

Social media is a fact of life for many people, influencing different aspects of life. Studies by researchers at Kent University, USA show that students who use it for this purpose see it as a 'coping mechanism' for homesickness, particularly Facebook and Skype. In another study by University of Sydney, people studying abroad in Australia said that they used these applications for 'comfort and ultimately reduced their stress levels as a result Social media can, however, prove to be a distracting influence on students. However, another study published by ScienceDirect has shown that students who use digital media within two hours of going to bed can become sleepless, with overall reduced sleeping times than those who didn't. There are many ways that social media can help new students settle in. International students use social media for 'social adaptation', a factor that has a huge impact on wellbeing and happiness for those who might be dealing with culture shock and unfamiliar surroundings. The trouble with being connected to what is going on all the time is that it can be hard to press the 'off switch'. Students who are studying abroad may have used Facebook or other channels to find out more about their university, keep up with student societies, or even find information in their native language. This suggests that social networking sites can be really helpful for maintaining friendships in day-to-day life. Students might already be stressed, thinking about assignments, or looking for a distraction, and the entertainment social media brings is very tempting. While social sites can be used in a number of positive ways, they can also come with unintended consequences when studying abroad. Students are already under pressure to succeed, but now with the added exposure social media brings, they have to be conscious of what their profile 'says' about them at all times. This can affect sleep patterns.