

## Some thoughts and comments about studying abroad.

Coming to study in a different country is a major life change. Even though you probably feel very excited about coming here, adjusting to life in a new culture can be very stressful.

What problems might you find?

You might face the task of working and writing in a language which is not your own.

You may well experience a degree of "culture shock" in the early days – many things will be different to what you have been used to, and this can feel bewildering and frustrating; for example, food and climate. You have left behind your friends, family and familiar situations for what is unfamiliar, and you can feel lonely, lost and homesick at times. Your expectations of what being here would be like may not be met in the way you had hoped, and you may feel disappointed and let down. It may feel exhausting communicating and studying if English isn't your first language. You may have been here a while and felt that you're starting to adjust; but then something – even quite small – goes wrong, and it all seems too much and you feel like giving up and going back home.

Possibly, you may feel low in spirits and overwhelmed; it's not always easy to recognise these feelings – sometimes it may show as a feeling of being run-down and tired all the time. People often find they are more liable to minor illnesses such as stomach aches, headaches and colds and flu when they have moved country; this is a reflection of the emotional strain of adjusting to life in a new country. You may encounter other people's prejudices and assumptions about your culture, which can leave you upset or angry.

What might help?

- Understanding yourself in this new situation...
- Remember that this is a huge transition and all these feelings are normal and natural adjustment responses.
- Don't be too hard on yourself: adjusting to a move and making new relationships takes time.
- Think about your strengths and try to identify what has helped you to cope so far (and with difficult situations in the past).
- Remember that others may be sharing similar feelings - it can help to talk to others and find you're not the only one. This will help you to feel more part of things. British students may also share some of your feelings if they are away from home for the first time.
- Find opportunities to familiarise yourself with the culture you are in (reading newspapers, watching television (TV), talking to others).
- Spending time with someone from the same culture can help you feel less isolated. You may find it easier to feel understood. You can talk about home, cook food you enjoy together, which may help you to feel less cut off; but try to get a balance – you'll feel more part of things if you also talk to people from British and other cultures, as well as have a more interesting time.
- Try not to be afraid to ask if you don't understand something or need help.
- Be open to the differences around you and enjoy the rich variety of social and cultural experiences that life in London can offer!
- Keeping in contact with your friends and family back home can help you feel more settled (writing, or arranging for them to phone you at an agreed time can help cut down on your phone bills!).

If feelings of depression, isolation or anxiety persist, take them seriously and discuss them with the Counsellor in confidence:

Counselling Service, Room G87, York Gate Terrace  
[www.ram.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing-support](http://www.ram.ac.uk/student-life/wellbeing-support)