BRAVE NEW WORLD

Starting life at a new university, whether at home or overseas, is a challenging experience. Alvin Ong, Assistant Manager of Student Services at the East Asia Institute of Management, offers pointers on settling in.

1. **It's the first week of school. What are some of the first things a newcomer must do?**
   The first thing to do is to familiarise yourself with your immediate surroundings, to establish some level of convenience and comfort in your daily routine. Getting to know the local transportation system and relevant routes is essential for foreign students. Other good-to-know’s would be the food centres and movie theatres near where you live or study. Attending the orientation programmes will provide you vital information, too, such as aspects of the school’s facilities, and class schedules.

2. **How do I adjust to life as a first-time student?**
   For foreign students, living and studying in a new country can teach independence, a commonly overlooked trait that’s needed to become a successful person, in my opinion. To manage the stress of newfound responsibilities and independence, foster good relationships with seniors and academic staff, as they can be good role models.

3. **How much time should I give myself to adjust to school life?**
   It usually takes about one semester, or three to four months, to settle in. Students adapt quickly due to various reasons, such as group work in class which helps acquaint students with one another, and participation in school activities and clubs.

4. **What happens after the excitement of being in a new school environment wears off?**
   After the initial adjustment period, students normally focus on their grades as they realise that school life can last up to three years. Unfortunately, there are students who try to keep reliving that initial excitement and pay less attention to their education. This is where we step in to advise students on how to strike a healthy balance between their studies and recreational time.

5. **How do I make the most of my education?**
   I would advise students to put in an hour daily for revision. It takes less effort to set aside an hour a day than to slave through material at the last minute to catch up when exams draw close.

6. **What can a student do if he/she is falling behind in his/her studies?**
   At the East Asia Institute of Management (EASB), students can approach academic staff regarding any issue, whether academic or not. Students who do not perform academically will be given additional revision classes and other learning support. Students who fail an examination will have the option of re-sitting their exams.

7. **What are some surprising factors that first-time students face?**
   Many students are caught off-guard by differences in the curriculum. Some students experience culture shock when getting to know students from around the world, while others are unprepared for the amount of discipline needed to perform well in school.

8. **Three ways to start off on the wrong foot?**
   Skipping classes, Missing classes and orientation in the first year has repercussions, as these students miss out on opportunities to make new friends and risk alienating themselves. Keeping yourself or to students from the same country. Putting yourself out there and mixing with students from various backgrounds and cultures will expose you to a diversity of thoughts and mindsets. This will help you develop values such as empathy and open-mindedness.

9. **How can I develop my social support network?**
   Join the school’s student clubs. At EASB, we have a variety of clubs, such as the Toastmaster’s Club which helps students develop English presentation and public speaking skills. You can also join clubs that allow opportunities for development and social interaction. Our Leo Club encourages students to participate in social services, and this helps them understand local culture and issues better.

10. **Any advice not usually included in the student handbook?**
    Be mindful of the strict school rules and laws in Singapore. I advise students to work harmoniously with both locals and foreigners and to treat others the way they want to be treated.