ACU National’s Faculty of Health Sciences endorses the role of overseas study tours in promoting cultural sensitivity and strengthening collaboration between the University and selected institutions in other countries.

The Faculty’s policy on international immersion notes that within the framework of the Faculty’s Internationalisation Strategic Plan, overseas study tours have the capacity to benefit students, staff and organisations in host countries.

As well as the unit studied in Vanuatu, the policy covers *Transcultural nursing in a multicultural society*, in which nursing students spend two weeks in Shanghai.

Students attend classes in Shanghai given by Chinese lecturers on such subjects as Chinese nursing, China’s health care system, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and herbs, and Tai Chi. Students visit Gong Li Hospital, Shanghai Children’s Medical Centre, a local nursing home and the Ren Ji Hospital.

“At the Ren Ji Hospital we were greeted by several past ACU National Master’s of Nursing graduates, who are now in senior positions,” said School of Nursing and Midwifery lecturer Ms Jacqueline Randle.

“We were very grateful for the expertise and support conveyed to our students by The Shanghai Institute of Health Sciences, within Shanghai Jiaotong University, President Professor Xiang Qian Wu and Director (International) Charles Wang, and the local teaching and administrative staff,” she said. “We have developed many friendships and excellent relationships with the staff and helpful student volunteers in Shanghai.”
For second-year nursing student Justine Baker, 22, born in Tumut in country NSW, a recent study trip to Shanghai, a city of 23 million people, was “amazing”.

“There were children playing and people cooking in the streets at 10 o’clock at night,” she recalled. “The city never sleeps.”

Her mind whirled with the similarities and differences in health care she noticed between Australia and China.

Justine, pictured above in the centre of the front row, was impressed by the recently completed Shanghai Institute of Health Sciences where the group attended lectures. She also enjoyed visiting a state-of-the-art paediatric intensive care unit.

“It was fantastic to see that people being nursed in the hospitals were receiving similar nursing care in many ways to what they would receive in Australia.”

Bilingual nursing graduates who will shortly visit ACU National’s Faculty of Health Sciences nursing laboratories in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne volunteered their time to translate and accompany Australian students shopping and sightseeing.

“Everyone was extremely friendly and helpful.”

Justine began her nursing career as an enrolled nurse, transferring to ACU National’s Canberra Campus with credit when the degree course opened earlier this year.

“I wanted to upgrade my skills and have that extra opportunity of employment throughout Australia and all over the world,” she said. “With nursing you can go anywhere.”

Justine, also a nursing student representative, said she loved the friendliness of the Canberra Campus.

“All the staff at the campus are always happy to help with any problem. There is support from the student centre, library, teachers and academic skills unit, for example, and the campus is cosy. You are not just one of a crowd. It’s a good feeling.”

Studying Transcultural nursing in a multicultural society meant a visit to Shanghai with fellow ACU National staff and students for second-year nursing student Kylie Peel, 20, from the Ballarat Campus.

The visit opened her mind to a host of different health care philosophies and practices, she said.

Images which remain in her mind were a surgeon removing a cancerous tumour from a patient and showing it to the patient’s waiting family, a state-of-the-art children’s hospital, and hearing how treatment can include Western and traditional Chinese methods such as acupuncture and herbs.

“We visited a nursing home, and heard how many of the older patients prefer traditional treatments,” Kylie said.

She is now researching the use of acupuncture as a painkiller instead of or as well as normal pharmaceutical pain relief, particularly for post-operative patients.

Kylie was also impressed by the professionalism and dedication of her nursing student peers in China at The Shanghai Institute of Health Sciences.

“If you travel overseas, unless you get sick you don’t get to see how people care for each other in other cultures. This was a really valuable experience.”

Kylie initially chose to study nursing because she wanted to study “something that would be different every day”. She remains interested in multicultural health care “particularly in Indigenous health and rural areas”.

Justine Baker

Kylie Peel