

Adjusting to life back home

International study and travel is a transformative experience – it will impact the way you think, your perspectives, provide you with additional knowledge you did not have before and create long term connections and memories of another country and culture. You will probably be excited to return to see family and friends that you have been missing, eat at your favourite places, speak your first language and reacquaint yourself with life back home. However, you need to remember that the people and places you left have also changed and developed and things may feel strange or unfamiliar when you arrive. You might also feel homesick for your life and friends in Sydney. Below is some information to help you prepare for the feelings and situations you might experience when you first arrive home and some tips to help you settle back in as quickly as possible.

Things to remember:

- Coming home isn't just about a flight and a change of location – it is an emotional journey as well. Prepare yourself by thinking about what you are hoping for and what you are worried about and have a plan for managing these feelings.
- You will have expectations about what life, family and friends will be like back home – that's ok, we all have expectations! But keep yourself open and flexible, knowing that just as your experiences in Australia have changed you, so have the people and places at home; as well as the politics, latest trends, current events and atmosphere. It will take some time to reintegrate so be patient with yourself and keep an open mind.
- Be prepared for some reverse culture shock – you might be surprised how much of a local Sydney-sider you have become! Remember how strange and unfamiliar Australia was when you first arrived and give yourself the opportunity to be surprised by your new surroundings – even if they are familiar! Give yourself time to refamiliarise yourself with life in your home country - see new places, meet new people and adjust to the culture, pace and style of life back home.
- You might be on an emotional rollercoaster – sometimes excited and happy to be home, other times, lonely, disoriented, bored or feeling like you no longer fit in. It is natural to miss your lifestyle in Sydney but don't romanticise it- try and stay realistic. Give yourself permission to miss the things you no longer have available to you but remember that when you lived in Sydney, you had moments when you felt just this way about your friends, family and life at home. Remember – this is a normal reaction to change and it will pass.
- You are full of stories and experiences that your family and friends might not be able to relate to, or they may seem uninterested in hearing about your time in Sydney. They will also have their own stories about what has happened in their life while you were away. Make sure you ask questions and listen to them too.
- There may be a period of downtime after you get home – you might be looking for a job or a place to live or just deciding what comes next. Try not to get upset if things don't happen quickly and keep trying different things and stay positive, even if sometimes it feels a bit hopeless. Keep trying and trust that the next step is just waiting for you to find it.

Tips

- Reflect on your experiences in Australia to provide you with a sense of achievement and closure:
 - Remember what it was like arriving in Sydney all those years ago and how you felt. Do you think you will feel differently when you are leaving?
 - Think about your favourite place and favourite memory – or maybe there are more than one! What was it about that time and place that were so important?
 - Consider how you have changed since you arrived in Sydney.

- What have you learned?
 - What are you most proud of?
 - What has surprised you the most about yourself?
 - Is there anything I will be happy to get away from or leave behind?
 - What do you miss the most?
 - Are your goals different now that you have graduated?
 - What part of your experience as an international student has taught you the most?
 - How are you going to use this knowledge and experience throughout the rest of your life?
- Try not to make comparisons about what is better or worse in Australia or your home country. Remain balanced and appreciative of the positives and negatives of life in each place without being too critical or praising of either.
 - Communicate and don't isolate yourself. You might be frustrated that people at home don't understand what you went through when you lived in Sydney, or they might not seem interested in your stories. Make sure that as you share your experiences with others you remain open to hearing about what their life has been like while you have been away – ask questions and listen and hopefully others will do the same.
 - Tap into your alumni network in your home country – these are people who have experienced similar things to you when they studied in Sydney and can help you re-adjust to home but still feel connected to Sydney – plus they can be a network of new friends and contacts to source work opportunities and social activities through. You can also network online via the Alumni website and mentoring platforms – a great way to keep in contact and up-to-date with the University. Visit the website to find out more: sydney.edu.au/alumni-giving
 - If you really miss your life in Sydney, consider your options for returning – either to undertake further study or to work. Explore your options on the University of Sydney website about postgraduate study, scholarships and work opportunities for students; or speak to a migration consultant about your eligibility to work in Australia. If you can obtain a work visa, look at websites such as www.seek.com.au for job vacancies in your field of work.
 - You are now a valued member of an elite group – graduates of the University of Sydney! Recognise how much you have achieved- you successfully completed studies in an unfamiliar culture a long way from home. If you can do that, you can do anything. Believe in yourself and your abilities.

The University of Sydney congratulates you on your achievements and wishes you the very best for your future endeavours.