

It can be very stressful living away from home and adjusting to a different culture. You might find that the way education is delivered in Australia is different to what you expected and it is not uncommon for international students to experience some difficulties or some culture shock.

While not all international students will experience difficulties, it is likely all students will experience some degree of stress associated with adjusting to a new culture. This stress or anxiety is referred to as Culture Shock, with common symptoms including:

- homesickness
- frustration
- confusion
- feeling lonely
- losing confidence
- irritability
- sadness
- difficulty sleeping or
- increased sensitivity to physical aches and pains.



If you can identify with any of these symptoms, it is important to know that it is a normal part of cultural adjustment and it is expected you would experience some, if not all of these symptoms at different stages of your cross-cultural experience.

Culture shock typically involves four stages of adjustment:

1. **The Honeymoon Phase:** During the first few weeks of moving to a new country it is exciting as you explore the different culture and appreciate the differences from your own culture
2. **The Negotiation Phase:** After 2-3 months the differences between the old and new culture begin to seem challenging and, as a result, you can become anxious, frustrated, and feel increasingly disconnected. Communication difficulties can impact upon the formation of new relationships and contribute to a sense of loneliness and homesickness;
3. **The Adjustment Phase:** After sometime you begin to establish a routine and have had the opportunity to learn more about the new country's way of life. You are more able to know what to expect in certain situations and you start to feel increasingly more comfortable;
4. **The Mastery Phase:** At this stage of the adjustment process you are confident in your ability to participate and engage with the new culture, whilst retaining your own cultural beliefs and norms.

Managing Culture Shock

Researching the new culture, locating and participating in social clubs/activities, and maintaining regular contact with family and friends at home are helpful ways to minimise the impact of culture shock. If you are finding it hard to adjust and this is affecting your studies, the counsellors at [USQ Student Services](#) can help. They are sensitive to cultural differences and are aware of some of the unique difficulties our international students may face and also that it may not be common in some countries for people to seek help from a counsellor. If you need assistance after hours, you can call the **Emergency Student Assistance Hotline** on **1800 689 410**.

Free, confidential counselling available for currently enrolled students at
USQ Student Services
Toowoomba Campus, G Block Ph: (07) 4631 2372
Springfield Campus Level 3 Main Building Ph: (07) 3470 4400
Fraser Coast Campus Student Hub C Block Ph: (07) 4194 3125