The Tertiary Leap

Your first time at University

Congratulations! You have made it to RMIT University. This year will be a time of massive change and adjustment. A lot of what is happening around you will be new. Every new situation has two common elements. These elements are dread and excitement.

Think back to the last time you experienced these two elements in your schooling. Recall your move from primary to secondary school. What you are experiencing now, or will soon experience, is similar to all those years ago.

There is the excitement of:

- The after glow of passing the VCE and gaining a place in the course of your choice,
- Studying a course that you are interested in and one that will lead to a career,
- The general buzz of "Being at Uni",
- The anticipation of being more independent than you have been in the past.

On the dread side is:

- The place is so big!
- Being here is so complex and confusing,
- I've got information overload,
- I didn't get that... I hope it's in the handouts!

There are also some experiences and situations that fluctuate between dread and excitement:

- I'm responsible for my own learning,
- I'm responsible for my own living,
- Living with people that are not family,
- Sharing, the rent, the cleaning, the shopping, etc.

Personal Freedom

How I choose to spend my own time is my concern. If I study or party, the choice and the consequences will be mine.

Students frequently encounter difficulties in adjusting to University life. If you are experiencing difficulties you are not the only student on the campus feeling this way. In fact, there are probably few students who are not in the same boat as you.

Do not feel reluctant to ask for assistance. Often students are only partly correct when they believe "things will sort themselves out" Yes, they will, but not necessarily in the way that is helpful to them. Frequently, assistance and encouragement provided earlier is more beneficial than assistance provided later. But, it is rarely too late for assistance to be of any help.

Helping yourself to adjust

Assistance in helping you to feel better about yourself and improving your situation can be gained from many sources. These can range from family, friends, lecturers, to student counsellors. Talk to someone. Talk to your friends. Find out how they coped with the same situation you are in. You will be surprised to find that they have been affected more than you realised and more then they let on. Through discussion you will find that your friends have used a variety of ways to cope and survive. Some of these suggestions will be applicable to you in your situation, others will not.
Lecturing staff can advise you on how to approach your work given the new demands that are being placed on you. Most staff are more than willing to assist students who ask for assistance.

Additionally, counsellors can be of assistance. A counsellor can help you to explore your situation to determine the specific factors that are making adjustment to University life difficult. Together you and a counsellor can discuss issues and concerns and develop ways of assisting your adjustment. Finally, should it be required, the counsellor can refer you to other staff such as Careers Counsellors, Housing Officers, or Financial Advisers who are able to provide you with additional professional assistance.

**Overseas Students**

If you are an overseas student your previous exposure to Australian culture and Australian University culture may be limited. If so, the chances are that you will be experiencing more difficulties adjusting to University than local students. In addition to the difficulties that they are experiencing there are differences in climate, food, social customs, change in family support network, change in friendship groups, and styles of learning that you will encounter. It is to be expected that you will be uncertain of what is happening around you and that time will be required to adjust to study in Australia.

There is one simple rule to follow while studying at RMIT; if in doubt ask for assistance. By following this rule your adjustment to student life will be made easier.

In addition, international student advisors from the International Student Information and Support can provide you with support and assistance. The Centre is located at Building 14, Level 4, Student Services (City Campus) and telephone contact can be made on 9925 2963.

Assistance in these areas and many others can be obtained from the RMIT Student Counselling Service. The RMIT Counselling Service offers free and confidential counselling to all RMIT students. Counsellors may help you to explore your concerns, both personal and academic.

The Counselling Service can be contacted on 9925-4365 Monday through Friday, between 9am and 5pm.