

We're here to help.

## Information for Family Members of First Time University Students

The decision to attend university affects not only the prospective student but their family as well. Whether you are the parent, partner or other family member of a new uni student, this fact sheet is designed to give you some basic information about what to expect at a tertiary level and to help you understand the importance of your role in the student's success. Recognise that the University is covered by privacy laws and specific information about a student cannot be released without that student's permission. This could be both a challenging and potentially rewarding period in your relationship!

For more detailed information about the issues raised in this fact sheet you may want to access some of the resources directed to students:

- Fact sheets such as Preparing For UTAS and Starting at UTAS – the new student in your family can get access to printed copies or you can download them from the Support and Equity website at: [www.support-equity.utas.edu.au](http://www.support-equity.utas.edu.au)
- Visit the First Year at UTAS website for a host of information relevant to you as you start uni: [www.firstyear.utas.edu.au](http://www.firstyear.utas.edu.au)
- The Student Centre Hotline on 1300 361 928 can provide a wealth of information about the practical side of uni entrance and survival, as can the administrative staff at a particular school or faculty office. Just ask!

### COUNT THE COST

Although potentially one of the most rewarding life experiences, the decision to enter tertiary education comes at a financial and social cost not just for the student, but the entire family. Clarifying these issues early is vital in avoiding unnecessary confusion, hurt and frustration within the family later on.

#### **Financial costs**

- Course costs – HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) fees are charged at different rates depending on your selection of subjects. For more information, ring the Australian Taxation Office HECS enquiries number 132 861, visit the [www.goingtouni.gov.au](http://www.goingtouni.gov.au) website, or go to [www.futurestudents.utas.edu.au](http://www.futurestudents.utas.edu.au) and click on 'Costs & scholarships'.

- Textbooks and materials – can be a significant cost depending on the course studied. There are short cuts and ways of ‘making do’ but most units will require at least a basic access to these.
- Information technology – access to an appropriate computer terminal, software, printing facility and the Internet is now essential for students. While the uni provides most of this on a 24-hour basis, students find it far better to have a computer of their own and Internet access at home.
- Accommodation – on or close to campus may be required depending on the type of course or mode studied. This may be the first time your student has moved out of home and so the cost of setting up a house/flat or living in a uni residence needs careful consideration. Those courses requiring on-campus attendance are sometimes structured so that the majority of class time is grouped together, for the convenience of those who need to travel to where they live or work. Not all courses are structured this way and students may need at least short-term accommodation for several nights of the week.
- Practical placements – some units require students to travel to locations around the state to fulfil practical placements as part of their assessment. This can mean several weeks away from home at a time. Sometimes this will involve further accommodation and travel expenses for the student. Information about such placements will be available from the relevant school.

### Social costs

- Demands on time – the usual tasks expected of the student around the home may need to be re-examined. Their study time will be ‘open-ended’ and it may take them some time to adjust to what is expected of them in

assessment. Certain times of the year will be more demanding than others and will require greater focus on their study. The quieter times may not always correspond to family commitments or the pursuit of other social engagements. This is a constant factor that needs negotiating in the family so that resentment and frustration does not build.

- Changes in family roles and expectations – sometimes families are thrown into confusion and turmoil when a member starts uni studies. They may seem to be around more but not as available. They may appear to always have study on their mind, be under pressure, or struggling to adjust to their new environment. They may no longer be the ‘bread-winner’ of the family, the ‘domestic engineer’ or the ‘youngest child’. They may be making decisions that their parents would normally make, or choosing options for themselves that appear unhelpful or unrealistic. They may not even be consulting you anymore regarding their decisions! If a partner; their interaction with children in the family, or their role as primary carer may change. Discussing these changes as, or before they develop will help to smooth the transition for the entire family.

### WHAT DO THEY REALLY DO ALL DAY?

A typical day at uni depends on the course the student is undertaking. Courses based on the sciences will require higher numbers of contact hours (class times); while Humanities based courses usually require fewer contact hours but have more extensive reading and out of hours research. The only time any attendance is recorded is during tutorial or practical classes as these are smaller groups. Students are encouraged to attend lectures which can be conducted in class sizes of over 300. Students have some flexibility to build their own timetables for the week around their needs and learning goals, but this is limited by the requirements of each unit.

Learning is essentially self-directed requiring the student to carefully manage their time, commitments, priorities and learning goals. With the increasing flexibility of course delivery (via Internet and distance-based media), students may have several options in how they undertake their study. Reading lists are often extensive and small group learning is generally encouraged. Academics are available as resources to students for their learning needs. Academics are not the same as the teachers that students were used to during their primary and secondary schooling – they expect students to take the initiative in researching prescribed topics and asking for help when required.

### Examples of a typical uni day

#### Humanities Student

9 - 9.50am	History lecture
10 - 12noon	Library research
Noon - 1pm	Lunch with a friend in the History Society and planning for next Society event
1.10 - 3pm	Sociology lecture
3.10 - 4pm	Tutorial for English Literature
4 - 5pm	Relax at Uni. Bar
5 - 7pm	Library research

#### Science Student

9 - 9.50am	Chemistry lecture
10 - 10.50am	Maths lecture
11 - 11.50am	Physics lecture
12 - 12.15pm	Lunch in Caf
12.15 - 1.00pm	Work on group assignment in learning hub of library
1.10 - 4pm	Geography practical
4 - 5pm	Attend session at Uni. Gym
5 - 8pm	Work on individual assignments in Lab

### HOW DO I KNOW IF THEY ARE ACHIEVING?

As a family member you will only know what the student tells you! Gone are the days of written or verbal reports sent home about the student's progress. In many courses even the students may be struggling to get a clear sense of how they are performing as some units require only one major piece of assessment per semester which may not be due until the end of the semester. What is expected in a unit's assessment should be very clear from the start of the semester. The Unit Outline will discuss all these issues in depth and is given to students in their first week of lectures.

Sometimes things go wrong and students struggle to complete work required by the due date. It is important that they talk with their lecturers/tutors as early as possible so that arrangements can be made. This can potentially avoid unnecessary penalties for overdue work. Encouraging them to take the initiative to get help when required is a vital role in supporting them at uni.

### THEY DON'T SEEM SURE ABOUT THEIR COURSE – WHAT DO I DO?

It is a common experience that students start a uni course and then find it is not for them for a variety of reasons. The uni semester is structured so that changes to enrolments can occur up until the relevant census date without financial penalty. (Go to: [www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/enrolments/all\\_students/census\\_dates.html](http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/enrolments/all_students/census_dates.html) to check the relevant census dates). This gives students time to consider their course and their ability to manage the pressures it creates. Support is available to them in considering their course options, career plans and future goals via Recruitment Student Advisers at Student Centre or through their lecturers. Encouraging them to access these as required is often helpful. Students regularly choose to move from full-time to part-time status (it is important to check the implications of this for Centrelink benefits), change their mix of units, rearrange practicum placements, or defer exams based on a range of circumstances. While these

things are not guaranteed, the options are at least available and can be negotiated on an individual basis. Support the student, encourage them and give them time and space to make the necessary decisions about future study goals. Maintaining a healthy, trusting relationship with them will go a long way in ensuring that their needs and the needs of the family are met.

## SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Students have access to a wide range of support on campus. Support and Equity can help cater for personal counselling needs, career and employment planning and the needs of students with disabilities of any sort. In Hobart there is a University Doctors Surgery and Travel Clinic available on campus. Information technology support is widely available as is a range of academic skill development resources. The social needs of students are also catered for in a variety of ways and students can choose to be as involved in these activities and organisations as they want.

Knowing these services exist is the first step to encouraging your student to find out how to access what they have to offer. If your student is experiencing difficulty, contact Support and Equity on the numbers below for information on who to talk to, or to access support for their specific need.

### **Hobart**

Student Union Building, Top Floor  
Phone: 6226 2697

### **Launceston**

Kerslake Student Centre, Ground Floor  
Phone: 6324 3787

### **Cradle Coast**

Mooreville Road, Burnie  
Phone: 6430 4949

## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Finding out about your student's new life will take time and trust on your part. There are some resources available directly to you in this process:

- UTAS Future Students website [www.futurestudents.utas.edu.au](http://www.futurestudents.utas.edu.au) – click on the 'Parents' link.
- Uni Open Days – an annual event held at all 3 campuses during August. Dates for Open Days are advertised in papers and other media.
- Excursions to uni with your family member – choose to spend a day with them and see first-hand what their new life is like. You are welcome on campus!