

# Final semester international students: Preparing emotionally for the next step



Finishing university involves as many emotional highs and lows as beginning the journey. There's so much to look forward to and yet, so much to leave behind. Saying goodbye to the people you've shared your Monash experience with and the lifestyle you've lead for an extended period of time is difficult. It's important to prepare emotionally for the changes ahead!

## Student story

Stepping out professionally was a struggle for me. I had no idea what to expect from the workplace, but it didn't take long to realise that it doesn't have to be scary. I decided to do things one at a time, rather than overwhelming myself, and soon I'd achieved a lot. You won't always get the job you apply for - it's just a normal part of the process. I now believe in making the best out of everything!

*Vidya*

## Transition shock

Transition Shock is the name given to feelings like sadness, anger or frustration which arise during times of change. You can also experience physical symptoms such as tiredness, sleeplessness and anxiety. While the process can be unsettling, there's no reason to worry – it's a natural part of adjustment.

## What can you do?

To manage the feelings and symptoms of transition shock:

1. Write a blog or a diary about:
  - what you liked about being a student
  - what you're happy to leave behind
  - what you're looking forward to
  - what you hope to achieve next
2. Plan for the future:
  - what are your goals?
  - what are you immediate plans?
  - how are you going to put your plans into action?
3. Change and uncertainty can be scary - expect some discomfort, be patient and believe that things will improve.
4. Find people you can talk to. Be active in connecting with new people and stay connected to old friendships.
5. Maintain a balanced lifestyle: eat well, exercise and practise meditation or relaxation.

## Student story

I hated it when I came home. Everything seemed so backwards and limited. Then I realized that the clash between me and the people, culture, mentality in my own country stemmed from 'reverse' culture shock.

Accept that you have changed in the course of your time away at university. In doing so, you may find ways to adapt a more positive attitude to help cope with the differences. In time, you will begin to appreciate the competitive edge you gain from your unique experiences abroad coupled with the local knowledge you have of home.

*Nurzawani*



## Going home

If you've lived abroad for awhile, adjusting to being home can be difficult. Some find this more difficult than their adjustment to the foreign culture.

While you're returning to a home and culture that you're familiar with, what you may not realise is that you have changed as a result of your experiences abroad. It is likely that the people at home have changed too.

### To prepare:

- Be mindful that you are going through two transitions at once: leaving university and returning home.
- Expect an adjustment process. Give yourself time to work through any feelings, especially challenges you may be facing.
- Your family will need time to get to know the new you and adjust to changes in the home environment.
- Most things will look and feel familiar, yet some things (and even you) may feel out of place. Take some time to explore your surroundings with a fresh perspective.
- You may have a heightened sense of awareness, this usually lasts a short period of time. Write your experience and perceptions down. It will help you reflect later on.
- Re-introduce yourself to family and friends slowly. Your way of life in Australia will have influenced you and it may take time for others to appreciate the impact your experiences have had.
- Look for opportunities to integrate your new knowledge into local traditions – while being respectful of those traditions and peoples' feelings towards change.
- Try not to idealise Australia, or criticise your own country and vice-versa. Attempt to remain objective. Be careful about how you phrase your comments and criticism about your country. Many foreigners are shocked when they come to Australia about how free Australians are to criticise. It may not be acceptable to do the same at home.
- Embrace returning home, reuniting with loved ones and the opportunity to practise the skills and knowledge you have gained from your studies.
- With the above in mind, don't forget to celebrate all that you've achieved in Australia!

### Would you like to know more?

The 'Information for international students in final semester' web page has helpful resources about:

- Academic records
- Career advice
- Going home
- Housing pre-departure checklist
- Superannuation
- Visitor's visa
- Alumni
- Freight
- Graduation
- Selling your belongings
- Tax return

[www.monash.edu/international/farewell](http://www.monash.edu/international/farewell)

If you'd like to talk to the University about any aspect of final semester, call the Health and Wellbeing Hub on your campus.