

## **Academic Success for ESL Students**

### **Acculturation Workshop**

### **What is Acculturation?**

Acculturation means to acquire the knowledge and skills to be able to adjust to the expectations and social patterns of a new cultural setting.

Whether you are starting at a new school or entering a new country (or both!), you need to learn what is expected and how to meet those expectations.

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## Barriers to your Academic Success

### What do you need to know to be academically successful?

What are the biggest challenges to your academic success at Durham College? [Write two points]

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<i>Cultural Barriers</i>	understanding the Canadian college education system and how to navigate it will help you to achieve your goals
<i>Educational Barriers</i>	learning what your professors expect and how to meet those expectations
<i>Language Barriers</i>	improving your English skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) to better understand and respond to the cultural and educational expectations

## Cultural Values

### International Cultural Values

What are some cultural values from your country? What behaviours are important in your culture? What do people in your culture value and expect from others? [Write two points]

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### Canadian Cultural Values

- **Individualism** – Boldness and originality. Individual contribution is respected.
- **Equality** – Respect towards others; all people/ideas are equally valuable
- **Informality** – A casual attitude is not equal to a lack of respect. (e.g. using a professor's first name is fine if invited to do so)
- **Punctuality** – Be on time, or let the person know ahead of the agreed time that you will be late or not able to make the appointment. Show respect for other peoples' time.

Are any of the main values in your culture different from the main Canadian values?  
Are there any values in your culture that are not listed above?

## Educational values

### International Educational Values

What is the student's role in your culture? What is the teacher's role? How are student questions handled? How are teaching and learning connected? How is evaluation conducted (instructor → student, student → instructor)? What are the students' expectations of the class? What are the instructor's expectations of the students? [Write three points]

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What do you know about Canadian educational values? [Write two points]

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What will be challenging for you in adjusting to the Canadian college education system? [Write two points]

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*The best way to understand the Canadian college education system is to understand what your professors will expect from you.*

*Understanding and meeting these expectations will ensure your success at Durham College.*

## Culture Shock

Do you think you will experience culture shock? What will happen to you?  
When will the ‘shock’ end?

### What is Culture Shock?

We all believe our own cultural values and behaviours to be the right way – this is called ethnocentrism. When entering a new culture, we all experience a loss of familiar things and people. This results in a feeling of isolation or diminished self-importance. Suddenly, the way of communicating and interacting with others is unknown or different from what you have always known.

### How to Recognize Culture Shock

- Are you eating more than usual (or less) – weight gain/loss?
- Have you become less social than you used to be?
- Do you become angry or frustrated more than before, or more easily than before?
- Do you often complain about the host country/culture?
- Do you sleep more than before?

### Stages of Culture Shock

<i>The Honeymoon Stage</i>	Everything about the new culture is interesting and charming
<i>The Negotiation Stage</i>	If I accept parts of the new culture, then I must be losing cultural parts of myself. Who am I?
<i>The Acceptance Stage</i>	A new cultural identity emerges (comfort in both cultures)
<i>Reverse Culture Shock</i>	Re-entry into own culture raises internal questions about your new identity (new ideas and behaviours do not fit)

### Coping With Culture Shock

- Expect it, recognize it, and understand it – it can be mild or strong
- Remember the problem is mostly from your state of mind (from yourself, not your surroundings)
- Remember that while it is difficult, it is a valuable life experience – you can learn a lot about yourself, as well as new ways of thinking
- Look for the best things about your situation, not the worst – keep a positive attitude
- Talk to people about your experiences
- Respond thoughtfully rather than react quickly to situations – consider that the conflict may be related to your culture shock
- Be open-minded and flexible
- Learn as much as you can about the new culture
- Remember, it will get better soon. When? Soon.

## Canadian College Professors' Expectations

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In Canadian college, the professors' goal is to expose you to content and experiences that are integral to your success in your selected field. They strive to prepare you with the knowledge and skills you will need in the workforce.

More specifically, professors expect you to do the following:

- Be responsible for your own learning – follow up on any missed work, ask questions, be focused and engaged
- Be able to work well in groups and independently
- Be able to communicate well in written and spoken English (refer to email handout)
- Have strong academic integrity – properly cite your writing – avoid plagiarism, maintain academic honesty – cheating is not acceptable and can result in failure
- Be active and interactive in the class – get involved in discussions, show interest, and contribute to the class
- Ask questions when you do not understand
- Develop your critical thinking and problem solving skills – you must develop and use your ability to analyze and evaluate processes and content, and your ability to use independent and original ideas to actively seek solutions
- Be able give presentations to express what you have learned – learn to prepare and deliver oral presentations to groups of people
- Understand that the professor is your partner in the learning process and is your guide to the course content
- Be successful in your course and your program – grading is based on class participation, group and individual assignments, and tests and examinations (you will need to demonstrate your knowledge with effective English communication skills)
- Be respectful towards professors and classmates equally – people in a respectful learning environment are more likely to excel and maximize their educational experience

*As you adjust to your new life in Canada, you may need to behave in ways that challenge your cultural values. This change in your normal way of thinking or behaving may challenge your core values – When your behaviours conflict with your values, **culture shock** can be the result.*

## Class Participation

Now that you understand **what** you should do in class, here is some information on **how** to improve your success in class.

### What is class participation? [Write two points]

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### Why is participation important in college?

Participation creates a more active learning process by checking understanding and giving feedback to the professor.

### How can you improve your class participation?

<p><b><i>Build a connection with professors and classmates</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- be respectful</li> <li>- ask questions</li> <li>- be positive</li> <li>- show interest</li> <li>- listen well</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Ask questions when you don't understand</i></b></p> <p>It's your responsibility to speak up if you do not understand – ask the professor or your classmates</p>	<p><b><i>Be active when listening</i></b></p> <p>Ask questions to clarify what is being said, repeat back what you understand, use body language to show understanding or confusion</p>	<p><b><i>Remember why you are here</i></b></p> <p>Don't allow your language ability stop you. Your English will get better every day.</p>
<p><b><i>Maintain a positive attitude</i></b></p>		<p><b><i>Speak loudly and confidently</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Mistakes are OK</i></b> Learn from them!</p>

## Strengthening your class participation outside of class

### 1. Previewing (reading) a textbook chapter before the class

In the first weeks of classes, many students are shocked by the difficulty of understanding professors during lectures. Experience will help, and within three weeks, you will notice a big improvement. One way to help yourself is to preview your textbook about a topic before the class, so you will be prepared to listen to topic that you have already read about. You can preview a chapter of your textbook by following a few simple steps. (See page 11 about “Previewing a Textbook Chapter”)

## 2. Improving your English speaking skills

- Write a journal – this gives you practice in forming your ideas into sentences and then read it out loud
- Find opportunities to use your English with classmates, instructors, or friends
- Join the Conversation Circle at SALS (SSB 204).
- Balance your cultural circle of friends – your English will not improve if you spend most of your time speaking in your native language
- Learn new vocabulary and then use it in your speaking
- Improve your pronunciation to avoid miscommunication
- Visit the ESL Specialist at SALS (SSB 204) for more ideas to improve your English

## 3. Improving your writing

- Learn your common errors (grammar, vocabulary, punctuation) and how to correct them in your writing
- Improve your vocabulary – start with academic English words
- Get feedback about your writing (friends, professors, SALS)
- Learn to proofread your work (See pages 12 and 13 about “Proofreading Your Paper”)

## 4. Balance your study and play

- a. Time management will help you to achieve a balance

<b>Monday to Sunday = 168 hours</b>	
Travel time	10 hours per week
Class time	21 hours per week
Homework/Study	21 hours per week
Sleep & Meals	70 hours per week
Part-time job	20 hours per week
Hobby/Interest	7 hours per week
Socializing/Clubs:	11 hours per week
Total: 160 hours with 8 hours of flexible time	

## 5. Build a Support Network

- Join or form a study group. Study groups are a great way to check your understanding of course content and readings. When explaining things to the group it helps you to clarify your own understanding. Your responsibility is to the group not just to yourself.
- Join a sport or club to follow an interest and make friends.



## Group Work

*In many of your courses, you will be required to work in groups with other students to complete course assignments and succeed in your program.*

### **Why is group work used in college classes?**

- It is part of the Canadian education system and your professors will require it.
- It is an opportunity to learn the skills for being part of a successful team.
- It is a Canadian business practice required in the workplace.
- Sharing different skills and experiences of your group. You can learn from your group members, and they can learn from you.

### **What are your responsibilities in group work?** [Write two points]

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### **Your responsibilities:**

- Preview (read before required) your textbook and participate in all class activities
- Follow the group work guidelines from your professor
- Contribute to discussions
- Ask questions if you do not understand
- Attend all meetings and arrive on time
- Do your part of the work (research and reference your work carefully, then edit and proofread carefully)
- Ask for feedback from your group, or visit the SALS Centre with your final copy for feedback
- Complete your part of the work on time
- Be prepared to present your part if required – practice with your group or visit the ESL Specialist for feedback

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## The Toolkit

### Previewing a Textbook Chapter

Previewing, or pre-reading, your textbook chapters before a class is one way to help prepare yourself for the information you will learn about during your class. This is an advantage because you will already have some ideas about the topic.

**You can preview a chapter in your textbook by following these steps:**

#### **Step 1: Title**

Read the chapter title and think about what it means. The title often summarizes what the chapter is about.

#### **Step 2: Subtitle/Headings/Subheadings**

A subtitle is a short summary appearing under or next to the title. Subheadings are breakdowns of main headings and they usually reveal the important points related to the major heading. A large font or bold print often stands out as a visual aid for the reader. Read the subtitles, headings and subheadings. They reveal the author's organization of material as well as key phrases which reveal the basic content.

#### **Step 3: Introduction and Conclusion**

By reading the first two or three paragraphs, you will be introduced to the subject and purpose of the article or chapter. In the last few paragraphs, the writer will present conclusions or a summary. Now that you know the important points in the article, you will pay more attention to them as you read. The introduction and conclusion can give you a quick overview of what the entire article or chapter is about.

#### **Step 4: Pictures, Charts, Graphs or Illustrations**

Look carefully at any of these visuals that may be together with the text. Looking at such aids before you read puts your mind into the correct frame of reference. Also note any keywords which may be used to describe the pictures - they will usually refer to the main points.

#### **Step 5: Summary or Discussion Questions**

Check for a summary or set of questions at the end of the chapter. Read the questions and try to predict the answers. By now, you should have a good overview of what you are about to read.

## Proofreading Your Paper

When reading through your completed paper, it is very easy to miss errors. This document will help you to learn how to proofread more effectively and find more of your errors.

**Before you proofread your work for grammar and punctuation errors, you should look at your paper as a complete document in terms of the following areas:**

### Content

- Have you done everything the assignment requires?
- Are the claims you make accurate and consistent?
- If it is required to do so, does your paper make an argument?
- Is the argument complete?
- Have you supported each point with adequate evidence?
- Is all of the information in your paper relevant to the assignment and/or your overall writing goal?

### Overall structure

- Does your paper have an appropriate introduction and conclusion?
- Is your thesis clearly stated in your introduction?
- Is it clear how each paragraph in the body of your paper is related to your thesis?
- Are the paragraphs arranged in a logical sequence?
- Have you made clear transitions between paragraphs?

### Structure within paragraphs

- Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence?
- Does each paragraph stick to one main idea?
- Are there any extraneous or missing sentences in any of your paragraphs?

### Clarity

- Have you defined any important terms that might be unclear to your reader?
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear?
- Is it clear what each pronoun (he, she, it, they, which, who, this, etc.) refers to?
- Have you chosen the proper words to express your ideas? Avoid using words you find in the thesaurus that are not part of your normal vocabulary; you may misuse them.

### Style

- Have you used an appropriate tone (formal, informal, persuasive, etc.)?
- Is your use of gendered language (male and female pronouns like "he" or "she," words like "fireman" that contain "man," appropriate)?
- Have you varied the length and structure of your sentences?
- Have you limited the use of the passive voice in your writing?
- Have you limited the use of unnecessary phrases like "there is," "there are," "due to the fact that," etc.?

### Citations

- Have you appropriately cited quotes, paraphrases, and ideas you got from sources?
- Are your citations in the correct format (APA, MLA, etc.)?

## Proofreading Tips and Strategies

- **Find out what errors you typically make.** Review instructors' comments about your writing and/or review your paper with a writing tutor.
- **Learn how to fix those errors.** Talk with your instructor and/or with a writing tutor to understand how to fix the errors.
- **Give yourself enough time to proofread.** To proofread your paper properly, you will need to read it several times – each time with a different purpose.
- **Each time you proofread your paper, select a different focus.** If you know you have trouble with a specific grammar point, such as subject-verb agreement (He likeses it. They likes it.), then proofread your paper for that one point. Yes! You will need to proofread several times for different issues.
- **Are your sentences clear and easy to read?** When a sentence does not flow well as you read, consider changing it. If you, as the writer, have difficulty reading it, then the reader will almost certainly have trouble with it as well.

*Consider the writing problems you have (or might have) and try the following strategies:*

### General Strategies:

<b>Take a break</b>	When you finishing the paper, take a break before proofreading it. While proofreading, take short breaks and only read for short blocks of time.
<b>Read aloud</b>	Some students can “hear” their errors even when they cannot see them. You might consider recording yourself while reading and then listen to the recording to find your errors. Read it to a friend.
<b>Check for your common errors</b>	Each time you read a section of your paper, choose only one of your common errors to search for. Check carefully and watch for the small details. Your skill will improve with practice.
<b>Use a cover as you read</b>	This will help you focus on your writing line by line.
<b>Read slowly</b>	This will help you focus on each word.
<b>Read backwards</b>	Start at the end of your paper and read sentence by sentence to search for grammar errors. Then start at the end again, word by word, to look for spelling mistakes.

#### References

Adapted from The Purdue University Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> and The Writing Centre at the University of North Carolina at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>

## The Ins and Outs of your Email Inbox and Outbox

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Email has become an invaluable communication tool in most academic and professional settings. The tone, format, length, and content of the email message must suit the intended audience and the purpose of the communication. The following guidelines can help you communicate your email message clearly and effectively.

- **Use language that is professional and appropriate.** Unlike in a face-to-face conversation where body language and tone of voice can help convey the intended meaning, the tone in an email message is conveyed through the choice of vocabulary and format of the message.
- **Consider your audience.** Most professors and other professionals prefer a formal tone, so avoid the use of slang, MSN language, contractions, too many abbreviations, and emoticons.
- **Address the recipient formally** unless you are certain informality is acceptable.
- **Include a clear, meaningful subject line.** If the recipient knows briefly what the email is about, he/she is more likely to read it and respond to it.
- **Use traditional, easy to read typefaces** such as Times New Roman and Garamond. Avoid typing in UPPERCASE as it can be interpreted as shouting. *Italics* can add emphasis, but should be used sparingly. Using **bold** too frequently can be seen as aggressive.
- **Keep emails relatively short and to the point.** Avoid overly long sentences and dense paragraphs. They are harder to follow in electronic format. Readers who have to scroll down to get the entire message may find it too time consuming. Try to include only one topic in an email.
- **Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.** The reader is likely to treat your message or request more seriously if you can show that you have taken the time to make it error free.
- **Remember that emails may be read by more than just the intended recipient.** Your email might be forwarded to others or become part of an email chain. Email is a more permanent record of a conversation than a face-to-face meeting. Avoid sending sensitive or personal information via email since it is not a secure form of communication.
- **Be patient when waiting for a reply.** Some people check their emails infrequently.
- **Reply to emails that require a reply.** Answer all questions that were asked of you and try to anticipate follow-up questions. Sign your name and provide contact information.
- **Double-check the content and tone of your message before sending it.** Check the 'To' line to make sure you haven't accidentally included someone other than the intended recipient(s). Re-read your email one final time, and imagine what your reaction might be if you received it. Make changes if necessary.

### References

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