A Spark in a Tunnel: Finding Academic Footing as an International Student

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To navigate a new academic environment while adapting to the many changes that come with moving to a new country is just one of those things we learn to contend with as international students. However, after a few months of settling into life in Toronto, many of us quickly realize that handling assignments, research expectations, and communication styles takes more than just effort. It takes support.

Here are a couple academic support services that will help you find your footing as an International student, as they have for me.

More Than Just Books

Whether you need assistance managing your academic responsibilities, freshening up your research skills, checking out curated media collections or just want a quiet study space, Seneca Libraries has you covered.

With in-person and digital offerings spanning all campuses, students gain access to a powerful database filled with scholarly journals, books, research guides, and streaming media across disciplines. Built-in citation support for APA, MLA, and Chicago styles makes formatting easier, and tutorials guide you through search strategies and source evaluation.

What many students don't realize is that Seneca Libraries also offers a wide selection of recreation outside of your favourite fiction books! You can browse films, documentaries, zines, and even wellness resources; perfect for winding down or exploring new interests. You'll also find materials on personal finance, mental health, creativity, and career development which is ideal for international students navigating life transitions.

Skill-Building for Academic Success

Hosted within the libraries, Seneca's Learning Centres are designed to help students build the skills that make academic life not just survivable, but sustainable. The Centres offer support that's practical and judgment-free regardless of whether you're struggling with a certain course or just need a study buddy.

Students can book appointments for personalized help or attend workshops on topics like essay writing, grammar, time management, and exam preparation. These sessions are interactive and welcoming, making it easier to ask questions and build confidence.

The best part? Many Learning Centre services are available online, ensuring accessibility across campuses and time zones.

Support that Adapts to You

One thing I've come to appreciate at Seneca is how seriously the school takes student support. Not just academically, but holistically. For students who face barriers to learning due to disabilities, health conditions, or temporary challenges, Seneca's Accessible Learning Services (ALS) offers personalized accommodations that make a real difference.

Students facing challenges such as chronic health conditions, temporary injuries, or learning differences can access tailored academic support through ALS. That might mean extended time on tests, access

to assistive technology, note-taking support, or quiet spaces for exams. This ensures that learning remains equitable and achievable. The process starts with a confidential intake appointment, where you meet with an accessibility advisor to discuss your situation and explore options.

What stood out to me is how flexible and student-centered the approach is. You're not asked to fit into a rigid system. Instead, the system adapts to you. And for international students especially, it's reassuring to know that support is available even if you're still figuring out how to advocate for yourself in a new academic culture.

You Don't Have to Figure It All Out Alone

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that you don't have to wait until you're overwhelmed to reach out. These supports aren't just for when things go wrong. They're here to help you grow, build confidence, and make the most of your time at Seneca.

So whether you're just starting out or already a few months in, take a moment to explore what's available. You might be surprised by how much easier (and more fulfilling!) your academic journey becomes when you know where to turn for help.

Find academic support here:

Seneca Academic Support Services

Seneca Libraries

Learning Centres

Accessible Learning Services

(Written by Siddhi Srinivas (They/them))

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