

## Successful transitions: China – Australia postgraduate learning in media and communication



# Briefing Note

## POSTGRADUATE STUDY ABROAD. INFORMATION FOR ACADEMICS IN CHINA: HOW TO PREPARE YOUR STUDENTS PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE FOR STUDY ABROAD

There are many aspects of the overseas experience that will be different for Chinese students who travel to western countries for postgraduate study. We know that students will work hard but this may not be enough as they may find some aspects of learning and teaching to be quite different and sometimes difficult. Some of these areas are identified below and suggestions are made as to how you can assist your students to prepare themselves for their study abroad.

Differences	Actions you can advise students to take pre-departure
<p><b>Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own learning.</b></p> <p>Many university support services will be available, but students will need to take the initiative to seek them out, and use them themselves. They should also understand that the concept of loss of face is not as important in Australia.</p>	<p><b>Get to know the university through its website.</b></p> <p>Students should be encouraged to really explore the foreign university website before they leave China so that they are familiar with things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration and student services so they know who to ask if they have questions or need support.</li> <li>• How the library operates and the facilities provided.</li> <li>• Academic support, especially for helping with English.</li> <li>• How their school or faculty is organised and operates.</li> <li>• Social and sporting activities and clubs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Students will be required to do a lot of reading.</b></p> <p>There will be an expectation that students will read extensively, in English, and from a range of sources including academic journals. Textbooks will form only a small part of the material that they will need to read. Students will be expected to find these materials themselves from electronic databases or libraries as usually these readings will not be handed out by lecturers.</p>	<p><b>Read from a range of authentic English sources.</b></p> <p>Encourage students to read a wide range of texts in English, preferably academic material written by native speakers of English. You might encourage them to go to the websites of media organisations and companies based in western countries and download articles and reports. Make sure they access the English language versions of these websites.</p> <p>Getting used to reading a wide range of texts is important for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can develop the habit of reading long and complicated texts.</li> <li>• Students can develop a knowledge base of the vocabulary that is specific to the area where they are</li> </ul>

	<p>studying.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will learn more about the way of life of the people with whom they will be studying.</li> <li>• Students will be better prepared to read for greater understanding and will then be able to better understand lecture and seminar topics and information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Students will be required to write many long assignments including formal academic essays.</b></p> <p>Usually, examinations are not the main way of assessing students in western universities. Writing academic essays, reports and other written assignments is very important and students will need to learn how to do this.</p>	<p><b>Practice writing essays in English.</b></p> <p>Don't just write to practice for the English tests like IELTS. Students need to be encouraged to write long essays – several thousand words – using correct English language conventions. Finding examples of such essays, and paying careful attention to how they are structured, can be very useful preparation.</p>
<p><b>Students will be expected to discuss information, topics and ideas with their lecturers and with other students.</b></p> <p>Importantly, they will need to do this spontaneously. They will not be able to rehearse and practise what they are going to say. They also need to know that on many courses these discussions will contribute to their overall assessment in their units and courses.</p>	<p><b>Listen to, and speak English as often as they can before they leave.</b></p> <p>Students will benefit from watching English language movies, listening to English songs and having conversations with people who speak English (and not just their lecturers) before they go overseas. Students will benefit from listening to male and female voices, with different accents (Canadian, Australian, British etc). They will also benefit from listening to informal language, as many conversations overseas will involve colloquial, not just academic language. It is <b>crucial</b> for students to practice using their English interactively and spontaneously as this will be an important part of what they do overseas.</p>

<p><b>Students will be expected to work in groups with students who are not Chinese.</b></p> <p>Working in small groups is common practice but it is not common to have students working only with students who come from the same place or country. Chinese students have much to offer students from overseas and overseas students can also provide much to their Chinese classmates.</p>	<p><b>Make friends with other students who come from other countries.</b></p> <p>Encourage students to learn as much about their host country and their fellow students as they can. Communicate to them how important it is to do this so that on their return home they can be better informed about China's place in the global community, more aware of and sensitive to other cultures, and more adept at cross-cultural communication.</p>
<p><b>Students will need to learn different skills to support their learning.</b></p> <p>Students will not be able to depend on cramming large amounts of information into their heads as the way to be successful in their study. They will need to develop other strategies for analysing, presenting and using information.</p>	<p><b>Explore different ways of learning and learning language.</b></p> <p>It is important for students to appreciate before leaving China that remembering and memorising, in the ways that they are used to, will not be enough for them to be successful in their studies abroad. They will need to develop new learning strategies and new ways of doing things at university and also within the international community in which they will be studying and living. On arrival at their new university, their lecturers will identify different ways of learning and help them to develop these new skills.</p>



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Additional materials and resources are available from  
<http://chinapostgraduates.murdoch.edu.au>

Project Team

Christine Daymon (Murdoch University, Project Leader)

Lindy Norris (Murdoch University)

Maree Keating (Victoria University)

Fiona Henderson (Victoria University)

Haixia Yu (Communication University of China)

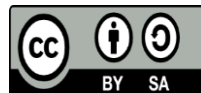
Dawei Wang (Communication University of China)

Jennie Bickmore-Brand

Linda Butcher (Murdoch, Project Manager)

Yibing Liu (Research Assistant)

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