The University counselling service is a free, high quality counselling service made up of experienced mental health practitioners who are registered psychologists and social workers. You can now book appointments with anyone on the team and choose to have an online (video or instant chat) counselling session. This information sheet is to help you get started.

**What is online counselling?**

Online counselling sessions are similar to face-to-face appointments but instead of sitting in a room with the counsellor, you connect with them via a Skype/Skype for Business/Skype Web App on your device.

You have the option of having a video counselling session or an instant chat session with your counsellor. The therapeutic techniques and confidentiality principles are the same, and so is the general structure of each session, with one appointment being 50 minutes in length.

**Advantages to online counselling**

- There is no need to get to a physical location so it is more flexible and convenient (as long as you have a device and can connect to the internet).
- You have a greater choice of counsellors and appointments, as you are able to access the whole counselling team.

**Disadvantages to online counselling**

- Your internet quality can have a big impact on your session. If video isn’t working you have the option or dropping back to audio only or text.
- Typed conversation can be easily misinterpreted. You might not be able to express or explain how you are feeling, or describe your situation fully. If you are feeling this is the case, seek clarification from your counsellor.
- If typing, the messages can get out of sync. If you feel that you are out of sync with your counsellor let them know, as them to summarise where you are up to and slow down to take turns with messaging.
- Online counselling, especially instant chat, is not suitable in a crisis situation. In a crisis, we recommend seeking immediate support, contacting emergency services on ‘000’, Lifeline on ‘13 11 14’, Mental Health Helpline on 1800 332 388 or the Suicide call-back service on 1300 659 467.

**I need to talk to someone now. Can I message my counsellor outside of our appointment time?**

Unfortunately our counselling team are not able to respond to messages or contact outside of scheduled appointments. If you need more immediate support you can call (1300 511 709) or text (0488 884 168) the after-hours crisis line, or you can call 1800 817 675 or visit [utas.edu.au/appointments](utas.edu.au/appointments) to see if there is an earlier appointment with another counsellor. You might also find it helpful to connect with other student experience supports such as Student Advice, Learning advisers or Course Information Officers.
**What do I need to do to access online counselling?**

Online counselling sessions at the University of Tasmania are offered through Skype or Skype for Business. You can connect with these sessions using Skype or Skype for Business. Skype is a free download and as an enrolled University of Tasmania student you are able to download and use Skype for Business free of charge using your University email and login details.

1. Make sure you have Skype or Skype for Business downloaded to your device. You can do this through your online app store.
2. For video counselling, you will need to make sure your device has operating video and microphone. If you do not have these available you can still have a phone or instant chat session.
3. Make an appointment with a counsellor.
4. When you make an appointment, be sure to mention or select Online Counselling. You will need to provide your skype ID or contact email to ensure your counsellor can connect with you. It is helpful to also provide a phone number (and email) so that your counsellor can get in contact if Skype is not working as planned.
5. You can state whether you would like a video or an instant chat session by adding this to the comments.

**How do I book an online counselling appointment?**

You book an online counselling appointment in the same way you book a regular counselling appointment. There are three ways you can do this:

1. Visit utas.edu.au/appointments and click on ‘Personal Counselling – Online’ under ‘What would you like to talk about’. Select an available appointment at a time that suits you. Select the Skype icon when booking and put your username or email in the Skype Username box. In the comments include whether you would like a video or chat session.
2. Phone 1800 817 675. Tell the operator you want to book a skype counselling appointment.
3. Speak with a U Connect staff member at your nearest U Connect or Student Services location.

**Where do I get Skype or Skype for Business?**

You can download Skype and Skype for Business from your device app store, or if using a home computer, through skype.com/en or the Microsoft Download Centre. It is advisable to do this ahead of your appointment.

**What if I don’t want to download Skype or Skype for Business?**

You can also access your appointment without downloading Skype or Skype for Business by instead using the web app. At the time of booking enter your main email as your Skype ID. In the comments section you will need to state ‘I don’t have Skype’ or ‘Please send me a Skype meeting invite’.

At the time of the appointment you will need to check your email for this meeting invite. At the bottom of this email you will have the option to click Try the Skype Web App and download a small file that will allow you to connect with your counsellor’s Skype for Business appointment booking.

[Join Skype Meeting]

Trouble Joining? Try Skype Web App

Once you have opened the Web App you will be asked to enter your name. Your counsellor will address you by this name during your session. If you do not have a video camera and microphone you can move to chat by selecting the chat icon at the bottom left of the screen.

This icon will open up the chat window.

> utas.edu.au/students
Checklist for a video counselling session
- A device for use during your appointment (PC, Mac, or smartphone).
- An internet connection.
- Video camera connected to or incorporated in my device.
- Microphone connected to or incorporated in my device.
- Skype or Skype for Business downloaded, installed and signed in before my appointment OR I will contact counsellor ahead of my appointment and use the web app link from my meeting email.
- A private space that I can sit and talk during my meeting (no other people around) and where I won’t be interrupted.

Checklist for instant messaging counselling session
- A device for use during your appointment (PC, Mac, or smartphone).
- An internet connection.
- A keyboard connected to my device to allow me to type my thoughts and comments to my counsellor.
- Skype or Skype for Business downloaded, installed and logged in on my device before my appointment OR I will contact counsellor ahead of my appointment and will use the web app link from my meeting email.
- A private space that I can sit and text or type during my meeting (where people can’t read your screen) and where I won’t be interrupted.

It is my appointment time and I am logged in, now what?
Your counsellor will use the information you have provided (your Skype username, your email address or failing that, your phone number) to connect with you at the time of your appointment.

You will receive a contact request or a message from your counsellor at the time of your appointment. You will need to reply to this message so that your counsellor can then continue with the counselling session.

If you have elected to use the web app your counsellor will send you an email sometime up to the start of your appointment and meet you in the online meeting space that they have created for you.

I have video but I can’t hear anything
- Check to make sure your volume is turned up and is not muted.
- Check to make sure your device is not linked to a Bluetooth audio device such as earphones or a speaker. If so, use this or switch off Bluetooth.
- If you are using plug in earphones, try unplugging and re-plugging them into your device.
- If all else fails, switch to text and let your counsellor know (or message with your number and switch to a phone call).

I have audio but only a frozen (or no) picture
- Check your wifi or internet connection. If you have little reception, try moving to a space where you have better reception.
- For slower connections you might need to switch to audio only. Alternatively, you can move to instant chat.

I am using the Web App and have joined the meeting but no one else is there
- Double check your appointment time. You were sent an email to your utas account when you booked your appointment. You can also log on to AppointmentHub at utas.edu.au/appointments and check your appointment details there.
- You will be able to log into this space at any time, but your counsellor will only be present at the time of your appointment.
- Check your email. In the unlikely instance of your counsellor being unwell or unexpectedly absent from work you will receive a phone call or an email notifying you of your cancellation.
- Call 1800 817 675 and explain your situation for more support.

This all seems too hard
You can switch across to a phone counselling session at any time, even once you have started your appointment. If your counsellor is having trouble connecting with you online they will attempt to contact you via phone. Please make sure you have included your current phone number.

If you can’t get things to work for your appointment or there are other issues, you can contact 1800 817 675 during your appointment time and let the operator know which counsellor you are expecting to meet with.

> utas.edu.au/students