

university culture and their more familiar home culture. Strong feelings of homesickness begin to surface and it is a time of a feeling of caught between two worlds. University is still not as comfortable as home used to be but home is not as familiar as it once was.

You may not realize how much you miss home until you have been away for quite awhile. And even then, going home to visit can still leave you feeling homesick for a home environment that no longer seems to exist. Changes may have happened at home too, and not having been there on a day-to-day basis can be upsetting.

### Acceptance, Integration and Connectedness

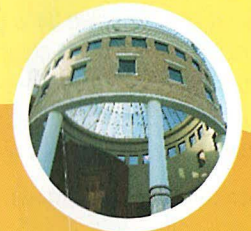
As you become more involved in university life, gain some history with new friends and get to know academic expectations, you begin to feel a better connection to the campus community. You begin to have a more balanced and realistic view of the university, seeing and integrating the good experiences with the challenges.


### Recommendations for First-semester Students

What steps can you take to have a great first year of university?

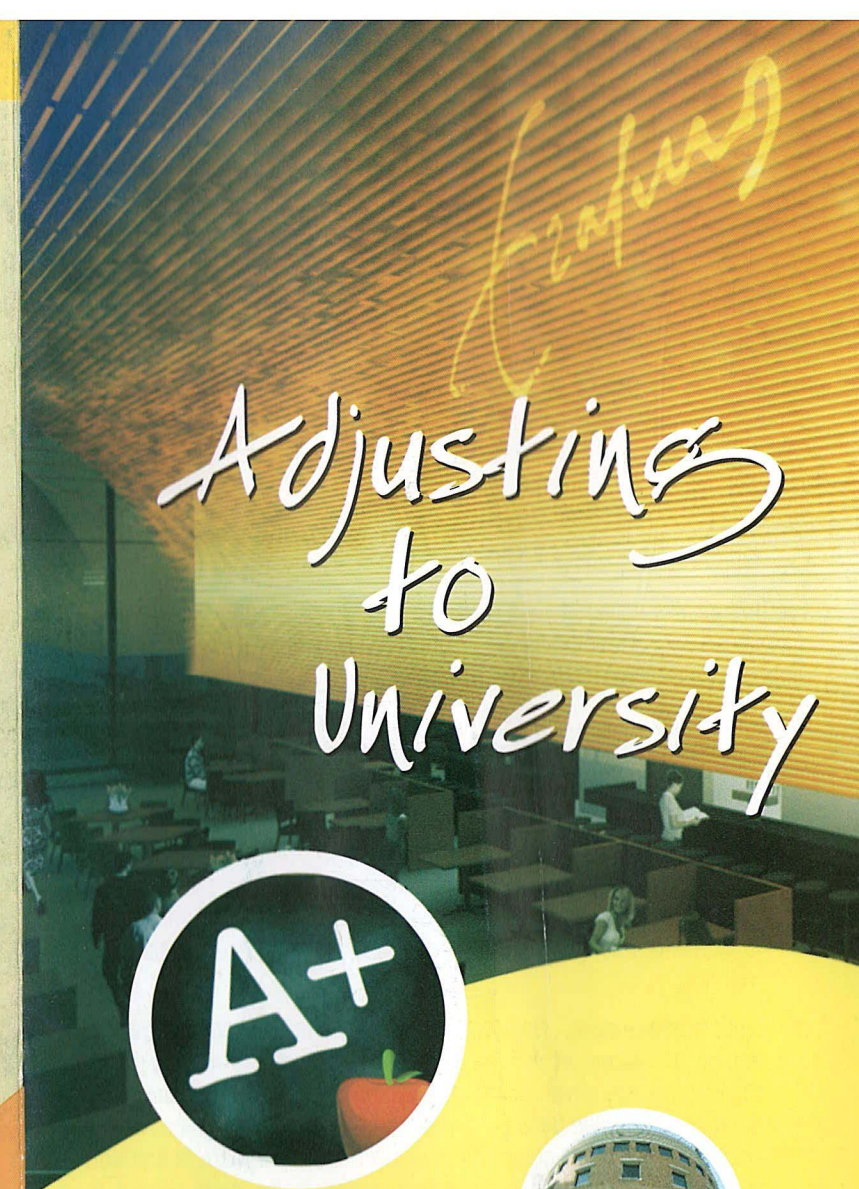
- ◉ **Self-knowledge and confidence.** Know yourself and then you will be confident enough to share feelings, personal preferences, habits and characteristics. You need to share information about your temperament so that your friends can read and understand your feelings.
- ◉ **Communication skills.** To negotiate and identify common areas of conflict such as neatness, noise, visits by friends, study, arrangements, sharing of belongings, money issues, messages, values, social lifestyles and schedules, you need to listen to each other without interrupting.
- ◉ **Taking control of your own finances.** You are on your own and you might be tempted to spend money on all the things your parents would not let you have before such as expensive designer clothes, etc. Be SELF-confident NOT LABEL-confident.
- ◉ **Be patient.** While campus may seem new and overwhelming for new students, it becomes more familiar with time. Refer to the many resources available to assist you in navigating your surroundings. Senior -Level students and the university Website are all useful tools to get you through the initial transition to campus.
- ◉ **Connect with other students.** If you talk to other students, you are likely to discover that they share similar questions and concerns and the solutions they discovered.

- ◉ **Get involved.** Student organizations are a fun way to interact with other students and faculty. Meeting people with similar interests and goals is an exciting way to make friends and participate in social activities.
- ◉ **Utilize resources.** There are numerous resources on campus designed to create a rewarding university experience. A range of offices and programs are offered to assist the diverse campus's needs. In addition, there are numerous sources of support such as, the Centre for Counseling and Career Advisory and Student Affairs Directorate which help to address various student needs.
- ◉ **Care for yourself.** The foundation for a productive university career is a healthy lifestyle. Take the necessary steps for nurturance, getting adequate rest, socializing, and physical activity. Campus recreation offers several resources that students can utilize to work towards wellness. Sports, Gymnasium and Library are just a few campus facilities that strive to promote healthy practices and to educate the campus community on various topics.
- ◉ **Study Schedules.** The onslaught of activity, new environment and being away from home for a longer period of time is likely to take a toll on how you study and perform in your test, quizzes and exams. The key is to remain focused from **Day One**. Make a schedule and stick to it. Many students get overwhelmed, resulting in poor performance in the first semester which adversely affects their overall grades till the end.



  
**NUST**

**NUST Centre for Counseling  
and Career Advisory (C<sup>3</sup>A)**





Attending university is one of the first major life transitions for many young adults. Some students are excited to take on the new experiences of campus life, while others feel apprehensive about making this change. Regardless of your outlook when beginning your first semester of university, you may benefit from talking with others who have already made that transition.

## Making the Transition

Transition is anything that involves change. It can be challenging and stressful. This is true even when the changes are positive. Some of the common changes that students often experience are: new environment and relationships, greater personal freedom, added responsibility, and changing relationships etc.

## Common Stressors

The first year of university is a new and exciting adventure, but one that may come with a few challenges along the way. What are some of the most common stressors that first-year students experience?

- ⦿ **Home Sickness.** Entering university is often seen as an exciting time. However, it can also be a challenging time for those of you who may have moved away from their social support base and are learning to adapt to a new environment. Feeling homesick can involve a sense of loneliness, sadness, confusion, fear, and preoccupation with thoughts about home. It can also be similar to a grief reaction as one becomes separated from family and close friends and feels a sense of loss of people, of places, and of familiar routines.
- ⦿ **Time Management.** Now that you are in the university, timings will not be the same as in high schools or colleges. You may have Classes for six, seven or more hours a day. The rest of your time must be negotiated between homework, clubs and activities, work, socializing, and self-care. You may often feel as if there is just not enough time to do everything that needs to be done. Using a schedule and some organizational skills will help you to effectively manage your hectic and changing life.
- ⦿ **Academic Performance.** By nature, university coursework is challenging, and it can be hard to keep up with the increased academic demands. Some of you are likely to undergo pressure from both yourselves and your parents. There may be requirements for scholarships that you have not previously experienced. In order to manage the increased demands and expectations, it is important to attend classes regularly, keep up with readings and assignments, and help seek when you need it. Professors and teaching assistants

are there to assist you, and want you to succeed.

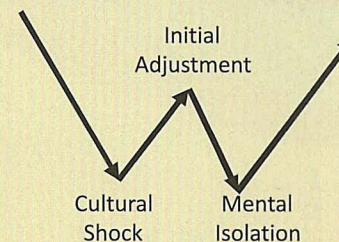
- ⦿ **Roommate Conflict.** If you are sharing a room with another student, learning to live with someone new can be one of the most challenging aspects of going to university. Different living habits are the most common source of roommate conflict (i.e. neat vs. messy; quiet vs. noisy; early-to-bed vs. up-all-night). Failure to communicate your expectations about living together can lead to tension and eventually conflict. To avoid “roommate fallout” you should communicate your needs and expectations respectfully, in first few weeks while recognizing your own habits and quirks that might affect your relationship.
- ⦿ **Body Image.** Many university students also struggle with body image. Media representations of the ideal body, messages from peers and other cultural factors shape what we perceive as “normal” or “good”. It can be fairly easy to have a clear, healthy perspective on ourselves and our bodies. This can be stressful at a time when many are trying to “fit in” with others and make new, exciting relationships. If you find yourself preoccupied with how you look or become distressed about your appearance, following the norms of simplicity and modesty will rid you of all conflict and confusion.

## The W-Curve and the First Year of University

Based upon research done with students, the W-curve is a predictable pattern of stages which any first year student can experience after arriving at a university. Initially, you may face problems in adjusting to university life but knowing about the W-curve helps you see this as part of a journey everyone goes through.

## The Honeymoon Phase

The honeymoon phase starts before students first arrive on campus. Although they may also experience some nervousness, the overall feeling is generally one of excitement and positive anticipation. The initial sense of freedom felt by a new student is often exhilarating, you will also be excited about what lies ahead and the beginning of a new phase of your



life where you suddenly feel grown up.

## Culture shock

As the newness of the university culture begins to wear off, students begin to deal with the reality of all the adjustments they are going through: sharing living areas, meeting people from different backgrounds and culture. Routine tasks that were taken for granted at home can become problematic chores and can create feelings of insecurity and frustration. The less rigid routine of university can also be unnerving.

Students are becoming self-sufficient, establishing identity, and accepting responsibility for their actions. First year students have many personal issues to deal with in addition to focusing on academic work: reworking relationships with parents, establishing new relationships with peers, dealing with conflicting values, separation and its resultant anxiety. It is a period of huge potentially positive change, but also a period of intense personal conflict and anxiety.

## Initial Adjustment

As initial adjustments are made, new students experience an upswing and a sense of well-being having successfully managed issues that have come their way. They fall into a routine as they gain confidence in their ability to handle university life. They feel they have regained control and normality in their lives. Conflict and challenges may still continue to come and go, but students are now feeling more in the swing of things.

## Mental Isolation

When students go home, they make comparisons between their