Meeting people and making friends

Whether you are new to the area, new to study or have been at UTAS for a while now, it can be tricky to meet new people. Sometimes, these things can naturally fall into place, but more often, expanding and developing social networks takes time and energy (and perseverance!). This handout provides an overview of some of the ways in which you can meet new people, both within UTAS and in the broader community.

**Where do I start?**
It is important to keep an open mind, be willing to give things a go and put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Expect that you might feel anxious at times and you might have some awkward conversations (everyone does!). Putting yourself into new situations and taking a proactive role in meeting new people (including approaching and starting a conversation sometimes), will enable you to find people you get on with and start developing new friendships.

You might feel like you are the only one feeling anxious and lonely, but many other students are feeling the same way. In your classes other students are feeling a bit nervous and shy too. Sometimes it just takes someone brave enough to break the ice and make that first move. You could be that person.

If you find it hard to start a conversation with someone new, or are unsure of how to meaningfully connect with others, these videos have some helpful tips:

**YouTube**

10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation - Celeste Headlee - youtu.be/RivskiVDwl4

7 Ways to Make a Conversation with Anyone - Malavika Varadan - youtu.be/F4Zu5ZAG7

How to Talk to Strangers – Vanessa Van Edwards - youtu.be/Q2cfh8X9v8s

The Power of Vulnerability – Brené Brown - youtube.com/watch?v=iCymsMzlF7o

**Lectures and classes**
Chatting with others in your lectures, tutorials and labs can be a great way to get to know other people. Here are some tips for how to talk to people in these settings:

**Lectures:** Although it can be tempting to watch lectures online, it might be a good idea to attend the lecture in person. Then you can sit next to someone, say hi and start a conversation.

**Tutorials/labs:** It can be a bit easier to talk to people in tutorial and labs. If you prepare for your class (e.g. do the readings), then you are more prepared to join in and talk. You could also start chatting with the people around you and make small talk. After a few classes you could ask someone if they wanted to go to get a coffee, get lunch or do some study together outside of class.

**Student Learning groups and workshops:** The Student Learning Advisor team offer workshops during semester to help support your academic skills. They also run a weekly English-speaking group. If you would like to develop your English skills in a friendly and fun environment, come along to a session.

http://www.utas.edu.au/students/learning/workshops
PASS sessions: Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) offers free unit specific group study sessions led by students who have previously succeeded in the unit. In sessions, students work together to revise content and strengthen study skills in a relaxed and friendly environment. As these sessions are smaller groups and discussion based, they can provide a good opportunity to get to know other students. For more information visit: utas.edu.au/students/learning/pass

Online study: If you are studying units online, other ways to connect with your classmates can involve using the unit discussion board. You might like to set up a Facebook page for your unit or check for an existing one. You could also check to see if there are other students in your local area. Other ways to connect with fellow online and distance students include joining Facebook groups such as:

Distance Students at UTAS: https://www.facebook.com/groups/965258280206932 things a go and put yourself outside of your comfort zone.

UTAS Life
UTASLife is led by the Student Engagement Leaders who plan and deliver a range of fun activities throughout the year including on-campus events and off-campus trips. Students are encouraged to follow UTASLife on social media and get involved by attending events and meeting new people.

Students can also help by volunteering with UTASLife. Volunteering is a great way to improve your communication skills, meet new people and enhance your university experience. To find out more visit utas.edu.au/utaslfe facebook.com/UTASLife/

Tasmania University Union (TUU)

Representation
The Tasmanian University Union is the peak body of student representation for students at UTAS. The TUU has several student representatives. If you want to know who your representatives are or if you are passionate about student issues and would like to get involved, contact the TUU. For more information visit: tuu.com.au/representation/

Events
The TUU run events throughout the year that provide opportunities to meet and mingle with other students. The best way to hear about their events is via the local Facebook page:

facebook.com/TasmaniaUniversityUnion
facebook.com/TUUSRCNorth/
facebook.com/TUUSRCCradleCoast/

Clubs and Societies
There are over 100 clubs and societies at UTAS that cater to a range of interests. Clubs and societies can be a great way to meet people who share similar values and interests. In addition, they are a great way to try out something new and meet different people. Some of the many societies include:


Some of the many sports clubs include:
Badminton, futsal, judo, rugby union, white water rafting, motorsport, fencing, basketball, arm wrestling, netball, snow sports, hockey, athletics, climbing, dive, volleyball, table tennis, viet vo, soccer, and bike polo.

For a list of clubs and societies check out:
tuu.com.au/clubs-societies/a-z-societies/
tuu.com.au/clubs-societies/a-z-sports/

Many clubs and societies also have their own Facebook page. These can be a good way to keep up to date with their activities. There is a Clubs and Societies Day at the start of semester where you can meet the clubs and sign up. Throughout semester, if you would like to get involved, send a message to the organising committee, join the Facebook group or attend one of their advertised events.
UTAS Student Leadership, Career Development & Employment (SLCDE)

There are many opportunities for students to get a job or volunteer on campus. Additionally, the UTAS SLCDE team can also support you to find work and volunteering opportunities off campus.

Career Connect is UTAS’ online resource for up-to-date job vacancies, volunteering opportunities, career information, appointments and on-campus events such as employer information sessions. New positions are advertised daily – many of which are only available to UTAS students. Visit utas.edu.au/careerconnect

To get formal recognition for your work and volunteering experiences, check out the Vice-Chancellor’s Leadership Program: utas.edu.au/vclp

Mumford’s Pride

Mumford’s Pride is a student-driven volunteer taskforce that is heavily involved with the Tasmanian community both on- and off-campus.

Students who join the Pride are given the opportunity to build connections with their fellow UTAS volunteers, participate in training sessions and volunteer networking events and are encouraged to find volunteer roles out in the Tasmanian community throughout the year.

Students who are interested in volunteering with Mumford’s Pride or their partner organisations are encouraged to become part of their Facebook community to share ideas and watch for any new opportunities.

Join the Pride: utas.edu.au/careerconnect

Find out more:
facebook.com/MumfordsPride/

Unigym

Unigym is a multi-purpose fitness centre located on the University of Tasmania Sandy Bay, Newnham and Cradle Coast campuses. The centres provide health and fitness services and sporting facilities for use by community members as well as UTAS students and staff. Unigym offers weights and cardio rooms, group fitness classes and facility hire. Attending the gym or a group fitness class can be another way to meet people on campus.

utas.edu.au/unigym

facebook.com/UnigymHobart/
facebook.com/UnigymLaunceston/
facebook.com/UnigymBurnie/

Source Wholefoods

Source Community Wholefoods is a community-driven, not-for-profit venture that includes:
- An organic food co-operative providing affordable organic, local and fair-trade goods.
- A community garden providing a fun and healthy way for people to spend time together, share valuable skills and grow their own food.
- The centre provides a place to explore social and environmental issues and host workshops, acting as a living example of urban sustainability that encourages community involvement and creativity.

There are many ways to be involved at Source:
- Become a member and/or volunteer in the shop and/or garden
- Sign up for Source’s fortnightly newsletter and like their Facebook page to find out what is going on in the Source community

facebook.com/sourcewholefoods

For more information: sourcewholefoods.org.au

Riawunna

Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education is focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, located on the University of Tasmania Sandy Bay, Newnham and Cradle Coast campuses.

Riawunna works within a cultural framework and aspires to create positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through educational experiences that build independent, resilient and confident learners, supported through shared celebrations, culture and Community.

Riawunna provides a culturally welcoming place of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to study, access academic and pastoral support, and be part of the Aboriginal community within the University.

utas.edu.au/students
The Centre is a hub for students to meet, find help and advice, and gain access to a rich community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks.

[utass.edu.au/riawunna](https://utass.edu.au/riawunna)

[facebook.com/RiawunnaCentre/](https://facebook.com/RiawunnaCentre/)

**Spiritual Support**

The Faith Centres on the Sandy Bay and Newnham campuses support the spiritual well-being of students and provide opportunities for people to learn from each other while exploring questions of meaning, purpose and identity. Several Representative Chaplains run regular gatherings at the multi faith centres. For more information about the Chaplains and events at the multi faith centre: [utass.edu.au/students/shw/spiritual-care](https://utass.edu.au/students/shw/spiritual-care)

There are also religion-based student societies and groups such as AUJS (Jewish) Society, Campus Christian Movement Society, Catholic Society and Muslim Society. To become involved in these groups, follow them on Facebook or email their committee. For a current list of clubs and societies visit: [tuu.com.au/clubs-societies/a-z-societies/](https://tuu.com.au/clubs-societies/a-z-societies/)

**UTAS Student Living**

If you are living in student accommodation, this can provide many opportunities to make friends. The accommodation staff run events throughout the year to help residents get to know each other. This includes movie nights, cooking nights, trivia, and sports events. If you would like staff to organise a particular event, just have a chat with them. They are interested in student ideas and will help support you.

To find out about events, follow your accommodation Facebook pages and look out for flyers around the buildings:

Hobart City: [facebook.com/UTAScityapartments/](https://facebook.com/UTAScityapartments/)
Sandy Bay: [facebook.com/UTAS.SL_SandyBay/](https://facebook.com/UTAS.SL_SandyBay/)
Newnham: [facebook.com/UTAS.SL_Newnham/](https://facebook.com/UTAS.SL_Newnham/)
West Park: [facebook.com/UTASwestparkapartments/](https://facebook.com/UTASwestparkapartments/)

Sometimes it can still get a bit lonely. If you would like to meet more people in accommodation, consider introducing yourself to your neighbours, hang out in the communal spaces and talk to the other students there. You could also propose an activity on the student Facebook page/group. Taking a proactive step will enable you to get to know more people.

**Community Groups & Clubs**

If you would like to meet more people outside of UTAS, then there are plenty of clubs and societies catering for a wide range of interests. The best way to find out about them is to use an internet search. For example, one Google search for “social groups in Hobart” came up with the following groups:

Writers Group [taswriters.org/community/writing-groups/](https://taswriters.org/community/writing-groups/)
Chinese Community Association of Tasmania [ccat.asn.au/](https://ccat.asn.au/)
Hobart Walking Club [hobartwalkingclub.org.au](https://hobartwalkingclub.org.au)
Baseball Tasmania [baseballtasmania.com](https://baseballtasmania.com)
Toastmasters Clubs [toastmasters.org/](https://toastmasters.org/)

The websites give an overview of what the clubs are about, and you can contact one of the organisers to find out more information.

**The Welcome Dinner Project**

The Welcome Dinner Project connects people who are new to Australia with established Australians over a shared meal in local homes or in public venues. Everyone brings a dish to share. Facilitators are there to make sure everyone feels comfortable – all you have to do is enjoy the food and meet new friends.

If you would like to attend or host a Welcome Dinner register at: [joiningthedots.org](https://joiningthedots.org)

You can also follow events via the Facebook page: [facebook.com/WelcomeDinnerProjectTas/](https://facebook.com/WelcomeDinnerProjectTas/)

Opportunities for volunteering are also available with full facilitator training provided.

**Volunteering in the community**

There is a lot of evidence that we get a boost to our wellbeing when we do things for others. Doing activities such as volunteering can provide a sense of enjoyment, as well as meaning and purpose. Giving to others makes us feel good. It is also another way to meet new people outside of UTAS.

To find out about volunteering opportunities in Tasmania, a good way to start is by checking out the Volunteering Tasmania website. You can search through advertised volunteer opportunities and can meet with a Volunteering Tasmania team member to get more information. For more information visit: [volunteeringtas.org.au/](https://volunteeringtas.org.au/)

[> utass.edu.au/students](https://utass.edu.au/students)
**Meetup**
Meetup is a website where people can create their own social groups. These groups can be based on a particular interest such as playing cards against humanity or bushwalking, but can also be broader, such as general social groups or single mingle groups.

Anyone can join a group and attend events. If you don’t know anyone, then that is ok. Meetup is designed for people who want to meet new people. At almost all events, there will be other new people attending.

To find groups in your area: meetup.com

**Is there someone I can talk to?**
If social anxiety and loneliness are affecting your UTAS experience and your mental health, further support is available.

**University Counselling Service** offers confidential and professional counselling to students experiencing a range of academic, mental health and personal concerns including (but not limited to) anxiety, stress, depression, motivational problems and relationship difficulties. If you would like support in managing your anxiety and making meaningful connections with others, then UTAS counsellors can support you.

The best way to book a face to face, phone, skype or email appointment is:  
Online: [www.utas.edu.au/appointments](http://www.utas.edu.au/appointments)  
Phone: 1800 817 675

After hours crisis counselling is available through the after-hours phone and text line.

Further resources can be found at:  

The UTAS counsellors also run a **Connections and Confidence Group** during semester at the Sandy Bay campus. This group specifically focuses on how to manage social anxiety, how to meet new people and how to become more confident in social settings. If you are interested in attending the group, please contact Jessie Armitage (UTAS counsellor) via jessie.armitage@utas.edu.au

*If you have any feedback or suggestions for this handout (perhaps you know of another way to meet people?), please contact Jessie via jessie.armitage@utas.edu.au*

>[utas.edu.au/students](http://utas.edu.au/students)