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JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

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# JCUMSA

## WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA GUIDE 2016 - 2017 EDITION

For international students  
By international students

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JCUMSA International Student  
Representative

# Welcome to JCU!

Hello and Welcome!

I would like to start off by wishing you all huge congratulations on being accepted into the medicine program here at James Cook University! That in itself is a huge accomplishment that you all should be incredibly proud of.

The following booklet is a guide to help ease your transition into medical school at JCU as well as life in sunny Townsville.

Please read through the following guide that was created by students for students. It is important to note that since it was created by students, it is not an official document/policy from the School of Medicine. However, we do think that it provides many helpful tips to help prepare you for the big move to Australia.

JCU has many exciting opportunities awaiting you as you embark on your MBBS journey. Some special things to note for this year is the inaugural JCU MBBS Mentor Program for International Students (JCU MMPIS) beginning, as well as AMSA convention happening right here in Townsville!

If after reading this guide you have any questions/comments, please do not hesitate to contact me directly with your concerns.

I look forward to meeting each and every one of you very soon in the first week and am excited to be your International Representative for this year.

Sincerely,

Julie Graham

JCUMSA International Representative 2016-2017

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# Before arriving

- ★ Ensure that you complete all your necessary forms for the university and Australian government. This includes making sure your visa is approved and received, as well as other mandatory requirements that are specific for the medical school. It is important that you bring these with you to Australia.
- ★ Helpful hint - It is very important to have a few photocopies of all of your important information. A great suggestion is to have a folder with documents at home as well as a folder with you in Australia. This way you can always produce a copy if need be. Documents to keep in the folder? Info about your visa, contact phone numbers, enrollment paperwork and offer letter, loan info, etc...
- ★ Make sure to start the process of the visa and medical check as soon as you can because sometimes delays can happen. The longer you put off applying, the higher the possibility that your student visa does not arrive in time for your flight to Australia. Note -most are electronic visas now where they are electronically on your passport. Make sure you are aware what yours is and when it expires.
- ★ One important thing to note - Some students may be required to write supplementary exams based on their academic performance in the semester. These are held in Townsville on the weekend prior to SP2 (Midyear supps) and in mid December (EOY supps). Students need to not be jetlagged when attempting these exams. Please plan your flights accordingly if you are offered supplementary exams (Note- this will be explained to you in the orientation week. Additional information can be obtained from academic advisers for the School of Medicine).

# Background on Townsville

Townsville is located in far North Queensland, Australia. It is approximately 1300km north of Brisbane. It has a very relaxed, country feel. The population is around 175000 people including a large military and student population. For students coming from large urban cities, it may be a slight adjustment to the more relaxed, smaller-town feeling. For others, Townsville may be a lot bigger than your hometown!

## Packing

### CLIMATE

Summer: 28+ (Celsius) days and some rainy-humid conditions (February –May and Mid October to November) Winter: 25+ days and dry (June-Mid October)  
Note - it can be very humid at times-make sure to plan accordingly

### CLOTHING

Considering the temperatures above, look to pack for summer and/or spring depending on where you are coming from. Clothes are fairly expensive in Australia and selection is at a minimum. That being said, all the necessities are available for easy purchase at a shopping center 5 mins drive from campus so no need to fret!

# Packing

## TIPS:

1. Pack a couple hoodies/sweaters- sometimes the air conditioning in the study rooms at JCU may be too high and you may get chilly!
2. Pack a raincoat for the rainy season, which usually happens between February and April (trust me, you will learn to embrace the rain)
3. For the students coming from a cold winter, think about packing/ wearing a jacket that will be warm enough in the airport when you leave/arrive. Do not bother with a large winter jacket as it WILL NOT go to use. In terms of jackets itself, look to pack a thin jacket if any (such as a spring windbreaker).
4. Look to invest in a pair of flip-flops (thongs, slippers, or sandals). These are a preferred option in the Townsville heat. However, you will need a pair of running shoes/closed in shoes as well for study in the anatomy lab.
5. Online shopping for clothes will become your best friend.
6. **CLINICAL CLOTHING** In terms of pre-clinical years (1-3), you will need a few clothing options for clinical skills sessions which occur every few weeks. Look to pack a good pair of **ENCLOSED** dress shoes. Your clinical dress wardrobe will continue to grow as you progress into 4th year and beyond as it does become standard dress attire. Examples of clinical dress include: dress shirts, dress pants, longer professional skirts, polo shirts, etc. Note- there is a guide online from the school that is the official accepted JCU dress attire for medicine- familiarize yourself with this.

# Food

1. Bring your favourite coffee or tea with you– these items are very expensive here
2. Canadians – Bring your maple syrup, Timmy's coffee or tea, Starbucks, Cheerios, Bagels (have yet to locate them in Townsville), graham crackers, maple cookies, ketchup and other potato chip flavours (there are very different flavours here in Australia)
3. Bring your Thanksgiving and other holiday tradition recipes with you. This way, you can have a feast with your new friends and show Aussies your wonderful traditions. Note- Whatever you decide to bring over, make sure that you check/declare it at the borders and customs.
4. Chewing gum is a good thing to pack for familiar home flavours!
5. Note that there is a Woolworths grocery store right beside the medicine building. As well, there are a few other stores close by to get all your needed food.
6. Note- There are great markets on Sundays (early in the morning till 11) where you can buy all your fresh fruits and veggies at great prices!! One large market near campus is the Willows market, which is open on Sunday in the parking lot of the Willows Shopping Centre (mall).
7. There are a few coffee places close to the medicine buildings but they unfortunately close around 4pm. Hint-bring a thermos/tumbler with you to class so you can bring coffee from home as well and save \$\$

# Textbooks

- ★ Similar to clothing, look online for your textbooks as you may be able to find them at a discounted price compared to the JCU book store.
- ★ Another option is waiting for older year students to sell their books through the JCUMSA used book sale, which usually occurs early in first semester.
- ★ Another option if you do not mind reading online is to try and find versions online.

# Electronics

Australia runs on 240v, so there is a large possibility that your personalized electronics may not work here (even with a converter). For those worried about their laptops and/or cell phones, most of them are compatible with 240v.

However to ensure they work, please read the associated power adaptor for your electronic device. Note - hair straighteners are temperamental here - I have heard from several friends that their device fried here on single use.

TIPS: For those looking to purchase a cell phone in Townsville, I would suggest against it simply due to the cost involved. I would suggest trying to purchase an UNLOCKED phone which would allow you to use the phone on the Australian networks. For those looking to bring their cell phone with them to Townsville, please ensure that you UNLOCK your cell phone because if it is not unlocked you will either A) be unable to use it or B) Be able to use it, but get charged very expensive roaming fees.

If you decide to purchase a phone in Australia, shop around to find the best deals. There is a shopping mall close to campus where there are multiple providers you can look at.

PHONES There are several different phone providers located in Townsville and based on what plan you are interested in getting, there may be a suitable option for you.

# Staying in contact

- ★ Skype will become your new best friend for contacting your parents, friends, and family (Free; requires internet)
- ★ If you are a fan of talking on the phone, look for the magic jack app as it allows for free calls to North America (Free; requires internet)
- ★ If you are a fan of texting, look for the whats app/viber app because it allows for communication around the world (\$ nominal fee; requires internet)
- ★ iMessage, Android Equivalent to iMessage, BBM, and e-mail are other options you can utilize

# Personal items

1. Stock up on your favourite stick deodorant at home (as it is hard to find similar brands here in Australia)
2. Makeup is +++expensive
3. Shampoo and conditioner are also expensive, so once again try bringing some over each time you fly back. Note- remember to wrap your liquids when you pack so they do not damage your luggage

# To Buy in Australia

## YOU CAN PURCHASE HOUSEWARES/ELECTRONICS

First off, there is no IKEA located in Townsville. From past students, we recommend buying the following:

- Iron
- Blow Dryer
- Flat Iron
- Electric Clippers/Shaver
- Drying Racks (Most houses DO NOT come with dryers)
- Sturdy Desk
- Comfortable office chair
- Printer

Where can I buy some of these items?

- ★ Housewares and electronic stores: Big W, Woolsworth, Harvey Norman, JBHIFI, Target, K-Mart
- ★ Office Supplies: Big W, Woolsworth, Target, K-Mart
- ★ There are a number of second hand stores and opportunity shops that you can purchase quality housewares and other items at bargain prices. Opportunity shops are generally shops where your purchase is put forward to a charity: Salvos, Vinnies, Lifeline, Endeavour Foundation.
- ★ Check your accommodation first before buying any of these items as some may have things left over from previous students which may save you buying duplicates

# Living in Townsville

## ACCOMODATION

For on campus, check out the university JCU housing website (<https://www.jcu.edu.au/accommodation>). Note that residence in Australia is referred to as “living on college.” Typically this option fills up fast, so if you are planning to stay there get your application in ASAP.

**TIPS:** Unlike Canadian universities, residence student accommodation at JCU goes by semester increments. Therefore it is possible to move on or off residence after first semester depending on your preferences. Please note that opportunities to move into college may appear again after a couple weeks into the semester.

Make sure to research the residence colleges carefully beforehand as some come with meal plans while others do not. Also, be sure to view the pictures of the colleges/locations before ranking your preferences.

For off campus, the suburbs close to the university are Douglas and Annandale. Look at the JCU off campus forum for possible shared housing and/or accommodations. Also look for messages from older year students looking for roommates. Some other possible sites to look at are: [realestate.com.au](http://realestate.com.au) or [domain.com.au](http://domain.com.au).

(Note - many students have had great success with simply finding it on their own without the use of an agent simply by looking online)

# Living in Townsville

Note: Real estate agents are sometimes not as helpful as you would like. Depending on when you look, finding a place may possibly take up to a month. Rent amounts vary from as low as \$90 per WEEK to possibly as high as \$200 per week. The amounts vary depending on location, electricity, water, internet and furnished or unfurnished. Also be aware of where you are living and if you are trying to secure a place before you arrive in Townsville, try to receive as much information as you can. For example, try to get pictures of where you will be living as well as distance to and from campus.

Be aware that some properties in Townsville operate without a lease agreement, so be knowledgeable of the rental agreement you have signed with the landlord. TIP: If this is your first time being in Townsville, I would suggest finding a place with an air conditioning unit as the heat can make it hard to concentrate if you are not acclimatized to the weather.

## Food

Woolworths and Coles are your main options in terms of grocery shopping. Coles is located at Stocklands shopping center, while a new Woolworths (opened 2013) operates on campus right beside the medicine buildings. Another nearby Woolworths is located in the Stockland Shopping Centre.

Remember to also note the Farmers Markets that happen on Sundays. If you need information regarding how to get there, please just ask or you can also google it online

# Transport

In terms of going to and from class, many options are available. The most popular option for international students have been walking/biking. There are several shops to purchase bicycles such as Toys R Us, Anaconda, K-Mart etc. Also there are various places where students can purchase great used bikes. Please see the below link for information regarding cycling at JCU, such as the shower facilities offered, where to park your bike, info about the on-campus mechanics, the shared bike program, cycle paths, and also where to purchase used bikes.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/tropeco-sustainability-in-action/sustainable-campuses/sustainable-transport/bicycle-travel-at-jcu>

Other common methods of transportation that students use are walking, busing, driving, and skateboarding. However, take note that the bus schedule does not run as frequently as some bus schedules in urban cities, nor do they tend to run as late.

In terms of driving and parking, there are times of rush hour in Townsville typical of a normal city; however, most of the time traffic is pretty minimal (driving is on the opposite or same side depending on where you are from- Australians drive on the left). In terms of parking, there are areas of paid and free parking around JCU campus, but free parking areas usually fill up early morning. Parking passes/permits can be purchased on campus from the bookshop-you will need to purchase these early each year.

# Jobs

When applying for jobs be aware of the amount of hours you are allowed to work based on your student VISA. In terms of job opportunities, it is fairly difficult to find a job in Townsville as per previous students. However, it is not impossible. There are also opportunities to work on campus, so if this is something that may interest you, keep an eye out on the JCU career hub online.

# Flights Domestic

There are several flights into Townsville depending on where you are flying in from. As Townsville is not a major city, many major international flights will fly into the larger cities such as Sydney and Brisbane and then from here, you will be able to connect up to Townsville on a smaller flight. Some of the airlines that travel to Townsville include Virgin Australia, Qantas, and Jetstar. When booking your ticket back home, remember to add in the flight from Townsville to your Australian destination as many international flight packages do NOT include the Townsville flight. The approx. ride from the airport to campus is about 15-20 mins.

Note - every Friday Jetstar has a sale online and you can score some pretty great deals. Keep an eye out on all airlines for seat sales and promotions as these happen quite frequently.

# Flights International

In terms of booking flights back home, be sure you are aware of the exam schedule before any booking as the university will not reschedule your exams due to a flight.

If you book a ticket with a long layover, here are some tips for each airport:

**Sydney:** Sydney's airport provides several fast food eating options (during operating hours) and has their subway run directly under it. Therefore, if you are keen on taking in the city before your flight, you can take the subway into the city and go exploring. Note the subway fare is slightly pricey. There is free wifi available to all passengers with "a limit." If you plan on sleeping over in Sydney's airport, the airport does close and any passengers waiting in the airport are either asked to leave or be placed in a closed-off area with a few chairs to spend the night. Typically, this area becomes full as many other passengers decide to stay over and sometimes end up sleeping on the floor as the chairs fill up quickly.

**Brisbane:** Brisbane airport also provides several places for food and drink (during operating hours) and also has a public transport system built into it for easy access to the surrounding areas. So once again, if your delay occurs during the day, it is possible to take in a little bit of the city. If you plan on sleeping over in Brisbane airport, take note: there are plenty of areas for passengers to sleep as the airport does not close. However, in terms of Wi Fi there is a 3 hour limit for a 24 period. Therefore, once you hit your 3 hour limit, you are unable to gain internet access for 24 hours, so plan accordingly.

**Cairns:** Cairns airport also possesses a couple places for food and drink. However, there is no free Wi Fi in Cairns airport.

# Keeping fit?

JCU has a gym. For membership price, please see online as prices do change yearly. There are also several private gyms, recreational centers and outdoor fitness areas available nearby for individuals.

Sports: There are intramural sports hosted by JCU Sports, as well as interfaculty and varsity sports. Depending on interest level and year, the sports available may vary. Typical ones offered include: basketball, rugby, soccer, netball and beach volleyball. If you live on campus you may consider joining the Fisher Shield sports teams, where each residence competes against one another to see who is the best! There are also several local sports clubs catering to various sports in Townsville.

# Any other questions?

Please note - I encourage everyone to join the Facebook group below for an online version of this handbook. As well, this is a great place where you can get any and all questions answered by upper year mentors!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1091312430889945/>

Or you can find this group by searching on facebook:  
JCU MBBS Mentor Program For International Students (JCU MMPIS)

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to email me as I am more than happy to answer any and all questions. If I am unable to do so, I will help direct your question to an individual that can.

Finally, there are several clubs that run out of the School of Medicine as well as JCU and I encourage each one of you to join a club and meet new people! Enjoy your year!



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