

# **Succeeding at University in New Zealand**

## **An Academic Guide for International Students**

Academic Skills Centre  
University of Canterbury

[www.academicskills.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.academicskills.canterbury.ac.nz)





# Haere Mai – Welcome

Studying in a foreign country



# Understanding New Zealand University Culture

*University culture* refers to the set of traditions, expectations and ways of doing things that make a university different from another institution or learning establishment. New Zealand university culture may be different from university cultures in other countries. Below are some common questions about university culture in New Zealand and their answers.

## ***What will my classes be like?***

Undergraduate students will have a combination of lectures, tutorials and labs depending on the subjects they are studying.

The **lecture** is the primary mode of transmitting knowledge. Lectures can range in size from 20-30 students up to several hundred, depending on the course. Students usually do not talk in lectures, unless the lecturer asks them a question or asks them for questions. Most lecturers do not appreciate students talking to one another during lectures. Make sure your phone is switched off or in silent mode during the lecture.

**Tutorials, labs** and **workshops** are opportunities for participation and discussion. Although students are not usually graded on their participation, there is an expectation that if you attend you will contribute. Be respectful of other students and your teacher, but do not be afraid to voice your opinions.

**Postgraduate lectures and seminars** usually have smaller numbers of students and you will probably be expected to participate more actively than in an undergraduate lecture.

**Attendance** is usually not monitored, although in some courses attendance may be compulsory (check with your lecturer). Typically, you are responsible for your own attendance.

Students are often surprised by the amount of **reading** they are expected to complete. It is important to keep up to date with your reading, as you will probably need it to complete your assessment. You will often be expected to complete some reading as preparation for a lecture or tutorial.

## ***What will my teachers be like?***

You will have different kinds of teachers during your time at UC. **Lecturers** are usually academic staff who conduct research and are experts in their field. **Tutors, teaching assistants (TAs)** and **lab demonstrators** are often postgraduate students completing research to become experts in their field.

ideas. If you do disagree with your lecturer, do so in a respectful and polite way, and make sure you have evidence to support your ideas.

Most lecturers can be contacted via email and have regular office hours during term time so you can meet with them in person. Keep in mind that your lecturers are busy people, but never feel too intimidated to approach them if you need to discuss something.

### ***What sorts of assessment will I have?***

Depending on their subjects, undergraduates may have some combination of the following **assessment types**: essays, reports, other written assignments, group projects, tests, exams, posters, and oral presentations. Postgraduates will often complete an extended piece of research in the form of a thesis or dissertation, either in addition to or instead of shorter assignments. Different kinds of assignments have different requirements, and these may not be the same as they are at home. The ASC can help you to understand the requirements of your assignment, or ask your lecturer or tutor for clarification.

The main method of assessing learning at university is **analysis and application of information**, not memorisation. Assessments do not simply involve listing facts you learn in your course; rather you will be expected to evaluate and apply complex ideas in different contexts. The ASC can help you to develop your critical thinking skills and understand what is expected of you in your assessment.

It is not usually acceptable to express personal opinions without supporting evidence in your academic writing. You need to remain objective and your opinions need to be supported with references to appropriate source material (see on the next page). However, you may encounter exceptions to this rule, so ask your lecturer if you are unsure.

It is your responsibility to hand in your assessments on time. No one will check up on you if you do not. If you need an extension for an assignment, you must discuss this with your lecturer *before* the due date.



# Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and Referencing

Academic integrity



## **Students with English as an Additional Language**

Studying in New Zealand can be especially challenging if English is not your first language. Meeting the minimum English language requirements for university entry (e.g. IELTS) may not necessarily mean your English is good enough for all contexts and circumstances you will encounter at university. Non-native English speakers are expected to continue improving their English while they are enrolled at university. You need to



## **Additional Resources and Support**

### **UC Student Development Team**

The Student Development Team deals with queries and concerns relating to wellbeing and success. Their advisors can help you to settle into the university environment and provide you with strategies for overcoming problems and becoming more involved in university life. They can also help you to understand university policies and processes.

Phone: (03) 364 2350

Email: [studentdevelopment@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:studentdevelopment@canterbury.ac.nz)

Website: <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/support>

### **UC Health Centre**

The Health Centre provides medical, counselling and related services to UC students.

Phone: (03) 364 2402

Website: [www.canterbury.ac.nz/healthcentre](http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/healthcentre)

### **UC Security**

General Security enquiries: (03) 364 2888

Emergencies: 0800 823 637

### **UC General Enquiries**

For all general enquiries about UC services, phone (03) 366 7001.

