Xiaoqi Zhang
Country: China
School: Riverside Girls High School

Xiaoqi Zhang from Guangdong completed her high school studies at Riverside Girls High School in 2007. In 2008 she began her tertiary studies in physiotherapy at the University of Sydney after achieving a University Admissions Index (UAI) score of 96.7 in the Higher School Certificate (HSC).

Xiaoqi first came to Australia in 2005 to study at a NSW government high school and lived in homestay until she turned 18. “Studying in Australia meant a new start to me,” Xiaoqi said. “I came here so I could learn English, which is why living in homestay was so great as it meant I had to speak English at home.”

Sydney is a great study destination for international students. It has been voted the world’s best city* in 2007 and 2008 for its beautiful landscape, climate, friendly people, affordable accommodation, and quality education and training. It also ranks as one of the top three global cities for employment and business opportunities, alongside London and New York.

Studying in Sydney has not always been easy for Xiaoqi, yet she has enjoyed the experience. “School in Australia is very different to school in China. High school in China is easier than high school in Australia in some ways because the teachers push you more. In Australia, you must motivate yourself to study and learn – it’s harder, but I prefer the education system here. And I did very well in my studies at Riverside Girls High School.”

“In China, there are 60 students or more in a class. In Australia, the classes are so small that the teacher can actually help everyone if there are problems. You can also interrupt the teacher at any time to ask a question if you don’t understand and it is not a problem. You cannot do that in China.”

Xiaoqi is thankful to the teachers at Riverside Girls High School for all their help and assistance. “I had some problems when I started at my school, but the staff were always so helpful in answering my questions and helping me when they could,” Xiaoqi said. “It made the whole experience much easier and allowed me to concentrate on my HSC studies.”

“Also, my friends helped me to adapt to the Australian culture. It was very easy to make friends. Many of them are born here but their parents are Chinese or Korean, and so they understand both the Australian culture and the culture I am used to back home.”

Xiaoqi firmly believes that studying in Sydney helped her improve her English and ensured her excellent HSC marks for direct entry to university. “My older sister also attended a NSW government school and is now is studying pharmacy at the University of Sydney. Studying here helped my sister learn very good English so she could cope with her university studies, and the same experience is true for me.”

*Anholt City Brand Index (2007-2008) and Conde Nast Traveler 2007

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