Distance Counselling

To help prevent the spread of Coronavirus and ensure support remains available to those in need, we have changed all of our counselling appointments to distance appointments.

How can I connect to a counselling appointment?

Students can book counselling appointments in the same way they have always done. There are three ways to connect:

1. Visit [utas.edu.au/appointments](http://utas.edu.au/appointments) and click on ‘Personal Counselling’ under ‘What would you like to talk about’. Make sure you see all appointments by selecting “Any” under practitioner and campus. Select an available appointment at a time that suits you. For an online appointment select the Skype icon (as shown below) when booking and put your 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.

What do I need to do to access distance counselling?

Online counselling sessions at the University of Tasmania are offered through Zoom. Phone counselling sessions involve a counsellor phoning you at the time of your appointment.

1. Make an appointment with a counsellor (see previous).
2. You will need internet coverage / wifi at the time of your appointment.
3. You will need a device to access your appointment (laptop, smartphone or local mobile or landline)
4. You need to have a private space where you are free to talk openly with your counsellor at the time of appointment. Please note, environments such as libraries, bus stops, communal kitchens and shared lounge rooms are not considered private space.
5. 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 an instant chat session or switch to phone counselling.
6. It is helpful to also provide a phone number (and email) in the comments section so that your counsellor can get in contact things are not working as planned.
7. If you select online counselling (rather than phone) you can state whether you would like a video or an instant chat session by adding this to the comments.

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 can access counselling whilst in isolation,
• You have a greater choice of counsellors and appointment times, 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 they 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](http://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.

**It is my appointment time, now what?**

Your counsellor will use the information you have provided (your email address or failing that, your phone number) to connect with you at the time of your appointment.

For online counselling, you will receive an email from your counsellor to the email address you provided (or your student email if you have not provided an alternative) at the time of your appointment with a link. When you click on the link you will then connect with your counsellor. When you join the meeting be sure to select “connect with audio”.

**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.
- Refresh my email inbox at my appointment time to access counsellor email and meeting link.
- 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.
- Refresh my email inbox at my appointment time to access counsellor email and meeting link.
- 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.

**Checklist for phone counselling session**

- A device for use during your appointment – Australian mobile phone or landline.
- Phone reception.
- A private space that I can sit and talk during my meeting (no other people around) and where I won’t be interrupted.

**I have video but I can’t hear anything**

- Check to make sure there isn’t a notification about joining with audio that you have missed.
- Check 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.

> [utas.edu.au/students](http://utas.edu.au/students)
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**
- Try switching your camera off and on again. You can do that by clicking "stop video" and "start video" at the bottom left of your zoom window.
- 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 by turning off your video. Alternatively, you can move to instant chat.

**Free counselling support from services other than the University Counselling Service**
There are a number of great services available at a distance in the community. We’ve collated a list of some of these services and listed them in alphabetical order. Some services have expertise with particular issues or presentations so we have included that information below.
- **1800Respect** offers confidential counselling, information and support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. The website includes an online chat service. Phone 1800 737 732 24 hours / 7 days a week.
- **BeyondBlue** aims to increase awareness of depression and anxiety and reduce stigma. Beyond Blue also offers online and phone support. Call 1300 22 4656, 24 hours / 7 days a week.
- **Butterfly Foundation’s National Helpline, ED HOPE,** is a free, confidential service that provides information, counselling and treatment referral for people with eating disorders, and body image and related issues. Call 1800 33 4673, 8am-midnight.
- **Family Violence Counselling & Support Service (Tas)** provides information, counselling and support for children, young people and adults affected by family violence. Call 1800 608 122.
- **Headspace** provides mental health and wellbeing support for people under 25 and their families, including information, support and health services. Call 1800 650 890, 9am-1am AEST / 7 days a week.
- **Lifeline** provides 24-hour crisis counselling and suicide prevention services. Call 13 11 14.
- **Mensline Australia** is a professional telephone and online support and information service for Australian men. Call 1300 78 99 78, 24 hours / 7 days a week.
- **Mental Health Helpline** is a 24/7 phone line staffed by clinicians. It is a point of contact and referral to Mental Health Services for assessment and treatment. Call 1800 332 388 (Tas) or (03) 6166 6333 (interstate).
- **MindSpot** is a free telephone and online service for people with stress, worry, anxiety, low mood or depression. It provides online assessment and treatment for anxiety and depression, and can help you find local services. Call 1800 61 44 34, 8am-8pm (Mon-Fri), 8am-6pm (Sat).
- **Moodym** is an online self-help program and app aimed to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. moodym.com.au
- **Parentline** is a phone counselling service to assist parents of children aged 0-5 years, with stressful parenting issues or concerns. Phone 1300 808 178
- **QLife** provides nationwide telephone and web-based services to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people of all ages. Call 1800 184 527, 3pm-12am (midnight) AEST / 7 days a week.
- **ReachOut** is an online support space for young people, providing information, resources and support around mental health issues. au.reachout.com
- **SANE Australia** provides support, training and education enabling those with a mental illness to lead a better life. Call 1800 18 7263, 10am-10pm AEST (Mon-Fri).
- **Suicide Call Back Service** provides 24/7 online and phone counselling if you or someone you know is feeling suicidal. Call 1300 659 467.

**I am not feeling well. Are there medical services available from a distance?**
For medical advice 24/7 you can call the free, government-funded national medical helpline on 1800 022 222.

If you suspect you have Coronavirus (COVID-19) you are advised to call the Public Health Hotline on:
- Tasmania: 1800 671 738
- NSW: 1800 022 222
- National Coronavirus Health Information Line: 1800 020 080

While the University of Tasmania does not run its own medical facility, there are medical services in close proximity to each campus location. We’ve collated a list of these which you can access from the student resources page at utas.edu.au/students/resources and by looking at “Medical Help Near Me” in the support directory section. If you have symptoms of cold or flu please contact the medical clinic ahead of your arrival so they can minimise risk to others.

> utas.edu.au/students