Starting at UTAS: The first semester

You’ve been accepted, you’re enrolled and you’re all fired up! What next? The key challenge for you over the following weeks will be to work out what is expected of you at university. This is no easy task, so don’t feel overwhelmed if it takes a little while. The following information will provide you with hints and tips to smooth the process of your first semester.

How does Uni work?

The learning environment

“Sometimes I feel like I’m just a student number...” (second year student)

Along with the excitement of starting at a large campus can sometimes come a sense of feeling unknown and insignificant. Welcome to the world of ‘self-directed learning’! How much and when you learn is essentially up to you. University can soon start to feel like home, but it’s up to you to get involved and take advantage of the opportunities provided.

All new students are encouraged to enrol in UniStart, an enabling course that provides a short face-to-face program prior to each semester and access to many learning resources throughout the year. UniStart is free for all domestic students. To enquire about UniStart, call 1300 361 928 or go to: www.utas.edu.au/unistart for more information. Email enquiries to student.learning@utas.edu.au

The learning format of university

Lectures are usually large classes and a lecturer presents the information using a variety of visual and auditory resources. Due to their size and format, generally lectures have no or only a short time to ask questions. If you miss a lecture, they are sometimes available online.

Tutorials (tutes) or practical groups are usually smaller groups run in conjunction with lecture courses, which include discussion or demonstration of material – you sign up for them during the first week. It is usually compulsory to attend a high percentage of your tutes and practicals to be eligible to sit your final exam. You will be expected to share your ideas but remember: you don’t have to know it all! You are there to learn and part of learning is asking questions.

Access your timetable online; just follow the link to the eStudentCentre from the Current Students page at: www.utas.edu.au/students You can access a help guide from: http://student-timetable.utas.edu.au

You can download a weekly planner from: www.utas.edu.au/students/fact-sheets. Alternatively, call 1300 361 928 for assistance.

Teaching staff

Academics are not the same as the teachers in high school or college. Their roles are split between teaching, research and administrative commitments. They will not pursue you for work due and they may not even know who you are until later in your degree. They will make themselves available to you at appropriate times but will rely on you to contact them for what you need. You will need to take the initiative!

How much time?

Depending on your course, your contact hours (formal meeting times in lectures, tutes or practicals) may seem small. As a general rule however, the courses with fewer contact hours expect more ‘out of hours’ study. This will be made clear in the unit outlines at the start of each unit.

Treat a full-time uni course as a full-time job and budget your time accordingly (at least 38 hours per week).
Getting started
Visit the Your First Year at UTAS website for a host of information relevant to you as you start uni. Go to: www.utas.edu.au/first-year

Getting your ID card
Your Student ID Card is used for a range of things including library borrowing and entry to examinations. Information on how to obtain your ID card can be found at: www.utas.edu.au/enrolments/student-identity-card

Using computers
Access to a computer is vital. If you lack confidence with computers, you are strongly encouraged to enrol in UniStart where you will gain the skills to get started.

To assess whether you have the IT skills necessary for a good start, we suggest you visit the Computer and Online Skills section of the Your First Year website at: www.utas.edu.au/first-year

Accessing your email
You automatically get a UTAS email account and access to computers when you accept an offer of a place. Your confirmation of acceptance lists your username and passwords for your email account and access to computers. You can use any computer with an internet connection to access your account. It is important to check your UTAS account regularly so get into the habit of checking it at least once a week.

To get started, access the ‘Email’ information at: www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk. If you are having particular problems, phone the Service Desk on 1300 304 903.

Finding your way around
Before classes begin, take a tour of the campus and check out where your lectures will be. Don’t miss your first lecture as you will get full details of the structure of the unit and how to enrol in your tutorials or practicals.

Your lecturer will also let you know what assignments are required, when they are due and who to contact if you require help. These details will also appear in your unit outlines.

Download a campus map from the Uni website at: www.utas.edu.au/campuses/maps
Take a campus tour during Orientation Week.

Getting orientated
It is clearly documented that students who succeed at university jump in with both feet. They get to know lecturers, tutors and other students. The best way to start this process is to attend orientation activities.

Attend all orientation activities relevant to you. Visit the Your First Year website at: www.utas.edu.au/students/student-experience/your-first-year-at-utas and click on the orientation step for details of campus activities, work your way through the Online Orientation (linked from the same page) or call the Student Services & Information Centre on 1300 361 928 for details.

Nature of a successful student
“My time at uni was not just about the knowledge I gained from my chosen field, but about the life skills I developed. It took me time to ‘learn the ropes’ of how uni works and I needed to allow for this to happen. Equipping myself with as much support as I could and not being afraid to ask about anything (even though I felt stupid at times!) helped heaps. I look back on my uni days as some of the best in my life!”
(graduate of 15 years)

Getting to know other students
Some students come to university with a group of friends, but for others it can start out being a very lonely experience. If you’d like to meet other students, there are a number of ways of doing this. Whichever method you try, give it time – often the connections come gradually.

- Introduce yourself to people next to you in lectures and tutorials.
- Make sure to attend any social events organised by your school.
- Start or join a study group.
• The University student body (Tasmania University Union) have a wide range of clubs and societies. Visit www.tuu.com.au

• Community Friends and Networks offer regular social events throughout the year. Find them at: www.utas.edu.au/cfnp

• Attend Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) if they are offered in any of your units.

• If you find it very difficult getting the confidence to talk to others, consider seeing a counsellor in the Student Wellbeing team.

Academic feedback

Getting feedback on your progress can be a challenging task at university. You will need to find ways to assess your own understanding of the material and ensure that you are ‘on the right track’. Look out for study partners and make use of academic staff.

For help with your studies visit the 'Student Learning' website at: www.utas.edu.au/student-learning or call 6226 7595 (Hobart), 6324 3787 (Launceston), 6430 4949 (Cradle Coast) or 6226 7595 (Sydney).

If you have been to see Student Learning staff and feel you need more intensive help, consider enrolling in selected units from the Bachelor of General Studies or the University Preparation Program (UPP), visit: www.utas.edu.au/student-learning/upp

Changing your course

Courses don’t always turn out to be what you expect and it is possible to change them. However, it’s best to discuss changing courses with a Faculty Officer. See the ‘Enrolment Advice’ link on the New to UTAS website. You can also contact Student Services Staff on 1300 361 928 for help.

Be aware that all changes must be completed by the census dates to avoid HECS liability and academic penalty. Information on census dates can be found on the enrolment website – follow the link to census dates from www.utas.edu.au/enrolments

Support

Whether academic or personal, there are plenty of people who can support you on campus. The key issue is ASK!

Visit the Ask Us site to search for answers to hundreds of common questions: http://askus.utas.edu.au

To find the best staff member to talk to about your particular issue use the handy Support Finder: www.utas.edu.au/first-year/support-finder

For personal issues, make a free appointment with a professional counsellor – visit or phone your local Student Services office or visit the UTAS website.

If you have a disability or health condition that may affect your study, we strongly encourage you to discuss this with your lecturer/s/Student Adviser and/or see a Disability Adviser in the Student Wellbeing team for information and advice.

Register online with CareerHub for your career and employment needs at: https://careerhub.utas.edu.au

The TUU provide student representation and advocacy, welfare support, social interests and entertainment for students of all campuses of the University. To find out more, attend their activities during orientation or visit their website at: www.tuu.com.au

Need more help?

Contact information for all these services can be found on the ‘Student Life and Services’ link on the New to UTAS website: www.utas.edu.au/first-year/student-life-and-services

Go to the New to UTAS website at: www.utas.edu.au/first-year or call 1300 361 928 for further details on any of the information contained in this fact sheet.

For a huge amount of information about what students can expect at university – from lectures, tutorials etc. through to study strategies and what it means to be an independent learner – visit www.utas.edu.au/student-learning

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