



Yilin's story

Foundation journey at UP International College NZ

Student profile

Name: Yilin Chai | Nationality: China

Programme: AUT Certificate in Foundation Studies (level 3)

Study destination: AUT, Bachelor of Communication Studies (Screen Production major)

Q1. Can you introduce yourself?

My name is Chai Yilin, and I'm from Zhengzhou—a city located in central China. I'm currently enrolled in the fast-track AUT Foundation programme, which consists of three semesters. I'm expecting to graduate in December, and I'm now in my second term studying three subjects: English 2A, Tertiary Study Skills, and Media. After completing the foundation programme, I plan to major in Screen Production under the Bachelor of Communication at AUT.

Q2. Why did you choose AUT?

I chose AUT because it has a reputation for being a modern and practical university with strong industry connections, especially in my field of interest, screen production. The facilities here are advanced and very professional. To be honest, at first I felt a bit disappointed when I learned that I needed to complete a foundation programme before entering AUT. But after arriving in New Zealand, I realised how valuable this programme has been for me.

Q3. What is daily life like in New Zealand?

This is my first time living and studying abroad long term. Daily life in New Zealand, from food to transport, was a whole new experience and sometimes even a challenge. The foundation programme is well paced and does not overload students, which gave me time to adjust.

For example, classes end by 5 pm at the latest, so I have enough time to cook, try new recipes, and improve my skills. When I first arrived, it took me over two hours to make a meal. Now I can cook something tasty in just 30 mins!

Q4. How has the Foundation programme helped you?

The programme has been very helpful for my English language development. Teachers speak clearly and adjust their speed so that non-native speakers can follow. The English courses focus on academic skills, like using APA 7 referencing, which I know will be essential at university. I feel more prepared than I would have been without this foundation.

Another great part of the programme is the chance to meet people from all over the world. Talking with them has not only improved my English but also broadened my cultural understanding. These connections will definitely help me in my future studies.



Q5. What do you think about the block system?

I think the 10-week block system works well. It helps us focus on one subject at a time without feeling overwhelmed. A longer semester might make it harder to stay motivated.

Q6. How are the classes and teachers?

I really enjoy the class environment. Students pay attention when the teacher is talking, and everyone joins in actively during group work. The no phone policy this semester has also helped improve concentration. The teachers are very supportive, they explain things clearly and are always happy to answer questions, whether after class or online through Microsoft Teams.

Q7. What subjects do you enjoy most?

I found Culture and Society very interesting. Before this course, my knowledge of Māori culture mostly came from the Disney movie Moana. Mr. Jacques September taught us about Māori history, customs, and even some basic Māori words. It really sparked my interest in New Zealand's culture.

I also really enjoy Media Studies film. It closely relates to the degree I want to take. Mr. Tim Haines uses real film examples to help us understand both the creative and technical sides of filmmaking. I'm also excited to be working on a short film project with two other students.

Q8. What is your goal?

Since there aren't many opportunities to speak English regularly in China, my listening and speaking skills are not as strong as my reading and writing. My main goal is to become more confident and fluent in spoken English so I can communicate easily with locals and feel more at home here.