

# INTERNATIONAL

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# EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Pre departure Checklist

- Visa
- Travel/Health Insurance
- UNSW Insurance Emergency Card and Details
- Prescriptions
- Cash/Travellers Cheques/ATM card number
- Faculty and Exchange Program contact fax & email addresses
- Checked that you are enrolled in UNSW Exchange course code(s) on [www.my.unsw.edu.au](http://www.my.unsw.edu.au)
- HECS and Student Fees paid OR  
Someone will pay fees while you are away for the session(s)
- Change of address and/or  
Someone collecting your mail
- Take your UNIPIN & UNIPASS for access & re-enrolment
- Log-on and get familiar with the UNSW Exchange web-site
- Scholarship recipients – Completed *correct* bank deposit details and forwarded payment advice form back to the IEP Office.

## IF LOST

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You can download this booklet at [www.international.unsw.edu.au](http://www.international.unsw.edu.au)



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## IMPORTANT COURSE DETAILS

Before you leave you should have all of your courses pre-approved by your course authority and your faculty office on a Transfer of Credit (ToC) form. Please ensure that you have plenty of options for enrolment overseas as often things have changed by the time you enrol at the Host University and courses are not available. Please hand in your transfer of credit form to the Exchange Office BEFORE you leave for exchange.

If things do change and you need to take different courses you MUST seek approval from your UNSW Faculty before you enrol in them. Please make sure you contact us and follow these steps to ensure you will receive credit for your study on your return to UNSW.

### Changing Courses

If you find you need to do any courses other than those already approved on your transfer of credit form, you need to do the following:

1. Contact the relevant UNSW Course and Faculty authority immediately for approval for new courses via email.
2. Download a Transfer of Credit (ToC) form from the Exchange Web site and complete the new course details. Fax it to the course authority for signature. Have them forward the signed copy to the Exchange Office for your file. Also ask for a faxed copy to be returned back to you if possible.
3. Forward a copy of the approval to the exchange office for filing.
4. Keep a copy of the email or ToC form approval for yourself and

bring it back with you when you return.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to contact your course authority and obtain course approval. Credit will not be transferred unless the course has been approved.

### Enrolment At UNSW While On Exchange

All students who go on exchange are enrolled in a relevant exchange code(s) according to the courses they are intending to transfer back to their UNSW degree. This is for a full time load and will determine the student contribution or tuition band fee rate for the exchange courses(s) and therefore the amount that you will be charged.

It is your responsibility to check your enrolment on [www.my.unsw.edu.au](http://www.my.unsw.edu.au) and to let us know if you are not enrolled in the correct exchange code(s). It is also your responsibility to remove all blocks on your record and pay any outstanding fines before you leave otherwise we will not be able to enroll you. Students who are not enrolled in the exchange code cannot transfer back their study credit.

After you have been enrolled in the relevant exchange code(s) please DO NOT alter your enrolment.

### Other Details

- It is compulsory to advise the Exchange Office of contact e-mail, postal address & phone number overseas *as soon as you arrive*.
- You must also advise us of your final enrolment at the host university by completing a Confirmation of Enrolment Form. The Exchange

Office at the university must sign this form.

- Arrange for someone to pay your tuition fees while you are away or do this online at [www.my.unsw.edu.au](http://www.my.unsw.edu.au)

**Transfer of Credit, Change of Address and Confirmation of Enrolment forms can be downloaded from the Exchange website <http://www.international.unsw.edu.au/exchange/exchangegetready.html>**

## THINGS TO ORGANISE NOW

### Travel Arrangements

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements. It is recommended that you arrive at your destination with sufficient time to settle in and if you have opted not to live in the Residence Halls, to find permanent accommodation. Either way you should arrive at least one week before the start of classes.

**Note:** *know the dates and location of the compulsory orientation and enrolment sessions at the host university. Ensure that your travel plans allow you to arrive in time for any compulsory events.*

When booking your airline ticket, it is strongly suggested that you investigate travel insurance. Your travel agent should be able to advise you on suitable insurance and make arrangements for you on this matter.

Exchange students are also covered by the UNSW Travel Insurance Policy. Please see below for further details. For many students this coverage will be sufficient for their travel and health needs while away on exchange, but for some this may not be the case. If you wish to take out your own insurance or believe that the UNSW coverage is

insufficient in any way for your travel plans, you **MUST** arrange your own coverage through a travel agent or your host university.

Always remember to confirm your flight bookings at least 72 hours prior to departure

### Travel Documents

**Passport** – Probably the single most important travel document. You must ensure that it is current and will remain valid for the entire duration of your time abroad including the time you intend to travel after your studies have been completed. Generally, it is necessary for your passport to be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your intended return to Australia.

**Visa** – You must ensure that you obtain the necessary visa or entry permit for ALL the countries you will be going to or through BEFORE you leave Australia. Take your acceptance papers to the consulate with your passport to obtain your visa. Visas can take several weeks to process so always confirm the time it may take with the consulate or embassy well in advance of your travel dates. Always take your acceptance papers to the Consulate as soon as you receive them. Fees for visas vary and can be up to \$400. It is a good idea to phone the consulate or look at their web site first to find out what they require of you i.e. they may need passport photos or a police clearance etc which can take time to organise.

**Airline tickets** – Check the departure times, dates and flight numbers and ensure that the details for ALL flights you are booked on are correct. Confirm your reservations at this point.

Never leave Australia without receiving

your correct visa for travel to your host university and other relevant countries.

**Student Visas for the USA** – Many exchange students travel to the United States, so it should be noted that conditions for the student visa (J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa) are now extremely strict. You must check the web site of the US Consulate in Sydney <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular/visaexch.html> to read the application requirements and procedures, which will take a number of weeks to complete and involve an interview. Students can now book their interview online at <http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/consular/visas.html>. When attending an interview students, especially non Australian Citizens need to be prepared to show incentive to return to Australia or their home country at the end of their exchange.

Students applying for a student visa to the US are now required to pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee before applying for their visa. The fee for J1 holders is USD 100 per person. Instructions for making payment are available at <https://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>

Students travelling to the US should note that they may no longer arrive on the Visa Waiver Scheme (Tourist Visa) and transfer to a J-1 Visa in the United States or a contiguous country. J-1 Visas only permit students to arrive less than one month prior to the commencement of studies.

\*\*Students undertaking an exchange in Canada who wish to travel through America need to check the US visa requirements carefully. These students generally need to apply for a long-term tourist visa to the US to allow

them to exit via the US at the end of their exchange. This involves lodging a visa application at the US Consulate and attending an interview.

## International Students on Exchange –

Compulsory Registration of Exchange Session at Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) – All International Students undertaking a session or year of exchange must collect a Letter of Support for Exchange from the Exchange Office outlining their Australian Student Visa details. International Students are only permitted to undertake an exchange with this letter from UNSW. This letter must be taken to the nearest DIAC office and *registered no less than 28 days prior to departure*. Students who do not complete this process risk cancellation of their Australian Student Visa and refusal of re-entry permission for further studies.

Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) while on exchange – International Students can claim credit on their OSHC for their time on exchange. Students need to contact Worldcare within 30 days of returning to Australia and must provide evidence of their exchange. This can include copies of their passport and boarding passes. Please contact the Worldcare Office for further details

## Travel Warnings & Emergencies –

Always check the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs website for relevant travel warnings and updates on events overseas - [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au). Always register with the nearest Australian Consulate once you reach your host destination, as

they can be very helpful in times of emergency.

Please note that the UNSW Exchange Office will contact you if there is a significant change to the safety situation in your host country or region. *If UNSW determines that the threat to your safety is significant we reserve the right to compulsorily evacuate you from that location.* Arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis regarding completion of your study program and relevant evacuation costs for any truncated exchange session.

## Health & Insurance Matters

### UNSW Insurance

Students on Exchange need to ensure that they have adequate insurance for the duration of their exchange session(s).

The UNSW Exchange Office and Risk Management Unit highly recommend that all students on exchange have travel insurance. In addition, most partner universities will require students to have insurance before you can study there. UNSW's travel policy will automatically cover all students while on exchange. This insurance is free of charge and no registration is required. A separate cover letter can be requested from the UNSW Risk Management Unit. Further information on the coverage details can be found at <http://www.international.unsw.edu.au/exchange/exchangegetready.html#insurance>

**If the UNSW Insurance Policy covers you while on exchange, you are obliged to read and understand all details of the policy. All insurance details must be confirmed before your departure. UNSW cannot change coverage while you are**

**overseas.**

Please ensure that you always carry the Emergency Contact Card provided to you at the Pre-Departure Orientation Session.

### **The Emergency Contact Card should be used for emergency and claims matters only**

Do not call the emergency number with general policy related queries, but contact the UNSW Risk Management Unit directly at +61-2-9385 1980 or email Azita Karpour on [azita.karpour@unsw.edu.au](mailto:azita.karpour@unsw.edu.au). Please remember to include your full name, UNSW student number, departure and return dates.

Note that while UNSW Exchange aims to assist you with cost effective insurance, the coverage above may not meet the requirements or personal needs of all students going on an exchange. In such cases, we strongly recommend that you arrange your own travel coverage through another private insurance provider.

### **Never leave Australia without adequate coverage**

### **Health Insurance – Partner University Requirements**

Health Insurance at the partner university is usually compulsory for the period of your exchange. Health care while overseas can be very expensive if you are not insured, particularly in the US and Canada where you may even be denied treatment if you do not have adequate cover.

Universities overseas have different requirements for health insurance. Many US, Canadian and European Universities require you to purchase their insurance. Check at their

Exchange Office to find out if you must purchase a specific policy. It is your responsibility to check the partner's requirements and apply for any waivers if applicable.

In some cases host universities have granted waivers for their coverage based on UNSW Insurance. UNSW cannot however insist or guarantee that such waiver be granted. The decision on such insurance requirements rests with the host university, and students will need to negotiate this directly with their host university. If you are eligible to apply for a waiver, please ensure that you fill out the relevant forms as soon as you arrive at the partner university. Do NOT leave it until the end of your exchange as it will be too late.

If you take out your own health insurance policy remember to take proof of your insurance with you and details of the policy otherwise you may be required to purchase additional cover.

We strongly recommend that you have a complete medical and dental check-up before you leave Australia.

## Medications

If you take regular medication, consider taking extra supplies with you as you may find that the medication you use is unavailable where you are going. If you take a supply of your medication with you, ensure that you have the doctor's prescription with you as well, so that you do not arouse the suspicion of customs officials. You should also have your doctor provide you with a report detailing your medical needs so that prescriptions can be made for you by the doctor at your host university, if the need arises. Take a full record

of immunization with you. Many US universities will request to see this form and make you pay for additional immunization if you cannot prove you are immunized.

Further, if you suffer from a medical condition that you feel may affect you while you are abroad, ask your doctor in Australia to supply you with a medical report, outlining your condition. You should also consult with your doctor about the implications going on exchange may have on your condition.

Remember that some drugs which are readily available (over the counter) in Australia may be considered illegal in other countries. For example, *Panadeine* contains codeine, which is illegal in the United States. Check any and all medication that you intend to bring with you to ensure that you are not breaking the law by bringing them into the country to which you are headed.

Never remove medication from its original packaging as this may cause concern for customs officials.

## Equity And Diversity

If you use any of the Equity and Diversity services at UNSW you may want to check what services are offered at your host university. It is important that you find out what services and provisions are available prior to departure and the commencement of your studies as the services may vary to the services at UNSW. Please be aware you may not receive the same adjustments as those provided at UNSW.

We strongly advise that you contact the UNSW Student Equity Officers (Disability) prior to your departure to

discuss your situation. You may be required to take original or certified (notarised) documentation with your verifying your disability. It would also be a good idea to take recent medical documentation from your consulting specialist, outlining the nature of your condition and the impacts it may have on your academic studies. If you are taking any medication, or aids with you, please check with your doctor and the Immigration Department of your host country prior to departure as health regulations and availability of medications may vary from country to country.

## International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

To assist in identifying yourself as a student, you should obtain an International Student Identity Card prior to your departure. This may be obtained at the Student Travel Australia (STA) office in the Blockhouse on lower campus; inquiries should be directed to that office.

## Money Matters

Ensure that you have sufficient funds in the local currency where you are headed, in cash and traveller's cheques, to last you at least for the first few weeks after you arrive.

\*Although ATMs now work in most places internationally, never assume that an ATM will automatically work when you arrive!

Ask at your bank now about bank drafts, overseas withdrawals and telegraphic transfers to take larger sums of money overseas.

**ATM Cards** – Many ATM cards may be used at cash machines overseas. Each use incurs a fee, however this is a

relatively simple way of accessing funds from Australia. Check with your bank for details and costs. Check carefully with your bank about the PIN requirements in different countries (i.e. USA ATMs do not accept PINs with 6 digits). You would not want to arrive and be stranded with no access to cash!

It may be worthwhile having a major credit card with you; it could be very helpful during an emergency. It does however, mean that you will have the added responsibility of its security and use. It is recommended that if you do take a credit card with you, you have someone trustworthy in Australia who can make regular payments to your account on your behalf. Alternatively, your parents may be prepared to give you a card on their account, which could be used for regular expenses or in an emergency.

**Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy** – Students receiving these allowances may normally continue to receive these while on exchange. Some students may actually become eligible while undertaking an exchange, but will need to investigate this information with Centrelink before they leave Australia. Note that rent assistance is not normally paid to students while they are on exchange.

To ensure that you continue to receive allowances you should always inform Centrelink of your overseas study plans, and take the Exchange Verification letter in the Pre-Departure Pack for their reference and registration well in advance of your departure.

Note that it will not be possible to negotiate or inform the department of changes to Youth Allowance when you are already overseas. Students who do not inform Centrelink of their

change of circumstances will normally have their allowances terminated.

## Accommodation And Housing

On campus accommodation – You should receive information from your Host University regarding on-campus accommodation. If you have applied for housing in a residence hall, but have not heard of the outcome of your applications before departure, you should contact the Exchange Office at your host university when you arrive.

In the event that your application for housing was unsuccessful, most universities have an Accommodation Office that will be able to help you. Obtain this information before you leave.

You should advise the Exchange Office at your host university of your arrival details as early as possible. These offices are usually able to arrange temporary accommodation for you when you first arrive.

Please be aware that you may find the accommodation and living options very different to what you are used to in Australia. Make sure you do your research before you leave so you do not get any surprises on arrival.

## Safekeeping Of Documentation

Before departing, make two photocopies of all important documentation such as passport, visa, and travel insurance, travellers' cheques, medical reports, university papers and transcripts/results. You should pack one copy in your luggage (not the originals, carry them with you) and leave the other copy here in Australia with a reliable person.

## Taxation

Do not forget your responsibilities with regard to tax. If you are going to be away through the end of a financial year, ensure that you have completed the necessary tax returns required of you. Contact the Australian Taxation Office for further details.

## Driver's Licence

If you intend to drive while abroad, you will need to obtain an international driver's license. You can get these from the NRMA.

## Packing And Luggage

Pack only items which are really necessary. Remember that in most cases, you will need to either change flights, catch a bus or coach, or do both to get to your destination – having too much to carry will only become a burden. Remember that you will probably bring back much more than you take away. In your hand-luggage you should have all the essential items which you will need while in transit:

- passport
- airline ticket – (or e-ticket confirmation letter – now compulsory for USA travel & visa issue)
- travel itinerary
- details of arrival procedure
- list of contact numbers
- travellers cheques/money
- valuables
- medication, optical supplies; prescription if needed
- a book

## Other Things To Consider While Packing:

Electrical items you have may not

work in other countries. Do not bother to take them with you.

Buy your heavy winter clothing overseas. It is often less expensive than in Australia and more readily available. It is also more suited to specific weather conditions of the place. In addition, you have the added bonus of being less likely to exceed your baggage allowance on your flight if you do not have to worry about thick and heavy winter gear.

On most airlines it is now compulsory to mark all items and luggage with your name and address. Address label tags are readily available at the check-in points at the airport.

*Have you got too much Luggage?*

*#TIP# Pack what you plan to take 24 hours before you go, and then take out HALF OF IT! If you really need that trendy shirt, then you can ask your parents to send it airmail after you arrive and see what you really need!*

## Minimising Jet Lag

Here are some simple hints on minimizing jet lag after a long flight:

### 1. Be relaxed

Ensure that you are organised and able to get to the airport in plenty of time. \*Check in and security procedures now take significantly longer, especially for flights to the United States.

### 2. Alcohol

Drink only water or light juices on the plane. Alcohol in the air is much more potent than on the ground. If you want to drink alcohol, limit yourself to one or two glasses during the entire flight. Try to drink lots of fluid.

### 3. Eating

Eat in moderation. Meals and snacks on a long flight are served frequently. Sometimes it is tempting to eat just to help pass the time. Remember that your digestive system is less efficient at 35,000 feet. Give your body a break and you will feel much better.

### 4. Exercise

While in the air on a long flight, walk and stretch. Keep your blood circulating. Read the information on DVT and stretch in your seat; get up and walk around the plane from time to time.

### 5. Adjust your clock

Immediately after take off, set your watch to the time zone that you will end up in. Start thinking that you are in the time zone you are headed for. Not only does the travel time appear to go faster, but it is easier for you to adapt when you arrive. Try to sleep on the plane.

### 6. On arrival slot into the time zone

Try and stay active and awake until about 7 or 8 p.m. on your first night. Then ensure that you get a good night's rest. Don't try to go out partying on your first night!

## WHEN YOU ARRIVE

### On Arrival

Contact the appropriate Exchange Office as soon as you arrive. The office should be named with contact details in your acceptance papers. In most cases, if you have given them your arrival details, they will be expecting you and will have made arrangements for temporary accommodation. If this is not the case, ask them for

suggestions on where you can stay temporarily while you look for permanent accommodation.

In some cases, particularly if you are going to a non-metropolitan university, you may need to spend a night in a city where you change flights. If this applies to you, check with your travel agent and ask for their suggestions on where you may be able to stay for the night. Again, be sure to check how much it is likely to cost, and ensure that you have the necessary amount of money in the local currency at your disposal.

## At The Host University

Soon after you arrive, you will need to register or enrol at your host university. Your first point of contact should be the Exchange Office. Staff there will be able to provide you with details about the compulsory Orientation, Enrolment, and other details about your stay.

Many universities also have an International Student Centre or equivalent, which looks after the welfare of all international students enrolled at the institution. You must contact either or both of these offices whenever you have a query about your enrolment, study program, problems with settling in, immigration etc. You should always approach these offices if you have any sort of problem.

Apart from the responsible office at the university, if you have queries regarding your courses, you should always speak with your lecturers there. They will normally need to approve any course and enrolment changes. You will probably find that lecturers are fairly approachable and agreeable.

If there are any issues ensure that you also contact us and we will do our best to assist you from this side.

## Keeping Up to Date and in Touch

The Exchange Office will regularly send emails to keep in touch with you. Please ensure that your UNSW email is always operational as this is our main method of communication with such a diverse group.

## Use Of The UNSW Exchange Program Web-site

The Exchange Web site has all the information on it that you will need while away. Once you arrive, it will be useful to log on to the web-site, and to follow the links to contact us. We need you to notify us of your safe arrival.

The web site also has Change of Address and Confirmation of Enrolment forms which you *must* complete. Please fax the conformation of enrolment form to the Exchange Office and email your change of address details to [intex@unsw.edu.au](mailto:intex@unsw.edu.au). We need this information in case of emergencies and to ensure that your study program is correct.

Remember this site: <http://www.international.unsw.edu.au/>

## KEEPING SAFE

Please remember to exercise the same caution as you would if you were in Sydney especially in regards to your personal belongings and safety. Report any incidents to the Exchange Office at your host university and any local authorities. Contact us as soon as you can to let us know as well.

## Drugs

In comparison with most other countries Australian drug laws and their enforcement are relatively relaxed.

While overseas your status as an exchange student does not exempt you from prosecution if caught in possession of any illegal substance. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Even drugs we may consider to be "soft", such as marijuana, can get you thrown in jail overseas.

In the US, consumption of alcohol is illegal in all states if you are under 21. Although this law may seem extreme, universities and police take it seriously. Be careful.

## Sex

Sexually transmittable diseases are a reality all over the world and not all countries are as open about sex and sexually transmittable diseases as Australia. Insist on safe sex, ALWAYS use a condom, even if you or your partner are on the pill. Just because others may not seem worried about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, this is no reason to put yourself at risk.

Condoms have use-by dates – always check them. They can perish – particularly in hot weather or if you have been carrying them in your pocket. Trying to save money by buying cheap condoms overseas is NOT a good idea, nor is not buying them at all. Taking some from home may give you peace of mind. You owe it to yourself and your partner to protect yourself: Diaphragms or the Pill will not protect you from HIV or other STDs.

Water based lube is essential when using condoms: it reduces the risk of the condom breaking, and has the added bonus of increasing sensation and minimizing discomfort. Examples of water based lubricants are K-Y Jelly or Wet Stuff.

NOTE: Oil-based lubricants such as Vaseline will weaken the condom and cause it to break.

## Politics

Australia is a very politically stable environment in comparison to many exchange destinations. Recently exchange students have been affected by political events and tensions in Indonesia, USA, Korea, France and South America.

As an exchange student, be aware that some political protest can be dangerous. If there is serious unrest in your area, contact the nearest Australian Embassy or Consulate and the Exchange Office at UNSW.

Be sensitive to the local situation. It is possible you may encounter anti-western feelings, racism or simply someone being antagonistic. Remember, it's usually best to bite your tongue and stay out of trouble. Try to be as sensitive as possible to the reasons why other people feel and act as they do.

If any form of constant harassment becomes an issue for you, seek out an Equity and Diversity, International office or a counselling service at the host university.

## Register At The Consulate

Although not compulsory, it is usually a good idea to register at the nearest Australian Embassy, Consulate or High Commission. This is particularly useful if there is some unexpected political event during your stay in the country and they need to contact or advise evacuation etc.

A list of Australian Consulates overseas is at [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

#Tip# Consulates often have social events, and national holiday celebrations

for important dates in Australia. When feeling homesick it is certainly great to stop in to the Embassy for a chat, a steak BBQ, and an Aussie beer on Australia Day in expensive cities like New York or Tokyo!

## Emergency Counselling For Australian Students Overseas

The Department of Foreign Affairs provides emergency services for Australians who are overseas and these services include access to Lifeline telephone counselling options for those negotiating a crisis overseas or who require counselling services in emergency situations while they are overseas. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To access this telephone counselling service students can ring the consulate emergency number +61 1300 555 135 and wait on the line or follow the offered selection options for different services. Telephone calls to local Australian High Commissions, Embassies or Consulates in various countries can also be put through to Lifeline in Australia for the cost of a local call. If the call is made after hours in the country from which the person is calling, their call is automatically transferred to Australia. Further information can be found at: <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/index.html>

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

### Preparing

Exchange will be a memorable and exciting experience and it will challenge you in many ways. You will often explain to others what it is like in Australia and in doing so be forced to think and learn about your own images and perceptions of Australia. You will also learn about yourself.

Leaving your home environment will give you a lot of freedom, which will encourage you to think about what is important to you.

The best preparation for going on exchange is to find out about local conditions from others who have already been. We strongly recommend that you read the Returned Student Testimonials at the Exchange Office.

The office also keeps a list of students interested in talking with potential exchange students, and we can put you in touch with returned students who would be happy to share their experiences with you. Otherwise, books and the Internet are great resources. Check out what's happening in the area and get thinking about what it may be like.

It can help to be aware of the preconceived ideas you may have of your destination. What do you think it will be like? Write down a few of your ideas and think about where these have come from. Are they from the media? Is your idea of California based on 'Baywatch' and Hollywood movies? Did you know that the water is too cold to swim in the San Francisco area?

It will be a lot easier to adapt to your new culture if you can take a step back from these preconceived ideas and take things as they come. Learn from your experience rather than interpreting everything before you have found out for yourself.

### Culture Shock

As a natural part of settling into your new environment you will, to some degree, experience culture shock. The key to successfully overcoming culture shock is being prepared. You

will find that the people, attitudes, food and the way of life in your new environment are different to what you are accustomed to in Australia. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom, United States and Canada, the differences may not be apparent at first. Given time, though, some things will emerge and you will find yourself noticing subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) differences between your host country and your home country. Some of these differences may cause you concern and even anxiety. This process of cultural adjustment is often referred to as culture shock.

Remember that culture shock is part of the re-adjustment process or cycle, which everyone goes through when moving from one environment to another. Obviously, some will be affected by it more than others, but everybody experiences culture shock to some degree.

In general terms a cyclical, four-phase process can be identified in the process of adjustments: This is sometimes called the U-Curve of Adjustment.

**Euphoria:** the tourist phase, you are excited and everything is perceived with the same sense of excitement, things do not appear to be too dissimilar from home, or your attention is drawn towards similar things between the old and the new environment.

**Irritation and hostility:** the initial excitement and curiosity passes to be filled with irritation, frustration, anger or even depression. You become aware of important differences and make comparisons between what you are currently experiencing and what you are used to in Australia. Minor things cause major upsets, you begin

to lose your sense of belonging, and people seem not to understand, or react in a way different to back home. Homesickness, boredom and loneliness emerge, and you may even question if you have made the right decision in going abroad. This is the most difficult phase and will affect different people in different ways.

**Gradual adjustment:** things begin to make sense; you become oriented to the new environment, and are able to pick up subtle cultural cues and clues which help to put things in perspective; the culture begins to feel more familiar and you find you are at ease with the differences. The sense of isolation characteristic of the previous phase fades and self-confidence is restored.

**Adaptation:** you become confident and enjoy interaction with the new culture; you meet the challenge of differences with renewed enthusiasm. The transition is largely complete. Be aware that this u-curve or cycle may occur again if you are on a 12 month exchange. The second curve though will likely be less severe than the first adjustment.

## Coping Skills

An effective way of limiting the adverse experience involved in culture shock is by getting involved. Try new things and check them out – in other words “have a go”. Meet new people and avoid spending all your time with other Australians. Instead, make friends with other international students from other nationalities/countries who share similar issues. Explore and meet the local people; get to know them well. Use the fact that you are different from them to your advantage, by sharing your thoughts and experience with them.

An Aussie attitude, smile and 'G'day' can go a long way!

You will find that most of the "natives" are friendly and would value the opportunity to get to know you. However, remember that people may not always go out of their way for you just because you are from abroad.

Take time to participate in the activities on or around campus. Remember that you are on an exchange program, which is not meant to be limited to your academic studies. There is always plenty happening that you can, and should get involved in.

## Are You Keeping In Touch – Too Much?!

With communications being much more efficient and cheap, travel overseas is now less alienating for many people than in the past. Home is only a cheap calling card away, a text message takes a few seconds, and email and online chat make it easy to stay up to date with what all of your friends and relatives are up to at any time.

These devices can make it easy to stay in touch, but also provide another challenge. Some exchange students now comment that they spend much of their time online or chatting to people at home about their experiences, hearing about what they are all up to at any minute etc. While this can be a positive experience it can also make it harder in the medium term to make the adjustment to being in another country and culture

One student noted, 'I realised I was online chatting to friends for hours in Sydney about nothing, while outside there was an amazing world happening that I was missing out on. I decided to stop

talking to my friends in Sydney, get off the computer, and embrace the amazing experience of being in Canada!'

As this student noted, don't spend all of your time hanging onto things in Australia and miss out on things that you could be doing in the new place you are going to! One way that you will make culture shock and homesickness worse is to stay mentally in your home country, and not engage with the new country.

So remember to keep in touch, but ensure that you cut the ties to home for the six months you are away, you will be all the richer and stronger personally for it, and enjoy your time there much more!

## Other Things To Think About – Self Reflection

Being abroad is a good time to think about and take a critical look at your own culture and values in that culture. Use the differences between your own culture and that of your host country to examine the value that you place on various things in Australia.

It is also important to remember that you are part of an exchange. As such, you will be expected to act as an ambassador for Australia and specifically for the University of New South Wales. What you say and do will reflect on your home and affect how people at the host institution/country react to Australians and others from UNSW who will visit that institution/country in the future. The functioning of the Exchange Program relies on the goodwill of our partner universities and the behaviour of students. We are in constant contact with our partner universities and we will hear about your actions, both positive and negative. **If your actions constitute**

**serious misbehaviour your exchange will be terminated and you will be forced to return home.**

As a part of your overseas experience, you will be asked to interpret your "Australian" actions and represent the "Australian" way of life. You may find your diplomatic skills being tested when you will need to explain or defend policies and views held by 'all Australians'.

This aspect of your exchange experience will serve to further challenge you while you are abroad, and hopefully, enhance the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment of having lived in another culture.

## BEFORE YOU RETURN

### Academic Transcript And Grades Transfer

Every university has a different system for issuing academic transcripts. Some universities automatically send your transcripts to our office. Others require you to order your transcript, or nominate where you would like your transcripts to be sent. Some universities, particularly German and sometimes French, require students to fill out several forms in order to receive a transcript. It is very important that you ask the International Office at your exchange university how their transcript system works. Without a transcript, your credits will not be transferred.

In the case where you are personally issued a transcript from your exchange you are required to bring it to the Exchange Office so that we are able to transfer your credits. After your credits are transferred to your UNSW transcripts we can give you any copies that we have

of your original transcript.

Students who have taken their last UNSW session on exchange and who will return to graduate should be aware that the transfer of credit process takes time: your graduation may be delayed. To speed up the process, you should arrange to get your overseas transcript to the UNSW Exchange Office as soon as possible. It is best to bring it in yourself rather than wait for the partner institution to send it. In addition to your transcript and transfer of credit form, all students will be required to complete a Returned Student Questionnaire before their credits will be transferred. This can be downloaded from our website or you can come and pick up a copy from our office when you return. Please be advised that credits from failed courses cannot be transferred.

\*The Exchange Office requires that all processing on grades transfer be completed by the end of the semester that you return to UNSW. If you have outstanding Transfer of Credits issues these will need to be completed as soon as possible and provided to the Exchange office.

### Study Program Changes Non-approved courses

If you find that when you arrive at the overseas university your study program is not suitable or you are not able to take courses which were pre-approved by your faculty on a Transfer of Credits form, please ensure that you log on to the Exchange Program Web site and download a copy of the Transfer of Credits form.

Communicate immediately with your UNSW faculty adviser and our office

on e-mail and seek approval for any courses that were not signed off initially. If possible, fax a copy of the additional Transfer of Credits form to the academic here for signature, and then get this copied to the Exchange Program office for your file, and faxed back to you for reference. This will ensure a smoother grades transfer when you return to UNSW.

## Honours

For many students who go on exchange, doing an Honours program at UNSW is very much a consideration. As such, the transfer of grades is an important factor to ensure that the studies they do at the host institution are given the correct grade.

If you are in an Honors program, it is essential that you speak to your overseas lecturers, particularly those who conducted the classes that are part of your major. Speak with them about obtaining information about your rank in the class at the end of term/semester/quarter, methods of assessment, profile of marks etc. and ask them if they would be willing to write you a reference detailing your performance and standing in their course relative to other students in the class.

## Extending Exchange

One-session exchange students who wish to extend their exchange for a further session must contact the Exchange Office at least 6 weeks before the end of their first session. Note that any extension will only be granted based on the approval from the UNSW Exchange Office, your UNSW Faculty and the Exchange Office at the partner university.

## Pay Outstanding Bills

Like UNSW, most overseas universities

withhold examination results if you have outstanding debts. Remember to clear all your debts BEFORE you leave. It is much easier to arrange this while you are still at the partner university rather than when you return to Australia. Double-check your library, telephone and rent accounts.

Leave some money in a local bank account to pay any debts you have forgotten (you can arrange to close it later) or make arrangements with someone to cover any such debts until you reimburse them. Every session we are unable to process credit transfers for a couple of students because of outstanding bills and because the overseas university will not release the transcript until the debts have been paid.

## RETURNING TO AUSTRALIA

Make contact with the Exchange Office as soon as you are able to after your return. We value the opportunity to discuss your experience with you. It is important that you hand in a completed student questionnaire on return which can also be downloaded from the Exchange Web Site.

## Re-enrolment

Assuming that you were correctly enrolled whilst you were abroad, re-enrolment into UNSW should be relatively straightforward.

If you are returning for Session 1 of the Academic Year, you will need to complete your enrolment during the normal re-enrolment period and in the normal online way. Make sure you keep in touch with your school and follow their enrolment procedures, and know details about when tutorials are open etc.

**\*Remember to take your UNIPIN and UNIPASS with you to enable you to log on to the UNSW Student Gateway for enrolment.**

If you return to Australia to re-commence your studies at UNSW for Session 2 of the Academic Year, you will need to check your online enrolment in plenty of time and ensure you know what the deadlines are for changing enrolments for the coming sessions.

If the course that you wish to enrol in has pre requisites that you completed overseas and your credit has not yet been transferred, you will need to take your transcript from the partner university to your faculty and negotiate enrolment with them.

If you are at all unsure about the status of your enrolment, you should check it by logging onto [www.my.unsw.edu.au](http://www.my.unsw.edu.au). Contact the Student Central Office or your faculty if you have any problems logging on and accessing information.

## Re-entry Into Australia

When organizing your return trip to Australia, allow yourself some time to settle in before re-commencing your studies. In other words, plan to arrive some time before the next session of studies for UNSW begins.

You will find that, just as it took time to adjust to your new surroundings when you went abroad, it will take time for you to re-adjust to Australia when you return home. It would not be unusual to find that life in Australia is different to when you left. Or perhaps you have changed and life here is relatively the same. In adjusting to the new culture abroad, you WILL have changed.

Being aware of the fact that things may have changed will help ease the

reverse culture shock. Just as you would have expectations that things would be different in your new culture when you went abroad, you should expect to face certain changes when you return. You should not think that, because it is your home, things will remain exactly as when you left it.

Take some time to re-orient yourself to life in Australia and become accustomed to the new developments around you. Allow yourself time to fit back into your old patterns. Returning home usually means that things are familiar and predictable. You may find that the excitement and sense of adventure you experienced overseas has gone and life seems boring.

In addition, you are no longer "different" or "special", and many of your friends and relatives will show little interest in the experiences you have had which meant so much to you. At this time many people regret coming back and want to escape by going overseas again. If you need any help at this stage, staff at the Exchange Office are more than happy to assist you in any way we can. You should feel free to make contact with the Exchange Office at any time.

## Returned Debriefing Session

It is recommended that all students attend the exchange debriefing session on their return to UNSW. This is an opportunity for you to tell us about your experiences while on exchange and is also a chance to talk and to compare experiences with other returning students. The session will cover some general administration as well as some information to help you settle back to life in Sydney. Tea and Coffee and some refreshments will be provided. Further

information on location and dates will be sent out closer to the time.

## **Staying Involved – Buddy Volunteers!**

After you've returned home, an excellent way to keep up your international outlook is to get involved with the program at UNSW. Each session we have more than 100 exchange students coming to UNSW from all over the world.

We run a buddy program, organise social functions, give regular information seminars and hold biannual Expos so there is always a lot going on at the Exchange Office. We rely on the returned students to help out with our activities and join the Aussie Mate Program. We cannot do this without you!

Check with us about upcoming events and how to become an Aussie Mate.

The Exchange Office also runs a volunteer program each session for students to get involved in the organising of the Aussie Mate program and promotional activities of the Exchange Office. This is a great way to network and meet other exchange and UNSW students and have a great time. It is also a way for you to develop skills that are useful for getting a job and it looks impressive on a resume. Volunteers will be asked to contribute approximately 20 hours of their time over a semester. Student volunteers will be given a book voucher, certificate of participation and reference outlining the activities undertaken. If you would like to get involved then please send your Aussie Mate Application form, resume and a 200 word statement explaining why

you would like to apply to [intex@unsw.edu.au](mailto:intex@unsw.edu.au)

## **Scholarship Students**

Students who received an Exchange Program Scholarship or Bursary will be expected to assist us with the Aussie Mate Program and promotion of exchange at the Exchange Expos and information sessions and will be reminded of this obligation on their return.