

Moving towards independence: International student needs beyond the classroom

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Fitting into a new culture brings many preconceived expectations and uncertainties, particularly for students who are also navigating the complications of adolescence. As adolescents, international students attending secondary schools still require the help and confidence of adults who they respect and with whom they can confide safely. This paper reports some of the findings from a survey and interviews investigating the needs of international students attending secondary schools. Overseas students in a variety of care settings were invited to comment regarding their settlement in Australia. There were 318 questionnaire respondents and eighteen students participated in the interviews. The study was examining the factors that enable them to move from requiring considerable support upon arrival to functioning confidently and independently within the Australian environment.

Three main factors emerged from the research. The first involved the preconceived expectations held by the students prior to arrival, and how these impacted their experiences upon arrival. The second factor involved the link between friendship patterns and communicative competence. Finally, the role of significant adults associated with the international students' lives was examined.