

AUT

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

NEW ZEALAND



Emma's Story

A University Partner Success Story

Q1. Tell us about yourself

My name is Emma Hoa Binh Le, and I am currently in my first year of university, pursuing a Bachelor of Communication Design at Auckland University of Technology. I'm originally from Vietnam, where I completed my high school education at Marguerite Duras French international school.

After I graduated, I joined UP International College's Accelerated Foundation programme. This programme was crucial for me, as it gave me the confidence, skills, and cultural understanding required to settle comfortably in New Zealand. I also believe this course helped me in making the transition to my new and successful university education journey, at AUT.

Q2. Why did you choose Foundation Studies in New Zealand?

I completed the Foundation Studies in New Zealand as it was the preparation I needed before university. Coming from a French high school, my English was not proficient enough yet for direct entry, so the UP Accelerated programme was really helpful to improve my language proficiency and academic skill. I also believe that joining UP education is highly necessary when I was unfamiliar with university or social life in New Zealand, and the change was hard. UP International College helped bridge that gap by introducing me to the academic culture, social environment, and study methods needed to succeed. Not only did this programme equip me with the knowledge and confidence to approach university life, but it also made my transition to New Zealand much smoother, ensuring I felt prepared and ready when stepping into AUT.

STUDENT PROFILE

STUDENT NAMES

Emma Hoa Binh Le

NATIONALITY

Vietnam

PROGRAMME

Auckland University of
Technology Certificate in
Foundation Studies
(Accelerated)

INTAKE

July 2024

UNIVERSITY DESTINATION

Bachelor of
Communication Design

Q3. Why did you choose Auckland University of Technology?

I choose to study at AUT as it provides a learning environment centrally in Auckland, which is quite convenient for me to attend. The university is massive and welcomes many international students, so that I have the opportunity to interact with different students – which I think is important for my growth and culture development as well as making my perspective unique.

Additionally, this also helps me easily connect with other people who have similar situations and lifestyles, making me never feel lonely or isolated. Specifically in my major, AUT provides the latest facilities geared towards supporting the students such as printing or bindery atelier which excite me to learn and try out. Finally, AUT also emphasises practical learning, with a lot of hands-on classes that help make learning interesting and fun.



Q4. Did you have any special experience while studying at UP International College?

Graduation day was probably the most special experience I have ever had while studying at UP International College. It was my last day of school at UP, but also a very emotional and memorable experience. Graduation day brought together the teachers and the students as a whole to celebrate our achievements, which is why it was such a celebratory experience.

On that day, our teachers were becoming so welcoming and nice. They smiled in photographs with us, chatted with us like friends, and offered their wishes to us for our future. It was bittersweet—while I felt proud of myself for completing the foundation programme, I also felt sad to say goodbye to teachers who had supported me along the way. Despite the mixed feelings, graduation day was a most wonderful and inspiring experience.



Q5. What was the biggest challenge as an international student in New Zealand?

The hardest thing for me as an international student in New Zealand was dealing with culture shock. It was difficult to adapt to social life and culture, which are very different from Vietnamese ones. For example, in New Zealand, the shops close early, at about 6 pm, whereas in Vietnam, nights are spent going out to take dinner at restaurants and enjoying lively social life.

The other significant challenge was being distant from parents and family. Just like with all other students studying abroad, it requires a lot of courage and determination to take such a step. Adapting to having to do everything on my own, trying new things, and adjusting to life on my own was definitely tough, but also an opportunity to grow and gain independence in the process.

Q6. What is your favourite course so far?

My favourite subject in UP is Art and Design as I have been passionate about the arts since a young age. This is a special course with two-semester of learning as it is filled with diverse learning activities. The instructor splits each semester into various periods, each specialising in one area of design, including communication design, fashion design, visual art, and architectural design.

This approach allows us to explore these fields thoroughly and discover which area of design resonates most with us. Personally, I believe it is not only learning the basics, but the course allows us to decide on our preferred design speciality and make correct choices about university study. That way, we don't waste time with the wrong major and can follow the track with confidence that best fits our interests and goals.

Q7. How are you finding the learning experience with your teacher at UP International College?

The teachers in UP are professional, friendly, and truly care about our success. Even with my introverted nature, I never hesitated to ask questions or seek help because the teachers there are so friendly. During exam weeks, teachers often offered extra online classes in the afternoons to clear out our confusion and make sure we were ready. With their help, I feel more confident in doing my exams and getting higher grades. Apart from the classes, they also give individual guidance, which I found a lot of help coming up with my path to university or finishing up my visa.

Q8. Have you got any scholarship? If yes, what scholarship did you win and how did you achieve it?

Yes, I received the International Student Scholarship 2025 when I finished my last semester at UP International College. This scholarship awarded me 5000\$, which I can apply to pay for my second year of university education. I came to know about the scholarship initially from my friends and teachers at UP, who motivated me to apply. Applying for the scholarship was easy—I sent in my grades and scores via the AUT scholarship website and completed all the necessary steps. Even though the waiting time was long and tedious, it was well worth it. Getting this scholarship not only assisted me financially but also made my family very proud of me. This reward pushed me to work even harder in university to not disappoint my parents.

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Q9. What is your every schedule?

My schedule for my first semester was quite busy and well-organized to suit my academic and personal needs. I completed three compulsory subjects: English 1, English 2A, and Tertiary Study Skills, which played a significant role in establishing a good foundation in language and study skills. To these, I also completed two electives that suit my interest in design—Art and Design and Design & Society. These subjects are well-arranged in my timetable and there were breaks in between classes. These breaks were really essential to save our energies and mental rest. These not only gave time to relax and get refreshed but also gave necessary time to the teachers to prepare well for the next session.

Q10. What do you think about living in New Zealand, and what are your future plans?

Being in New Zealand and staying there is an exciting chance, but it also comes with hard challenges. Even I really want to have this opportunity but it seems unpredictable. However, I anticipate looking for opportunities to stay in New Zealand, using my persistence and resilience as the foundations for my career. Regarding my future aspirations, after graduation, I intend to find a design job related to the course I am pursuing. Not only will this allow me to earn a salary, but it will also allow me to acquire experience and improve my skills. At present, I am dedicated to getting the most out of my time here, learning as much as I can, and preparing myself for the future.

Q11. Finally, do you have any advice for students who considering the Foundation Studies at UP International College?

I think they should continue studying hard as they were in college. Some people think that the Foundation Programme is unnecessary, so they take attendance too shallow. But it is still very important to go to all your classes. In addition, they should take part in discussions as there are lots of group and collaborative works. Also, they should make friends there, they all come from abroad which let us learn about different cultures and interesting things from their cultures. And finally, don't be shy to ask questions when you are unsure because your teachers and tutors are always there to help you.