EXCELSIA
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

International Students Guide

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS GUIDE

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS GUIDE

Established in 1983, Excelsia, one of Australia's leading Christian higher education providers, has an innovative and creative community of people who are passionate about excelling and growing academically, professionally, personally and spiritually. Our students and alumni embark on a journey of lifelong learning and leadership.

WORLD-CLASS MENTORSHIP

Be mentored and learn from engaged and committed staff who are approachable and passionate about learning.

PASTORAL CARE

Excelsia prioritises pastoral care and this is fully integrated throughout our programs. It is important to Excelsia that we meet the personal, social wellbeing and academic needs of students and staff.

ALUMNI AND INDUSTRY NETWORK

Over 3,000 alumni and accomplished academics around the world attest to our whole-of-person education.

EDUCATION WITH A DIFFERENCE

Giving you the tools to bolster your image and build your career.

OUR VISION: Excelsia contributes to making a better world through active participation in a life-transforming global Christian learning community.

OUR MISSION: Excelsia is an academic community benefiting the world by producing research characterised by exemplary scholarship consistent with a Christian world view, and graduates prepared to lead in a range of professions.

OUR VALUES

Our values reflect our vision and our mission:

1. **Christ-likeness:** striving to exemplify the life of Christ in our commitments, our actions and our relationships.
2. **Innovation and creativity:** working with passion and imagination in a range of influential professions, to further God's transformative work in the world.
3. **Scholarship:** creating a culture that values the search for truth, supports academic freedom and rewards rigorous thinking.
4. **Service to the community:** using our skills and abilities in and beyond the Institution in the service of others.
5. **Lifelong learning:** continually seeking knowledge, wisdom and capability to flourish and contribute in a changing world.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

1. **Deep Knowledge**
   A deep, coherent and extensive knowledge of studied disciplines characterised by intellectual openness, creativity and curiosity.
2. **Critical Analysis**
   Willingness and ability to analyse issues logically, consider different options and viewpoints fairly, and make informed decisions in relevant artistic, academic and/or professional contexts and settings.
3. **Lifelong Learning**
   A commitment to lifelong learning characterised by a willingness and ability to acquire, develop and apply knowledge and skills that facilitate positive adaptations to a changing world.
4. **Effective Communication**
   Aptitude to communicate information, arguments and ideas effectively and ethically through writing, speech and/or artistic expression as appropriate within each discipline.
5. **Christian Ethical Action**
   A sound knowledge and understanding of Christian values and beliefs, and of the relevance of Christian faith to personal life, professional ethics, and social concerns.
6. **Self-Direction**
   A capacity for self-directed learning and activity while working effectively with others in scholarly, vocational, civic and/or artistic pursuits and endeavours.
7. **Technical Competence**
   Competence and facility with materials, processes and technologies relevant to learned disciplines, generic information literacy and professional practice.
8. **Responsible Innovation**
   Oriented towards exhibiting intellectual and artistic enterprise, innovation and independence in constructive, creative and responsible ways.

Introduction

This guide contains important information for international students who are planning to study at Excelsia on a student visa. It will help to answer some of your questions about who we are and what it will be like studying in Australia. International students are also required to abide by all the relevant policies and procedures contained in the Student Handbook, located on the website.

Although this guide provides contact details for a number of staff and departments within Excelsia, once an international student has accepted their offer and is officially a student at Excelsia, the team within the Registrar's Office are your official point of contact. The primary contacts for international students within the Registrar's Office are the Registrar and Assistant Registrar, however, other staff in the team are also able to assist you with many enquiries that you may have.

About Excelsia

Excelsia is an incorporated company (ABN 50 360 319 774), and a university college registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, approved to offer FEE-HELP, Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy to eligible students, and registered to offer courses to international students. Excelsia is an Affiliate of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and a member of the Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA). Excelsia's policies and procedures are structured and enacted in compliance with the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011* and the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* and their respective regulations, codes and guidelines.

Excelsia seeks to fulfil its mission in higher education by integrating academic programs, professional development and spiritual formation. In doing so, it offers students stimulating opportunities for academic and personal development in a caring Christian environment. We are committed to preparing graduates so they can adapt readily to the workplace, showing maturity and creativity in the application of their professional skills to practical situations.

Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000

International students studying in Australia on a student visa are governed by the *ESOS Act 2000* and its associated legislation, which ensures your protection as a consumer while you are studying in Australia.

ESOS legislative framework https://internationaleducation.gov.au/regulatory-information/pages/regulatoryinformation.aspx

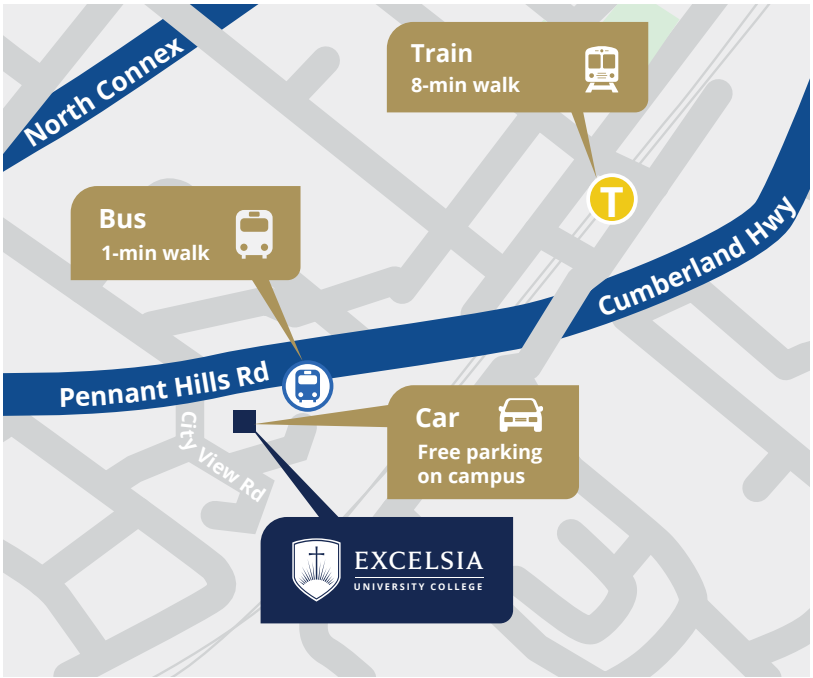
Studying at Excelsia

All courses offered by Excelsia are delivered at its campus located at 1 City View Road, Pennant Hills NSW 2120.

CAMPUS FEATURES

- Library
- Black box creative space
- Production studio
- Innovation centre
  - Mac lab
  - PC lab
- Drama and music specialist rooms
- Wellness centre
- Fidèl Café
- Koorong Bookstore
- Student facilities
  - Free wifi
  - Study desks
  - Snacks bar
  - Free coffee
  - Microwaves
  - Games console

CONVENIENT LOCATION



Applications

To apply for admission to Excelsia courses you must be 18 years old by the commencement of your studies. Excelsia will not admit overseas students who have not yet reached 18 years of age.

Application instructions and forms are available on the website, or from excelsiacollegeapplications@excelsia.edu.au.

Applications are assessed according to the application closing dates and round offers. It is advisable to submit your application by the close of the preliminary or main round to allow adequate time for your student visa to be processed once an offer is made.

Admission

In order to qualify for admission to one of Excelsia's accredited courses, you must meet the course admission requirements. In general, undergraduate admissions require the completion of the Australian Year 12 examination or the equivalent university entrance examination in your country.

Postgraduate admissions normally require completion of a qualifying undergraduate degree. Details of the admission requirements for each course are published in the course information brochures available on the website.

If you are successful, you are given an offer of a place. You accept this offer by paying your fees for the first semester and accepting your Letter of Offer and Written Agreement, and we then give you a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE). You need to take this to your nearest Australian Embassy or Consulate to apply for a student visa. If you have questions about admission, please contact the Registrar's Office.

English language proficiency

If your qualifying studies were completed in a language other than English you must demonstrate English language proficiency as part of the admission requirement. English language proficiency requirements for each course are published on the webpage and information brochure for each course. Please include a certified or notarised copy of your current IELTS examination result with your application. If your result is below the required level you will be asked to undertake additional language study before coming to Excelsia. Information about the language requirement can be found on the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) website.

Student visa requirements

Your student visa application will be assessed according to the DHA assessment level and evidentiary requirements of your country of citizenship. You may be required to provide proof of your English language skills and evidence that you have enough money to pay for living expenses, education costs, and travel for the duration of your study. Your student visa will have certain conditions attached to it which you must abide during your stay in Australia. Failure to comply with these conditions may result in you being asked to leave the country. The DHA Students page will give you all the details.

The mandatory conditions of your student visa include the following. (Please also refer to https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au)

1. You must remain enrolled in a registered course.
2. You must maintain satisfactory attendance in your course and course progress for each study period as required by your education provider. Minimum academic course progress must be maintained. (Minimum academic progress is defined as passing at least 50% of enrolled credit point load in a semester.)
3. You must maintain adequate arrangements for health insurance during your stay in Australia.

   Note: This means that you must maintain Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for the duration of your course.
4. Your main course of study must continue to be the accredited course that matches your student visa.
5. You must continue to have sufficient financial capacity to support your study and stay in Australia.
6. You must notify your education provider of any change in your residential address within 7 days of the change. (You must first notify your education provider of your residential address in Australia within 7 days of arriving in Australia.)
7. You must notify your education provider of a change of education provider within 7 days of receiving the Confirmation of Enrolment certificate (CoE) or evidence of enrolment.
8. You must maintain adequate schooling arrangements for your school-age dependents who join you in Australia on a student dependent visa for more than 3 months.
9. Under the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, no more than one-third of units you study can be delivered online or by distance education (Section 8.19). Additionally, you must study at least one unit face-to-face for each semester in which you are enrolled, unless it is the last unit in your course (Section 8.20). As such, there is an expectation that you live within travelling distance of Excelsia.

For further information about your obligations, consult the DHA Higher Education Student Visa page.

Compassionate or compelling circumstances

In addition to the above mandatory conditions, it should be noted that you can only defer or extend your studies (for example via a Leave of Absence or Reduced Study Load) where compassionate or compelling circumstances exist. Such circumstances are generally those which are outside your control, and which impact your course progress or wellbeing. Examples include but are not limited to: if you have a serious illness or injury; bereavement of a close family member (spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent); major political upheaval or natural disaster in your home country; a traumatic experience.

Please note: In certain circumstances it may be necessary to extend the duration of your course. Such extensions may be due (but are not limited) to where you have: made unsatisfactory academic progress; an approved Leave of Absence; or an approved Reduced Study Load. In such cases, if you are on a Student Visa (Subclass 500), Excelsia will issue you with a new Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) which includes a revised course end date. It is strongly recommended that you contact the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to see how this extension may impact your Student Visa.

Working while studying

Most student visa holders are only permitted to work a maximum of 48 hours per fortnight when their course is in session and unlimited hours when their course is out of session. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students are exempt from this requirement.

Elective courses with work requirements:

The Department considers a student's course to be in session:

- for the duration of the advertised semesters, including exam periods
- when they are undertaking another course, during a break from their main course and points from that course will be credited to their main course

The Department considers a student's course to be out of session:

- during scheduled course breaks
- if their course has been deferred or suspended in line with Standard 9 of the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students
- if they have completed their course as scheduled and still hold a valid student visa
- if their enrolment has been cancelled due to the default of their education provider until they secure alternative enrolment and commence the course.

The legislation specifies that work won't count towards the 48 hour limitation if the work was specified as a requirement of the course when the course particulars were entered in the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). If an elective is a requirement of the course but the work itself was not specified when the course was registered with CRICOS, you can still complete these electives but it will be counted towards the 48 hour work limitation. This may be the case even if you are not being paid for undertaking the work. However, volunteer work, that is work that would not normally attract remuneration, may be exempt.

1. You are not permitted to start work until you have commenced your course of study.

2. You can work a maximum of 48 hours per fortnight during the semester, and unlimited hours when your course is not in session.
3. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) considers your course to be 'in session':
   - for the duration of the advertised semesters (including periods when exams are being held)
   - if you have completed your studies and your Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is still in effect
   - if you are undertaking another course during a break from your main course, and the points will be credited to your main course.

If you decide to work while you are studying, you will need to obtain a Tax File Number (TFN) to work in Australia. You can obtain a TFN through the Australian Tax Office (ATO). The Tax Office, in conjunction with DHA, has developed an online registration process that will enable permanent migrants and temporary visitors to Australia to apply for an individual TFN via the internet. For more information, visit the ATO website, or phone 13 28 61. **If you breach any conditions of your visa the Australian Government requires that Excelsia report you to DHA.**

Work rights

As an international student you have the same work rights as any person working in Australia. The key things you must note are:

1. You must be paid the minimum wage.
2. You must be provided with a pay slip for each pay cycle.
3. You must pay tax on your income.
4. There are general protections for all workers in Australia.

If you require further information or have any issues or feel there is a matter that is not right at work you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Student visa expiry

Do not let your student visa expire. You must return home before your expiry date. If you need to stay longer, see DHA before the visa expires.

Your student visa is granted for the length of your course plus one month. You cannot remain beyond your visa expiry date. If you need the Registrar's Office to produce a letter or documentation for DHA, please give sufficient notice.

In some instances, it may be necessary for you to apply for a new visa when the end date for your course has been extended (for example, if you have had an approved Leave of Absence or Reduced Study Load, or you have failed to meet satisfactory academic progression). In such cases, you should contact the DHA.

Copy of your visa

Excelsia is required to have a copy of your visa or visa approval from DHA (usually an email). If you have not done so already, please email this as soon as possible to the Registrar (Registrar@excelsia.edu.au).

Needing help?

Here's who can help you.

Visa matters	DHA or the Registrar's Office
Financial matters	Manager Finance, Accounts and Administration
Enrolment questions	Head of School or the Registrar's Office
Personal problems	Head of School or School/Program Coordinator

Contact information for DHA

Phone: 131 881 (Mon to Fri 9:00am–4:00pm)
Website: www.homeaffairs.gov.au

Visa and Citizenship office – Sydney
Department of Home Affairs
101 George Street,
Parramatta NSW 2150
Counter hours: 9:00am–5:00pm

Medical insurance – Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC)

All international students, with the exception of Norwegian students and some Swedish students, are required to have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for the duration of their student visa. The cover provides basic health insurance for international students, similar to that provided to Australians. Additionally, OSHC includes access to some private hospitals and day surgeries, ambulance cover and some pharmaceutical benefits. For further details of cover and cost, please see the website of Excelsia's preferred OSHC provider, Bupa.

OSHC does not pay for ancillary services (for example, dental, optical or physiotherapy). If you require cover for ancillary services you may take out extra OSHC cover for these needs, or supplement OSHC with other insurance, such as international travel insurance.

Excelsia will organise OSHC for the duration of your student visa with our preferred provider, Bupa. If you wish to take out extra cover, you need to contact Bupa or an alternative health insurance provider directly. The Assistant Registrar will be able to answer any questions you have about OSHC.

Excelsia discloses commissions may be paid to Excelsia by our preferred provider partners, and that advice given in relation to preferred partner providers is general in nature only. You should read the Product Disclosure Statement of any insurer before making a decision to choose the insurance coverage that is right for you.

Your child's school fees

If you bring any children of school age with you to Australia, you will be required to pay school fees for them in addition to your own tuition fees. If you choose a New South Wales government school, you will

be required to enrol your children at the school nearest to where you will be living. The NSW Public School page provides additional information. There are also many independent schools and Catholic schools in Sydney into which you can enrol your children.

Student accommodation providers

Although Excelsia does not provide student accommodation, there are student accommodation networks that do. Usually accommodation is in single bedroom/studies and twin-share bedrooms with individual study areas. Meals are served in the dining room, and there are indoor and outdoor common areas. It's a great place to meet students living in Sydney. For more information go to:

Robert Menzies College
rmc.org.au/home

Morling Residential College
morlingresidential.com/morlingres

Macquarie University Village
mystudentvillage.com/au/macquarie-university-village

Arundel House, Forest Lodge
arundelhouse.asn.au

Other accommodation

If your family will be accompanying you to Sydney you may find it useful to contact real estate agents before you arrive to find suitable accommodation. To rent property in Sydney, tenants are usually required to provide references and statements confirming their history of paying rent on time or bank statements showing their capacity to do so. The websites realestate.com.au or domain.com.au will give you some idea of the different types of dwellings available for rent and their cost per week, as well as properties which are currently on the market if you are thinking of buying property to live in during your stay in Australia.

Where can I get help?

Tenants NSW provides free advice and advocacy services to people who rent properties in Sydney.

Costs associated with studying in Australia

When you apply for a student visa you must also provide evidence that you have enough money to pay your tuition fees, return air fares and living costs while you are living in Australia. We have included here some estimates of living expenses in Sydney for single students.
The cost of living in Sydney will vary depending on your choice of accommodation and the suburb. Following is an indication of the costs you may incur. In addition to the 37-week academic year, there is a 10-week summer break from December to February – an ideal time to seek casual or part-time work to offset your expenses.

Weekly Costs	Shared House or Unit (AUD)	One-bedroom Unit (AUD)
Indicative weekly rent	100–250	250–500
Miscellaneous household expenses	50	90
Utilities (gas, electricity, phone)	60	85
Food	80	90
Travel	50	50
Spending money	60	60
Average Weekly Cost	**400–550**	**625–875**

There may be further initial costs associated with accommodation. When renting a unit or house you are usually required to sign a six-month lease. For unfurnished premises a bond of four weeks' rent is payable before you move in. Telephone, gas and electricity bonds are also required.

Deferral of a course

You will only be allowed to defer the commencement of your studies on the grounds of compassionate or compelling circumstances. In applying to defer your studies you must provide evidence of the compassionate or compelling circumstances such as a medical certificate, death certificate, evidence of upheaval or disaster close to your family in your home country, police report or report from a qualified professional. If you defer your enrolment, this may affect your student visa. As required under Section 19 of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, if you defer your studies, the Registrar's Office will notify DHA, via PRISMS, and keep complete records in your file. For more information on deferral, refer to Excelsia's policy on deferral for overseas students (refer to the Student Lifecycle Framework).

You will only be allowed to defer the commencement of your studies on the grounds of compassionate or compelling circumstances. In applying to defer your studies you must provide evidence of the compassionate or compelling circumstances such as a medical certificate, death certificate, evidence of upheaval or disaster close to your family in your home country, police report or report from qualified professional. If you defer your enrolment, this may affect your student visa. As required under Section 19 of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000, if you defer your studies, the Registrar's Office will notify DHA, via PRISMS, and keep complete records in your file. For more information on deferral, refer to Excelsia's policy on deferral for overseas students (section 1.2.1 of the Student Lifecycle Framework).

Emergency contact information

While we endeavour to avoid any problems, big or small, during your stay with us, it's important to be prepared for an emergency situation.

In the event of an emergency which requires police, fire, or an ambulance: Dial 000

If you find yourself in any emergency situation which does not require the immediate assistance of police, fire, or ambulance, please contact Student Support to discuss your emergency within business hours.

One of the many benefits of your Bupa OSHC membership is access to a 24 hour emergency telephone line: 1800 888 942, giving you medical, legal and other assistance over the phone, with the aid of an interpreter where necessary. This telephone service is provided by International SOS, the largest 24-hour medical and security assistance company in the world. Services include:

- emergency medical advice and assistance
- referrals to doctors or medical centres for medical treatment and assistance with making appointments
- access to a solicitor for general legal advice and referrals
- phone assistance to replace travel documents or passports
- interpreters – available for Japanese, Mandarin, Indonesian, Malay, Cantonese, Thai, Korean, Portuguese languages, and many more.

Remember to have your Bupa OSHC membership number ready when you call.

Student Support Services

Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Excelsia is committed to maintaining a work and study environment which is free from discrimination and harassment for members of the Excelsia community. Staff and students are expected to respect the rights of others. Excelsia is committed under the principles and requirements of the state and federal anti-discrimination laws to ensuring that any and all matters relating to harassment are dealt with speedily, sensitively, equitably, confidentially and according to proper processes.

Please see the website for Excelsia's No Harassment and Discrimination Policy in the Integrity and Respect Framework.

Public Liability Insurance

Excelsia's public liability insurance, subject to policy terms, conditions and exclusions, extends to:

- students whilst undertaking an approved Excelsia course. The policy covers you for any loss in relation to which it is proven that Excelsia was negligent.
- all premises and locations Excelsia may use in conjunction with the delivery of educational programs to its students. This insurance cover extends to any place in which an approved off-campus activity is conducted.

Excelsia's public liability insurance does not extend to your home or other places of study, or any other place you may wish to visit while studying.

Student Success and Wellbeing

The Student Success and Wellbeing (SSW) team seeks to be an oasis of support that provides students with services for their academic and personal flourishing. Working with the Schools, the SSW team aims to enhance your student experience through a range of services from a team dedicated to your success.

In the busyness and stress of life and study, the SSW team also aims to be a source of comfort and care. They provide relevant and best practice workshops, skills development and advice. You will find our staff approachable and relational in all activities, meetings and conversations.

Appointments for all services can be requested on the Student Support page of ExO.

- **Counselling services.** Our counsellors are committed to helping you accomplish your educational and life goals by helping identify strengths and offering support where needed. We offer a safe, supportive and private atmosphere in which to discuss any concerns at all, and these services are available to all Excelsia students at no cost. Duration of services varies depending on your needs and counsellor availability, but generally speaking we work from a short-term counselling model that aims to help you reach your identified goals within five sessions. Ultimately, however, decisions regarding length of services are made jointly by you and your counsellor. If you have personal obstacles that are more deeply ingrained or that are deemed to require more long-term therapy you may be advised of off-campus resources as appropriate. Off-campus resources may be used instead of, or in addition to, the counselling services provided on campus.

  - **Confidentiality**
    Counselling records are confidential and separate from academic records, and will not be released without your signed, written permission. However, in the instance in which you present a threat to harm yourself or others, counselling information may be released without your signed, written permission, and then only to the extent necessary to protect you or other persons in danger.

- **Scheduling appointments**
  You may schedule appointments with a counsellor through the Student Support page on ExO. Walk-in appointments are accepted only if a counsellor is available, or in an emergency, in which case a counsellor will see you ASAP. There may be graduate interns providing counselling services. Graduate interns are held to the same level of ethics and professionalism as professional counselling staff. The counselling service entrance is the west side entrance of the building.

- **Director of Mission.** The Director of Mission seeks to provide spiritual guidance that leads to spiritual growth – to see people finding and living their best humanity in Christ. The Director of Mission is available to meet with you to listen, to love, and to provide care, guidance, support and advocacy. The Director of Mission concerns themselves with the holistic wellbeing of all staff and students, acting both reactively and proactively to ensure each one feels their worth as an image bearer. The Director of Mission will also initiate and oversee programs and activities that lead individuals to become more like Christ, as well as seeking to continually shape Excelsia to further reflect the heart of God. The provision of pastoral care will result in the development of a supportive environment conducive to study as well as personal and spiritual growth.

- **Academic support.** The core function of Excelsia is academia. The Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) team ensures this operation is successful through a range of academic support activities. You will be referred to SSW if a faculty/school staff member deems it necessary for your academic growth, however you may also wish to opt in to activities in order to excel in your areas of study.

Academic Skills Consultation

You can request an individual consultation with the Academic Skills Advisor to develop a plan for your academic success and help you with academic difficulties. If you are on academic probation or identified as at risk of failure, you will be referred to the Student Success and Wellbeing team by schools/programs as per your intervention strategy.

Academic Skills Workshops

Various workshops are conducted throughout the year and aligned with the rhythms of Excelsia academic needs. These workshops are aimed for groups of 10–20 students and participant numbers are increased as per needs basis. If you are at risk of not progressing in your course, you may be referred to these workshops. You are also welcome to attend at any time to increase your academic potential.

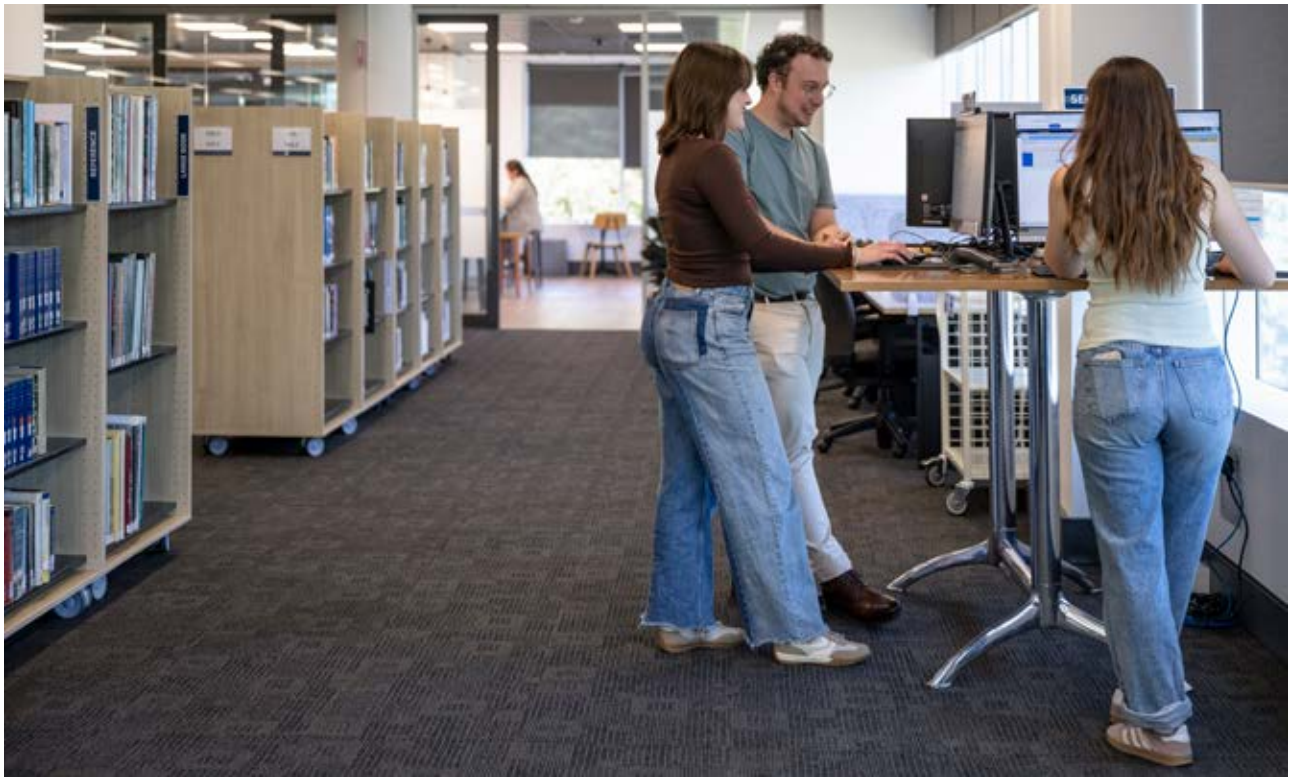
- **English language support.** The Student Success and Wellbeing (SSW) team offers the development of language proficiency and assists students in meeting Excelsia's English language requirements. Overseas students who have achieved the required IELTS score may require further language support in addition to their academic requirements. The SSW team desires to journey with students and provide support to ensure their language skills keep up with academic demands.

English Language Skills Consultation

You can request an individual consultation with the English Language Teaching Advisor to develop a strategy for your English language success. You will also be referred to the Student Success and Wellbeing team if you are on academic probation or identified as being at risk of failure, as per your intervention strategy. You may also be referred to the English Language Advisor after a consultation with the Academic Skills Advisor. The outcomeof the consultation will determine which program you enter.

Speaking/Presentation Workshops

Being able to confidently speak and present material in front of an audience when English isn't a first language can be daunting. Speaking/Presentation workshops are aimed at reducing presentation anxiety and building confidence through a range of fundamental skills to carry you beyond your studies and into your career. If you are considered at risk of not progressing in your course, you may be referred to the workshops for your academic requirements. You may also choose to engage in the workshops to increase your academic and English-speaking potential.



- **Career advice.** Excelsia wants you to succeed beyond your studies and achieve a fulfilling employment and career. Excelsia's Career Service helps you in establishing career pathways and goals. You may request a consultation with the Career Advisor to receive individualised support and information on the next steps in your desired career.
- **Disability support.** The Disability Advisor is accessible in the Innovation Centre on level 11 if you are living with disability and require assistance. The Advisor journeys with you during your studies to increase your skills, independence, personal growth and development through the provision of active support and your enhanced participation as a valued member of the Excelsia community.
- **Indigenous support.** The Indigenous Advisor is accessible in the Innovation Centre on level 11 and functions to increase the wellbeing of Australian and Torres Strait Islander students studying at Excelsia. The Advisor provides support for First Nations community members through regular contact, and liaison between staff and the Excelsia community. First Nations students receive advocacy, assistance and guidance in conjunction with necessary external First Nations services and activities within Excelsia.
- **Student Representative Council.** The Student Representative Council (SRC) is an elected body representing students' interests and promoting activities that benefit the Excelsia community. Students, including international students, will work closely with Excelsia to improve student wellbeing and resolve issues whenever they arise. When you raise with SRC members matters concerning student wellbeing, these matters are referred to relevant people for resolution. The first point of contact for SRC members is the Student Life Coordinator. If, for whatever reason, SRC members are unable to address issues with the Student Life Coordinator, they are encouraged to address them with the Director of Learning and Teaching.

SRC members also help Excelsia leadership with activities that develop leadership skills, provide moral and spiritual direction for the student body, and support the mission, vision and values of Excelsia.

Specific responsibilities of SRC members include:

- attending all SRC meetings, conveying apologies whenever attendance is not possible
- responding to SRC-related communications in a timely manner
- identifying themselves to all students in their School as available points of contact for discussing concerns
- accurately representing the views of all students at Excelsia regardless of personal beliefs and/or opinions
- using established channels of communication (e.g. meetings with Heads of School, department forum, etc.) to receive and relay information
- becoming familiar with and abiding by Excelsia policies and procedures

- contributing to the decision-making process on matters brought to the SRC
- respecting staff and student confidentiality where appropriate
- actively participating in Orientation, Open Days, retreats and other community events throughout the year
- promoting the profile of Excelsia within the internal and external community.

- **Community Gatherings.** Staff and students meet together weekly for The Gathering, a community space which can include worship, guest speakers, student contributions and announcements. All staff and students are encouraged to be present at The Gathering or have access to the information that is given out there.

PRIVACY

Excelsia complies with the Australian Privacy Principles set out in the Privacy Act 1988 in respect of students' personal information. These principles are designed to protect your privacy.

To gain access to your personal information held by Excelsia, complete the Student Request for Access to Own Personal Information form, and submit it to the Registrar who will arrange for you to have supervised access.

STUDENT GRIEVANCES

The creation and maintenance of a harmonious environment which encourages study and personal development is an important part of Excelsia's mission. We recognise that problems and grievances may arise and are committed to ensuring that these are resolved promptly in a fair and equitable manner. The Student Grievance Framework has been developed to enable students and applicants to appeal the decisions made by lecturers or committees that affect their status or academic progress. For more information, please refer to our online policy library.

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- 10% of the number of pages, or
- one chapter if the work is divided into chapters.

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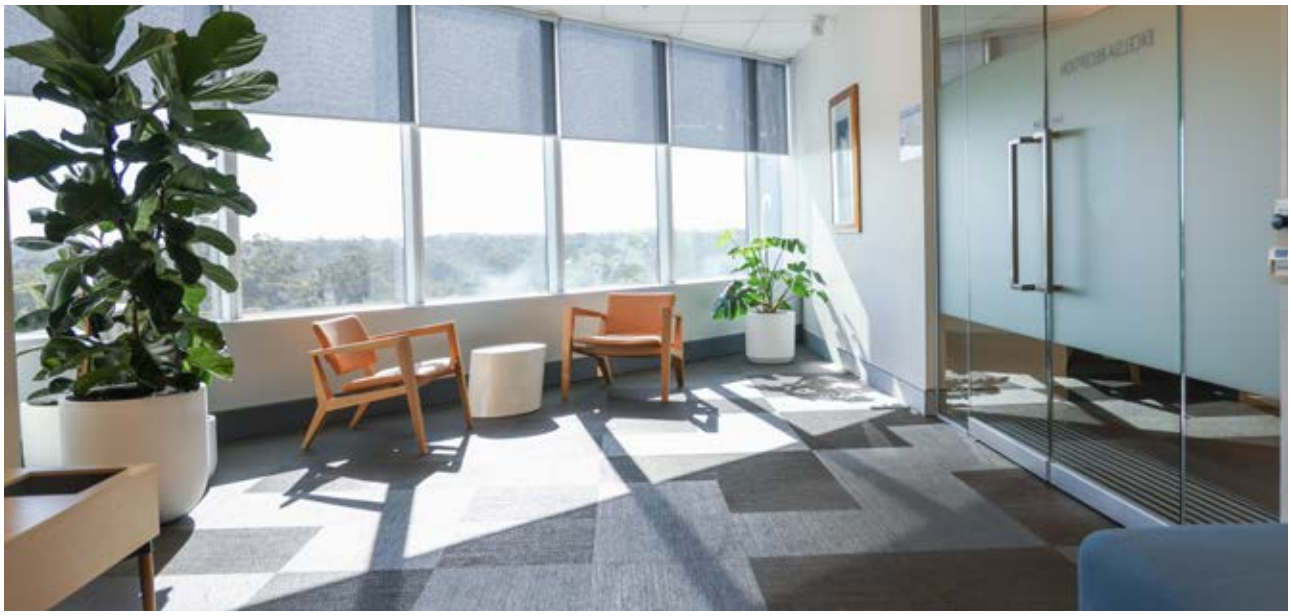
- 10% of the number of words, or
- one chapter if the work is divided into chapters.

Visit the Australian Copyright Council for this and many more user-friendly information sheets.

Please note that copyright restrictions apply to any study materials issued to you as part of your studies. The content of these course materials and any associated resources provided remains the intellectual property of Excelsia. You are not authorised to use these materials for purposes other than your own study and development and should not give course materials to others not enrolled in the course.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS GUIDE

HELP DESK

Academic Enquiries

Assessment requirements ..... Lecturer
Attendance requirements ..... Lecturer/Head of School
Leave of absence ..... Head of School/Registrar's Office
Course transfer ..... Head of School
Credit and RPL ..... Head of School/Registrar
Course requirements ..... Head of School/Registrar's Office
Grievances about assessment ..... Registrar/Head of School
Late assignment ..... Lecturer/Head of School
Professional experience/placement ..... Student Placements Department/Head of School
Special consideration ..... Head of School
Study skills/tutorials ..... Student Success and Wellbeing
Subject choices ..... Head of School
Transcripts and Results Summaries ..... Registrar's Office
Variation to enrolment ..... Head of School/Registrar's Office
Withdrawal from course ..... Head of School/Registrar's Office

Administrative Enquiries

Austudy, Abstudy, Youth Allowance ..... Registrar's Office
Change of personal details ..... Registrar's Office
Fee payments ..... Accountant
FEE-HELP ..... Registrar's Office
Immigration matters ..... Registrar's Office
Invoice queries ..... Finance and Accounts Manager
Student ID cards ..... Registrar's Office
Timetable queries ..... Head of School

Other Support

Disability support ..... Student Success and Wellbeing
Career mentoring ..... Head of School/Student Success and Wellbeing
Email assistance ..... Excelsia Help Desk
Pastoral care ..... Director of Mission/ Student Success and Wellbeing
Personal counselling ..... Student Success and Wellbeing
Student grievances ..... Registrar/Student Success and Wellbeing
Student Representative Council (SRC) requests ..... SRC Representative
Upcoming performance queries ..... Excelsia Website/School Assistants
Moodle assistance ..... Help Desk

LIVING IN SYDNEY

Population

In 2023 Australia's population reached 26.9 million people. Sydney's population is around 5.4 million, and is quite culturally diverse, so you are likely to meet someone from your cultural background during your stay. A lot of international students choose Sydney as the location for their studies, so hopefully you will meet other students from many parts of the world.

Climate

Sydney has a temperate climate which enables residents to enjoy outdoor activities all year round. Summer temperatures are usually between 25 and 30 degrees Celsius. February is usually the hottest summer month, so if you are arriving during this month to commence your studies, make sure you wear light clothing under any coat or jacket you take on the plane with you. Winters are usually cool, with temperatures averaging about 17 degrees Celsius. During winter the night time temperature can drop to around 9 degrees Celsius, so either plan to bring warm clothing with you or budget to buy winter clothes during your first year of studies. Autumn is Sydney's rainiest season with March being the wettest month. Spring is traditionally the driest season in Sydney, with warm sunny days.

Summer (December, January, February)	Max 34°C	Min 17°C
Autumn (March, April, May)	Max 26°C	Min 13°C
Winter (June, July, August)	Max 17°C	Min 7°C
Spring (September, October, November)	Max 22°C	Min 12°C

Money and banks

One of the first things you may wish to do when you arrive in Sydney is to open a bank account in which to deposit money, so you can pay for things in the local currency. If you intend to work while you are studying, your employer will be able to pay you directly into your account if you open an Australian bank account. While there are a number of banks and credit unions to choose from in Australia, banks such as Westpac or the Commonwealth Bank are particularly experienced with international visitors and will be able to help you set up an account. Operating hours for banks are usually 9:30am–4:00pm, Monday to Friday. Below are the addresses of banks located close to Pennant Hills campus.

Westpac

Precinct ATM Pennant Hills
Phone: **132 032** Local Branches:

Pennant Hills Market Place
17/10 Hillcrest Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120

CommonwealthBank

Commonwealth Bank
Phone: **13 2221** Local Branches:

Carlingford Court, Shop Sp128
Pennant Hills Road
Carlingford NSW 2118

Credit cards and ATMs

Credit cards are widely accepted around Australia. The most commonly accepted credit cards are MasterCard, Visa, American Express, and Diners Club International. Most shopping centres have Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). ATMs normally charge a fee for withdrawal if you do not have an account with that bank. Many department stores, supermarkets, and specialist shops have electronic transfer terminals (EFTPOS) where you can withdraw cash and purchase goods without additional fees, once you have an Australian bank account. Some shops will charge you a fee in addition to the purchase price if you use a credit card to pay for your goods, especially if you use American Express and Diners Club International cards.

Consumer rights (excerpted from www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au)

In Australia, every person has the right to be protected from unfair business practices. NSW Fair Trading is the state government agency that resolves disputes between consumers and businesses on issues such as shopping, refunds, renting, cars, buying and selling property, home building, product safety, scams and more.

This information aims to help you understand your consumer rights and responsibilities in New South Wales.

Shopping and refunds

As a shopper you have certain rights. The information you get about a product or service must be accurate and the product must be labelled correctly. You are entitled to a receipt upon request. The law gives you consumer guarantees in case things go wrong.

When you CAN get a refund

The seller should provide a refund (money back), exchange or repair when the product:

- is unsafe or faulty
- doesn't do the job it's supposed to do
- is different to the sample or description you saw.

If the problem is serious, you can choose to return the product and get a refund. Generally the seller will ask you for proof of purchase.

When you CANNOT get a refund

The seller does not have to give you a refund if:

- you change your mind about a product, for example if you do not like the colour or it is not the right size (unless the shop has a generous returns policy)
- you damage the product by not following the instructions or using it incorrectly
- you were aware of a fault before you bought the product
- you do not have a receipt or proof of purchase.

Read more about refunds on the Fair Trading website.

Internet shopping

When you buy products on the internet from an overseas seller, New South Wales laws only offer limited protection. Here are some tips to protect yourself:

- Be careful of offers that sound too good to be true.
- If you are dealing with a seller for the first time, find out who they are by calling them and checking their business details or selling history.
- Compare prices, postage, refund, warranty and return policies.
- Check the exchange rate, sales tax and import duties.
- Never give your password or personal bank details.
- Check if the site is secure before paying. Look for a key or closed padlock icon before the web address in your internet browser.
- Print out the payment or order confirmation and keep it in a safe place.
- Check the Scamwatch website scamwatch.gov.au and the National Fraud Information Centre (USA) website fraud.org for the latest scams to avoid.

TIP: Do not use public computers for internet shopping or banking as they may not be secure.

Deposits

Before placing a deposit on a product, make sure you are definitely going to buy it as you may lose all or part of your deposit if you change your mind.

TIP: Always keep all receipts and invoices as you may need them if you want to return, repair or exchange the products.

NSW Fair Trading

Do you have a problem with something you have bought?

- First try to sort it out with the seller.
- Keep the receipt and any other documents that relate to the sale (such as the warranty or quote).
- Write down the names of the people you speak to and what was said.

- If you can't come to an agreement with the seller contact Fair Trading on 13 32 20 or visit the Resolving issues section of the Fair Trading website for information or to lodge a complaint online.

Currency

To find out how much your local currency is worth in Australian Dollars, you can access a currency converter on the internet.

Australia uses a dollars and cents system of decimal currency with 100 cents in a dollar. The bank notes in use are $5, $10, $20, $50, and $100. Coins used are the silver-coloured 5 cent, 10 cent, 20 cent, and 50 cent coins, and the gold-coloured $1 and $2 coins. Australia developed the polymer (plastic) banknote which is very tough. The colours of notes vary according to the value of the note, which helps when you are counting them out to pay for your purchases.

Eating out and tipping

Sydney has many restaurants, so eating out can be reasonably inexpensive if you choose carefully. Ask other students for ideas on where they have found good, cheap places to eat.

Tipping is not the general custom in Australia, and service charges are not added to accounts by hotels and restaurants. In better-class restaurants it is usual to tip food and drink waiters up to 10% of the bill for good service. Porters have set charges at railway terminals but not at hotels. However, at any time, tipping is a matter of individual choice.

Telephones and mobile (cell) phones

Public telephones are available at post offices and shopping centres. Public pay phones accept a variety of coins and phone cards. Phone cards are pre-paid for use in public pay phones and can be bought at any newsagent, post office and convenience store in denominations of $A5, $A10, $A20, and $A50. Simply tell the newsagent what country you are likely to call the most and they will provide you with the correct card.

While in Australia you may wish to purchase a mobile phone. You will be able to purchase pre-paid mobile phone cards, which will add a certain amount of credit to your phone.

Retail shop hours

Retail shops are generally open:

Monday to Friday	9am – 6pm
Thursday	9am – 9pm
Saturday	9am – 5pm
Sunday	10am – 4pm

Post offices

The hours of opening are usually 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Post offices are able to help you with mailing letters and packages, buying gifts and greeting cards, and

even paying your bills online. To find the nearest post office to your accommodation visit their website auspost.com.au or phone 13 76 78. The closest post office to Excelsia is: Pennant Hills West Post Office, Thorby Arcade 12/562–564 Pennant Hills Rd, West Pennant Hills.

Mailing to Australia

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) checks goods arriving at international mail centres, airports, and seaports. Quarantine officers, x-ray machines, and detector dogs screen all of the 150 million items of international mail sent to Australia each year, intercepting around 80,000 high-risk items. Here are some tips for sending international mail to Australia:

- Tell friends and family overseas about Australia's quarantine laws and ask them not to send prohibited food, plant material, or animal products.
- Do not send prohibited food, plant material, or animal products. For a list of prohibited materials visit Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Fill out the declaration label clearly and correctly. Make sure you itemise everything inside the package, including any packaging materials you have used.
- Do not pack items in egg cartons, wooden boxes, or cardboard boxes that have been used to hold fruit, vegetables, or meat/small goods: this packaging is a quarantine risk and is prohibited.
- Do not pack items with straw or dried plant material: this packaging is prohibited. Use newspaper or foam to wrap fragile goods.
- Clean all footwear, sporting, and camping equipment thoroughly to remove any soil or seeds.

You could be fined up to $66,000 and risk 10 years' imprisonment for breaching Australia's quarantine laws.

HealthCare

Australia has a good healthcare system. All Australians pay a Medicare levy (additional tax) to fund the public health system and ensure everyone gets access to public system doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare services. People who pay extra into a private health insurance fund receive certain privileges when they use private healthcare services. In addition to the usual services available in just about any Australian suburb or town, most Australian institutions also provide special healthcare services and advice for students.

International students studying in Australia are required to have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for the duration of their student visa.

If you have OSHC with Bupa, you can submit claims at a Bupa retail centre. The nearest one to the Pennant Hills campus is in:

Shop 1073 Westfield Hornsby
Cnr Florence and Hunter Street
Hornsby, NSW, 2077
(Near Priceline)

Public hospital waiting times

If you need to go to a public hospital to see a doctor you may find a public hospital which has a general practice clinic attached. If not, you can attend an emergency room to see a doctor, but be prepared to wait a very long time. At some hospitals you could wait for as long as 5–6 hours to see a doctor. It is common practice for a doctor or nurse to make an initial assessment of your condition when you first arrive in order to prioritise the emergencies in the hospital. It is also common to remain in the emergency room for some time after a doctor has attended to you before being allowed to leave.

Local Doctors

Pennant Hills Medical Centre
8/2 Hillcrest Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
02 9484 1359

MC Family Medical Practice
Suite 5, 380 Pennant Hills Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
02 9875 2626

West Pennant Hills Medical Centre
16–18 Castle Hill Road
West Pennant Hills NSW 2120
02 9481 7773

Local Pharmacies (Chemists)*

Chemist Warehouse
3 Hillcrest Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
02 9484 1055

Pennant Hills Pharmacy
Shop 17/4–10 Hillcrest Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
02 9484 3554

* Please note: it is illegal to have family or friends mail prescriptions to you from overseas.

First aid officers on campus

John Leung	02 9819 8854
Rachel Pearson	02 9819 8801
Luke George	02 9819 8822
Matt Holt	02 9819 8815
Call for a First Aid Officer	02 9000 9696
Rollan Verzosa	02 9819 8839
Angeline Tyrokomos	02 9819 8879

SAFETY

Laws and safety in Australia

Among the reasons we have such a wonderful lifestyle in Australia are our representative democracy, the separation of powers, and our respect for the rule of law. We have a lot of laws in Australia and as a result, society runs smoothly.

When you applied for your student visa, you signed a document (Australian Values Statement Temporary) agreeing to respect Australian values and obey the laws of Australia for the duration of your stay. Failure to comply with the laws of this land could result in a fine or the cancellation of your visa and possible deportation back home. If you are convicted of a serious crime, you could go to prison. Nobody wants this to happen! Go to the Australian Government website for a comprehensive outline of our values and laws.

Home security

House-breaking is one of the most common crimes. Most house break-ins appear to be crimes of opportunity with entry gained through an open or unlocked window or door. Most intruders are looking for (and often find) a house left open or unlocked where they can get what they want with ease and make a quick getaway.

Some general security tips:

- Your house number should be clearly visible from the street in case of an emergency.
- Keep your front door locked when you are at the back of the house.
- Do not leave messages on the front door. It lets people know you are not home.
- Avoid having parcels left on the doorstep.
- If you must have something delivered while you are out, ask the neighbours to collect it.
- When out, leave a radio or television on, or a light in the evening, to give the impression you are home.
- Keep cash and valuables out of sight.

Personal safety

When you are out and about it is important to be alert and aware of your personal safety. Please consult the Safety Information on our website for good advice.

Personal safety tips: (excerpted from cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

- Be alert, assertive and confident
- Try and walk with other people rather than by yourself
- Carry only the money you need for the day
- Keep your money and wallet in your front pocket and keep your bag in front of you
- Be aware of your surroundings. Avoid text messaging and long conversations on your mobile
- At night stay in well-lit areas, where there are lots of people
- If you feel like you are being followed or threatened, cross the street, change direction, vary your pace and enter a shop or occupied house.

If you are being robbed:

- Give them what they ask for
- Try and remember what they look like
- Report all crimes to the police (interpreter services are available, advise police which language you would like to speak and an interpreter will be provided).

Report all crimes to the police:

For all emergencies, ring **Triple Zero (000)**

For non emergencies, ring the Police Assistance Line **131 444**

Hornsby Police Station
292 Pacific Highway
Hornsby NSW 2077
02 9476 9799

Castle Hill Police Station
16–18 Pennant Street
Castle Hill NSW 2154
02 9680 5399

Gordon Police Station
2 Park Ave
Gordon
02 9418 5399

To report crime anonymously, contact **Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000**

If you are going out at night, remember to:

- Think ahead: consider how you are going to get home. What about pre-booking a taxi or arranging transport with a friend or family member?
- Never hitchhike (asking a stranger for a ride in their car by making a hand gesture).
- Make sure that you stay with your party and that someone knows where you are at all times.
- Make sure you have enough money to get home or to make a phone call.
- Keep away from trouble. If you see any trouble or suspect that it might be about to start, move away from the scene if you can. The best thing you can do is to alert the police and keep away.
- Walk purposely and try to appear confident. Be wary of casual requests from strangers, like someone asking for a cigarette or change – they could have ulterior motives.
- Try not to carry your wallet or phone in your back trouser pocket where it is vulnerable and in clear view.
- If you are socialising in a public place never leave your drink unattended. Drink spiking (putting extra alcohol or other drugs in a person's drink without their knowledge) is an unfortunate risk to people who are out trying to have a good time. If you suspect you or your friends have had a drink spiked call 000 immediately to report it and get help.

Hitchhiking is illegal in Queensland and Victoria. Elsewhere in Australia it is illegal to hitchhike on motorways. Many crimes have been committed against innocent hitchhikers.

DON'T HITCHHIKE! It is not worth the risk.

Sun safety

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. In fact, one in every two Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer at some point during their lifetime. The good news is, it can be prevented. By minimising your exposure to the sun's damaging ultraviolet radiation (UVR), you can protect your skin and prevent the development of skin cancer.

Sun protection

Skin cancer and skin damage are caused by being exposed to the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR). The key to preventing skin cancer is to protect your skin from the sun by practising sun safe behaviours.

There are six simple steps you can follow to reduce your risk of skin cancer and protect your skin:

1. Minimise your time in the sun between 10am and 3pm
2. Seek shade
3. Wear suitable clothing that provides good sun protection
4. Choose a broad brim, legionnaire-style or bucket-style hat that will protect your face, neck and ears
5. Wear UV protective sunglasses
6. Apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen 20 minutes before you go out into the sun.

Beach safety

Understanding the ocean is very important – the more you know about how waves, wind and tides affect conditions in the water, the better able you are to keep yourself safe from danger. Recognising danger signs and awareness of surf conditions is an essential part of lifesaving.

Remember the F-L-A-G-S and Stay Safe

F	L	A	G	S
Find the flags and swim between them: the red and yellow flags mark the safest place to swim at the beach.	**Look at the safety signs:** they help you identify potential dangers and daily conditions at the beach.	**Ask a surf lifesaver for some good advice:** surf conditions can change quickly so talk to a surf lifesaver or lifeguard before entering the water.	**Get a friend to swim with you** so you can look out for each other's safety and get help if needed. Children should always be supervised by an adult.	**Stick your hand up for help:** if you get into trouble in the water, stay calm, and raise your arm to signal for help. Float with a current or rip – don't try to swim against it.

And remember to:

Never swim at unpatrolled beaches

Never swim at night

Never swim under the influence of alcohol

Never run and dive into the water

Never swim directly after a meal.

The surf environment

Rips

A rip is a strong current running out to sea. Rips are the cause of most rescues performed at beaches. A rip usually occurs when a channel forms between the shore and a sandbar, and large waves have built up water which then returns to sea, causing a drag effect. **The larger the surf, the stronger the rip.** Rips are dangerous as they can carry a weak or tired swimmer out into deep water.

Identifying a rip

The following features will alert you to the presence of a rip:

- darker colour, indicating deeper water
- murky brown water caused by sand stirred up off the bottom
- smoother surface with much smaller waves, alongside white water (broken waves)
- waves breaking further out to sea on both sides of the rip
- debris floating out to sea
- a rippled look, when the water around is generally calm.

Escaping from a rip

If you are caught in a rip:

- Don't panic, stay calm.
- If you are a strong swimmer, swim at a 45-degree angle across the rip and in the same direction as the current until you reach the breaking wave zone, then return to shore.
- If you are a weak or tired swimmer, float with the current, don't fight it. Swim parallel to the shore for about 30 or 40 metres until you reach the breaking wave zone, then swim back to shore or signal for help.
- Remember to stay calm and conserve your energy.

Bush and outback safety

Australia has many extraordinary and beautiful places to explore. If you are going on a trip, travel with other people, make sure someone knows where you are at all times and stay on a road or a walking track.

Be prepared if you plan some time in our bushland. Plan your hike. Always tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to return. Let them know when you return safely.

- Check the weather forecast and be prepared for unexpected changes in weather.
- Check the length and degree of difficulty of your planned walk. Consider using a local guide when taking long or difficult walks.
- When walking or exploring outdoors drink plenty of water (allow at least one litre of water per hour of walking). Wear sturdy shoes and socks, a hat, sunscreen lotion, comfortable clothing and insect repellent. Other handy items for long bushwalks include food, warm clothing, first aid supplies, a torch and a map.
- **Never walk alone.** Read maps and signs carefully. Stay on the track and stay behind safety barriers.
- **Never dive into a rock pool, creek, lake or river**. Stay away from cliff edges and waterfalls.
- Do not feed or play with native animals. You might get bitten or scratched.
- Limit your use of fire. Use a fuel stove for cooking and wear thermal clothing to keep warm. Never leave fires unattended or unconfined.
- Visit the ranger station or park information centre to obtain details on the best places to visit and any additional safety tips for that park.

Home fire safety

International students are increasingly appearing in statistics related to fire incidents and deaths in Australia. Sadly, most of these fires are preventable. You can take some simple steps to reduce the risk of fire in your accommodation. Follow the fire safety tips below to

help reduce the chance of fire in your accommodation:

Smoke alarms

When you are sleeping you cannot smell smoke. Smoke alarms save lives. They wake you and alert you to the danger from smoke and fire. You MUST have a smoke alarm where you live, it is the law. All homes must have a smoke alarm on each level. Landlords are legally responsible for installation of alarms in rental properties. Tenants are responsible for testing and maintaining alarms.

- Test your smoke alarm monthly by pressing the test button.
- DON'T remove the battery.
- DON'T take the smoke alarm down.
- DON'T cover the smoke alarm.
- Replace the battery in your smoke alarm yearly.
- Regularly vacuum over and around your smoke alarm to remove dust and debris to keep it clean.
- If there is no smoke alarm or it does not work report it to your landlord.

Electricity

The electrical current in Australia is 240/250 volts AC, 50 cycles. The Australian three-pin plug is extremely safe. Adaptors are usually required for most foreign appliances. A transformer may be required if you bring an appliance from overseas that operates on a different voltage.

The safe use of electricity assists in preventing house fires. Improper use of power boards and double adaptors can lead to fires. A double adaptor or a power board plugged into another double adaptor or power board creates a danger of overloading the system. For safety, use a single extension cord rather than joining shorter cords. Leaving an extension cord coiled while in use or placing a cord under floor coverings can cause overheating.

Heaters

It's nice to keep yourself warm in the cooler weather, but remember heaters are a major cause of house fires.

- Read and follow the operating instructions for your heater.
- All clothes and curtains should be at least one metre from the heater.
- Turn off all heaters before you leave your room or go to bed.
- Before you go to bed at night or leave your home, ensure heaters are turned off at their power source and fires are extinguished.

Cooking

- Most house fires start in the kitchen.
- Prepare food only in the kitchen.
- Always stay in the kitchen while food is cooking.
- Hot oils and fats catch fire easily.
- DO NOT use water to put out an oil fire.
- Use a dry powder extinguisher, fire blanket or saucepan lid to extinguish, if safe to do so.
- Turn off the cooking appliance before you leave the room or go to bed.

Plan your escape

In a fire:

1. Get down on the floor. Crawl to the door.
2. Get out of your room.
3. Close the door. This prevents smoke and fire from spreading
4. Alert others.
5. When outside stay out.
6. Call **000**.

Dangerous animals and plants

Australia is home to a variety of native animals. Even if they seem friendly to you, do not touch or feed them – they are not used to close contact with humans and may hurt you. If you are visiting any of Australia's beautiful parks or forests:

- Be wary of animals in their natural habitat. Stay well back from goannas, crocodiles, snakes, dingoes, cassowaries, and also wild pigs, cattle, horses and buffaloes. People have been seriously injured or killed by wild animals. Be very careful about approaching any injured animal, such as kangaroos or possums. They are likely to bite and scratch if you attempt to touch or move them.
- Never feed or play with wildlife. Native animals are by nature timid, however, having been provided food from people, they may become aggressive in pursuit of food. You may get bitten or scratched. In addition, human foods may be harmful to native animals.

In the warm waters of tropical Queensland:

- **Take care to avoid marine stingers.**
- **Do not enter water where crocodiles may live.**

Bites and stings

The majority of insects in Australia are not harmful to humans. Some insects bite and sting if they are threatened so it is best to avoid touching them if you want to avoid being stung or bitten.

The Australia-wide Poisons Information Centres have a common telephone number: **131 126**.

Some people are allergic to certain insect bites or venom. In the case of an allergic reaction to bites or stings, medical attention should be sought immediately. Call a doctor or hospital for guidance, or **000**.

Anaphylaxis – allergic reactions

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can occur in sensitive individuals from exposure to any chemicals foreign to the body, including bites and stings, plants, or medications. Parts of the body, for example the face or throat, swell up so much that the patient can't breathe. In severe cases the patient may go into shock within a few minutes and the heart can stop.

For any patient who shows signs of anaphylaxis, call 000 for an ambulance, and have the patient taken immediately to the emergency department of the nearest hospital.

TRANSPORT

Public transport

With one of the highest standards of living in the world, Australia offers modern transport systems. Sydney has an extensive public transport system that includes trains, buses and ferries. The Sydney Metropolitan Area is divided into zones, and your ticket type and cost depends on which zone you are going to travel in and for how long. Tickets can be bought at some train stations and news agencies. International students are now eligible for certain transport discounts, although in New South Wales you are not eligible for student travel concessions when you travel by train, bus or ferry.

The cheapest way to get around Sydney is to purchase an Opal card. Opal cards are smartcard tickets that you keep, reload and reuse to pay for travel on public transport. Simply add value to your Opal card then tap on and tap off to pay your fares on trains, buses, ferries and light rail – anywhere within the Opal network. The Opal network includes train, bus, ferry and light rail services in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hunter, Illawarra and Southern Highlands. As an international student, you will need to order an Adult Opal card opal.com.au

As well as the lowest single fares, Opal cards have lots of benefits for regular travellers. The more you travel with an Adult Opal card the more you can save. Complete eight paid journeys between Monday and Sunday, and your fares for the rest of the week are half-price. There are several ways you can top up your Opal card. You can set the card to automatically top up. This means whenever your Adult Opal card value falls below $10 it automatically tops up to the amount of your choice using a linked debit or credit card. You can change the top up amount or cancel auto top up at any time. You can plan your trips, search your transaction history, top up your Adult Opal card and even calculate your fares, all from your smart phone. Alternatively, you can top up using the Opal Travel app, online, at a top up machine or at an Opal retailer.

To find out more about the Adult Opal card, visit this website:

https://www.opal.com.au/en/about-opal/opal_for_adults

Please note that you can incur an on-the-spot fine of $200 or more if you travel without a valid ticket. Transport Officers monitor all transport services and are frequent visitors on bus and metro service routes to and from Excelsia.

Concessions for travel around Sydney are not available to international students on student visas, but international students can get concessions for international airfares. The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is an internationally accepted proof of status and also provides savings on accommodation, entertainment, food, clothes and much more. Further information is available from the ISIC website.

Private transport

International students may drive in Australia on a valid overseas driver's licence; but if the document is not in English, the visitor must carry a translation with the permit. An international driving licence is not sufficient by itself. You must drive on the left in Australia, and it is advisable to familiarise yourself with the road rules before you hire a car or purchase one to drive in Australia during your stay.

Metered taxicabs operate in all major cities and towns. You will find taxi ranks at transport terminals, main hotels or shopping centres, or you can hail taxis in the street. A light and sign on the roof indicates if a cab is vacant. There is a minimum charge on hiring as well as a charge per kilometre travelled. Taxi drivers do not have to be tipped. See Sydney Taxi Fare Rates for fares.

HELPFUL INTERNET RESOURCES

Student visa information:

https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500 includes information on student visas, work visas, temporary residency, and immigration.

Studying in Australia:

studyaustralia.gov.au

Study NSW:

study.nsw.gov.au/current-students

This is the NSW Government's website for international students. It contains a wealth of information about living and working in NSW, as well as information about events, support services, and so much more.

Service NSW:

service.nsw.gov.au/guide/support-for-international-students

This NSW Government website includes information about language and interpreter services, identity cards and documents, travel, safety and emergency help.

National Student Ombudsman (NSO):

https://www.nso.gov.au/

The NSO works with students and higher education providers to resolve student complaints. The website provides information on the services they provide and how they can be contacted.

Fair Work Ombudsman:

fairwork.gov.au

This website is a good starting point for workplace related matters including entitlements and conditions, as well as being able to report issues.

Redfern Legal Centre:

rlc.org.au/

Free legal advice for international students and funded by Study NSW.

iSTUDENTglobal Guide for International Students:

i-studentglobal.com/study-regions/australia

Directions (walking or driving):

whereis.com

Information on Australia:

goaustralia.about.com

What's on in Sydney:

sydney.com/events

Tourist information, maps, and events for Sydney:

sydney.com.au

cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Local information:

hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Buying food in Sydney:

coles.com.au

sydneymarkets.com.au

woolworths.com.au

paddysmarkets.com.au

aldi.com.au

Buying clothes in Sydney:

factoryoutletshopping.com.au

westfield.com.au/hornsby

theiconic.com.au

Road safety information:

Transport for NSW: Centre for Road Safety

BOOKSTORES IN SYDNEY

Christian

Koorong Bookstore
2/1 City View Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
koorong.com
02 9857 6699

Word Bookstore
Online
word.com.au

General

Dog Eared Books
2/7 Hillcrest Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
dogearedbooks.com.au
02 9875 2277

Berkelouw Hornsby
Shop B30/33/236 Westfield Hornsby
236 Pacific Highway
Hornsby NSW 2077
berkelouw.com.au
02 9987 2393

QBD Books
Shop 3041 Westfield Hornsby
236 Pacific Highway
Hornsby NSW 2077
qbdbooks.com.au
02 9476 0144

LOCAL LIBRARIES

Pennant Hills Library
Yarra Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2077
02 9847 6100

Hornsby Central Library
28–44 George Street
Hornsby NSW 2077
02 9847 6813

Epping Branch Library
Chambers Court
Epping NSW 2121
02 9806 5843

AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

Adjusting to life in Australia

While living and studying abroad may be an exciting adventure, it can also present a range of challenges. Having decided to study and live in Australia you will be undertaking adjustments in many areas of your life, including cultural, social and academic. It is also important to remember that while these changes are occurring you will be embarking upon a new semester of study (for many of you in a different language) and be away from your usual supports, networks and resources. Adjustment to a new country and culture is a process that occurs gradually and takes time. The values, beliefs, traditions and customs of your home country may vary greatly from those in Australia and adapting to the Australian way of life may take time.

Schools

Children in Australia are required to attend school until the completion of at least Year 10. Sydney is serviced by a large number of government and non-government schools. If you have one or more school-aged children, should find places available for them in a good school near your home. You may be required to pay full school fees, depending on whether your child(ren) are enrolled in a government or a non-government school.

Australian art

Australian contemporary arts reflect the world's oldest continuous cultural traditions and also a diverse, multicultural society. Our visual and performing arts communities receive international acclaim for their vibrancy, originality, and cutting-edge work in the arts, literature, stage and cinema, dance, classical music, and contemporary Australian rock music.

The National Museum of Australia opened as part of Australia's Centenary of Federation celebrations in 2001. It is co-located with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in the nation's capital city of Canberra.

Multiculturalism

More than 100 ethnic groups are represented in Australia, making it one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. Australia's dynamic multiculturalism can be attributed to its unique combination of Indigenous cultures, early European settlement, and immigration from all parts of the world.

Australians value the wealth of cultural diversity and social sophistication that international students bring to our campuses and our communities. We take great care in looking after international students and helping them adjust to the Australian way of life. International students also greatly benefit from their education in Australia and make lifelong friendships.

Language

Although English is the official language, a host of other languages are spoken in Australia. As one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, we have many Australians who are naturally fluent in other languages.

Many Australians speak a language other than English at home. Of these, many speak a European Union language, apart from English, in the home, with others speaking an Asian language.

In Australia, there is the opportunity to improve your English through specialist study in an English-speaking environment and in all sectors of Australian education and training.

People from other English-speaking nations rarely have trouble understanding Australian English. While there are some minor differences in accent between the cities and country areas, the difference is much less than you will find in America, Britain and Canada. As you improve your English in Australia, you will learn some of our slang and have much fun explaining the meanings to your friends and relatives at home.

Religion

The most common religion in Australia is Christianity, but most religions are represented in our multicultural society. Australians respect the freedom of people to practise their choice of religion. Churches, mosques, temples and synagogues are located in most major cities.

Social customs

When meeting someone for the first time, it is usual to shake the person's right hand with your right hand. People who do not know each other generally do not kiss or hug when meeting. When you first meet

someone, it is polite not to talk about personal matters.

Clothing customs

The types of clothing that people wear reflect the diversity in our society just as much as the variation in climate. There are no laws or rules on clothing, but you must wear certain clothing for work situations. Most workplaces have dress standards. Outside of the work situation, clothing is an individual choice; many people dress for comfort, for the social situation or the weather. Clubs, movie theatres and other places require patrons to be in neat, clean clothes and appropriate footwear.

Polite behaviour

'Please' and 'thank you' are words that are very helpful when dealing with other people and buying goods or services. When asked if you would like something, like a cup of tea, it is polite to say, 'Yes please' or just 'please' if you would like it, or 'no, thank you' if you do not. When you receive something, it is polite to thank the person by saying 'thank you'. Australians tend to think that people who do not say 'please' or 'thank you' are being rude. Using these words will help in building a good relationship with other people.

Australian slang

Much common word usage or 'slang' may seem strange to people new to Australia. Slang words start from many different sources. Some words are shortened versions of longer words. Many were expressions already used by migrants who came from the north of England. If you are unsure what an expression means, it is all right to ask the person who said it to explain. Some common expressions are:

- **Bring a plate:** When you are invited to a party and asked to 'bring a plate', this means to bring a dish of food to share with your host and other guests. Take the food to the party in any type of dish, not just a plate, and it is usually ready to serve. This is common for communal gatherings such as for school, work or a club. If you are unsure what to bring, you can ask the host.
- **BYO:** When an invitation to a party says 'BYO', this means 'bring your own' drink. If you do not drink alcohol, it is acceptable to bring juice, soft drink or soda, or water. Some restaurants are BYO. You can bring your own wine to these, although there is usually a charge for providing and cleaning glasses called 'corkage'.
- **Arvo:** This is short for afternoon. 'Drop by this arvo' means please come and visit this afternoon.
- **Fortnight:** This term describes a period of two weeks.
- **Barbeque, BBQ, barbie:** Outdoor cooking, usually of meat or seafood over a grill or hotplate using gas or coals. The host serves the meat with salads and bread rolls. It is common for a guest, when invited to a BBQ, to ask if they should bring anything.
- **Snag:** The raw type sausages usually cooked at a BBQ. They

can be made of pork, beef or chicken.

- **Chook:** The term chook means a chicken, usually a hen.
- **Cuppa:** A cup of tea or coffee. 'Drop by this arvo for a cuppa' means please come and visit this afternoon for a cup of tea or coffee.
- **Loo or dunny:** These are slang terms for toilet. If you are a guest in someone's house for the first time, it is usually polite to ask permission to use his or her toilet. 'May I use your toilet, please?' Some people ask, 'Where's the loo?'
- **Fair dinkum:** Honest, the truth. 'Fair dinkum?' when used as a question means, 'is it really true?'
- **To be crook:** To be sick or ill.
- **Flat out:** Busy.
- **Shout:** To buy someone a drink. At a bar or a pub when a group of friends meet, it is usual for each person to 'shout a round', meaning buy everybody a drink. Each person takes a turn at buying a 'round'. It is also acceptable to say that you do not drink (alcohol) by saying that you are a 'teetotaller'. This also means you are not obliged to shout.
- **Bloke:** A man. Sometimes if you ask for help, you may get an answer to 'see that bloke over there'.
- **How ya goin? 'How are you going?':** This means how are you, or how do you do? It does not mean what form of transport you are taking. Sometimes it can sound like 'ow-ya-goin-mate'.

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Australia is home to the world's oldest continuing cultural traditions. Sites showing human occupation have been dated back 40,000 years. Recent work in north-west Australia identified rock art that may be 175,000 years old. Indigenous Australians have a mystic tradition that explains their close relationship to the land and tells of a dreamtime rich in stories of creation.

Settlement

On 26 January 1788, European settlers reached Port Jackson and established a settlement in what is now Sydney. Australia's population is now over 25 million. Asian countries figures prominently in Australia's top 10 source countries for family migrants.

Government and politics

Australia is a democracy and debate is a component of the Australian political process. Freedom of speech is a cornerstone of any democracy and Australians have no hesitation in expressing their views on political and controversial issues. All Australians from the age of 18 are required to vote in local, state, and federal elections.

The Parliament is based on the Westminster system of government. Common law is the basis of Australia's legal system. On 1 January 2001, Australia celebrated its Centenary of Federation. Elected by the people of Australia, the Commonwealth Government governs Australia as a constitutional monarchy. King Charles III of the United Kingdom is also the King of Australia. He is formally the head of state, represented in Australia by the Governor-General.

There was vigorous debate about Australia becoming a republic in the lead-up to a national referendum in 1999 when a majority of Australians voted to remain a constitutional monarchy.

AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHY

Australia is a land of contrasts: sweeping golden beaches, coral reefs rich with marine life, tropical rainforests, mountain ranges, vast grazing lands, and sparse deserts.

One of the oldest continents, Australia is as wide as the distance from Kuala Lumpur to Taipei and as long as the distance from Singapore to Manila. It is the only country to occupy an entire continent.

Surrounded by the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Australia has many animals and plants which are unique to the planet. The surface geology is typically old and flat.

LEISURE

Sports and recreation

Australians are very keen on sport and outdoor activities and have gained a worldwide reputation, both as individuals and as teams. Hosting the Year 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney highlights Australia as a leading destination for international events. See what's on at the Olympic Park: www.sydneyolympicpark.com.au

Australia has more than 120 national sporting organisations and thousands of state, regional and club bodies. It is estimated that 6.5 million people are registered sports participants. While there are over 120 sporting organisations, Australians also take part in bushwalking, fishing, boating and water sports.

Great Aussie movies to watch

The Castle: The Castle took just a week or so to film and was produced on a shoestring (it cost well under a million dollars). The plot revolves around a developer persuading the local council to compulsorily acquire a cheap home which is located alongside an airport and which is close to high voltage power lines. The happy family does not wish to shift, and they take their case to court. It's a box-office hit in Australia and actors include former TV host Sophie Lee (of Muriel's Wedding) and Eric Bana. (Warning: The Castle is full of Australian cultural allusions; it might be best to watch this after you have been here a while, or with Australians who can explain the movie to you.)

The Dish: This film was made by the producers of *The Castle*. It is based on the work of the Parkes radio telescope in tracking the first manned lunar flight.

Strictly Ballroom: Despite rules and family differences, a couple find love and competes in the national ballroom dancing championships. Ballroom dancing made somewhat of a comeback as a result of the film.

The Man from Snowy River: A young cattleman recovers a precious horse in spite of unfavourable odds, thereby winning more than the respect of more experienced cattlemen. There is a sequel: *The Man from Snowy River 2*.

Crocodile Dundee: Paul Hogan plays an outback crocodile hunter who meets a USA reporter and shows off the attractiveness of the outback, exaggerating the danger of crocodile attack. Great cinematography. *Crocodile Dundee 2* is also worth watching.

Newsfront: This film, which was made in the 1970s, now looks as quaint as the old newsreels it depicts. It reflects the rebirth of the Australian film industry.

Gallipoli: Australian forces face a monumental task fighting Turks during World War I.

Mad Max: When Australians first saw the Mad Max trilogy, they were introduced into a post-nuclear world. It pictured a desolated Australia of the future in which few would wish to live.

Tim: Mel Gibson's debut movie, about a mentally disabled young man who learns to live and love. A must see.

Babe: This Australian film has seen international success, appealing to children and adults alike. The film follows the journey of the central character, a pig called Babe, who would rather be a sheepdog than a pig. It won an Oscar for best visual effects. Its sequel, *Babe 2*, has also proved popular.

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is part of the intercultural experience of study abroad. Each of us has attitudes, emotions, prejudices, habits and mannerisms that are products of our culture. When you enter a new culture, all or most of the familiar cues of daily life are removed. No matter how broad-minded or full of goodwill you may be, the mental and emotional adjustments required of those living abroad are real.

Many people think that knowing and speaking the language ensures automatic communication. However, since communication includes behaviour, knowledge of the written and spoken language may of itself be insufficient. Your peace of mind and efficiency depend on hundreds of signs and symbols about which you are largely unaware. These signs or cues that you use to orientate yourself to the situation of daily living include: when and how to greet people, eat food, get from place to place and talk informally. When you enter a new culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed.

An intercultural experience is a powerful teacher. It forces you into realisations about others and about yourself. Indeed, the greatest shock may not be in the encounter with a different culture, but in the recognition of how your own culture has shaped you and what you do. This difficulty might also be termed 'role shock'. Many times what is

really shocking is not necessarily the new culture, but the changes of roles you are forced to assume.

The first step toward adjustment is accepting the fact that adjustment will be a challenge until you become familiar with the language, mannerisms and local customs. You may not like to believe that you are experiencing emotional stress, but it is wise to admit it when it happens.

Culture shock has been broken down into four phases: excitement, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. The problems of adjustment come to all, but to each person with varying intensity. It helps to know that such problems will arise and know what it is you are experiencing. It affects nearly every traveller, even experienced ones.

1. Excitement

This is often called the 'honeymoon'. You are excited about the newness of it all. Experiences are new and exciting. Sights, sounds and smells are different, but still so interesting. You are comfortable as long as you can see similarities between your native culture and your new environment. Normally this phase does not last if you remain in one place, as you must begin to cope with the real conditions of life.

2. Crisis

How can there be a crisis stage during this experience that you planned for and dreamed about for so long? When the newness and excitement wear off (from a few hours to six months), the real challenge starts. As you begin to see and feel differences, things may go wrong and you may begin to feel disoriented. Because language is the most common communication tool in any society, it offers the greatest security in personal relationships. If you do not have adequate language skills, you are stripped of your primary way of interacting. You will be unable to display your education and intelligence, symbols that give you status and security back home. As you meet other educated and intelligent people, but are not able to respond to them on their level, you may feel you are on the level of a child again.

You may be excessively concerned about cleanliness, drinking water, or food. You can sometimes be identified by an absent-minded, far-away stare. You may experience fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations, or fear excessively the possibility of being cheated, robbed or injured. It is at this time that some go through an 'anti-native' stage. This is the time of cultural adjustment when there is a tendency to sit around with other 'foreigners' and complain with them about the country and the people. It may be a time of clinging to old beliefs and attitudes and idealising the situation at home. It can end up with constant complaining and finding fault with everything foreign. You are in another culture to learn about the culture and use your newly acquired lens to view your own culture, not to replicate your country.

The other side of the 'anti-native' stage is 'going native'. It is good to recognise the positive qualities of the new culture and be somewhat adventurous, but there is a danger of going too far. A person of this extreme totally renounces all former ways and values in favour of new ones. There is criticism of the home country and bitter blaming for real and imagined injustices.

This time is also characterised as 'culture fatigue'. A person gets tired of not being home. In spite of the ability to cope on a daily basis, everything can become uncomfortable and overwhelming.

3. Recovery

You begin to piece together a pattern of behaving and living. You begin to recognise communicative cues: peoples' faces, actions and tones. You even recover your sense of humour. If you are speaking another language, you begin to communicate more efficiently. As you build your familiarity and knowledge, you find yourself making it through each day with greater ease.

To move to this stage, it is important to develop self-awareness – an understanding of your own feeling and cultural patterns – what offends or confuses you and why you feel that way. It is helpful if you can suspend judgement about conditions and situations you find unpleasant or confusing until you learn more about the people and the reasons they think and act as they do.

The recovery stage progresses as you begin to empathise with the host culture. You become more concerned with gaining new insights and friends.

4. Adjustment

Now that you are willingly adjusting to the new culture, you can accept it as just another way of living. It does not mean you are enthusiastic about everything the people do or about the way they do it. It does mean that you can accept and understand the differences. You will still have moments of stress and times of misunderstanding, but you begin to feel more comfortable and genuinely enjoy yourself.

Cultivating awareness

What will help you as you go on this roller-coaster of cross-cultural adaptation?

Awareness of self

You need a positive self-image and the ability to adapt. You need to be emotionally stable in situations that challenge personal feelings. Self-motivation allows you to act positively rather than react negatively to a strange environment. We are all products of our own environment, but our

own way of doing things is not the only way. By being self-aware you can have the confidence to view the other culture and learn from it.

Awareness of others

A tolerance of differences and uncertainty makes it easier to understand others. Resist making jokes and comments intended to illustrate the stupidity of the 'natives', and don't hang around those who make them. They will only reinforce your unhappiness. Consciously look for logical reasons behind everything in the host culture which seems strange, difficult, confusing or threatening. This will reinforce the positive attitude that there is a logical explanation behind things you observe in the host culture. Have the confidence to take every aspect of your experience and look at it from the perspective of your hosts, finding patterns and interrelationships. All the pieces fit together once you discover where they go.

It may be helpful to identify a host national (a member of your host family, a neighbour, someone in class, a friendly acquaintance) who is sympathetic and understanding, and talk with them about specific situations and your feelings related to them. Talking with people from your own culture can be helpful, but only to a limited extent. Your problem lies with your relationship to the host culture.

Awareness of Circumstances

A sensitivity to circumstances allows you to pick up behaviour patterns more quickly. If you look, listen and appropriately imitate, you will communicate more effectively with people around you and you will be able to establish pleasant relationships. Find out as much as you can about your host country. One of the best antidotes to culture shock (though when you're in the midst of it, this may not make sense) is knowing as much as possible about where you are. Go to a museum, a sporting event, a movie or an art gallery. Hang out at a local coffee shop, listen, read the newspaper, take a new route to Excelsia or ride a bus to a different neighbourhood. Being active and interactive with the culture will give you new and exciting experiences.

Adjusting to a new culture can be a powerful learning tool. Although you may suffer temporary frustration, discomfort and anxiety, these feelings can facilitate self-understanding and personality development. Because you must deal with the situations yourself, you will learn. The very experiences that disrupt your personality and its relationship to your surroundings will be the basis upon which you can build an expanded, enlightened personality.

Half the battle of cultural adjustment is won if you realise you will experience it. The other half is won by using your cultural sensitivity to learn and make the adjustment a positive experience. Once you realise that many of your cultural adjustment problems are caused by your failure to understand another's cultural background, you will also realise that you can gain an understanding and learn to communicate. Then you can really start enjoying yourself.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Australians hold certain days each year as special days of national meaning. We may recognise the day with a holiday for everyone or we can celebrate the day as a nation with special events. Most States and Territories observe some of the public holidays on the same date. Some States and Territories have others on different dates or have some days that only their State or Territory celebrates. In larger cities, most shops, restaurants and public transport continue to operate on most public holidays. In smaller towns, most shops and restaurants close.

New Year

Australians love to celebrate New Year. There are festivals, celebrations and parties all over the country to welcome in the New Year. Sydney Harbour and Sydney Harbour Bridge have become synonymous with New Year celebrations in Australia; the fireworks display is considered to be one of the best in the world.

1 January is a public holiday.

Australia Day

Australia Day, **26 January**, is the day we as a people and place celebrate our nationhood. The day is a public holiday. The day marks the founding of the first settlement in our nation by European people.

Easter

Easter commemorates the resurrection (return to life) of Jesus Christ following his death by crucifixion. It is the most significant event of the Christian calendar. In addition to its religious significance, Easter in Australia is enjoyed as a four-day holiday weekend starting on Good Friday and ending on Easter Monday. This extra-long weekend is an opportunity for Australians to take a mini-holiday or get together with family and friends.

Anzac Day

Anzac Day is on **25 April**, the day the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) landed at Gallipoli in Turkey in 1915 during World War 1. This day is set apart to hold dear the memory of those who fought for our nation and those who lost their life to war. The day is a public holiday. We remember with ceremonies, wreath laying and military parades. Anzac Day is the only day of the year where it may also be possible to attend an RSL (Returned and Services League) Club to experience a traditional game of 'two-up' – a game of chance played by the ANZACS where money is waged on the toss of two coins for a resulting combination of 2 out of 3 being either heads or tails.

Labour Day

Labour Day is celebrated on different dates throughout Australia. As elsewhere in the world, Labour Day originated in Australia as a means of giving 'working people' a day off and recognising the roots of trade unionist movements and workers' rights. In New South Wales, Labour Day is the first Monday in October.

king's Birthday

The King's Birthday holiday celebrates the unofficial birthday of King Charles III who is not only King of the United Kingdom but also King of Australia. The King's Birthday is a public holiday celebrated on a Monday in June, which results in a three-day long weekend.

Melbourne Cup Day

The Melbourne Cup is a two-mile international horse race run on the first Tuesday of November each year attracting the finest racehorses from around the world. Known as the 'race that stops a nation' due to a public holiday being declared in metropolitan Melbourne in its home State of Victoria, and most of the nation whether at work, school or home, stopping to watch the race broadcast on television.

Christmas

Christmas is celebrated in Australia on 25 December. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus is 'the son of God', the Messiah sent from Heaven to save the world. Christmas in Australia is also associated with two major sporting events:

- **The Boxing Day Test:** 26 December is the opening day of the traditional 'Boxing Day Test' at the MCG (Melbourne Cricket Ground) between the Australian Cricket Team and an international touring side. It is the most anticipated cricket match each year in world cricket, and tickets are sold out months in advance.
- **The Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race:** the 'Sydney-to-Hobart' is Australia's most prestigious yachting race on the calendar of international yacht racing, and it begins 26 December in beautiful Sydney Harbour.

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SEXUAL ASSAULT OR HARASSMENT IS NEVER OK.

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1800RESPECT
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