

# THRIVING ROOM: EXPLORING WHERE, WHY AND HOW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THRIVE

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For many international students studying abroad can be a challenging experience. During their time studying in a foreign country international students may have difficulties with culture shock, lack of English language proficiency, social isolation, psychological distress, unmet expectations and academic pressures. Some international students however revel in the challenges and thrive in their new surroundings. This research used qualitative inquiry techniques to uncover which factors may set thriving students apart from their peers who are finding it more difficult to adapt to their new universities and ways of life. 10-12 international students who felt that they were thriving participated in semi-structured interviews which delved into their personalised experience of studying abroad. The data from the interviews was thematically analysed using inductive and deductive coding and various themes were identified for example, social connectedness, a sense of belonging, exploring and opportunities for personal growth. This presentation explores the emerging themes from the perspective of the day to day lived experience of these thriving international students and highlights the value and impact of factors, including spaces and places, that these students believe are significant in supporting their learning and social interaction, and indeed to their “thriving”.