



## ADAPTING TO A NEW CULTURE

Life in Victoria may be different than what you are used to in your home country, it is a new chapter in your life and even the most positive experiences can cause stress, which you may experience as culture shock. This is a normal reaction to a new environment where you no longer familiar and have lost an element of control. Culture shock is a term used to explain what occurs when people encounter unfamiliar and new conditions.

You may arrive in Victoria full of excitement about you upcoming students at UVic, but after a few days or weeks you may begin to feel lonely, frustrated, homesick or depressed. You may feel overwhelmed by the change in weather, language and culture. This is normal as you become accustomed to your new life and new home. If you are experiencing culture shock the UVic community is here to support you and we suggest trying these strategies.

### Strategies for dealing with culture shock:

- **Acknowledge the impacts of adjusting to a new culture.**  
It is not a sign of weakness to admit that you feel uncomfortable or confused. Leaving your home country to study abroad always involves a certain amount of stress. It is common for international students to experience disappointments and frustrations. Be patient. Learning to live in a new country and culture is a process, not an event. Allow yourself and others time to develop trust and understanding.
- **Get involved.**  
It is important to make time for friends and fun. Joining a social, athletic, spiritual, or community group is a great way to meet people. Volunteering is also a great way to meet people and could lead to a Canadian reference for your résumé. Join the [UVic Global Community](#) and participate in the opportunities to meet other students through the [Conversation Partner Program](#), [Mentorship Program](#) and take part in their [events and activities](#).
- **Keep an open mind.**  
Think about the differences and similarities between your home culture and Canadian culture. Learn other ways of doing things and experience new perspectives. Keep an open mind and resist thinking one culture or country is better. Take the opportunity to learn, understand and grow as a person.
- **Maintain contact with friends and family back home.**  
Keep in touch with people at home. Communicating with people you trust, who know you, and who understand your point of view may help you feel less homesick.
- **Do something that reminds you of home.**  
Listening to your favourite music or practicing a familiar hobby can boost your spirits when you are feeling homesick.
- **Explore Victoria.**  
The more you know [about Victoria](#) and all the things it has to offer, the more you will feel comfortable here. There are lots of events and activities and many place to discover.

## Take care of yourself:

- **Get enough rest.**  
Get enough sleep, especially when you first arrive in Canada. You may need to recover from your travels and adjust to the time difference. You may experience “jet lag”. Try your best to wake up and rest at regular hours so your body can adjust to your new environment.
- **Eat healthy food.**  
Staying hydrated and well-fed will help you settle into your life in Canada. There are many international food stores (see our Shopping handout) and [restaurants in Victoria](#) and you may find some familiar foods there.
- **Seek out support.**  
It is normal to feel a little uncomfortable in a new place and it is important to understand how changes around you may affect you. [UVic Student Wellness Centre](#) provides health, counselling, and multifaith services.
  - Health professionals are available on campus at the UVic Student Wellness Centre
  - [Counselling](#) is a good option for anyone who is needing to talk to someone or who is struggling emotionally or who just needs someone to talk with. Professional counsellors are available to meet individually with students. Appointments are confidential and free. The [UVic Student Mental Health website](#) is also an excellent resource.
  - Some students may prefer to receive support through their connection with a faith group or spiritual community; [multifaith](#) provides religious and spiritual care for students.
- **Give yourself time.**  
Give yourself extra time to get things accomplished and to adjust to your new routine. Life will be less stressful if you do not push yourself too hard in the beginning. If you still find yourself overwhelmed in a few weeks reach out to the [International Centre for Students](#), we are here to help.