<insert faculty cover sheet / student declaration form here>

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| **Case Study Report**  **Jun**  **Class:**  **Teacher:**  **Due Date:**  **Name / Student Number:** |

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## Abstract

International students studying at university in Australia often suffer from culture shock and difficulties in adjusting to what is often for them a very new academic environment. The issue of culture shock and adjustment is examined by looking at the case of Jun, a student from China who is experiencing difficulties both with academic and cultural adjustment in the first year of his study in Australia. Three possible solutions are put forward and evaluated, and one chosen as the best: that he seek help both regarding his studies and his difficulties in adjusting. Some conclusions and recommendations are then given relating to the wider issue, including the importance and impact of differences in learning styles, particularly on students of an Asian background, and the need for increased clarification of student expectations and understandings prior to arrival in the destination country.

## Introduction:

Culture shock is a phenomenon that can affect to a lesser or greater degree any traveller to a new or foreign country or cultural environment. Students studying overseas are no exception to this rule, and of all the problems that international students face, culture shock can be one of the most difficult and challenging. Culture shock can occur whether the person is aware of it or not, and manifests in particular stages known as the stages of adjustment. These stages include the imagining stage, the arrival stage, the participation stage, the culture shock stage, the real adjustment stage, and, ultimately, the re-entry stage. Culture shock is a psychological reaction to the unknown rules and cultural mores of a new social environment, and can manifest itself in mental as well as physiological symptoms. Difficulties that compound and typically trigger culture shock in international students include the new environment and how to navigate in that new environment, a different academic culture, with perhaps less formality in some areas - such as relationship to teachers - and more in others, as well as in changes in food, accommodation style and weather. This case study will explore the issue of the effect of culture on international students by looking at the case of Jun, a bachelor degree student from China who came to Australia with the aim of completing a course in international trade.  While Jun was happy to be in Australia at first, he has found the accumulative build-up of challenges difficult, and as a result is considering returning to his home country. The first section of the report will give a statement of the problem. This will be followed by a suggestion of possible solutions, an evaluation of those solutions, and a choice and justification of the best solution. In the final section some conclusions and recommendations will be put forward.

## Statement of problem:

Definition:Jun, an international student from China, was keen to study for an International Trade degree in Australia. Although excited to be in Australia at first, he now misses home increasingly. His studies have not been as successful as he would have liked. He is faced with a lot of reading to do for his study, but is not sure how to finish his assignments. At the end of his first semester he passed three of his four subjects, but failed the fourth subject. Everything feels difficult and although he knows his parents want him to complete his studies in Australia, he is considering quitting and going back home.

Analysis:Although during the first few weeks Jun felt excited and enjoyed experiencing the different environment of Australia, his energy levels have dropped and he is missing the food and environment of home, as well as his family and friends. In China, his mother always cooked for the family and he did not have to worry about organising food, accommodation, or other needs such as clothes washing for himself. Lately his energy levels have been dropping. His language skills, while seeming to progress quite well in the first few months of being in Australia, seemed to have stopped progressing also, and he now sometimes feels he is going backwards. He is not doing well in his assignments, but is unsure of what he is doing wrong and lacks the confidence to ask the teacher directly.

## Possible solutions

* He could continue as he has been doing and hope that the situation will improve.
* He could quit his course and return home to China.
* He could seek help both regarding his studies and his difficulties in adjusting.

## Evaluation of possible solutions

## Solution 1 - He could continue as he has been doing and hope that the situation will improve.

**Advantages:** He would not have to expend energy in changing his routine. It is likely that he is in the 4th, or 'culture shock' stage of adjustment, and does not realise that the next stage, 'real adjustment' ,will probably occur quite soon. If he does nothing, therefore, there is a good chance things will improve soon.

**Disadvantages:** The next stage of adjustment may not happen for some time and Jun's health and mental state may deteriorate further, becoming a more serious problem.

## Solution 2 - He could quit his course and return home to China.

**Advantages:** He would be with, and enjoy the support of his family and friends again. He will be able to eat food he is used to again and his energy will soon return.

**Disadvantages:** He will always know that he quit, and may regret his decision later in life.

## Solution 3- He could seek help both regarding his studies and his difficulties in adjusting.

**Advantages:** He may be able to find some good study guidance from the university's student help centre. He may find advisors who are aware of the difficulties for international students, and particularly Chinese students, and receive some good advice about understanding the culture in Australia as well about the effects and stages of culture shock.

**Disadvantages:** If it is difficult to find someone to give him advice, he may feel disheartened. Similarly, if the advice he receives is not helpful, or the advisor does not understand the situation of international student, he may feel worse than before.

## Choice of Solution:

**Solution 3.** Seeking help about his studies and his difficulties in adjusting to the new environment, is the best of the three possible solutions.

**Justification:** Most universities in Australia have well structured student help facilities, both in the area of learning and academic skills and in the area of student counselling services.  The large number of international students studying in Australian universities likewise means that most universities ensure that there support staff with knowledge of of the needs and unique problems of international students are available. The academic staff may be able to help Jun understand the main expectations Australian lecturers have in terms of their written assignments. A counsellor may likewise help Jun understand that the 'symptoms' he is experiencing are normal, and usually occur at their most severest just prior to the 'real adjustment' stage, the simple knowledge of which may already take the edge of his current distress. Finally, if Jun left before doing his best to seek help, he  may feel that he has failed, a burden he may continue to carry as a negative experience.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Although international students often think carefully when deciding on which country and which institution they wish to study at, they are in fact often not as well prepared for the experience of being an international student as they may think. While giving careful thought to the kind of institution they would like to study at and the kind of degree they would like to study for, often less thought is given to the possible differences in culture and academic environment they will experience, and how these differences may impact on their aim of a successful overseas studying experience. In many Asian cultures for example, it is up to the teacher to ensure that students learn and that a proper understanding has been obtained by the student. Students don't expect to have to ask questions if they don't understand. Material is likewise presented for rote learning in a way that is often quite different from the more independent style of study that western students are used to wherein critical thinking and ability to engage in independent analysis are valued. Additional efforts on the parts of both the university and incoming students is recommended to clarify what is expected of international students as is an increasingly appropriate acknowledgement of the unique difficulties of international students on the part of Australian universities. If more students such as Jun are clearer about the difficulties they may encounter while studying in Australia, both in terms of cultures shock and in terms of the structure and expectations of the environment they are entering, and more universities are equipped to provide accessible and relevant support, the richer and more rewarding the experience of international students choosing to study in Australia will be

## References