

[Home](#) » [National](#) » Article

Studying to become cruisy on world's first floating university

By Jordan Baker
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THE casinos will be turned into libraries and the ballrooms into lecture theatres, but studying will still be a cruisy experience for students aboard the world's first luxury floating university campus.

Six institutions, led by Macquarie University, have teamed up to run the Scholar Ship, a five-star cruise liner that will sail the globe each semester to encourage "intercultural learning".

The first Royal Caribbean Cruise vessel is due to leave Athens next January for a 16-week voyage. Some 700 students paying \$US19,500 (\$A26,000) each will visit eight countries and four continents during their trip.

The aim is to create a "transnational learning community" and teach students skills they need to work in a global environment, said Tony Adams, international pro-vice-chancellor at Macquarie University.

"No one has done anything like this before — a university-level program that's studying issues of global concern, whether it's cultural matters, international relations, politics, environment," he said.

"All sorts of issues are discussed in a hothouse environment aboard the ship. Then when they go to port they'll be involved in activities which will support the subjects on the ship."

Universities from China, Morocco, Mexico and Ghana are part of the consortium, but Macquarie University will be the only institution issuing credits towards degrees.

Undergraduates will have to do assessments and the program will offer a postgraduate certificate in intercultural knowledge management.

But students won't spend all their time in class. The ships — provided during the European off-season, when they would otherwise be sitting idle — have a swimming pool, theatre and sporting facilities.

Student applications open this month. Academic staff are also wanted.

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