



IDP Education Pre-departure Guide



For students arriving in Australia
after 1 January 2010

Updated January 2010



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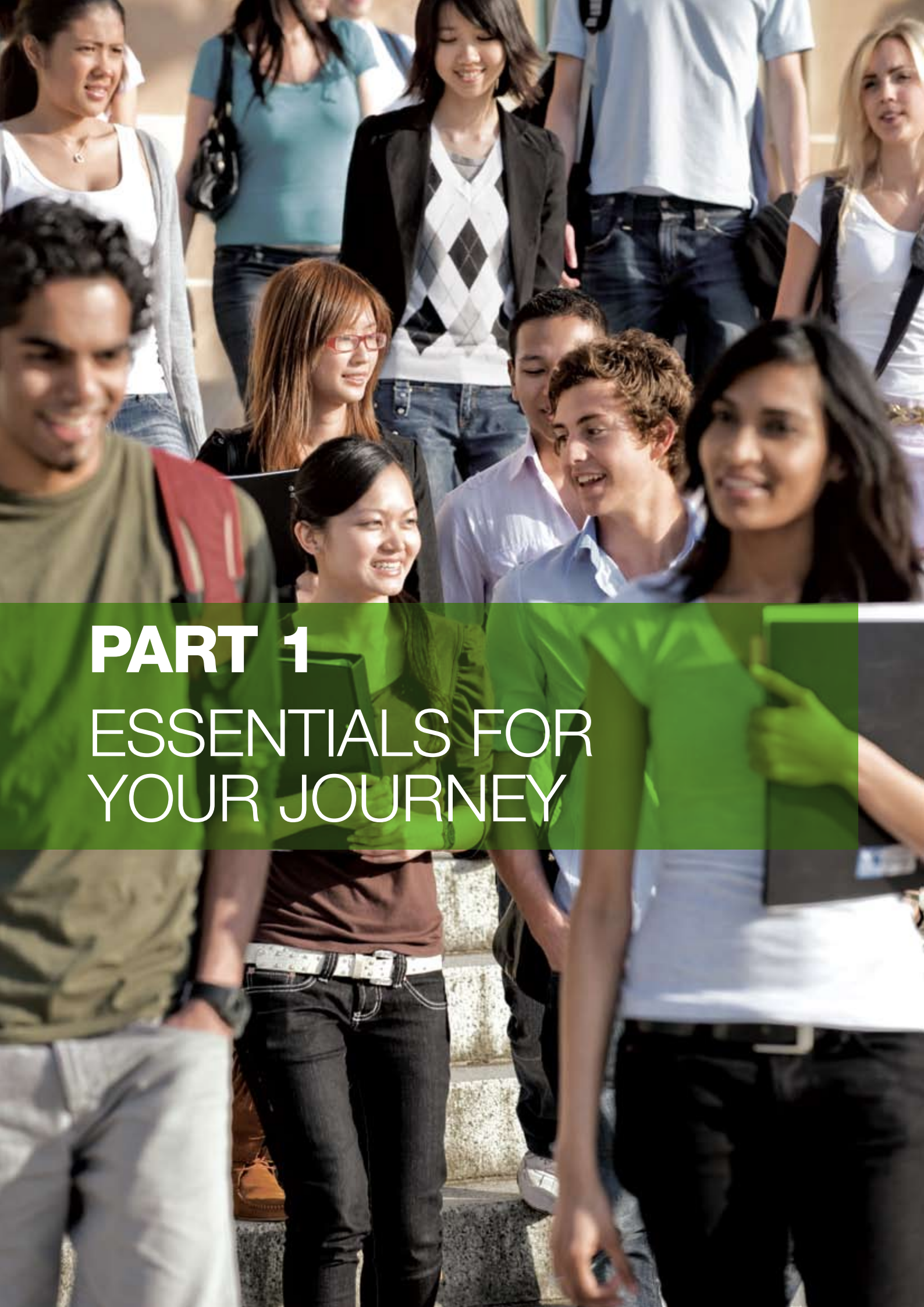
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PART 1

ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR JOURNEY



CHECKLIST WHAT TO DO BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Obtain a certified English translation of your academic record
- Obtain an English transcript of work experience relevant to your course (this may be useful in applying for advanced standing* or for part-time work in your chosen field)
- Check with the Australian embassy or diplomatic mission if your medications are legal to take into Australia. Get a letter from your doctor explaining your medication
- Obtain an English translation of your doctor's prescriptions, and the ingredients of prescription medications
- Visit dentist and/or ophthalmologist (these treatments in Australia are not covered by standard OSHC, so they can be more expensive than at home)
- Change cash into Australian dollars for your arrival (see **Cash and funds to carry**, below). Arrange a bank draft or travellers cheques to be drawn in Australian dollars after you arrive, or ensure you have access to funds
- Check with your IDP counsellor or your current bank whether you can set up an Australian bank account before you leave. If so, set up credit transfer facilities for your family to forward funds to your Australian bank account. Otherwise you can open a bank account when you arrive in Australia.
- Book flights
- Arrange travel insurance
- Arrange temporary accommodation (see Part 2 **Essential for your first week** for further advice)
- Obtain an International Drivers Licence or an English translation of your existing licence (see **Transport around home and campus** in Part 4)
- Inform your Australian institution's International Student Office of your arrival details (date, time and how to contact you)
- Notify family, friends and IDP of your contact details in Australia
- Apply to your institution for airport reception service if available. Otherwise arrange for someone else to pick you up.
- Make copies of your passport, drivers licence, and translations of your academic record, work experience and medication prescriptions in case of loss or damage (keep them in a separate place to original documents)
- Obtain Yellow Fever vaccination if you are coming from Africa or South America, or have visited there recently#

*Your application for advanced standing should accompany your application to study, submitted through IDP. However, bring with you all relevant transcripts in case previous study needs to be discussed or you wish to apply for a further course.

#Yellow fever vaccination is the only health requirement for travellers entering Australia, and only required from those who live in or have visited Africa or South America in the week prior to departing for Australia.

What is a 'certified' copy?

When bringing important documents to Australia, you should bring originals or certified copies. Keep another copy (a photocopy) somewhere else for safe-keeping, such as at home with your parents. A 'certified' copy is one that is certified by a relevant authority as being a legitimate, complete copy or translation of the original. It is treated as an original. Your local Australian Embassy or Diplomatic Mission, or your local IDP office or a notary can certify relevant copied documents.

COMING TO AUSTRALIA

Flight bookings

Book your airline tickets as soon as you have accepted your offer and applied for your student visa. It is advisable for you to be at the institution in time for the orientation program. This program is usually conducted a week prior to course commencement and the dates will be mentioned in your letter of offer or on the institution website.

As airline seats are in heavy demand prior to commencement of a semester, the earlier you book the better your chance of securing a ticket with the airline of our choice.

Travel insurance

You may opt to take travel insurance prior to your departure. Travel insurance gives you coverage for unforeseen problems, from a cancelled flight to a serious illness – or in rare cases for an act of terrorism.

The cost of travel insurance is based, in most cases, on the value of the trip and the age of the traveller. Typically, the cost is five to seven percent of the trip cost.

Clothing and possessions to pack

Most institutions do not have dress rules. Students wear casual clothing unless a uniform is required. You are welcome to wear the clothing of your culture, including a burka or hijab.

Semester 1 starts in February at the height of Australia's summer. Pack light, comfortable clothing such as denim or cotton trousers, shorts or skirts, T-shirts, light cotton shirts, sandals and canvas shoes or runners. Bring some lightweight jumpers/jackets for evenings, and sunglasses and a hat for the daytime.

If you are starting mid-year (July), you will be coming into Australia's winter. Those destined for south-east NSW, Victoria, South Australia, the ACT, southern Western Australia or Tasmania should bring winter clothing (warm jumpers, a scarf and one heavy jacket). Winter is very mild in central to northern NSW, Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and much of South Australia. Heavy coats, gloves and scarves are not needed in those areas. The North of Western Australia and Queensland as well as the Northern Territory have more tropical seasons, meaning that wet clothing is needed but not heavy winter clothing.

See **Quick facts Australia** for a summary of the climate.

You may want to also bring a set of sheets, pillowcase and towels and enough basic stationery for your first week or so, including voice recorder and bilingual dictionary plus personal items such as toiletries, photographs of family and friends, camera, iPod and a backpack. **Do not bring food into Australia (see Quarantine section, Page 4)**

Bringing prescription medication

Your medication should be declared to Customs on arrival – particularly those containing narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates or tranquilisers. Medications containing steroids, androgenic substances or growth hormones are not allowed, unless you have written permission from the Australian embassy or diplomatic mission.

Bring an English translation of the prescription and ingredients in case you are questioned or you must find an alternative medication in Australia. A copy of the packaging is also useful. If you expect to need medical services in Australia, an English transcript of your health history will assist your Australian doctors.

Bringing your computer and equipment

Students are exempt from duty taxes on items such as computers and similar electronic equipment, provided the Australian Customs Service is satisfied that you intend to take the equipment home with you when you depart Australia at the end of your course. To avoid fees on your equipment, especially if recently bought, you must carry your Confirmation of Enrolment to prove you are a student, and proof of purchase of the equipment.

Customs duty and/or sales tax may be payable on other equipment valued over \$900 which is less than 12 months old. Clothing is excluded from this rule.

More information can be found at: www.customs.gov.au

Important note

Your computer may not be compatible with Australia's power supply, and notebook or palmtop computers in particular can be damaged. Australia's power supply is 220-240 volts, 50 Hertz. Buy an AC adaptor at home or on arrival to protect your equipment. Also, your PC-card modem may not work in Australia. It is recommended you bring a 'global' modem or purchase a PC-card in Australia.



Items for hand luggage

Cabin baggage: normally a maximum of 7 kgs, and certain size restrictions apply. Confirm with your travel agent or airline.

Use hand luggage for valuables and personal items, and important documents. Keep copies of all important documents in a safe place in your other luggage.

Documents to pack in hand luggage:

- passport
- Confirmation of Enrolment (which evidences payment of tuition fees and health cover)
- copy of airport reception arrangement and accommodation details
- IELTS score card (if applicable)
- birth certificate
- marriage certificate, if your spouse is travelling with you (to prove your relationship)
- yellow fever vaccination certificate (if applicable)
- receipts for computer or other valuables
- phone numbers for your institution's International Student Office and your accommodation
- English transcript of your academic record
- copies of certified academic, work, English proficiency documents
- spare passport size photographs, Australian Government regulation size 45–50mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " – 1 $\frac{15}{16}$ ") high and 35–40mm (1 $\frac{3}{8}$ " – 1 $\frac{9}{16}$ ") wide
- driver's licence
- cash in Australian dollars, in all denominations (see below)
- travellers cheques or bank draft to be drawn in Australian dollars (see below).

While flying in Australia (for example when you are transferring from your international flight to a domestic flight), it is important to insure that no sharp items are kept in hand luggage as these will be confiscated by security at the airport (including nail files, scissors etc.). Likewise, pressurized items such as paint canisters should not be in the hand luggage).

The Australian Government has recently introduced enhanced security measures, involving liquids, aerosols and gels that can be taken through the security screening point for passengers who are flying. For a full list, check with your airline or the following Australian Government website: www.dotars.gov.au/transport/security/aviation/lag/index.aspx

Checked-in luggage

For security purposes, luggage that is not going with you onboard should be secured with a small padlock. Generally airlines permit 20–25 kilograms of checked-in luggage per person beyond which a fee for 'excess luggage' must be paid for weight exceeding this. Ask your IDP counsellor about any special offers on freight that may be available to IDP students.

Airlines charge for excess baggage: if you have a lot of excess baggage, check with your airline about the charge and process for unaccompanied baggage.

If your airline has given an excess baggage allowance of up to 40–50 kgs, then this will be endorsed on your ticket. In this case, one piece of baggage should not weigh more than 32 kgs. Make sure you clearly label each bag with your name, institution and city.

Customs and Immigration

Before you disembark from the plane you will be given an Incoming Passenger Card to complete. You must remember that the Incoming Passenger Card is a legal document and any false declaration can result in immigration clearance being refused. Declare medicines, any equipment you are carrying (such as chef's knives) and souvenirs made from wood.

The Customs and Immigration Officer will request your Passport, Visa Grant Notification Letter, Offer Letter and Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment (eCOE). On completion of the required checks the officer will put an immigration stamp on your passport with the date of arrival in Australia.

Cash and funds to carry

Carry enough cash to cover at least your first week, plus cash and some travellers cheques to cover expenses for the second week. Travellers cheques save carrying large amounts of cash, which can be lost or stolen. Bank drafts and cheques take at least a week to clear, so cannot be relied upon for immediate funds.

For single students, \$200-\$500 cash (in a range of denominations: \$50, \$20, \$10 and \$5 notes) or credit cards plus \$3,000 in travellers cheques should cover initial start-up costs. This includes: transport, snacks, meals, stationery, immediate linen and clothing needs, text books, household items, immediate rental costs or short-term accommodation and rental bond (equivalent to four weeks' rent).

There is no limit to the amount of money you can bring into the country, but cash amounts larger than \$10,000 must be declared to customs.

Baggage collection

You can now proceed to the conveyor belt designed to your flight to collect your luggage. You might meet an Australian Quarantine beagle at the baggage conveyor belt who will sniff your bags to identify any items of quarantine concern (see next page)

Quarantine – food and products to declare

Because Australia is an island, it is free from a variety of pests and diseases common in other countries. Food, plant material and animal products from overseas could introduce some of those pests and diseases into Australia, devastating the country's valuable agriculture and tourism industries and unique environment.

When you arrive in Australia at the airport you must declare:

- All food, including fruit and vegetables, dairy, eggs, egg products, meat and meat products
- Seeds and nuts, including handicrafts and souvenirs that contain seeds
- Sporting and camping equipment, including hiking boots, golf clubs (for soil particles)
- Animal products, including feathers, skins and shells
- Plant materials, including wooden items, bamboo, cane, pot pourri and dried flowers.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) screens all luggage at the airport. If you do not declare these products, you can be fined for bringing in restricted items.

AQIS also screens all international mail sent to Australia, so please remind friends and family not to send restricted items, particularly food. (You will be able to find similar food in local grocery stores. This food will have been checked by AQIS already.)

Tip

If in doubt, declare it. AQIS screens every piece of luggage. If you fail to declare or dispose of any quarantine items, or make a false declaration, you risk being fined \$220 on the spot, or being taken to court. Check the AQIS website: www.aqis.gov.au

FROM AIRPORT TO CAMPUS

Reaching a regional campus

Australia's institutions have many campuses in regional areas where there is no international airport. Be aware that the distance from the international airport to your campus might be further than expected (Australia is a big country!)

In most cases you can fly from the international airport to a domestic airport close to campus. Campuses in other places can be reached by train, bus or ferry. Your IDP counsellor or your institution can help make arrangements in advance.

Airport reception service

Many institutions offer airport reception services to students in on-campus and homestay accommodation, meeting them at the airport and driving them to their new home. There is often a fee for this service. (This service is free to some students receiving government sponsorship and at some institutions.) It should be arranged through IDP or the International Student Office a few weeks before you leave home. Make sure you bring a copy of your reception details (time, place, pickup officer phone number) with you.

In the event you are delayed or have changed your flight, inform your institution as much in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Flight delays

If your flight is delayed, or the institution representative is not at the airport to meet you, ask an airport employee for assistance.

Taxis are available outside the terminal building, which you can hire to reach your accommodation. Taxis run by the meter so you should not be overcharged.



A photograph of two young women sitting on a brown couch. The woman on the left has short dark hair and is wearing a white and black argyle sweater over a grey t-shirt. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a white top with a beaded neckline and blue jeans. They are both looking at a book held by the woman on the right. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with green plants.

PART 2

ESSENTIALS FOR YOUR FIRST WEEKS

IDP SUPPORT OFFICES IN AUSTRALIA

IDP has offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide to support students during their study and stay in Australia. Within Australia contact your local IDP office by phoning **1300 STUDENT** (1300 7883368). Services range from assistance with continuing your study in Australia, change of education institution when eligible or extending your visa onshore.

IDP offices often organise **social functions** like river cruises, cherry picking, winery tours and barbecues to provide networking opportunities for students to meet with current students, alumni and IDP local staff.

Check details at: www.australia.idp.com

Office hours (all offices): 10.00am to 5.30pm
Monday to Friday

Locations of IDP offices:

Melbourne

Ground Floor, 410 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000
Ph: 03 9670 7685
Email: info.melbourne@idp.com

Sydney

Ground Floor, 191-199 Thomas Street, Haymarket, NSW 2000
Ph: 02 8260 3300
Email: info.sydney@idp.com

Brisbane

Shop 20, 215 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000
Ph: 07 3020 6101
Email: info.brisbane@idp.com

Perth

138 Barrack Street, Perth, WA 6000
Ph: 08 9218 5999
Email: info.perth@idp.com

Adelaide

96A Currie Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
Ph: 08 8205 1100
Email: info.adelaide@idp.com

ORIENTATION AND ENROLMENT

Orientation Week, or O-Week, is offered for all university and most vocational education and training (VET) students usually one week before classes begin (Semesters 1 and 2). High schools also provide orientation which allows new students to become familiar with the school's layout and procedures and help them to become comfortable before starting their classes. Don't miss it – it is invaluable in helping you settle in. You will be shown around campus and its surrounds, introduced to teachers and fellow students and taught about support services, the library, social activities and clubs. There are free information sessions on topics such as banking, applying for credit transfer, applying for permission to work or finding permanent accommodation. You will be given free maps and invited to a variety of social activities.

Students must enrol before they can attend classes or get a student card. At enrolment, students choose which units ('modules' or 'classes') to study for the semester. The institution's handbook will explain each unit in detail. Academic staff will be available to offer advice.

You will receive a student card which will allow you to use the library and other facilities, provide free email and internet at the institution and access to online services such as exam results, as well as student discounts on travel, entertainment and text books.

Important note

Even though international students will have received a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE), they still need to undertake enrolment on campus. The CoE is merely confirmation of your application, for the purposes of gaining a student visa. On-campus enrolment is vital for confirming which particular units you will study.

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OFFICE

Introduce yourself to the International Student Office in your first days. They will offer you support and information on almost any issue throughout your entire time at the institution. Make sure they know who you are, and that you know all the services they offer.

Below are just some of the support services the international student office can give you:

- your OSHC card (see **OSHC and medical costs** in Part 4)
- area maps, timetables and tickets for public transport
- information on special religious and community facilities on campus and in the local community
- information on free tuition in study skills and English language (see **Seeking language and academic support** in Part 4)
- information on counselling and advisory services on personal issues, accommodation, career and finances (see **Ongoing support and services** in Part 3)
- application forms for a Tax File Number (see **Working in Australia** in Part 4).

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

Open a bank account shortly after your arrival so funds can be transferred to you from home as soon as you need. Australia has a range of banks including Commonwealth Bank, ANZ, St George, Westpac and various community banks. Among the larger banks listed above, there is little difference between fees and services, and most offer phone and internet banking. Make sure you read your bank's fee schedule carefully.

All major banks offer international services such as transfers and drafts. Transfers can be as quick as two to three days. Drafts take longer to process (five to six days) and may need to be mailed to you.

To open a bank account, you must present sufficient identification. Your passport and a mailing address may be enough if you have been in Australia for less than six weeks. Otherwise you will need your passport plus at least two pieces of 'minor' identification such as a credit card and driver's licence. Your institution will explain how to open a bank account during O-Week.

The bank will mail you your new ATM (automatic teller machine) card in around a week. ATMs are plentiful in Australia and most accept cards from various banks so you can withdraw money at most machines. There are also Electronic Funds Transfer at Point-of-Sale (EFTPOS) facilities at most grocery stores, retail shops and restaurants. You can use the same debit card to make purchases using EFTPOS.

My experience

Khong Ren, a Singaporean student studying at the University of Wollongong, found herself under financial strain because she did not expect banks in Australia to take five to six days to process a bank draft deposited into an account. "I took it for granted that banks in Australia worked the same as in Singapore and that bank drafts would take at most 48 hours to be processed. I only kept \$50 with me. When I found out I had to wait almost an entire week for my money to become available, I was forced to borrow money from friends to feed myself!"

ORGANISING ACCOMMODATION

There are a number of things to consider when looking for accommodation in Australia. Make sure you weigh up all the options once you have determined your budget, where you want to live and who you want to live with. Consider all options including both on and off campus accommodation. Make sure you allow enough time to arrange your accommodation as there is always a great demand for on campus accommodation and the more affordable off campus accommodation.

Make sure you start your research now, start looking at various websites, talk with your IDP counsellor, and start communicating with your institution; specifically with international students' services or the student housing services on campus.

A checklist below provides you with an overview of the type of questions you need to ask yourself to assist with making the right accommodation decision.

- Have you made your short term accommodation arrangements for your first few days/week of stay in Australia? If not, then it is advisable to do so prior to your departure to Australia.
- Consider what type of long term accommodation you want – on or off campus, student accommodation or private rental

- Consider if you want to share with other students or live alone. Sharing with other students is always more affordable but choosing the right flatmates/housemates is important. They must share common values, likes, dislikes and preferably be in the same level of study as you.
- If you choose to live off campus – where do you want to live? Rental prices vary according to the location of the property, the size and quality of accommodation. It is advisable to become familiar with the average cost of rental of properties in suburbs surrounding your institute.
- If you choose to rent private accommodation be prepared. Know your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Ensure that all communication with your landlord is in writing and that you have checked the condition of the property before signing the contract. Make sure you document all monthly rental payments and keep copies of all documentation.
- If you choose to live on campus make sure you contact your Student Housing Services, or International Student Services. Your institute will provide you with all the necessary information and assistance with your application.
- How far is public transport from your accommodation, can you walk to your campus, or do you need to catch the train, bus or tram?
- How far away are services like the bank, post office, supermarket, medical centre, etc?
- How far away do your friends live?
- Work out a budget – how much will electricity, gas, water, phone, food, transport and rental be a year/month/week?
- Is your accommodation fully furnished or unfurnished?
- How much will your set-up costs be including rental bond deposits and rent in advance?

Some useful links to assist you with your search for both temporary and long term accommodation.

www.realestate.com.au
www.lastminute.com.au
www.domain.com.au
www.property.com.au
www.melbourneexchange.com.au
www.studyoasis.com.au
www.visitvictoria.com
www.flatmates.com.au
www.flatmatesfinders.com.au
www.shareaccommodation.com
www.bondiaccommodation.com
www.sydneyexchange.com.au
www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/ViewPage.action
www.s-h-a.com.au
www.unilodge.com.au
www.unilodgehotel.com.au
www.collegesquare.ymca.org.au
www.homeatflinders.com.au
www.tcnhomestay.com.au
www.studentvision.com.au

On-campus accommodation

On-campus accommodation is usually booked on acceptance into your course. You will need to book early, as it is in demand.

Cost usually includes gas and/or electricity (for cooking, hot water, heating, cooling) and local telephone calls. Certain residences offer cleaning, and meals may also be provided. Single rooms generally have a bed, desk, cupboard and shelving. Bed linen and towels are not usually provided.

My experience

Norwegian student Elizabeth Kolstad recommends on-campus accommodation for students who are new to Australia. "It was easier to get to know people and make new friends. It made adjusting to a new country easier as people were quite helpful, and the university arranged social gatherings for the residents as well."

Off-campus accommodation (private)

Find out about off-campus accommodation before leaving home to avoid staying too long in interim accommodation such as hostels or hotels. The Accommodation Officer at your institution can help you research independent accommodation, and give advice on the affordable areas closest to your campus. They will also provide information on interim accommodation.

Most students travelling alone share private accommodation with up to three or four others, keeping their own bedrooms. This allows students to live in a spacious house with all its own facilities at a reasonable cost (because the costs are shared). Rooms in share houses are advertised in local newspapers (especially Saturday editions) and around campus. The Accommodation Officer will also hold a list of share houses near campus. Properties are also available through local real estate agents. They will advertise in the local newspaper and on web sites such as www.realestate.com.au

In either case, a lease agreement must be signed – usually for a six or 12-month term. This is a legally binding document so read the contract carefully, or ask your institution's Accommodation Officer for advice. If you move out of a share house, ensure your name is removed from the lease agreement.

Women-only or men-only accommodation

It is acceptable to specify that you wish to share a house with only males or females if it is important to you. Share house advertisers commonly request a male or female specifically. You may be able to find suitable house-sharers through relevant campus or community groups.

Paying rent and bond

The equivalent of six or eight weeks' rent is payable upfront which covers your first two-weekly or monthly rent payment plus bond. The 'bond' is the equivalent of four weeks' rent and is held in a third party account through the Rental Bond Board.

Rent is paid every two or four weeks, in advance.

Telephone, electricity and gas

In a share house, these will already be set up and you will simply contribute your share of the monthly or quarterly bills. Telephone bills can be itemised, so you can identify calls.

If establishing your own home, you will need to arrange for new accounts. There are various telephone service providers; the main ones are Telstra or Optus (see **Telephone, mail and email** in Part 4). Local electricity providers will be listed in your local Yellow Pages (Australia's telephone and business directory, provided free to all households or online at www.yellowpages.com.au). Connection fees will be added to your first bills.

If the house has gas appliances, gas will be either 'Natural Gas' pumped from underground conduit, or in tanks outside the house which you must refill when necessary. You can ask your Accommodation Officer for advice on how to do this.

Homestay accommodation

Arrange homestay accommodation as soon as acceptance into your course is confirmed.

Be aware that homestay hosts do not make a lot of money from what you pay. Often, they do it for the experience and the enjoyment of having international visitors, and the money is secondary. Don't expect your hosts to do everything for you, and do your best to respect the house rules.

On arrival

Your hosts will show you around the house and discuss the house rules with you. These rules might be written down and left in your room. Feel free to ask about anything you are not sure of. A few things to find out early are:

- what time they leave for work in the morning
- how to lock the house
- arrangements for meals
- when dinner is served, or when you can use the kitchen
- a convenient time for you to use the shower
- arrangements for laundry and cleaning.

Essential homestay information

You will be expected to get to your institution by public transport. It is rare to live within walking distance. Your hosts will show you how to get to the bus stop or train station, and tell you which bus or train to catch.

'Homestay with meals' means breakfast and dinner is provided seven days a week, with lunch provided only on weekends (however, some homestay programs may not offer lunch at all). Tell your hosts if there is any food you do not like or cannot eat because of religious or health reasons. If you have chosen homestay without meals, you will be given access to the kitchen to prepare your food.

Rent is calculated weekly.

Accommodation and other legal issues

Your institution's Accommodation Officer can offer advice and assistance on accommodation issues including complaints and disputes. These officers should be able to resolve any issues with on-campus or homestay accommodation, and can direct students to external agencies for help with private accommodation.

My experience

Yoko, a Japanese student, has really enjoyed living in homestay. "My host family are my friends and they help me adapt to the Australian lifestyle more easily. I think it's more fun living with Australians than living by myself."

Here are some advantages and disadvantages of the various options available to you.

On Campus Accommodation

Advantages

- ✓ Normally near or on education institution's campus
- ✓ Easier to get to know other international and Australian students
- ✓ Collegiate, good support systems like tutorials, resident mentors
- ✓ May have meals and some cleaning services provided
- ✓ Utilities (electricity, water, gas) included
- ✓ Many special events and activities organised throughout the semester

Disadvantages

- ✗ Can be fairly small with basic amenities
- ✗ Can be noisy as mostly undergraduates live here
- ✗ Must move out during semester break
- ✗ Not normally available for families
- ✗ Overseas visitors unable to stay with you or only for short periods
- ✗ High demand for places and may be difficult to secure a place – hence you need to book early
- ✗ Communal bathrooms/kitchens in most cases
- ✗ Normally more expensive than off-campus

Private Rental

Advantages

- ✓ More independence but added responsibility
- ✓ Your family can stay with you
- ✓ Cheaper as rent and amenities can be shared
- ✓ Privacy – not sharing a bathroom and/or kitchen with strangers
- ✓ Can cook your own type of food

Disadvantages

- ✗ Can be more expensive (depending on the area you choose)
- ✗ Number of people you are sharing with
- ✗ May be increased travel time to institution
- ✗ Leases are usually for 12 months so can be difficult to move if you change your mind
- ✗ Unless you rent a furnished house/apartment you will need to purchase furniture and household appliances
- ✗ A roster of duties for all household chores and appropriate sharing of all household bills must be agreed upon. This can be a daunting at first, especially for students who have not lived away from parents and performed these duties before.

Homestay

Advantages

- ✓ Get to know an Australian family and way of life
- ✓ Meals usually included in the cost
- ✓ Can be cheaper than other accommodation options
- ✓ Opportunity to improve your English skills and knowledge of Australian culture
- ✓ Safe and secure environment
- ✓ Assistance in everyday situations
- ✓ Time to focus on study

Disadvantages

- ✗ Overseas visitors may not be able to stay with you
- ✗ Possible lack of privacy
- ✗ May not have own bathroom or kitchen facilities
- ✗ Need to 'fit' into the family and not be a 'paying guest'

Customised Student Accommodation

Advantages

- ✓ Suitable for short term and long term accommodation
- ✓ All furniture and appliances provided
- ✓ Legal rights respected
- ✓ Some student accommodation apartments come with support services
- ✓ Multi-lingual staff experienced in dealing with students
- ✓ Privacy with own kitchen and bathroom
- ✓ Centrally located

Disadvantages

- ✗ More expensive option than others
- ✗ Less flexibility regarding family and visitors



Buying furniture and computers

Second-hand furniture and computers can be bought through the local newspaper (especially Saturday editions) or various 'second-hand' or 'new and used' stores around town. Some cities will also have an ex-government/office furniture outlet, with bargains on desks and office equipment. Larger furniture/electrical stores offer 'factory seconds', which are much cheaper for having minor damage such as a scratch or dent, but that are perfectly operational.

A basic second-hand lounge suite will cost upwards of \$100. A desk will cost upwards of \$50-100. Expect to pay upwards of \$500-600 for a decent second-hand computer capable of handling student use, for example at least 256Mb RAM with modem and CD drive. Second-hand laptop computers cost slightly more.

You can buy new furniture and computers from all the major department and electrical stores such as Myer, Harvey Norman, IKEA, Freedom Furniture, Target, K-Mart, Big W and David Jones.

ADAPTING TO AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIANS

Spending time with Australians is the only way to really appreciate their customs and traditions. Below are some tips to help avoid major embarrassments while you are settling in. Australians prefer informality and openness, so there's little you can do that will deeply offend.

Language and conversation

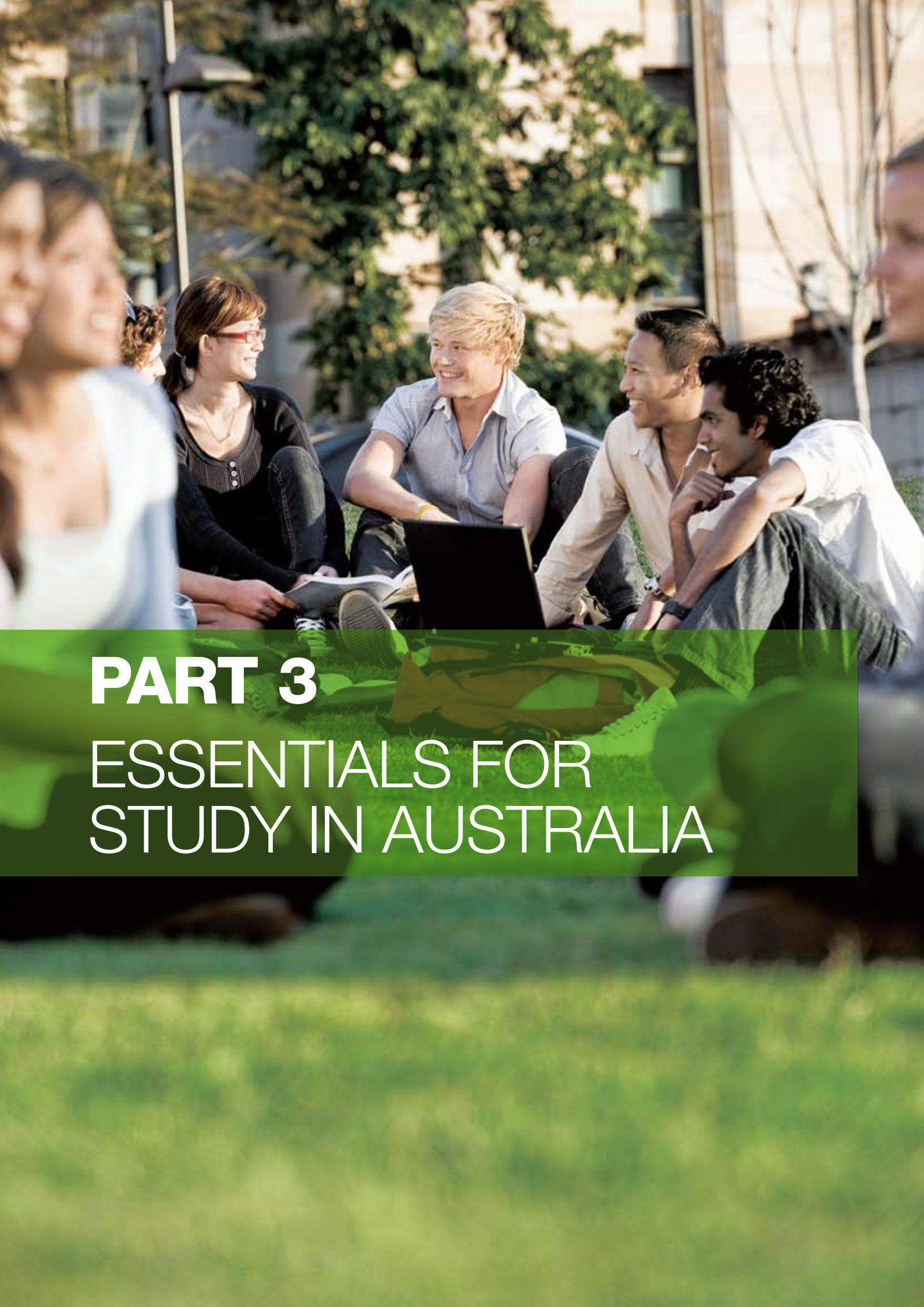
- Australians usually address others by first name, including elders, superiors in the workplace, and teachers. If unsure, address them by their last name (with Mr or Ms) in the first instance – they will then tell you what they prefer to be called.
- It is not considered ill-mannered to speak before being spoken to. You may greet a teacher or superior before they greet you.
- Australians greatly value the use of 'please' and 'thank you'. 'Ta' is a casual form of 'thank you'. You may also hear 'cheers' used the same way.
- At the dinner table, family members of all ages speak equally.
- While open and friendly, Australians are quite private about certain subjects. Avoid asking questions about their finances, health, relationships and religion unless you know them very well.
- Gentle teasing among friends is part of Australian humour, and is a way of showing acceptance.

Meal times

- Australians eat mostly with knife, fork and spoon. Eating with fingers is acceptable for certain foods such as sandwiches, hamburgers, spring rolls, and chicken wings.
- At the dinner table, wait until everyone is seated and served before starting to eat.
- There is no ceremony to begin meals, and rarely prayers.
- Burping and slurping are considered ill-mannered.
- It is acceptable to leave a small amount of food on your plate if you have eaten enough.
- In the home, it is polite to thank the hosts for the meal when you have finished.
- If invited to a meal in a home, it is customary to bring a small contribution to the meal such as a bottle of drink, particularly if you intend to drink alcohol, or pre-meal snacks such as dip or cheese. Bringing a small item from your own cultural cuisine would be well received.

Social and general customs

- Men and women are equal in Australian society and by Australian law. It is usual for men and women to mix in all public activities, including at work or school.
- Wearing light clothing in summer, such as singlets and short skirts is considered normal. However, it is equally acceptable for visitors and immigrants to wear traditional dress for their culture or religion, such as a burka or hijab.
- Every member of the household contributes to daily chores and cleaning.
- Lateness is considered impolite.
- Littering and spitting are unacceptable, and if done in public you can be fined.
- Smoking is banned in classrooms, work places, restaurants, airports and shopping centres.
- Australians are accustomed to lots of space, and personal space is valued. One arm length away in queues or conversation is fine, as a general guide. If you bump a person or need to push past, say 'sorry' or 'excuse me'.
- Bargaining is not practised, including in retail shops and with taxi drivers. A small amount of bargaining is acceptable when buying second-hand goods privately.
- Tipping is rarely expected, and is generally only used to thank for particularly good service at a restaurant, bar or hotel. Ten per cent of the bill would be a good maximum tip.
- Bribery of any kind is considered a serious crime.



PART 3

ESSENTIALS FOR STUDY IN AUSTRALIA

ACADEMIC LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

Acceptance of international students

International students are an integral part of Australian campus life. They make up 25 per cent of the student population, with more than 435,000 from countries all over the world. As an international student in Australia, your fellow students will respect your individuality. Australians respect your right to observe your cultural and religious customs. There is a range of support systems if you feel unfairly treated. See **Ongoing support and services** in Part 3.

What to expect of classes and teachers

In university or vocational education, you will generally spend less than six hours each day, five days a week in classes. The remainder of your time is spent undertaking independent study at the library, in study groups and in other research. You are expected to organise this time and initiate your own activities. Each student's timetable can be slightly different.

Many postgraduate classes are held in the evening, but this is not considered part-time. All students must maintain a full time study load.

At high school, you will attend classes from around 9am to 3pm, with a short mid-morning break and a lunch break of around one hour. You will also be given 'homework' to do in your own time, often required for the next day.

Lectures and tutorials

Classes at university will be a mixture of lectures and tutorials. At a 'lecture' the core course information is delivered to you in a presentation by a professor. This presentation may be attended by 50-200 students from many tutorial groups. The 'tutorial' is where smaller groups discuss and debate the course information in more detail. Tutorials are presented by a teacher for up to 25 students. You must attend your lectures to get the information that will be discussed in your next tutorial, and in your exams and assignments.

At a vocational institute you have fewer lectures (if any, depending on your course). The core information will be given in your tutorials, and discussed at the same time. Or you will get to practise the tasks hands-on at the same time (for example, if you are learning to cook or design).

Classes at the postgraduate level are not always separated into lectures and tutorials.

Teaching methods

Australian institutions develop creative, analytical and lateral thinking – and individuality. The Australian teaching style does not rely on repetition and rote learning. Teachers aim for their students to thoroughly understand answers or solutions, and to add their own perspective where appropriate – rather than simply remember the right words to say.

Questions and open discussion are encouraged in the classroom. It is not considered disrespectful to question your teacher or ask for clarification.

My experience

British student Katherine Grant is researching the ocean's geological history at James Cook University. "I am very happy with the study I am doing. What impressed me is the fact there is no hierarchy here. Students are encouraged to address the professors and lecturers by their first names, making them very approachable and helping us build a good rapport."

Assessment methods

Assessment methods for university and vocational education vary. Students may be assessed by examination at the end of each semester or academic year, or through continuous assessment. Final grades for a unit will be based on a combination of exams, assignments, essays, projects and class participation. Class participation is assessed on your attendance, level of contribution to class discussion and group exercises.

Postgraduate students undertaking a thesis should consult their supervisor to ensure they understand assessment criteria.

Each high school in Australia determines its own assessment method. In the final year of school you are assessed through a mixture of school-based and external exams.

What is expected of you

The key to successful learning in Australia is to:

- take an active part in your own education;
- develop the courage to ask questions, and to ask for help from staff (including library staff) and fellow students; and
- supplement your class time with independent research, study and revision in the library, at home and in teams (many students form small study groups).

At the start, you may feel a little lost as your teacher will give minimal instruction on what to do outside of class. Your teacher will want you to take the initiative. However, teachers will happily offer advice to international students coming from a different education system. Also feel free to approach fellow students. Take the time to learn how to use all the library facilities to ensure there are no resources you overlook (see **Orientation and enrolment**).

Computer literacy

Regardless of your subject, you will be expected to have at least basic computer literacy. Australia is technologically advanced, and your teacher will presume you have access to a computer. You will need basic computer skills to search the library catalogues. Internet research will be a great advantage, and some teachers post their class notes to the internet. Assignments should be typed.

Computers are available on campus for free use in a computer resource centre. Many tertiary institutions also offer free email to students.

Plagiarism and copying

Plagiarism is like copying. It is against Australian education policy and is taken very seriously. It could result in a student being excluded from the unit. You may cite another person's work in an assignment, but you must 'reference' that person in the assignment. You should also show how that person's work is relevant, include your own thoughts on that person's work, or add to their work in some way.

Important note

If you are found cheating in your exam, your institution can choose to suspend your enrolment temporarily on grounds of misbehaviour.

Attendance and grades

You will be expected to be punctual at all classes and lectures. Lectures and tutorials will begin immediately at the time scheduled, so aim to arrive five minutes early to find a seat and get settled. If you know that you will be late to a tutorial for unavoidable reasons, tell your teacher in advance and ask to be excused, and ask at the end of class for any notes you might have missed.

Important note

Adequate attendance and satisfactory progress are conditions of your student visa. Your visa will be in jeopardy should you not attend enough classes, or if you do not consistently pass your subjects or achieve strong grades. See **meeting your visa requirements** below.

Language and academic support

Most institutions have an International Student Office, Student Services Unit, and/or Study Skills Centre where you can get free help with English language skills, study skills, preparing for exams, taking notes, writing essays, managing your time and coping with stress. Many teachers will set aside a couple of hours every week for speaking privately with students, so make an appointment if you need it. It is also possible to hire a private tutor who will come to your home and help you with a specific subject.

If you have trouble understanding your teacher's spoken English or their accent, English language support includes training in listening skills. Your teacher will be happy to do what they can to help you if they understand your specific problem.

Students who have been identified 'at risk' of not passing the minimum number of subjects (50%) will be provided with extra learning support to help them pass. This forms part of an institution's intervention strategy.

MEETING YOUR VISA REQUIREMENTS

Progress and attendance at class

The intention of the Australian Government is for students to genuinely attempt to achieve their desired educational outcomes within the duration of their student visa. Student visas include a condition that requires the student to progress satisfactorily and attend their classes (where applicable).

Your progress and your participation at your course contact hours (face to face seminars, tutorials and classes) will be monitored by your education institution. If your progress or attendance record is unsatisfactory or you are at risk of not passing in the units you have enrolled in, your education provider will notify you and provide counselling and support to assist you in achieving your educational goals. However, if the problem continues you are at risk of having your enrolment and student visa cancelled.

Your education provider will provide you with its attendance policies and procedures which will specify the requirements for achieving satisfactory attendance. If you are enrolled in a certificate, diploma, foundation, ELICOS, school program you are normally expected to maintain 80% attendance.

If you have been approved a leave of absence or a deferment of your enrolment for more than six months, then your student visa is cancelled and you must apply for a new visa to continue your studies in Australia. If the deferment is more than 28 days but less than six months you are required to leave the country, unless you are unfit to travel due to an illness or injury.

Missing classes during prayer times

If you explain the importance of your prayer times, your teacher will understand and may be able to negotiate a solution that does not jeopardise your visa. Many teachers provide their class notes on the internet or on paper, and some university classes are recorded on tape, or run twice.

Changing your provider

The Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC) regulations state that you cannot change your institution for the first six months of your principal / main course, unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying the change of enrolment. This may include your not meeting English language requirements for the next level of a course. IDP offices in Australia can provide free advice. Phone IDP in Australia on **1300STUDENT (1300 788 3368)**

ONGOING SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Institution counsellors

Each institution has counsellors experienced in international students' issues. These counsellors offer free, confidential advice on all sorts of personal issues from homesickness to discrimination to stress.

Institutions also provide trained counsellors to assist with language and academic issues, including time management and stress management as well as training in study skills. The International Student Office can give advice or direction on other legal issues.

Important note

As OSHC does not cover treatment for pre-existing conditions during the first 12 months of membership, students with a disability or ongoing medical condition should obtain additional health insurance from their home country or have extra funds available for medical treatments in their first year in Australia.

What happens if you fail?

Students can appeal against academic assessment if they believe assessment has been unfair or compromised. Each institution publishes details of their own appeals process (in their websites and handbooks), which will include initial informal discussion with the teacher plus formal procedures through the institution hierarchy.

All institutions also have a complaints and appeals mechanism, which is both internal and external. You can access this if you are not happy with any of the institution's decision to report you to DIAC on grounds of breach of visa conditions. You can also use this process to appeal against the institution's decision to suspend or cancel your enrolment for non-compliance of obligations under the national code or refusal to grant a letter of release.

Student representation

Student associations at each institution provide representation for students to institution administrators on almost any issue, from tuition fees to facilities. Universities also have separate postgraduate student associations to address issues particular to postgraduate students.

Protection for overseas students

The Australian Government wants overseas students in Australia to have a safe, enjoyable and rewarding place to study. Australia's laws promote quality education and consumer protection for overseas students. These laws are known as the ESOS framework (Education Services for Overseas Students).

As an overseas student on a student visa, you must study with an education provider and in a course that can be found on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) at <http://cricos.dest.gov.au>. CRICOS registration guarantees that the course and the education provider at which you study meet the high standards necessary for overseas students.

Your rights

The ESOS framework protects your rights, including:

- Your right to receive, before enrolling, current and accurate information about the courses, fees, modes of study and other information from your provider and your provider's agent. If you are under 18, to ensure your safety, you will be granted a visa only if there are arrangements in place for your accommodation, support and welfare
- Your right to sign a written agreement with your provider before or as you pay fees, setting out the services to be provided, fees payable and information about refunds of course money. You should keep a copy of your written agreement.
- Your right to get the education you paid for. The ESOS framework includes consumer protection that will allow you to receive a refund or to be placed in another course if your provider is unable to teach your course.
- Your right to know
 - o How to use your provider's student support services;
 - o Who the contact officer or officers are for overseas students;
 - o If you can apply for course credit;
 - o When your enrolment can be deferred, suspended or cancelled;
 - o What your provider's requirements are for satisfactory progress in the courses you study;
 - o If attendance will be monitored for those courses;
 - o What will happen if you want to change providers;
 - o How to use your provider's complaints and appeals process



PART 4

ESSENTIALS FOR LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

ONGOING COSTS

According to the Australian Government website **Study in Australia** (www.studyinaustralia.gov.au) the average international student in Australia spends about **\$360** per week on accommodation, food, clothing, entertainment, transport, international and domestic travel, telephone and incidental costs. These figures do not cover tuition fees. It is important to remember that individual circumstances will vary by location, course and lifestyle.

The ability to cover living and tuition expenses in Australia is a condition of your visa. International students may only work 20 hours a week while studying (see **Working in Australia** below), so you cannot rely on employment to cover your expenses.

From 1 January 2010, the basic rate of living costs under the Migration Regulations increased from the previous rate of \$12,000 per year. Under these regulations prospective Student visa applicants and their family members must have access to the following funds to meet the living costs requirements:

- \$18,000 per year for the main student
- \$6,300 per year for the student's partner
- \$3,600 per year for the student's first child
- \$2,700 per year for every other child; and where required
- demonstrate that the funds they are relying upon to meet the costs of studying in Australia will be genuinely available to them during their stay in Australia.

Everyday costs

Rent: Usually paid every two weeks, in advance (boarding houses ask for payments per semester or year). Costs vary greatly.

Groceries: Those in private accommodation should budget at least \$180 every two weeks to cover groceries and take-away snacks (for a single student). Grocery costs will be less if meals are included in your accommodation package. It would be wise to budget some grocery money anyway, to cover snacks not offered by your institution or homestay family.

Telephone: Expect to pay upwards of \$150 for three months for a conservative amount of use. Local calls from a home phone are 30-40 cents and not timed. Interstate or overseas calls are timed and rates vary. Your mobile bill can be emailed to you as well.

Utilities: In private accommodation, you must pay for electricity, water and gas (if applicable) in addition to rent. The provider will mail you a bill quarterly. It is safe to budget upwards of \$1,000 quarterly (every three months). Your costs will depend on how many flatmates you share with.

Transport: Buses, trains, trams and ferries are inexpensive and there are student discounts in all States and Territories except New South Wales and Victoria. It is cheapest to buy weekly or monthly passes. On buses and trains/trams,

expect to pay about \$3 for one short trip, upwards of \$20 for a weekly pass, and upwards of \$80 for a monthly pass. See also **Transport around home and campus** below.

Entertainment/general: This will depend on your lifestyle, and will be up to you to control. Expect to pay: \$15 for movie ticket, \$10-20 nightclub entry, \$10-40 local theatre/band, \$40-80 professional show, \$20-30 restaurant meal, \$10-15 bottle of wine, \$2-5 can of soft drink.

Additional costs for family

Schooling for children as international students costs about \$5,000-11,000 for primary school (Kindergarten to Year 6, ages six to 12) and \$6,000-13,000 for secondary school (Year 7 to Year 10, ages 12 to 16). If you are sponsored by the Commonwealth Government, your child may be given schooling for free (check with your scholarship provider).

WORKING IN AUSTRALIA

How much can you work while you are studying?

You can work a maximum of 20 hours a week while the course is in session and unlimited number of hours during holidays. Voluntary or unpaid work is included in the limit of 20 hours per week.

Students risk losing their visa status if they work more than the allowed hours.

Dependant family members granted permission to work can work a maximum of 20 hours per week throughout the year. Family members of the following students can work unlimited hours once the student starts their main course:

- students enrolled in Masters by coursework (visa 573)
- students enrolled in Masters by research or Doctoral degree (visa 574)
- students sponsored by AusAID or Defence (visa 576).

When can you start working part time?

You can start only after you have commenced your studies in Australia. So even if your visa is issued early and you arrive before the orientation date, you cannot start work immediately.

People granted student visas after 26 April 2008 will receive permission to work with their visa grant. This applies to both the primary student and any family members travelling with them on their student visa.

Your visa information is held electronically and you can access it at any time using the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system. Employers, banks and government services can also check details about your visa entitlements on VEVO once they have your consent to do so. For information on how to access VEVO go to www.immi.gov.au/e_visa/evo.htm

Income tax

When you begin a job, you must apply for a Tax File Number (TFN) through the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Your TFN is essentially a reference number for the Australian Government. If you don't get one, you will be taxed at the maximum rate (around 45 per cent). Forms are available through the International Student Office or the ATO (also online at www.ato.gov.au). You must supply your TFN to your employer so they can arrange your pay.

At the end of each financial year (after July), you must complete a Tax Return, stating the amount you've earned and paid in tax (your International Student Office can help). You may be eligible to have some of your tax refunded.

What work is available

It is not always easy to find work – and there is great competition for the jobs available. If you cannot find paid employment, think about doing voluntary work. This will improve your skills, enable you to network within the community and understand business culture. It may even lead to a paid job.

Most students work in retail and hospitality as those jobs offer after-hours and weekend employment that doesn't interfere with classes. Typical jobs are in cafes, restaurants, clubs, retail shops, video stores, petrol stations, supermarkets, cinemas and hotels. Some students may also gain employment as tutors in their native language.

Part-time jobs in retail and hospitality pay upwards of around \$12 an hour, before tax (so the amount you have left to spend will be less than this). Higher rates are payable for those working on public holidays and in some industries for those working Saturdays or Sundays. Clerical and professional positions pay higher hourly rates but rarely offer weekend work. Tutoring pays around \$50 a tutorial and \$40 for a repeat tutorial.

Finding a part time job which is relevant or closely related to your field of study will be an advantage, especially if you are interested in working or migrating to Australia, after successfully completing your education.

It is advisable to keep working hours to a minimum at first, to ensure you are able to juggle your time between work and study.

www.seek.com.au is a good site to check out employment opportunities. (SEEK is the leader in the online employment and training market in Australia and is a major shareholder of IDP Education Pty Ltd).

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Australia is a particularly healthy country in which to travel. Health services in Australia are high quality and abundant. See **Medical services and oshc** below.

Australia is comparatively safe and has a low crime rate. In most places, streets are clean, open and well-lit at night. The incidence of robbery and assault in Australia is relatively low, and Australia has strict anti-gun and anti-drug laws. As in any country, you must exercise caution and larger cities have some more dangerous areas.

Tip

As basic precaution: stay in well-lit areas at night and don't walk alone. Lock your home and car; on the train, sit in a carriage that has other people; don't leave bags or cameras unattended; discretely carry only small amounts of cash.

Medical services and OSHC

Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) covers some medical services (see your policy for specific details). Your OSHC will have been arranged before departure for Australia, and covers you from the moment you arrive. You will need to pick up your OSHC card from your health care provider (eg Medibank Private, Worldcare Assist or BUPA OSHC). Ask your International Student Office for assistance.

Australia's health care system

Most large university campuses have an on-campus medical centre with quality doctors. All other campuses have at least a trained first aid officer, and rooms for sick or injured students to gain treatment or rest while waiting for a doctor to arrive.

There are medical centres and hospitals throughout all cities and towns, including many in suburban areas. There are 24-hour emergency centres at all hospitals and in some suburbs. Patients can request to see a male or female doctor.

It may be possible to find a doctor who speaks your native language. The Department of Immigration & Citizenship offers free national telephone translation services to doctors to help them communicate with patients whose English skills are not strong.

Australia's health care system is divided into 'public' and 'private'. Public patients rely on the government's national health insurance, Medicare. Private hospitals run on a commercial basis. Private patients pay annual fees for tailored health cover. The public health system is high quality nationally so patients should not be concerned that services may be inferior.

International students with OSHC can request treatment in public or private hospitals but OSHC may not cover all costs of private services.

Prescription medication

Many medications in Australia (including antibiotics) are only available to customers who have a doctor's prescription. A prescription can be filled at any chemist or pharmacy ('drug store') nationally. Common prescriptions such as antibiotics cost \$23-30. OSHC covers some of this cost.

See Part 1 for information on bringing prescription medication into Australia.

How to claim OSHC benefits

When claiming benefits on services outside a hospital, you can pay the account yourself then get a refund in cash (up to certain cash limits) from your OSHC provider. Alternatively, according to your provider's arrangements, you can give your provider the unpaid account and they can send you a cheque made payable to the doctor (or ambulance service).

Hospital bills are normally sent direct to your OSHC provider for payment directly to them. The student is responsible for paying the difference between the OSHC benefit and the hospital charge, especially if you use a private hospital.

For prescribed medicines, pay the chemist/pharmacist first and then claim a refund from your provider.

Renewing your oshc

It is a condition of your student visa that you have private health insurance for the duration of your stay in Australia. The Australian Government requires that the minimum period of OSHC is 12 months or the length of your student visa, which ever is shorter. The maximum period is the length of your student visa. You will need to renew your membership if you are extending your student visa or have not paid the full length of your original visa.

Important note

If you do not renew your OSHC cover, your student visa may become invalid and you may be sent home.

Sexual precautions

Australian sexual conduct may be seen as more liberal than in some countries, but promiscuity is not generally accepted. Most Australians maintain monogamous relationships (a relationship with one person at a time). Information about risks and contraception is available at the Student Union/Guild, the campus health centre or your local doctor. Contraceptives are affordable and readily available through chemists and supermarkets. They should always be used.

The incidence of AIDS in Australia is low, with only around 0.06 per cent living with HIV. However, students and travellers should always take precautions against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Culture shock and homesickness

Culture shock doesn't happen suddenly, as the term suggests. Every day in Australia your body and mind have to make adjustments to unfamiliar things and after a while both body and mind are exhausted and find it hard to cope. Homesickness leaves you sadly missing friends and family.

Typical emotions are distress, confusion and lack of confidence and self esteem. The process of adjustment involves three to six months of fluctuating emotions. The trick is to be able to identify ill-feeling as culture shock or homesickness, and remind yourself that it is natural and temporary.

Counsellors at your institution can help you. Some tips for coping are: remind yourself why you came to Australia; re-evaluate your expectations; ask questions to broaden your understanding of Australian culture, rather than retreat from it; explore the country; keep in touch with family and friends; find reminders of home like local foods; and get involved in campus and community clubs.

My experience

Ng Yee Fui is a Commerce/Law student originally from Malaysia and now studying at the University of Melbourne. "After the initial awkward period, I began to like it here. I made plenty of friends during Orientation Week. Purchasing a cheap phone card allowed me to call home regularly, and I emailed often about my new adventures. I also engaged in various activities like joining the Melbourne University Overseas Students Services to gain new experiences."



RELIGION

Australia's approach to religion

In their multicultural society, Australians accept that a lot of their friends and colleagues will come from other cultures and religious backgrounds.

Religion is considered a somewhat private matter in Australia, and does not influence a person's friendship circles or social standing. Around 15 per cent of the population claim to have no religion at all. For these people, and most other Australians, the important thing is to live by a standard set of morals and values that apply to any positive human relationships.

Facilities and support for all religions

While Christian religions are the most common in Australia, there are widespread networks for other religions – including Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

Most campuses have prayer rooms, either shared or for specific religions. Institutions also have their own chaplains to provide spiritual guidance to students. The International Student Office can provide a list of local facilities and support groups for each religion.

My experience

Faiz Bajaber is President of the University of Western Australia's Muslim Student Association. "To be honest, I have found the majority of Australians do not discriminate against religions and are very accepting of the different faiths being practised in Australia."



TELEPHONE, EMAIL AND MAIL

Home phone

Telstra and Optus are Australia's two home and business telephone networks. The White Pages directory (found in all households) provides service numbers. A customer service officer will take you through the process. Also see www.whitepages.com.au

Be sure to ask that international dialling be included when you set up your home account. Both providers offer various special deals and packages to suit customers who make a lot of international and interstate calls.

Mobile phone

Australia's two mobile networks – digital and CDMA (digital based) – are compatible with Europe's networks, but not the US or Japanese systems. Students from Asian countries and the Middle East should check compatibility before leaving home.

The main service providers are Vodafone (www.vodafone.com.au), Telstra (www.telstra.com.au) and Optus (www.optus.com.au). Coverage is good in all major cities and large regional centres. Students in small regional campuses should check with their institution which mobile provider offers best coverage in their area.

International calls

International calls are charged according to the length of time (usually in minutes) and the destination of the call. Ask your provider about special offers on international dialling. There may be discounts for calling at a certain time of day, or for certain lengths of time.

Through Telstra's Country Direct, students can be put in contact with telephone operators in their home country and make a reverse charge call or call using their credit card. The Telstra White Pages directory (found in every household) provides more information on this service.

Pre-paid accounts and phone cards

Pre-paid accounts and phone cards are recommended if you need to strictly budget your spending, are in a share house (where there can be confusion over bills), or expect to move house soon. Whenever you purchase a phone card, read the instructions carefully to make sure you do not spend more money on phone calls than you plan.

With a pre-paid account, a certain amount is paid to the provider upfront, and you can make calls until the account needs replenishing. All mobile providers offer pre-paid services. Telstra also offers pre-paid accounts for home phones. On home phone pre-paid accounts, a code number (or PIN, Personal Identification Number) prevents anyone else from using your account. Ask your provider for information.

Phone cards for local and international calls can be bought from newsagents and post offices. They can be used in public phones, mobiles or home phones by dialling an access number and PIN.

Lonely Planet's 'ekno' travel services offers phone cards and pre-paid accounts specifically for international travellers. Phone cards and accounts can be setup online with a credit card. Low-cost international calls are available to 74 countries. For more information, go to www.ekno.lonelyplanet.com.

Email

Australians are technologically advanced. All education institutions offer internet access, as do most libraries (on campus and in the community). There is an abundance of internet cafes and community access centres, including in small towns around the country.

Free email at your institution

Most institutions offer free email and/or internet access to students. You will need your Student Card as identification to begin. You should receive information in O-Week, or ask the International Student Office or Student Union for details.

Free personal email

Free web-based email services are also available, and can be handy while travelling or between courses. The main providers are: Excite (www.excite.com); Yahoo (www.yahoo.com); MSN Hotmail (www.hotmail.com); and ekno (www.ekno.lonelyplanet.com, described above).

Mail

Australia Post is efficient and inexpensive with many outlets, including some on large campuses. Outlets are also in some newsagencies and general stores.

International letters can be sent as 'Airmail' letters for \$1.40 to the Asia-Pacific and \$2.05 elsewhere. Parcels can be sent by air (as economy or express) or by sea, which is cheaper but significantly slower. Parcels are charged according to weight and destination.

http://www1.auspost.com.au/pac/int_letter_select.asp

Within Australia, regular letters and postcards cost 55 cents to any destination.

TRANSPORT AROUND HOME AND CAMPUS

Unless you live on campus it is rare that you will be in walking distance of the campus or city centre. Inner city accommodation can be expensive, and Australian cities and towns are fairly spread out compared to other cities of the world.



Public transport

Australia's public transport is efficient, organised and inexpensive. Systems vary by city, and can be a combination of buses, trains, ferries and trams. All States and Territories except New South Wales and Victoria provide student discounts on public transport. There are savings in buying weekly, monthly or yearly passes. The International Student Office provides timetables and maps. You can buy tickets at newsagencies.

My experience

Korean student Dong Ho says, "When I first came here, I made a lot of mistakes. Firstly, I experienced language problems. Even though Australian people explained things, I was afraid of going out alone and I felt anxious. The second issue was transportation – the Australian train system was complicated. At first, it was very hard for me, but after a year in Australia I am accustomed to the Australian lifestyle. I can speak English and I can understand train announcements. I like it here very much because everyone is kind and tolerant."



Bicycles

Bicycles are a cheap and convenient form of transport for students, both around campus and around cities. All campuses offer bicycle storage areas and most cities have allocated bicycle paths to ensure riders have access to all areas without having to compete with road traffic. It is compulsory to wear a helmet at all times. A decent bike for city riding will cost you upwards of \$250-700 second hand, or \$350-1,000 new.

Cars

For most students the costs of a car outweigh the need. Australia's public transport is excellent. Car parking is limited at city campuses in particular, making it more convenient for many students to rely on public transport or bicycles.

However, cars can be most convenient for students in regional campuses or rural postings. A car can be a great way to make short trips at home and take longer trips in holiday times. Students over the age of 25 can hire a car for a day, a weekend or longer.

Drivers must be at least 17 years of age. International students can drive in Australia under their own national driver's licence (provided it is a full licence). The licence is valid for the period of your student visa (or until the original expiry date). You must carry your licence with you at all times when you are driving. If your driver's licence is in a language other than English, you must also carry an official translation.

Basic rules for drivers

Australians drive on the left side of the road. It is compulsory to wear a seat belt (the driver can be fined close to \$100 if any passenger is not wearing their seat belt). Drivers must have no more than 0.05 per cent alcohol content in their blood. Any more than two drinks for a man and one drink for a woman can raise the blood alcohol level too high. If you are caught over the limit, you will be fined and may even lose your licence.

You must obey the speed limit. The police mount hidden speed cameras and red-light cameras around cities and towns, and will mail you a fine if you are caught breaking the law.

Costs of buying and maintaining a car

Decent second-hand cars sell for \$4,000-12,000 and higher. Older cars are available from \$600-3,000 but they will be far less reliable and usually require costly repairs within a few months. All vehicles must be registered with the State government as being road worthy. The cost of registration varies, but you can expect to pay \$500-700 a year.

Motorbikes

Motorbikes are cheap vehicles to buy, however they are not recommended for international students. This is because Australia's roads are not congested and traffic is fast, so small motorbikes are unable to keep up. They become a hazard to traffic and dangerous to ride. A special licence is required for all motorbikes.

SHOPPING AND ENTERTAINMENT

Shopping and business hours

Business hours are 9.00 am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday. Banks are usually open shorter hours 9.00 am to 4.00 pm, and some until midday on Saturday.

Retail outlets offer 'late night shopping' on Thursday or Friday, opening until 9.00 pm. Most are open on Saturday until midday or 5.00 pm in large centres. In cities, large shopping centres will be open on Sunday from about 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

Most restaurants and take-away outlets serve until around 10.00 pm. Some large chain grocery stores such as Woolworths and Coles are open until 10.00 pm or midnight, seven days. Video stores and petrol stations can operate similar hours, or 24 hours.

In many places restaurants, clubs and bars must close by midnight, with a smaller number open until 4.00am on special licence.

Alcohol, tobacco and drugs

The legal age for drinking alcohol and attending night clubs and bars is 18 years. This is also the legal age for buying tobacco products. You will need to show your ID to get into night clubs and to buy alcohol. It is illegal to sell or buy marijuana or any other drug.

TV, radio and press

All but the most remote areas receive three to five free television stations which includes two to three commercial stations plus the national advertising-free station, ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and SBS, the multilingual station offering programs and news in various languages and from various countries. ABC and SBS are national. Satellite or digital pay-TV is available in most areas, providing additional channels.

All areas have several radio stations on AM and FM, including ABC and SBS plus various community and foreign-language stations.

Each capital city and most regional centres have their own newspapers. Your institution will likely have its own student paper or magazine, and the International Student Office and Student Union will distribute a range of free youth media. Foreign-language newspapers are readily available in local newsagencies and through the International Student Office (such as the Chinese language **Australia Daily**, **India Link** and the **Dutch Courier**).

FOOD AND DRINK

Australia has high quality food and water nation-wide, and there is little chance of receiving unsafe or contaminated foods or drink at any outlet.

As a young, multicultural society there is a range of foods available from all over the world, and contemporary Australian cuisine is a fresh mix of tastes, ingredients and methods from a multitude of cultures. There are restaurants and cafes of nearly all ethnic backgrounds in most cities and regional centres such as Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian, Greek and many others.

The cafeteria at your institution will probably offer a selection of sandwiches, salads, basic Asian dishes (such as beef with black bean, sweet and sour pork, and fried rice), basic Australian meals such as roast beef and vegetables or potato with cheese, and fried foods such as potato chips. All of it will be safe to eat, decent quality and inexpensive (upwards of \$4 for a sandwich, and \$7 for a meal).

My experience

Judy, a Taiwanese student, says, 'My friend's father told me that it was impossible to get Asian food in Australia. However, this was not the case at all.'

Special food needs

Australia's largest grocery stores, Coles and Woolworths, stock halal and kosher products in many outlets. A small number of university campuses serve halal food in their food hall and some on-campus accommodation offers halal meals on request. Australia has lots of special grocery stores for European, Asian, Indian and Middle-Eastern spices and specialities. They are easy to find in just about any area where there is an institution campus. Vegetarian alternatives are offered in all grocery stores, and almost all cafes and restaurants. Cafes and restaurants that don't advertise as vegetarian or vegan will prepare a suitable meal if requested in advance (vegan customers may need to explain the constraints of a vegan diet, to ensure their meal is not simply vegetarian).

Australia's main airline, Qantas, provides halal in-flight meals if you ask in advance. Passengers can also order vegetarian meals on Australia's airlines, at the time of booking.

SPECIAL NOTES FOR STUDENTS UNDER 18 YEARS

Guardians

If you are under 18 years of age, you are required to have an appropriate guardian nominated or approved by your parents. Your guardian has to be a suitable person who must be over 21 years of age and takes responsibility for you.

Your guardian may be an eligible relative who lives in the city you are studying in, a responsible person or organisation appointed by your school or institution, or your homestay parent. Students under 18 years of age can bring a relative from home as their guardian under a Student Guardian Visa.

Your guardian should be someone who will take an interest in your progress at school, perhaps attend parent-teacher interviews with you, provide advice to you if you need it and may be authorised to sign forms on your parents' behalf – for instance, if you need urgent medical treatment, or if you need a permission slip for a school excursion.

Visa conditions

You are not allowed to change your pre-approved accommodation or welfare arrangements until you turn 18. You cannot change your institution either without the written permission of your parent/guardian. If your parents are not coming with you or your guardian does not live in Australia, you must ensure that you arrive in Australia no earlier than the date on the CAAW (Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation & Welfare) form provided by your institution



GOVERNMENT

Australian Government
www.gov.au (links to federal and State/Territory sites)

Department of Education, Science and Training
www.dest.gov.au

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
www.dfat.gov.au

Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
www.immi.gov.au
Phone: 131 881 in Australia

State Government youth affairs websites
www.thesource.gov.au/youth_services/index.htm

Study in Australia
www.studyinaustralia.gov.au

Australian Government Education Services for Overseas (ESOS) Act
http://cricos.dest.gov.au

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSISTANCE

IDP Student Centre: 1300 STUDENT (1300 788 3368)
http://www.idp.com/students/

For your ESOS rights and responsibilities
www.aei.dest.gov.au/esos
ESOS Helpline +61 2 6240 5069

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
www.hrec.gov.au

The National Liaison Committee
www.nlclink.org

TRAVEL AND CULTURE

Australian Tourist Commission
www.australia.com

Australian culture and lifestyle.
www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/

Medibank Private
www.medibank.com.au

WORK

Australian Taxation Office
www.ato.gov.au

Job opportunities in Australia and overseas.
www.seek.com.au

Submit a resume, get interview tips or find out who's hiring near you.
www.youthjobs.com.au/

EXPLORING YOUR CITY

White Pages online directory
www.whitepages.com.au

Yellow Pages online business directory
www.yellowpages.com.au

What's going on in capital cities and regional centres
www.citysearch.com.au

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Tel 000 (Police, fire brigade and ambulance)



AUSTRALIAN WORDS

arvo	afternoon
bloke	a male
brekkie	breakfast
byo	Bring Your Own (usually relates to alcohol and used on party invitations or for unlicensed restaurants)
cuppa	cup of tea or coffee
deli	delicatessen
flat	one or two bedroom apartment
full-on	intense, busy
grog	alcohol
hang on	wait
hi	hello
jumper	warm overshirt, windcheater, sloppy joe, sweater
loo	toilet
mobile	cellular phone
na/nope/nuh	no
no worries	'that's not a problem' as in, 'Yes, I'm happy to do that for you'
O-week	orientation week
school	high school
see ya	good bye (see you later)
SMS	text messaging
ta	thank you
tute	tutorial
uni	university
what's up?	'what's wrong?' or 'what do you want to say?'
yeah/yep	yes
you right?	'are you all right?', also used for 'what do you want?' or 'can I help you?'

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IDP Student Services Offices in Australia

Melbourne

Ground Floor
410 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Tel +61 3 9670 7685
Fax +61 3 9670 7645
info.melbourne@idp.com

Sydney

Ground Floor
191-199 Thomas Street
Haymarket, Sydney, NSW 2000
Tel +61 2 8260 3300
Fax +61 2 8260 3311
info.sydney@idp.com

Brisbane

Shop 20, 215 Adelaide Street
Brisbane, QLD 4000
Tel +61 7 3020 6101
Fax +61 7 3220 0084
info.brisbane@idp.com

Perth

136 Barrack Street
Perth, WA 6000
Tel +61 8 9221 9080
Fax +61 8 9221 9040
info.perth@idp.com

Adelaide

96A Currie Street
Adelaide, SA 5000
Tel +61 8 8205 1100
Fax +61 8 8205 1111
info.adelaide@idp.com

www.australia.idp.com

IDP Education Pty Ltd

Corporate Office

Level 8, 535 Bourke Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Australia
Tel +61 3 9612 4400
Fax +61 3 9614 0578
info@idp.com

This publication is intended as a general guide only. Information in this publication is current as at January 2010. Prospective students should contact their nearest IDP office for further information.

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