

# International Students'

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## ^ Information Pack



# International Students Information Pack

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Disclaimer:

Information in this document is accurate as of 13 August 2020.

## Introduction

Moving to a new country to study and adjusting to a new culture can be very stressful. It is a BIG transition to make. **International students face unique mental health stressors.** You might be facing language barriers, pressures from home, culture shock, loneliness or homesickness, or financial worries. All these experiences are normal, but they can make you feel anxious.

**It's important that you take care of yourself.** Even though headspace Bondi Junction cannot provide counselling for international students, **there are many other supports available for international students** – this document explains some, and gives links to others.

**Disclaimer:** Information in this document was accurate as of 7 August 2020. Please check with individual providers to confirm costs etc.

## What is Mental Health?

Our mental health can change over time.

**Good mental health** has us feeling really good about ourselves, our future and our life.

A **mental health problem** might have us feeling a bit up and down, sad, irritable, or anxious for a short time.

A **mental illness** might see us being really sad, hopeless, confused and without hope for the future. For example, major depression has us feeling low and losing interest in activities for most of the day, almost every day.

It's normal to feel down sometimes, and there are things we can do to help us feel better. This might include talking about what we are dealing with and speaking to a counsellor or mental health professional. **By taking action to find good support, you can feel better and more settled in your new home!**

## Translated Mental Health Resources

If you'd prefer to get mental health information in a language other than English, check out the link which has diverse information on many topics.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/who-does-it-affect/multicultural-people/translated-mental-health-resources>

## Need a free interpreter?

If you don't use English as your first language you can get free translation support from the below services

### Sydney Health Care Interpreter Service

<https://www.slhd.nsw.gov.au/interpreters/>

**Phone:** (02) 9515 0030

### Translating and Interpreting Service

<https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

**Phone:** 131 450

## Medicare and Overseas Health Cover (OSHC)

### What is Medicare?

Medicare is Australia's public health care system that provides Australian citizens and permanent residents with access to a range of medical services, free care in public hospitals and reduced cost prescriptions.

### Am I covered by Medicare?

Some international students may be eligible for reciprocal health care (a temporary Medicare card).

Australia has agreements with 11 countries that covers the cost of medically necessary care when Australians visit certain countries and visitors from these countries visit Australia. To see if you are eligible go to:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/reciprocal-health-care-agreements>

**If you're not eligible for Medicare, overseas health cover replaces it.** Most international students in Australia must have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) to cover the entire period of their stay.



medicare



### What is Overseas Health Cover (OSHC)?

OSHC is health cover that you are required to have as an international student in Australia and must cover the length of your stay. This would have been organised when you arranged your visa. OSHC benefits are similar to the cover Australians receive through Medicare. OSHC covers in-hospital and out-of-hospital medical assistance, prescription medications and emergency ambulance assistance. OSHC is provided by private health insurance. Make sure you know the extent of your cover to avoid any unwanted charges.

If you are from Sweden, Norway, Belgium, New Zealand you may be exempt from OSHC.

For further information on exemptions and OSHC read the Department of Health website:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Overseas+Student+Health+Cover+FAQ-1#oshccover>

### What should I do if I have a complaint about my OSHC provider?

If you face a situation where you feel like you're being taken advantage of or unfairly treated in regards to your OSHC, you can contact the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman (PHIO). It's a free service designed to help you out of trouble!

<http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/about/private-health-insurance>

**Phone:** 1300 362 072 (within Australia)

**Email:** [phio.info@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:phio.info@ombudsman.gov.au)

## What does OSHC cover? The costs of getting support...

Every OSHC provider is different so check your cover by contacting your Overseas Health Cover provider.

### Doctor / General practitioner (GP)

Most Overseas Health Covers will cover all or some of the cost of seeing a doctor (also called a GP).

When you see a GP in Australia there is a set fee for the consultation called the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) fee. Doctors can charge more than these benefit amounts. If they do, you will need to pay to cover the difference (an out-of-pocket cost, also called a 'gap' fee). Depending on the doctor, you may have to pay a gap fee of \$30-50, so call ahead to ask about this or ask when you make your appointment. Most OSHCs cover the MBS fee only.

Your OSHC may direct bill your doctor at many clinics, which means you may not have to pay the full amount at the appointment. Otherwise you'll need to pay for your appointment then be reimbursed by your OSHC provider later.

### Psychologists and psychiatrists

To see a psychologist or a psychiatrist you need a referral from a GP. Psychology is under the specialist part of your cover. If the psychologist is registered under Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) then your OSHC may pay around 85%\* of the MBS rates. Psychologists may charge more than the MBS rate. You will need to pay upfront and get a refund of 85% of the MBS rate with your OSHC. For psychiatry, check with your OSHC provider for the cover you have.

### For example

#### **You go to the GP to get a referral:**

The MBS fee for item 23 (a GP visit) is \$37.60. You visit a doctor that charges \$50. You have an OSHC that pays 100% of the MBS fee for GP consultations. This means you would get back \$37.60. Your out-of-pocket cost would be \$12.40.

#### **With your referral you go to a Psychologist:**

The MBS fee for item 80110 (psychology visit) is \$99.75. You visit a psychologist that charges \$140. You have an OSHC that pays 85% of the MBS fee for specialists. This means you would get back \$84.80. Your out-of-pocket cost would be \$55.20.

### Australian hospitals and OSHC?

If you are feeling sick then visit a doctor at a local medical centre first. This is the cheapest upfront option and you may be able to claim from your OSHC provider.

Hospitals are for emergency situations – either life-threatening or an injury/illness that is getting worse quickly. If you need to visit a public hospital then call your health cover provider as the hospital may charge you a fee.

**If it is a medical emergency, call an Ambulance by phoning 000**

**Check your policy for what's covered**

Some OSHC insurers have arrangements with preferred hospitals. These arrangements can mean that if you use a preferred hospital or health provider, there are less gap costs, less paperwork and other benefits. Check your insurer's website to find health providers and hospitals that bill direct with your insurer.



## University preferred OSHC providers:

Different Universities have different preferred providers. To see the full list of available providers, see [www.privatehealth.gov.au/health\\_insurance/overseas/overseas\\_student\\_health\\_cover.htm](http://www.privatehealth.gov.au/health_insurance/overseas/overseas_student_health_cover.htm)

### UNSW - Medibank Private

More info: <https://www.medibankoshc.com.au/unsw/>

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/overseas-student-health-cover>

### USYD - Allianz

More info: <https://allianzassistancehealth.com.au/en/student-visa-oshc/cover/>

<https://sydney.edu.au/students/overseas-student-health-cover-oshc.html>

### UTS - Medibank Private

More info: <https://www.medibank.com.au/overseas-health-insurance/oshc/uts/>

<https://www.uts.edu.au/future-students/international/essential-information/being-international-student-australia/overseas>

### TAFE NSW - Medibank Private

More info: <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/international/why-tafe-nsw/life-in-nsw/health>

## How do I check my policy?

Call your provider – their number should be on your card.

### Medibank OSHC

Call 134 148 and they'll let you know which treatments are included in your policy.

If you're a student with Medibank Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC), you can call the Student Health and Support Line on 1800 887 283 at any time of the day or night. They'll offer you advice and over-the-phone counselling as part of your cover. They also have an interpreter service so you can speak to someone in your own language.

### Allianz OSHC

International Students using Allianz can call 13 67 42 and they'll let you know which treatments are included in your policy.

## Free and low cost services

There are many services that are free or low cost, even for International Students. These are listed below.

### The Psychology Clinic at UNSW

The UNSW Psychology Clinic provides a broad range of clinical psychology services to adults, young people, children and families at low cost. The clinicians at the Psychology Clinic are trainees completing their Master of Clinical Psychology at UNSW. The Psychology Clinic operates on a fee-for-service basis with fees being used to support the clinical, training and outreach activities of the clinic.

<http://clinic.psy.unsw.edu.au/>

**Phone:** (02) 9385 3042

**Waitlist:** To check status of waiting lists: <http://clinic.psy.unsw.edu.au/our-services#WaitingLists>

**Fees:** \$40 per 50-minute session (standard fee) or \$20 per 50-minute session (reduced fee for full-time adult students & holders of government-issued concession cards)

### ACAP Psychology Clinic at the Australian College of Applied Psychology (ACAP)

The Psychology Clinic is a not-for-profit psychology teaching clinic that offers a range of psychological services to the community at a nominal fee or at no cost. The Psychology Clinic is located in Sydney city centre.

Appointments are available Monday to Friday between 9.00am to 5.00pm, with the last appointment scheduled at 4.00pm. Individual therapy appointments are usually 50 minutes in length. Initial appointments may be scheduled for up to 90 minutes.

<https://www.acap.edu.au/current-students/acap-psychology-clinic/>

**Phone:** (02) 8236 8070

**Location:** Level 11, 255 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW Australia

**Email:** [psychclinic@clinic.acap.edu.au](mailto:psychclinic@clinic.acap.edu.au)

**Fees:** No Standard Individual Consultation, Psychometric Assessment and Report Fees are charged for people who are full-time students or whose main source of income is an Australian Government pension or income support payment. Otherwise the fees are:

\$20 for Standard Individual Consultation, \$40.00 for Group enrolment fee (one-off enrolment fee on first session. Group sessions are free of charge after the first session), \$300 for psychometric assessment and report fee.

### UTS Psychology Clinic

The UTS Psychology Clinic is a not-for-profit teaching and research clinic that provides quality services to the community at a low cost.

Services are provided by Provisional Psychologists in their final years of training (Year 5 and Year 6) under the supervision of highly experienced registered Clinical Psychologists and Neuropsychologists.

<https://www.uts.edu.au/about/graduate-school-health/clinical-psychology/what-we-do/uts-psychology-clinic>

**Phone:** (02) 9514 7339

**Email:** [psychclinicadmin@uts.edu.au](mailto:psychclinicadmin@uts.edu.au)

**Location:** One Hundred Broadway Clinic, One Hundred Broadway (Corner Broadway and Abercrombie Streets), Ultimo NSW 2007

**Opening hours:** Tuesday to Friday 9.00 am – 6.00 pm (last appointment 5.00 pm). Consultations are by prior appointment only.

**Fees** are \$25 per session. \$12.50 for concession.

To make an appointment call 02 9514 7339 or email on [psychclinicadmin@uts.edu.au](mailto:psychclinicadmin@uts.edu.au).

### headspace Camperdown

International students can go to headspace Camperdown through using their OSHC.

For most students insured under Allianz your fees will be billed to Allianz OSHC directly and you won't have to pay anything. If you're with another OSHC provider, you may need to pay for your appointment then be reimbursed by your OSHC provider later.

You may also need to get a referral from a GP.

Call your OSHC and find out if you are covered for psychology sessions, then contact headspace Camperdown to chat about getting an appointment.

<https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/headspace-camperdown/>

**Phone:** (02) 9114 4100

**Location:** Level 2, 97 Church Street, Camperdown, New South Wales 2050

**Email:** [headspace.camperdown@sydney.edu.au](mailto:headspace.camperdown@sydney.edu.au)

**Opening hours:** 8.30am-5.30pm, Mon-Fri.

### NewAccess



NewAccess is a free service available to anyone, developed by beyondblue to provide free and confidential support to help you tackle day-to-day pressures.

They provide six free sessions with a NewAccess coach, specially trained and experienced, supporting you in setting practical goals that will get you back on track.

Read More about the NewAccess <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess>

You can also Call 1800 010 630 to talk to a NewAccess coach.

### WAYS

WAYS is based in Bondi and accepts students for counselling and support - <http://ways.org.au/>

### Free Sexual Health Service



#### Sydney Sexual Health Clinic

If you think you might have a sexually transmissible infection you can visit the Sydney Sexual Health Clinic. They provide testing, treatment and management of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), including HIV. If you think you might have been at risk for an STI or HIV do the online risk assessment: <https://www.sshc.org.au/amiok> and then make an appointment on (02) 9382 7440.

<https://www.sshc.org.au/>

**Location:** Level 3, Nightingale Wing, Sydney Hospital, Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000

Sydney Sexual Health Clinic services are **free** if you are:

- **Anyone** showing STI symptoms
- Under 24, showing no symptoms
- Over 24, showing no symptoms but you know you have had contact with someone with infection
- Gay or bisexual
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

- Sex worker (They also have interpreter, and Mandarin and Thai speaking staff that can help).
- Injected drug user

Need advice on sexual health?



### **NSW Sexual Health Infolink**

Ask any questions about HIV, sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.

<https://www.shil.nsw.gov.au/>

**Phone:** 1800 451 624

**Opening Hours:** Weekdays 9am to 5.30pm

## Services for students at Specific Universities

All Universities and Tertiary education providers should have some sort of on-campus mental health support service for their students, whether it's a counsellor, psychologist, chaplain, nurse or social worker. Below are services available to students of some at Universities local to the Eastern Suburbs (of Sydney)

### University of New South Wales



UNSW  
SYDNEY

#### UNSW Counselling and Psychological Service (CAPS)

CAPS is a cost free counselling service for UNSW students. CAPS provides the students of UNSW with session-limited, individual counselling and psychological assistance, as well as group workshops related to academic, personal and psychological matters. They also provide crisis intervention and referral, and consultation.

'On the Day" consultations are available by appointment between 10.00am and 3.30pm, Monday to Friday (except Wednesday mornings) and are filled on a first come basis. For the morning appointments you should come to CAPS between 9.15 and 10.00am and for afternoon appointments come between 12.30 and 1.30pm. There are a limited number of appointments and the 'On the Day' consults fill up quickly at peak demand times during semester so be prepared to try again the next day. The "On the Day" consultation will last for 25-30 minutes. <https://student.unsw.edu.au/counselling>

**Phone:** (02) 9385 5418

**Location:** Level 2, East Wing, Quadrangle Building (E17), Kensington Campus

**Email:** [counselling@unsw.edu.au](mailto:counselling@unsw.edu.au)

**Opening hours:** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

### University Health Service at UNSW

If you have Medibank OSHC your medical fees will be billed to Medibank OSHC directly and you won't have to pay anything at your appointment. If you're with another OSHC provider, or if your membership card hasn't arrived yet, you'll need to pay for your appointment then be reimbursed by your OSHC provider later.

To make an appointment, you can call or by walking in and asking reception or [online booking system](#).

<http://www.healthservices.unsw.edu.au/>

**Phone:** (02) 9385 5425

**Location:** Ground Floor, East Quadrangle Building Kensington Campus

**Email:** [unihealth@unsw.edu.au](mailto:unihealth@unsw.edu.au)

**Opening hours:**

Monday to Thursday 8.00am-5.30pm (last appointment 5.15pm)

Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm (last appointment at 4.30pm)

### UNSW International Student Advisors

<https://student.unsw.edu.au/consult>

The International Student Advisors are there to help make your time in Australia as smooth as possible. If you're having trouble, they're a good place to go for advice and support.

They can give you advice about services available to you and where to get help about mental health, getting accustomed to life in a different place, visa help and anything else that you may have questions about.

Book a consultation with a Student Advisor on [the booking system](#). These 30-minute sessions are available to discuss personal or academic difficulties.

Alternatively, you can attend a 'Drop-In Service' @ The Nucleus and advisors are available Monday to Friday for brief appointments between 10am - 4.30pm. Longer appointments can be scheduled if needed.

## The University of Sydney



### USYD Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Free professional and confidential psychological and mental health services available through Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS). CAPS offer individual short-term therapy sessions with clinical psychologists (counsellors) who provide evidence based treatment and resources tailored to meet your individual needs. Consultations typically last up to 50 minutes and you can attend weekly, fortnightly or at less frequent intervals depending on your needs. Students usually attend between 1-6 appointments.

If you would like to speak to one of the clinical psychologists (counsellors), the first step is to visit in person or call to arrange an appointment.

<https://sydney.edu.au/students/counselling-and-mental-health-support.html>

**Phone:** (02) 8627 8433 or (02) 8627 8437

**Email:** [caps.admin@sydney.edu.au](mailto:caps.admin@sydney.edu.au) or [cumberland.cs@sydney.edu.au](mailto:cumberland.cs@sydney.edu.au)

**Location:** Level 5 Jane Foss Russell Building G02

**Opening hours:** 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

### University of Sydney Crisis Line

If you need to speak to someone outside CAPS business hours, you can contact the University of Sydney Crisis Line from 5pm to 9am weekdays, 24 hours on weekends and public holidays.

The Crisis Line connects you with a qualified crisis support specialist who can support you to find relief from current emotional distress, explore coping strategies, safely manage any immediate threats to life or safety and offer referrals and open pathways for longer term solutions.

**Call 1300 474065**

**Text 0488 884 429** (for SMS chat option)



### USYD Health Services

USYD Health Services offer experienced general practitioner and emergency medical care services, including clinical psychologist and advice and assistance for students with examination difficulties.

If you're insured under Allianz Global Assistance Health Cover and you use the University Health Service, your medical fees will be billed to Allianz OSHC directly and you won't have to pay anything at your appointment. If you're with another OSHC provider, or if your membership card hasn't arrived yet, you'll need to pay for your appointment then be reimbursed by your OSHC provider later.

<https://sydney.edu.au/students/health-services.html>

**Phone:** (02) 9351 3484

**Location:** Level 3 Wentworth G01

**Opening hours:** 8.30am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday (except on public holidays). Last appointment 4.45pm.

### USYD Student Representative Council

<http://srcusyd.net.au/src-help/international-student-resources/international-students-health-cover/>

The USYD Students' Representative Council (SRC) has some useful advice on how to access mental health and other services with your OSHC. You can book an appointment with a caseworker by calling (02) 9660 5222 or emailing [help@src.usyd.edu.au](mailto:help@src.usyd.edu.au) for more information about accessing health care in Australia.

## University of Technology Sydney



### UTS Counselling Service - for UTS students and staff

Psychological and mental health services are free to all UTS students. Contact the Counselling Service to make an appointment. UTS have counsellors who speak other languages (Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking counsellor available on Wednesday; Indonesian-speaking counsellor available on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday). Please let reception know if you would like to book an appointment with a counsellor who speaks these languages.

<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help>

**Phone:** (02) 9514 1177

**Email:** [student.services@uts.edu.au](mailto:student.services@uts.edu.au)

**Location:** CB01.6 (Level 6) Building 1, 15 Broadway, Ultimo, NSW 2007

**Opening hours** for City Campus:

8.30am-8.30pm, Monday-Wednesday

9am-8pm, Thursday

9am-5pm, Friday

## Seeing a psychologist

Finding a psychologist can be a good option to get the help you need. You may be able to claim some of the cost with Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). Your health cover pays for some but not all of the psychologist fee. The fee you pay is called a gap fee (the gap between the amount covered by insurance, and the total fee).

### How to claim some of the cost of seeing a psychologist

If you want to see a psychologist and claim some of the cost through OSHC, there is a process to follow:

Make an appointment to see a general practitioner (GP), and ask them for a Mental Health Care Plan.

When you have your Mental Health Care Plan, your GP may suggest a psychologist for you to see, or you can choose a psychologist yourself.

### What is a Mental Health Care Plan?

A Mental Health Care Plan means you can see a psychologist for six sessions and some of the cost may be covered by your OSHC. After this, if you need more sessions with a psychologist, and you want OSHC to cover some of the costs, you must get a new Mental Health Care Plan from your GP. A Mental Health Care Plan will cover up to 10 sessions with a psychologist over a 12-month period.

### How to find a psychologist

To find a psychologist you can go to the Australian Psychological Society Website: <https://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist>

Staff at your university can also help you find a psychologist. If you are choosing a psychologist for yourself, bring their name to your GP appointment.

### How much does it cost to see a psychologist?

To know the exact costs of seeing a psychologist, follow these steps:

Call the psychologist before you visit to find out how much an appointment will cost.

Contact your OSHC provider (you can do this online) and ask them how much money you can claim back. You will need to pay the gap fee.

When you make your appointment, the psychologist will advise you how to pay. You may have to pay for the appointment upfront, and then make a claim to your OSHC provider afterwards.

## Other resources to support international students

Study NSW has partnered English Australia to develop a **Best Practice in International Student Mental Health Guide**, This is for education facilities to support international students better. The City of Sydney and Redfern Legal Centre have published **Your Body. Your Choice** which talks about your rights in relationships, in terms of sex and consent.

### Know your rights!

It's important that you are aware of your rights as an international student in Australia. It can feel a bit overwhelming and be confusing, but we hope to point you in the right direction of who you can talk to about your rights, if you feel you are not being treated fairly.

It's important to be aware of your visa conditions, accommodation rights and work rights and responsibilities, for example. Check out Council of International Students Australia for an overview of your rights: <http://www.cisa.edu.au/student-rights/>

Here are some more useful website to have a look at regarding your rights.

#### **Work:**

Fair Work: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/rights-and-obligations/international-students>

Study in Aus 'Work Rights': <https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/live-in-australia/working>

#### **Accommodation:**

Tenancy Check: <https://www.tenancycheck.com.au/tenants-association/tenants-union-australia-wide>

#### **Domestic and relational violence:**

1800 Respect: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

#### **Arranged marriage and forced marriage:**

My Blue Sky: <https://www.mybluesky.org.au/>

Youth Law Aus: <https://yla.org.au/vic/topics/health-love-and-sex/forced-child-marriage/>

Discrimination: <https://yla.org.au/vic/topics/violence-and-harm/discrimination/>

#### **Access to health (and mental health) support:**

via your OSHC insurance and further information via your educational institution

## Crisis Support Services and Online supports

### Do you need urgent help?

If you, or someone you are with, are hurt or need immediate support:

**Call 000** (Ambulance, Police, Fire Brigade).

If you think you might act on any thoughts or plans to harm yourself contact:

#### **Lifeline**

13 11 14

For people of all ages

Telephone support (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and online web chat (nightly, 7 days a week) with a counsellor.

Lifeline Text – 6pm-midnight, 7 days a week.  
0477 13 11 14

#### **NSW Mental Health Line**

1800 011 511

State-wide 24 hour mental health telephone access service to help you work out what is the right service for you.

#### **Kids Helpline**

1800 55 1800

24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

Counselling by phone, online chat, and email

#### **Suicide Call Back Service**

1300 659 467

For people aged 15 years or over

Telephone, video or online counselling with a mental health worker (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

## Want to talk to someone?

### Youth Beyond Blue

[www.youthbeyondblue.org.au](http://www.youthbeyondblue.org.au)

1300 224 636

Information, online chat, email & 24/7 phone support

### QLife

[qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

1800 184 527

Online chat & phone counselling for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) young people

### Butterfly foundation

[www.butterfly.org.au](http://www.butterfly.org.au)

1800 33 4673

Support, advice & recovery programs for people experiencing eating disorders.

Phone, email and online chat support. Open 8am-12am AEST, 7 days a week (except national public holidays)

### MensLine Australia

1300 78 99 78

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

Phone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns.

## Helpful resources

### ReachOut

[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

Great website with information, tools, forums and apps to help cope with tough times and improve wellbeing.

### Head to Health

<https://headtohealth.gov.au/>

Australian government website listing many digital mental health resources and information.

### eheadspace

Online information and group chats on various mental health topics, lead by clinicians or young people.

<https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/group-chat/>

## Challenges International Students can face, and Self Help ideas

With very few support networks, language barriers and pressures from home, international students face many challenges and these challenges can all greatly impact on their mental health leaving them to feel unsettled and anxious. Which is why we're here tonight to discuss what supports are out there for international students to access here in Australia.

Students who consider themselves international, may be completing their secondary education, or are enrolled in a university or another tertiary institution – they may be a 'full degree student' here to complete their whole degree (bachelor or masters, for example), or, on exchange/study abroad for one or two semesters. International students may be sponsored by their government to complete their studies in Australia or are supported by their family back home. There are a lot of different types of international students. We recognise that on top of concerns and barriers encountered by all students (oh those pesky assessments for example!), additional difficulties often arise for international students.

### Culture Shock

Students who are a long way from home may experience cultural shock resulting from being immersed in a culture very different to their own. You may be dealing with an unfamiliar place, a different climate, new accommodation and new accommodation. Also, cultural norms, values and beliefs may be different and sometimes some people may feel socially, culturally or racially excluded in the new environment.

Culture shock is the feeling of disorientation and loneliness that you may feel when moving to a new place and being in a new environment. It's very common to experience culture shock, it may last a few days or longer. You may feel nervous, sad, lonely, overwhelmed and disconnected. These feelings can pass with time and feeling more settled.

Here are things you can do to help manage feelings related to culture shock:

- Keep in contact with friends and family back home – trying calling, emailing or messaging.
- Talk with the staff at your education provider – they can refer you to counsellors at your institution.
- Make your room in Australia feel like home, for example, you may like to decorate your room and have some photographs of friends and family on display.
- Try to keep yourself busy, but also give yourself time to relax.
- Remind and reassure yourself, experiencing culture shock (and feeling homesick) is normal. It is likely the intensity and frequency of these feelings will pass and you can find ways to overcome them.
- Exercise, eat well and sleep well.
- Try new things and get involved with your institution's clubs and societies. It's a great chance to meet new people.

## Feeling Homesick

It's totally normal to feel homesick! In fact, it's likely that at some point you will miss home... this may change from time to time in intensity. It's important to remember that it is normal and okay to miss your life, your routine, your family and friends, and the familiarities of home.

You might like to try:

- Remind yourself that it is normal and okay to feel homesick!
- Connect to other new students – domestic or international (maybe they can share their experience of managing these feelings).
- Writing down things that you have found interesting or enjoyable in your new home here in Australia.
- Look into new opportunities (activities, meet-ups, volunteer, groups and clubs).
- Explore your new environment (find your local park or café).
- Decorate your new room!
- Make sure you're taking care of yourself, including trying to eat and sleep enough and well.
- Stay connected with your friends and family at home (chat to them over the phone or Skype, send them messages, write emails and letters, etc.)
- Try to continue with some of the things you did at home, like cooking, religious practices, exercise, etc. - if it's possible!
- Remind yourself that feelings change and although feeling homesick can be really tough, it's normal and it's likely that with some support and positive and proactive thinking and action – you can feel more settled in your new home!

## Adjusting to university

Adjusting to university can be tough, and even more so when it is in a new country.

When we are in a new place or an unfamiliar environment and away from our usual supports and routines, it can become difficult to adjust and to cope.

Expect to feel both 'up' and 'down' at times. On the 'down' side you may experience worry, confusion, sadness, loneliness, self-doubt, vulnerability and home sickness. On the 'up' side you may feel exhilaration, freedom, independence and excitement!

Some things that may impact on your ability to adjust to your new life/university:

- Distance from home
- Change in culture
- Expectations of the university or the location – your experience may be different than what you expected
- An increase in workload or juggling study and other commitments like work
- Not feeling connected to the environment and feeling a lack of control over the situation
- Feeling lonely or isolated



- Feeling excluded or discriminated
- Stress from home
- Personal difficulties

So, what might be helpful to adjust to life in Australia as a student? Here are some ideas:

- Remember to do the basics: sleep well, eat well, drink plenty of water, exercise, stay connected to family and friends, do things you love, set goals, and take breaks.
- Allow yourself to miss home and feel homesick – it's a normal thing and it's totally okay!
- Stay in touch with home on a regular basis (phone, email or write letters!)
- Stay busy and be active! Try to be open about trying new activities but also hobbies and interests you did at home
- Join a group or a society at your university/school
- Decorate your room – make it feel comfortable, it's your new home away from home!
- Give yourself time to settle in. Think of this as a tricky, but important, time to adjust and settle in.
- Don't make any decisions too quickly, take your time to consider options before making any major decisions.
- Remind yourself of the positives – independence, growth, travel, life experience!
- Explore new positive ways to cope with change through connecting with others.
- Make friends – say yes to social invitations.
- Seek information and support from services at your university/school