

“Getting it right the first year” : Helping New Zealand AID students to adapt to the academic and social requirements of life in New Zealand and a New Zealand University

Leuaina Vaai-Hatier and Jamie Hooper

Massey University, PRIVATE BAG 11 222, PALMERSTON NORTH NEW ZEALAND

For many international undergraduate students the first year in a foreign university is the hardest with so much to take in and adjust to. They must deal with the likes of culture shock, adjusting to a new environment, leaving behind family and friends (their usual support system) as well as learning a new education system. Most local first year students find their first university year very challenging and the experience can be very much the same plus much more for international students.

At Massey University we wanted to find out if our various programmes from orientation to wellness workshops as well as the academic and support services that are offered are adequate to meet the unique needs of international students. The close interaction required for our New Zealand AID (NZ AID) undergraduate scholars has provided us with an ideal focus group to learn more about the student experience and get vital feedback to gauge if the services provided cater for their needs. The NZ AID scholars are a unique set of students whose monitoring requirements provide a great opportunity to identify how we can improve our university support services to cater for international students' needs.

Throughout this year we will monitor this group of students in their progress, but more importantly will ask for their feedback on what services they find helpful or in greater need of. This three-stage process of review, consultation and students' reflection, is anticipated to help the academic and support staff to embed a culture of global understanding, enhancement of student experience and promote self monitoring and improvement to services.

Keywords: New Zealand AID; International students; Culture Shock; adapt; University