



The Preparatory Studies Centre

STUDENT Handbook





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WELCOME

Dear Students,

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we extend our warmest congratulations on your acceptance to UTAS. We are delighted to welcome you to the Preparatory Studies Centre, offering a General Foundation Program in English Language, Mathematics, and Computing Skills. May the blessings of Allah illuminate your path with happiness and open the doors to success throughout your academic journey.

As you embark on this exciting chapter of your life, we are pleased to present the Handbook of the General Foundation Program (GFP). This comprehensive guide has been meticulously crafted to provide you with all the essential information you need during your study of the English language, Mathematics, and Computing Skills.

Within the pages of this handbook, you will find details about the program's structure, academic skills, assessment systems, and various aspects of college life. We encourage you to explore its contents thoroughly, as it serves as a valuable resource to help you navigate and make the most of your time here at UTAS.

Our dedicated faculty and staff are committed to supporting you in every step of your educational journey, and we are confident that your time with us will be marked by personal growth, academic achievement, and memorable experiences.

Wishing you all the best for a bright and successful future. May your pursuit of knowledge be fulfilling and rewarding.

Welcome to UTAS!

Sincerely,

The PSC Team, UTAS



STUDENT INDUCTION

An induction is a crucial orientation process designed to help you settle into your new environment smoothly. It provides you with essential information about the institution, your course, and the resources available to support your learning journey.

UTAS Student Induction Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure you're fully prepared for your first week and beyond.

Student Orientation Week Checklist

- **Campus Tour.**
- **Welcome Pack:** Collect your student ID, maps, and other essential information.
- **Set Up Student Accounts:** Activate your student email and online portal access to CIMS.
- **Orientation Session:** Attend the main orientation session to meet university staff and get an overview of what to expect.
- **Placement/Entry tests:** Attend placement tests for English, Math and Computing Skills or give your skill certificates. UTAS accepts Academic IELTS or TOEFL iBT for English and ICDL for computing skills. IC3 is also accepted, if taken at a UTAS branch.
- **Meet your academic advisor.**
- **Familiarize yourself with CIMS self-registration.**
- **Class Timetable:** When the test results are confirmed, you can collect and review your class timetable. This can be collected from Registration or accessed on CIMS.
- **IT Services:** Ensure your devices are connected to the university Wi-Fi and understand how to access online resources.

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- **Teaching and Learning Resources:** Students should take a tour of all PSC teaching and learning resources.
 - **Student Services:** Visit the student services center to learn about support services available, including counseling, career advice, and extracurricular activities.
 - **Social Events:** Participate in social events and activities organized for new students.
 - **Explore Clubs and Societies:** Explore the clubs and societies to explore extracurricular opportunities and sign up for those of interest.

Essential Student Success Checklist

- ✓ Check Emails Regularly: Keep up with important updates and communications from the university.
- ✓ Check Attendance: Keep up with your absenteeism percentage and understand the rules highlighted in this handbook.
- ✓ Stay Organized: Use a planner or digital calendar to keep track of classes, assignments, and events.
- ✓ Build Connections: Engage with classmates, join study groups and participate in clubs or extracurricular activities.

ABOUT UTAS AND ITS HISTORY

By virtue of the Royal Decree (76/2020), the former Colleges of Technology (CoT), the former Colleges of Applied Science (CAS), and the former Rustaq College of Education were merged under a single umbrella to form a university, thus, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

With the increasing number of students, UTAS has emerged as the largest university in the Sultanate of Oman.



Merger

The merger of these former colleges was motivated by the Oman Vision 2040 with focus on the National Strategy for Education 2040, Scientific Research Strategy, and the Innovation Strategy, keeping abreast with the modern challenges, priorities, and needs.



Student Population

The student population at UTAS has significantly increased over the years. Students registered in the Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor levels, are taking a wide range of specializations in the fields of Pharmacy, Engineering, Applied Sciences, Business Studies, IT and many more!



History of CoT

The Colleges of Technology (CoTs) were established in 1984 and originally had 7 branches. It was known as Oman Technical Industrial College, established in 1984 at the initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said to educate the citizens of Oman by implementing high-quality programs in various fields.



History of CAS

The Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) evolved from 1995 as educational institutes, later becoming education colleges and finally were a group of thirteen public colleges with six campuses. These colleges were established in 2007. Notably, prior to the colleges' establishment, some of the colleges operated as teaching colleges which offered two-year degrees to future teachers.

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

To lead in technological and applied education, contributing to the development of a sustainable and knowledge-based society.

Mission

To build competitive and innovative capabilities by providing a stimulating environment and effective engagement with community and industry to promote excellence in learning, research, and innovation.

Values

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Collaboration
- Loyalty and Identity
- Diversity and Inclusion

Branches



Muscat Branch



Nizwa Branch



Ibri Branch



Salalah Branch



Shinas Branch



Musandam Branch



Ibra Branch



Ruslq College of Education



Suhar Branch



Al Musanaa Branch



Sur Branch

PSC

What is PSC?

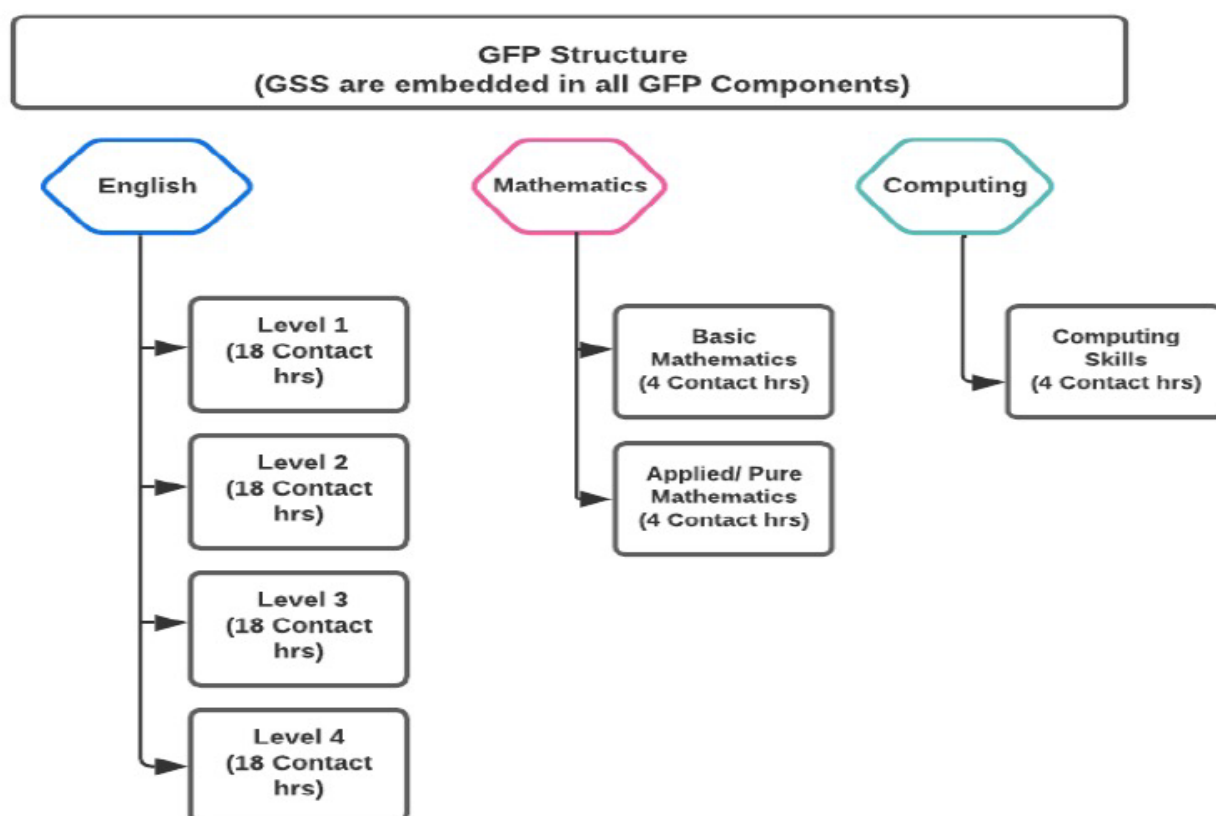
The Preparatory Studies Center (PSC) is an educational entity within the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) that caters to newly joined students in all eleven UTAS branches across Oman. Each center consists of three important units— English Language Curriculum and Assessment, Math and Computing Skills Curriculum and Assessment, and General Requirements. Through these units, the PSCs ensure that our students are well equipped for their academic journey. An endeavor that can be achieved by:

First, striving for our students' academic development which can only be accomplished by cultivating a student-centered learning environment. Thus, we are committed to providing a wide set of innovative programs, diversified resources and services to guarantee that all our students enjoy a holistic transformative educational experience.

Second, facilitating our students' successful and smooth transition from being new students to joining their career programs. We believe that our responsibility towards our students does not only encompass the preparatory phase, but it also extends to empowering them with the skills required for their future careers. The introduction and integration of extracurricular activities and community service programs to students learning experience, play an essential role in instilling self-direction and achievement values like independence, passion for learning and the drive for continuous self-improvement.

OVERVIEW OF THE GFP

In September and January, new students join the General Foundation Program (GFP) before enrolling in the specializations offered by the branches of UTAS. The General Foundation Program is an intensive program encompassing three components: English language, Mathematics and Computing Skills. The General Study Skills (GSS) component is embedded within these three components.



The English Language courses have been structured into four ability levels. Students may enroll in any of the three Mathematics courses whenever they meet the pertinent entry requirements. Students who pass Level 2 English course may enroll in the Computing Skills course in Level 3. If a student is suspended from the English component before reaching level 3, s/he must enroll in the Computing Skills course in the subsequent semester. The GSS are embedded in the teaching of the other three GFP study areas and assessed through CA components. The GFP structure is flexible as it is designed to offer all GFP courses every semester to meet the needs of all the students.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE



GFP English comprises **four levels**, elementary to upper intermediate level. Each level requires **one semester** for completion, with instruction provided for **18 hours per week**. The breakdown of content for each level is presented in the table below:



Every GFP English course encompasses the development of four primary skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, each course includes instruction in grammar and general study skills, equipping students for advancement to higher levels, further academic pursuits, and future professional endeavors. These competencies are outlined as learning outcomes in the Course Outlines provided at the commencement of each course.

Content Breakdown:

Skill/Level	Reading and Writing	Listening and Speaking	Project and Presentation	Number of hours per week
Level 1	10	8		18
Level 2	10	8		18
Level 3	10	8		18
Level 4	8	7	3	18

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PLACEMENT TEST

During the initial week of enrollment, students undergo an English Placement Test to ascertain their English language level. This test is administered either electronically or on paper, consisting of 100 multiple-choice questions. Comprised of 60 questions on English grammar and usage, and 40 on reading and vocabulary, the test must be completed within 75 minutes.

Highflyers

Students who score greater than or equal to 78 in the English Placement Test are identified as high-flyers. These high-flyers need to score greater than or equal to 70 in the English Waiver Test to be exempted from taking English courses; otherwise, they will have to study Level 4 English Course.

English Placement Validation Test

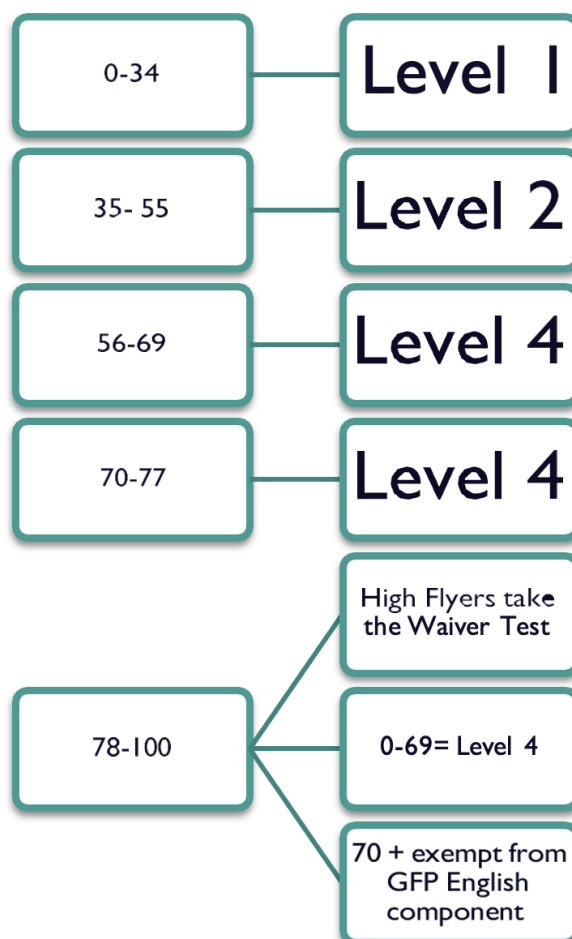
During the initial two weeks of the semester, instructors can identify students in Levels 1, 2, and 3 who demonstrate language proficiency exceeding their current placement. This serves as an opportunity for students to advance to a higher level.

Alternative Pathways

For students proficient in English, an alternative pathway exists via presenting an IELTS certificate that allows them to bypass GFP English courses. The equivalencies are outlined in the table below:

Diploma	IELTS Band 4.5 or above (with no component lower than 4)	TOEFL iBT score 56 (with no component lower than 13)
Advanced Diploma		
Bachelor	IELTS Band 5 or above (with no component lower than 4.5)	TOEFL iBT score 64+ (with no component lower than 15)

Entry Standards



ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE ASSESSMENT



Assessment

Each English course incorporates various forms of assessment. Throughout the duration of the course, students' performance is evaluated based on classwork, homework, grammar and vocabulary quizzes, portfolio submissions, and other assignments. Additionally, there are **two formal exams** held per semester: one Mid-term Examination in week 7 and one Final Examination in week 16 and 17.

The allocation of marks for these assessments is outlined in the table provided below:

Assessments	Continuous Assessment (CA)		FE	Total
	Other	MTE		
All Levels	20	30	50	100

Other continuous assessment (CA) in Levels 1, 2, and 3 comprise quizzes, story or news reviews, story review presentations, teacher evaluations, and student portfolios. Further details regarding these assessments can be located in the **Assessment Booklets** provided at the commencement of each course.

In Level 4, other continuous assessment (CA) consists of a quiz, a project report, a presentation, and teacher evaluations. More information on these assessments is available in the **Assessment Booklets** provided at the commencement of each course.



Passing Criteria

To progress through each level of English in GFP, students must minimally meet the following criteria:

- Attain a score of 25 out of 50 in the Final Exam.
- Achieve an accumulative/total score of 50 out of 100.
- Maintain an attendance rate of at least 85% in classes.

Failure to fulfill any one of these three requirements will result in either repeating the level or withdrawal from the GFP program.



Assessment

Students are granted a single opportunity to retake any level they fail within the duration of their studies in the General Foundation Program. However, if a student achieves a cumulative/total mark of 50 or higher in the semester, with a final mark of 25 or above, s/he may progress to the next consecutive level, as illustrated in the table below:

	<i>CA (50)</i>	<i>FE (50)</i>	<i>Cumulative Mark (100) (CA+FE)</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Result</i>
Student 1	25	25	50	D	Pass
Student 2	40	20	60	F	Fail
Student 3	21	40	61	C-	Pass

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Level 4

GFP Level 4 students at UTAS who have successfully met the GFP Exit standards may conditionally be admitted to one of the chosen degree program's three academic levels (Diploma, Advanced Diploma, or Bachelor). The pertinent academic level shall initially be determined based on the student's performance in Level 4/ELPT (Cumulative Mark/Final Mark) or the Academic IELTS bands or TOEFL iBT as shown in the table below:

Academic Level	Level 4 Final / ELPT Cumulative Final Mark	IELTS Band	TOEFL iBT Score
Diploma	50-61	4.5 (with no component lower than 4)	56 (with no component lower than 13)
Advanced Diploma	62-69		
Bachelor	70-100	greater than or equal to 5 (with no component lower than 4.5)	greater than or equal to 64 (with no component lower than 15)

MATHEMATICS



GFP Mathematics

There are two mathematics courses offered to students at all levels. Each course takes one semester to complete and is taught over 4 hours per week. Whether a student takes Applied Math or Pure Math depends on their chosen specialization as these courses are catered to be most applicable for students during their future studies. See the table below:

Course	Number of hours per week per course
Basic Mathematics	4
Applied/Pure Mathematics	4



Aims

The aim is to equip students with the essential mathematical understanding and skills essential for meeting the cognitive and practical demands of postsecondary or higher education across diverse disciplines. These skills are detailed as learning outcomes in the Course Outline, which will be provided at the beginning of each course.



Placement Tests

The Math Placement Test is conducted in the initial week of enrollment and students are required to undertake the Mathematics Placement Test (MPT). This assessment is designed to determine the appropriate academic level for the student's enrollment.

The Placement Test is administered either electronically or on paper and consists of 30 multiple-choice questions. Based on their MPT scores, students are assigned to either Basic Mathematics or Applied/Pure Mathematics courses. Scores below 50% place students in Basic Mathematics, while scores above 50% place them in Applied/Pure Mathematics depending on the students' specialization. Students scoring above 80% on the MPT are eligible to take the Pure and Applied Mathematics Waiver test



GFP MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT

In each Mathematics course, various forms of assessment are utilized. Over the duration of the course, students will undergo evaluation through quizzes, assignments, self-study tasks, and more. Additionally, two formal exams are scheduled per semester: a Mid-term Examination in week 7 and a Final Examination in week 16 and 17.

The distribution of marks for these assessments is outlined in the table provided below:

Continuous Assessment	Midterm Exam	20%
	Other Assessment	30%
Final Exam		50%
Total		100%

Passing Criteria

In order to advance to Pure or Applied Mathematics, students must attain at least 50% of the total marks in Basic Mathematics.

Students who score more than 80% on their first time regular study of Basic Mathematics course are eligible to take the Mathematics Challenge Test. Those who score 50% and above are exempted from studying Pure or Applied Math.

COMPUTING SKILLS



The Computing Skills Course consists of a single level, which requires one semester for completion. Classes are conducted for a total of four hours per week, as illustrated in the table provided below:

Course	Number of hours per week per course
Computing Skills	4

Aims

To develop the student's understanding of Information Technology and the acquisition of essential skills in computing in preparation for their postsecondary or higher education studies in a variety of disciplines. These skills are listed as learning outcomes in the Course Outline you will receive when you start each course.

Computing Skills Entry Test

During the initial week of enrollment, students are required to take the Computing Skills Entry Test, a mandatory assessment for all new university entrants. This test is designed to evaluate students' proficiency in computing skills.

The assessment comprises of two parts, with passing Part 1 being a prerequisite for proceeding to Part 2. Successful completion of both parts exempts students from the Computing Skills course. However, students who fail Part 1 or pass Part 1 but not Part 2 will be enrolled in the Computing Skills course.

Alternative Pathways

Students can waive the Computing Skills Entry Test and the associated course requirement by presenting a valid IT proficiency certificate: the ICDL. The IC3 certificate is also acceptable if taken at UTAS branch centers.

COMPUTING SKILLS ASSESSMENT

GFP Computing Skills

There are several forms of assessment in the GFP Computing Skills course. Throughout the course students are assessed on quizzes, assignments, self-study and more. There are three exams in the semester. Test 1 in week 7, Test 2 in week 14 and the Final Examination in week 16 and 17.

The distribution of marks for these assessments is detailed in the table below:

Assessment Marks Details	Labs	Group Activity	Self-Learning Activity + Presentation	Test - 1	Test - 2	Final Exam	Total
Modules Covered	Module 1,2,3,5	Module 4	Module 4 & 5	Module 1,2,3	Module 5	All Modules	All Modules
Total	15 Marks	5 Marks	10 Marks	10 Marks	10 Marks	50	100 Marks

Passing Criteria

To successfully pass the Computing Skills course, students must attain a minimum of 50% of the total marks.

GFP Grading Scale

The grades to be awarded shall be classified as the following:

Grade Point	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
Score x/100	95-100	90-94	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	00-49

ACADEMIC POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Attendance

Attendance is compulsory for GFP students in all the curricular components and attendance shall be taken at the beginning of each lecture. Students shall be marked “Absent” if they arrive late to class. Warning notices will be issued according to the criteria shown in the table. If a student exceeds the allowed absenteeism percentage with a valid excuse, the student shall be debarred from the Final Exam and awarded a W in that component. If the student exceeds the allowed percentages without a valid excuse, he/she shall be debarred from the Final Exam and shall be awarded an (FW) grade in the relevant GFP course only.

Notice Percentage	Course
15%	English
20%	Mathematics
20%	Computing Skills
Types of Withdrawals	
FW= No valid excuses	W= With valid excuses

Academic Calendar

Annually, the university releases an academic calendar, accessible online at www.utas.edu.om.

Academic Integrity

UTAS is dedicated to upholding the utmost standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct in scientific research for both faculty and students. The branch administration will intervene if any instances of plagiarism are detected. Violations of academic integrity will result in consequences that may lead to the student being debarred from the university. The procedure is outlined in UTAS integrity Policy.

Types of Plagiarism (SAMPLES)

1. Copying all or part of what was written by someone else without documenting the source.
2. Quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing any text that belongs to another person without documenting the source.
3. Copying and pasting text from any source, whether in print or electronically without proper reference or citation.
4. Submitting teamwork as if it is personal work.
5. Submitting work done by someone else as personal work.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Student Code of Conduct

UTAS strives for excellence and expects all students to abide by the code of conduct.

1. To treat all members of the university staff and students with respect, consideration and politeness.
2. To avoid damage to or misuse of all buildings, equipment and fittings.
3. To always bring the university ID.
4. To attend classes according to the timetable.
5. To make every effort to meet the deadlines set for submitted work.
6. To read and follow all safety instructions provided on all premises of the university.
7. To wear decent dress according to Islamic requirements and maintain an appropriate appearance.
8. To avert the use of mobile phones during classes.
9. To never smoke on university property.
10. To never disrupt the smooth administration of any examination, either individually or in association with others.
11. To never disturb another class when it is in session.

Student Classroom Etiquette

All UTAS students are expected to:

1. Be on time for all classes. If you are late for class, you will be marked absent. A grace period of up to ten minutes is tolerated for the 8 A.M. class only.
2. Come prepared with stationery. It is your responsibility to bring the equipment you need to class.
3. Arrive eager to learn. Teaching and learning are a mutual process.
4. Respect your teachers. If any issues arise, follow the correct procedures.
5. Respect your fellow students. Bullying of any kind is not accepted.
6. Respect all books and equipment you use owned by the university. It is not allowed to write in the textbooks supplied to you.





CAMPUS FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Advising

Each student is designated a staff member to be their advisor throughout their studies here at UTAS.

Tutoring Services

Each campus has a Help Centre where teachers can support students with extra academic assistance.

Facilities

Each campus has its own unique characteristics stemming from size and historical background. However, UTAS is committed to fostering unity across all branches to provide students with a consistent and equitable experience regardless of their location. Examples of facilities available include libraries, information systems, educational technology centers, help centers, writing centers, self-access computer labs, smart boards, projectors, publishers, and more.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are important in university life, helping students develop skills like collaboration and teamwork. Each campus offers different activities based on its resources. UTAS tries to offer similar activities across all campuses, so every student has equal opportunities. Examples include the English Club, Debate Club, sports teams, and Drama Club. If you have a specific interest, get involved or talk to staff about starting it if it's not available.

Online Platforms

Each student is allocated a UTAS email account via Outlook, enabling access to OneDrive and Teams. Additionally, they are allocated accounts for other platforms such as Moodle, LearnSmart, CIMS and MyELT.

Accessibility

Ensuring accessibility for all abilities is a continual goal across all UTAS branches. If you encounter any challenges regarding accessibility for yourself or fellow students, please don't hesitate to reach out to student services at the respective branch. Your feedback is crucial in helping us address any issues promptly.

Counselling and Mental Health

On each campus, there is a dedicated onsite counselor available to support students. We encourage you to seek assistance if you ever feel it's necessary. Mental health is of utmost importance, and we urge you to open up about your concerns to the professionals provided and to seek help during challenging times.

ESSENTIAL UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES

During your first weeks of university your branch will ensure you have access to the following procedures. By familiarizing yourself with these procedures, you can navigate university life more smoothly and effectively. If you have any of the following questions and need further assistance, please contact the relevant department, center, or office at your branch for the procedures.

What to Do if You Are Sick?

What to Do if You Are Sick for an Exam or Assessment?

What to Do if You Are Absent from Class?

What to Do if Your Absenteeism Goes Over the Permitted Allowance?

How to Report a Health and Safety Issue?

How to Make an Academic Appeal?

How to Make a Complaint or Suggestion?

How to Request a Leave of Absence?

How to Postpone, Transfer or Leave?

How to Request Leave for Extra Curricular Activities?

How to Access Counseling Services?

How to Request Academic Support or Tutoring?

How to Report Special Needs?

How to Report Bullying?

In conclusion, we believe that each student brings unique strengths and perspectives that enrich our collective experience. As you begin your journey with us, remember that your dedication, skills, and enthusiasm are deeply valued and appreciated. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and never underestimate the impact of your contributions. Together, we aim high, so we can achieve remarkable things.

Best wishes for success at UTAS! Your journey here is just beginning, and we are excited to see your achievements and growth. Here's to a fulfilling and rewarding experience ahead.





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The Preparatory Studies Centre
Student Handbook