) – this program features discounted rates to students who wish to try a variety of activities and adventures. This is a great way to meet new people while bushwalking, sightseeing, and even exploring!

University support

WSU resources:

If adjusting to life in Australia becomes a barrier that may affect your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- ▶ **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30pm. Alternatively, or email counselling@westernsydney.edu.au

- ▶ **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- ▶ **WSU [Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- ▶ **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

- ▶ **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- ▶ **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- ▶ **Leave of absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community Support

- ▶ **Lifeline** (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**

Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).

- ▶ **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- ▶ **Study Australia** provides support services for international students with all-rounded services that help you adjust to life in Australia.

- ▶ **Daily groceries:**
 - ▶ These are the 3 biggest supermarkets in Australia that you may buy all your daily groceries from:
 - **Woolworths** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Coles** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Aldi** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)

- ▶ **Home appliances:**
 - ▶ You can buy home appliances, clothes, or some other groceries at these stores:
 - **Big W** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Kmart** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Target** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Ikea** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)

- ▶ **Pharmacy:**
 - ▶ You can buy medication or other cosmetic products here:
 - **Chemist Warehouse** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Priceline** - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)

- ▶ **Finding event, activities and people nearby:**
 - **TimeOut** – This media and hospitality group brings inspiration to locals and visitors alike in exploring and enjoying the best of the city
 - Available on [Instagram](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Website](#)
 - **UrbanList** – This indie media house curates recommendations that range from lifestyle, travel, and local food/drink to locals and visitors
 - Available on [Instagram](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Concrete Playground** – This group shares the latest places, events, and experiences to its Australian cities
 - Available on [Instagram](#) / [Facebook](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Meetups** - Meet new people and groups who share your interests through online and in-person events.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)

Resources

- ▶ [Podcasts](#)
- ▶ [Videos](#)
- ▶ [Apps](#)

Podcasts

Top 8 Podcasts for International Students in Australia

This article provides a variety of podcasts to tune into and caters to different interests ranging from the history of Australia, local language of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, finance and budgeting while in a new country, and heaps more!

<https://insiderguides.com.au/podcasts-for-international-students/>

“Episode 5: Random things we love about living in Australia”

Expats from London, Annie and Steve share their experiences of living in Australia and explore the challenges and opportunities of the transition between countries. They share their own stories about what they love about living in Australia, while providing comfort to those who may be missing home and settling in.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/episode-5-random-things-we-love-about-living-in-australia/id1642473786?i=1000580134212>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4rm8C9riMQ3BRckZx9ZP8r?si=zGTaAw3uS36QhIums3OvrA>

Videos

Overseas Students Australia

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxGtCA1BbYrkxFpTYHxkobQ/videos>

OzTrek Services (North America to Australia)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE4mDCSfuxrQO50hAvxUwXw/featured>

Apps

► Navigating student life:

- **EmergencyPlus** - The app uses your smartphone's GPS functionality so you can provide Triple Zero (000) call-takers with your exact location in an emergency. It also lists other handy phone numbers if you have a health concern (Healthdirect); need help in a flood, storm or cyclone (SES); or want to report a crime (Crime Stoppers).
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **Duolingo** - Learning a new language is often part of being an international student. Living in a homestay is a big advantage as it allows you to practice every day with your host family. But if you need a little more help or want to master another language then Duolingo is a must-have. The top-rated app helps you read, write, listen and speak in 30+ languages using gamification to make learning fun and simple.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **TripGo** - Getting to/from school and travelling around your new hometown is a breeze with TripGo. Compare travel times and different modes of transport including train, bus, tram, car/taxi/rideshare, bicycle and walking.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **CampusGroups** - To access WesternLife you will need to use this app with the following steps.
 - Download the **CampusGroups** App ([iOS](#) / [Android](#))
 - Search "Western Sydney University" to access *WESTERNLife*
 - Sign in with your Western Sydney ID
- **Western Sydney University** - The Western Sydney University app gives you access to view campus maps, check your timetable or student email, get in touch with academic staff, find out what's happening on campus or access library and course material.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **Lost On Campus** - If you're having trouble finding your way around your campus, the Lost on Campus app can help. It features detailed maps of university campuses around Australia, showing you where to find lecture theatres and classrooms
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **Time Buddy** - This allows you to put multiple time zones in one space. It provides hour by hour scheduling that you can copy and paste into your calendar

- Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- **Uni Days** - This app provides students with many discounts on items such as clothing, technology, and even food!
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
- ▶ **For accommodations:**
 - **Flatmates** - You can find accommodation and flatmates on this app
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
 - **Realestate.com** - Find accommodation in your area on this app
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#) / [Website](#)
- ▶ **Finding restaurants nearby:**
 - **Uber Eats** - This app will help you find food nearby or delivered to your house
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
 - **Yelp** - This app will provide reviews and rankings of the restaurants near you or other services you may need such as hair salons or postal services - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)

Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

Please find the attached PDF document [here](#).

References:

[Western Sydney University- Disruption to Studies Policy](#)

[Western Sydney University- Withdrawing without academic penalty](#)

[Western Sydney University- Counselling Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Student Welfare Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternNow](#)

[Western Sydney University- Chaplaincy](#)

[Western Sydney University- TalkCampus](#)

[Western Sydney University- Out and About](#)

[Study Australia](#)

[Beyond Blue- Online chat](#)