

Get set for wild revelry

University. For first-years, the word conjures up images of beer skolling marathons and pub crawls where students run amok, dressed as anything from pimps and 'hos to their favourite cartoon characters. This sort of wild and boozy revelry has become an initiation for university newbies, and the rite-of-passage is on again. Finally free from the shackles of VCE, it's a time for students to, well and truly, let their hair down.

Partying has a long association with studying. On some levels, the social aspects of a tertiary education can be just as rewarding as the study. The friendships you make now are often the ones that last. The parties and nights spent out dancing on bars and hijacking DJ booths are the ones you remember. At uni, you find yourself suddenly rid of everyone you ever had to 'put up with' at high school. Replacing them are hundreds of like-minded others, similarly motivated to study and similarly motivated to have a good time while doing so.

While students acknowledge the importance of a bit of harmless fun before settling back into the study grind, universities are not so convinced. The often raucous image of student behaviour has led some to subdue the party mood of O week, as an emphasis on student welfare grows.

RMIT University's

orientation week consists mostly of academic programs and a festival day at each of its campuses, where students are entertained by performers and receive giveaways. Alcohol, however, is not on offer.

"In the last few years, we've moved away from providing the alcohol component ... mainly for safety," RMIT transition officer Aleng Joses says.

"Within the festival we are still providing free food and soft drinks."

Gone are the days when beer, and even spirits, ran free on campus and students had a never ending list of social events to attend. Nowadays, it seems students must use their own initiative in order to be initiated. But newcomers shouldn't fear. Most universities have pubs on campus (or nearby), ready to quench a student's thirst. And if your chosen university's idea of orientation consists solely of library tours and essay writing tutorials, don't fret. Student Union clubs and societies are continuing to run events and activities, often independent of the university faculty.

David Mulholland is president of one of the University of Melbourne's largest student associations, the Science Students' Society. The Society has over 2500 undergraduate, postgraduate and past student members. He says the aim of the SSS is to not only provide support and information to students,



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but also study relief in the form of its popular social events.

"If you don't have any connections around uni, you're just going to get

stressed out thinking about all of your work," he says.

"I look forward to going back to uni because there's so many people I can meet up with that are just great to

be around. That's the positive aspect that comes from getting into these parties and having a bit of fun.

"I've never heard a bad word about our O week events. Everyone just has an awesome time. It's mainly just the faculties who are always on our backs about being responsible."

One of the Society's most popular events is its Orientation Camp. The camp runs every year, hosted by later year and past society members. Mulholland says the event is so successful, he has second and third year students begging him to be allowed to come back every year.

"We just have the best weekend of your uni life," he says. "It's probably the best way to meet people on campus from all around and, it's just a party weekend basically. By the end of it you know about 200 random people you wouldn't have known otherwise."

Having this sort of introduction to university can be enormously beneficial to new students, especially those who may have moved away from home in order to study. There's nothing quite like losing your inhibitions with a group of strangers to ease the transition into university life and kill any awkwardness. Plus, no one can deny the advantage of knowing a familiar face on your first day somewhere new.

Socialising helps students to not only meet their

classmates and make friends, but to make a solid grounding for themselves at university. Hitting the books is of course important, but so is surrounding yourself with familiar faces that know how grinding tertiary study can be. Students who are unable to strike a balance are usually affected by factors other than a distracting uni lifestyle, such as not liking what they're studying or feeling lost as a result of moving away from home.

"By attending social events, students are giving their lives balance. It's not just all about work and study," Deakin Commerce Students Society president of functions Laura O'Rourke says.

"Most workplaces have a social club, and when they enter the workforce students will be encouraged to join. The Society sees itself as a way to provide students with exposure to events. Alcohol is provided in a controlled and responsible environment."

It would be a shame to go through university without making the absolute most of what a great experience it is. This O week, put yourself out there and have some fun. Join a club, take advantage of the free food on offer or run riot on one of the pub crawls. Be responsible, but enjoy yourself while doing so. Remember, you're only young once. 

Jennifer Greive

tuesdays & thursdays
drinks
schooners
champas
cowboys
spirits
wine
spm til 3am
THE BEST COMMERCIAL HOUSE
& TOP 40
ALL NIGHT
The George white
BAR AND GALLERY