

Settling In and Making New Friends

Welcome! We wanted to welcome you by giving you some information about Australia, studying in Australia, and making friends at University. We come from countries in South East Asia, from Japan, and Latin America. Here are our suggestions.

Food: eating, shopping and cooking at home

Australia is a multicultural society, so there is a wide range of different food available. There are markets and shops that will sell the food that you want. After a very short time in Australia, we could buy most of the various foods we like to cook and eat regularly.

It is good idea to know how to cook three or four of your favourite meals as it makes life easier when you first arrive. Restaurant food can be quite expensive and most Australians like to eat at home.

Climate: finding out about your city

Some of us were not aware of the size of Australia and its many different climates. The weather in each capital city is quite different. For example, Brisbane has a tropical climate, but Melbourne has hot summers and cold winters. The different climate and environmental conditions were a surprise for most of us. In fact some of us needed to buy warmer coats, while others wished they had packed fewer heavy clothes to take to Australia. It took some time to get used to these different conditions.

It is good to find out more about the climate of the particular city you are going to, especially the typical summer and winter weather. It will still seem strange for a while and it will take time to adjust if you are coming from very different weather conditions, for example, from the middle of a cold winter to the middle of a hot summer.

Feeling lonely: that's natural

It is natural to experience some loneliness and homesickness in any new place. These feelings are called 'culture shock', and in a new culture with a different language, it is common to feel 'out of place' and strange. Everything here is so different. Our life style has changed, and even at university the teaching and learning are different. We all feel lonely at times, but at other times we feel as though we are coping well.

What has helped us is having a group of friends in Australia. Living with others in shared accommodation or "homestay" has helped. We also regularly email and phone our friends and family at home.

For further information:

- Contact the Academic Skills Adviser on your campus
- Visit our web pages on myACU.

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Making friends and meeting people: that's important

We found there were many opportunities to meet other international students as well as local Australian students. We met most of our friends at university on the campus, but we also met other international students during social activities. The university organises a series of orientation events and other welcoming social activities during the year, so international students can meet students from a variety of year levels, courses, and cultural backgrounds.

The following people can help you to find out more about the academic and social orientation activities on your campus:

- International Student Adviser on your campus
- The Student Association
- Student Services

Meeting friends through study activities

It is important to talk to other people before, during, and after classes. When you talk to other students about your study, it is easier to begin a friendship. Some lecturers encourage students to interact and meet with each other. Some students also form their own study groups as the semester progresses. All of these situations help friendships to develop.

During the semester, we made friends with people from many different cultures and countries. As English was the language we had in common, we all spoke English to each other, so our English improved as our friendship groups broadened.

Balancing work and study: seeing other faces and places

Australia is a very diverse and interesting country. Although we find that we have to study very hard because we are studying in our second (or third) language, we also have made time to visit different places in the cities where we live. If you want to visit the beaches and bushlands, they are only a few hours train trip or drive away from most large cities in Australia.

We have found that the best time to go travelling was after the examination period at the end of each semester. Some of us booked flights to The Great Barrier Reef in Queensland or saw the Opera House and Harbour in Sydney. Other friends visited the snowfields or The Great Ocean Road in Victoria. Many of us have travelled to these wonderful places with friends we had made at ACU during the semester.