



PARENTS & SUPPORTERS HANDBOOK



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

STUDENT
LIFE

Orientation, Transition
& Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome Letter from Vice Provost, Students

Dear parents and supporters,

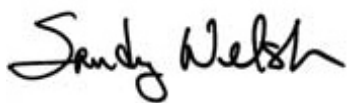
In the years that I've worked as the Vice-Provost Students, one of my favorite times of year is the start of the new school year, when our new students arrive to move-in to residence or to come to campus for the first time for their classes. It's a chance for me to meet our new students and learn more about their plans for their time at U of T. I enjoy hearing about where they grew up, what they were excited about and what they were nervous about.

We know that for many students, the support and encouragement they get from their friends and family can be a very important factor in their ability to succeed, and so we decided to make this resource for anyone with a loved one attending the University of Toronto, St George Campus. It has great information that can help you get to know what programs, services, and resources are available to U of T students, as well as general information about the student experience.

We know the "how-to"s about best supporting your student is on your mind, so we put together what we believe are the most important resources and information for you to assist your student while they journey through this new chapter in their lives. Whether your U of T student is coming straight from high school, transferring, or coming back after many years, this handbook will make it easier for you to navigate the many services, programs, and opportunities to support your student's success and overall well-being.

This handbook is a small step in the development of a more comprehensive suite of resources we are planning for parents and supporters. In the next year we will be rolling out a new website with more information and more resources. These resources are for all students at the St George campus, and you may also find additional information for your UofT student through their local communities. For example, their college, residence, department or faculty may have additional and more specific information that you might find helpful. U of T is a big place with lots of resources and lots of helpful people. I encourage you to encourage your U of T student to connect with our incredible staff and faculty and to take advantage of the available supports early and often.

Sincerely,



Sandy Welsh
Vice Provost, Students

COVID-19

One of the top concerns of family and friends and U of T students is the plan for Fall Semester 2021 on St. George Campus.

In an effort to keep everyone informed, the University of Toronto posts the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases among members of the U of T community. [The Dashboard](#) is updated every Monday (Tuesday after a long weekend) and Thursday.

The COVID-19 situation is changing daily. U of T is planning for a safe, gradual return to campus for fall 2021 and we are hopeful that many in-person activities can resume. As these plans can change according to public health guidance we recommend that you and your student stay up to date with the latest plans by visiting the [UTogether](#) page.



UNDERSTAND U OF T

Make Up of U of T, Colleges and Faculties

The University of Toronto at St. George is the largest University campus in Canada. [With 62,864 students \(43,790 are undergraduates\)](#) and a decentralized administration structure, understanding and navigating U of T can be confusing without some context.

Once your student has been accepted to the University of Toronto, they will be accepted to a Faculty. There are five Faculties at the undergraduate level at U of T that house unique academic programs and communities. The undergraduate Faculties are the Faculty of Arts & Science; Applied Science and Engineering; Architecture, Landscape, and Design; Kinesiology and Physical Education; and Music.

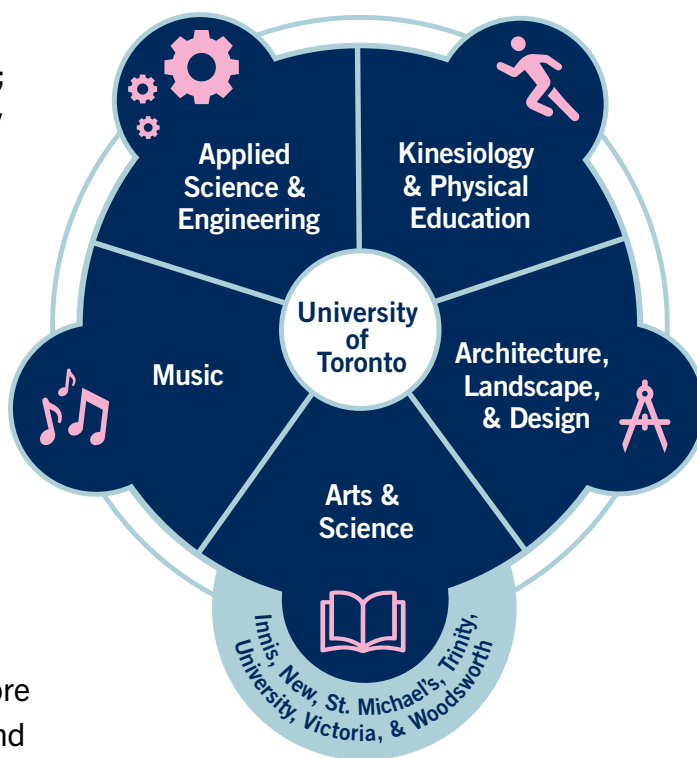
If your student is accepted into the Faculty of Arts & Science, they will also apply to and be accepted into one of the seven Colleges. These Colleges are created to organize and provide direct support to the students in the Faculty of Arts & Science. Each of the seven colleges on the St. George campus is an individual community of scholars and students. Each college has its own culture, and all provide core student services, including academic and financial counselling, accommodation, orientation, scholarships and bursaries and social gatherings. The Colleges include Innis, New, St. Michael's, Trinity, University, Victoria and Woodsworth. To learn more about the College and Faculty system, visit the [Faculty of Arts & Science page](#).

If your student is part of Applied Science and Engineering; Architecture, Landscape, and Design; Kinesiology and Physical Education; or Music, they will be in the community that houses their own student services and opportunities.

Within each Faculty there are several academic departments, these departments provide the classes that make up the Faculty and can have their own unique communities as well.

Everyone enrolled at U of T has access to a host of centralized services and communities, such as Health & Wellness, Housing, student clubs and academic support, for example

If your student has any questions about U of T before beginning their first semester, we highly recommend that they reach out to their [campus or college registrar](#).



Maps

For a comprehensive, interactive map of the University of Toronto, [please visit this page](#) where you can explore all three campuses.

ASKme

Tell your student to look out for the ASKme Ambassadors, once they get to campus. These are experienced students employed and trained at U of T to answer questions about the student experience. While not experts or professional staff members, ASKme ambassadors know how to answer frequently asked questions and how to refer a student to the appropriate resource to best address their question or concern.

Your student can speak with ASKme ambassadors at outdoor information booths stationed throughout the St. George campus September 7 thru 30, 2021.

To learn more about the ASKme program, visit the [ASKme Anything Pop-Up Booths page](#).



PREPARING FOR U OF T

Check List for Family and Friends

Starting an academic career at U of T can be an exciting and nerve-wracking experience — for you and your student. Encourage your student to be their own best advocate at university, and build their own community, but let them know friends and family at home are available to support them too.

From the experience of Family and Friends here is a list of tasks and discussions you may want to work on with your student.

- ❑ Attend a [Family and Friends Orientation](#) to U of T.
- ❑ Understand your student's [privacy rights](#).
- ❑ Establish communication guidelines to stay in touch as your student becomes less reliant on you over time.
- ❑ Create a financial plan and have a discussion about financial expectations.
- ❑ Discuss what success means to each of you and how your student wants to communicate with you about this throughout the year.
- ❑ Take a look at the [Campus Safety](#) page and encourage your student to review it as well.
- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the campus resources so that you can refer your student if needed.
- ❑ Encourage your student to get excited and think about how they are going to tackle their studies and find ways to be involved in the campus community.
- ❑ Ask your student if they have received their Starting Strong calendar to start preparing for Fall. The Starting Strong Calendar is a checklist for your student. It includes lots of ways for your student to set up for success before they get to campus in September. The calendar was mailed to domestic students and emailed to international students. For an electronic copy find the [Start Strong Calendar here](#).



TCard Services

A *TCard* is your student's campus identification and gives your student access to the library, gym and other services. Your student can even carry a cash balance to spend on food, printing and more. To learn more about how you can upload funds to your student's *TCard* as a guest, visit the *TCard* website.

Before your student visits *TCard* Services, they should check that they have the right documents and that their information matches their legal status. International students need a valid study permit. Canadian students must bring proof of citizenship. Once your student's *TCard* is activated, they'll have access to password protected services via their *UTORid* such as the U of T WiFi and *UTmail* email account.

For more information on *TCard* services, visit the *TCard* Services website.

Fees (*Health and Dental Insurance Coverage*)

Your student's invoices for fees, residence and meal plans are available online through *ACORN*, the student online information service. You will not have direct access to their account, but can still make payments on their behalf. You must make payments through a financial institution, via a bank machine, teller, online or by telephone. No payments are accepted on campus and credit-card payments are not accepted.

To find out more about paying fees, such as how to make payments from outside Canada, or about OSAP and other financial aid, [please visit the Fees website.](#)

As a student at the U of T, your student is automatically covered by extended health insurance. This is provided through your student's student union, known as the *University of Toronto Student's Union* (UTSU). Extended health and dental coverage fill any gaps in provincial health care and other basic health-care programs. If your student already has health coverage, they can opt out of Health and Dental coverage, as long as proof of coverage by an equivalent health plan is provided.

For more information on health & dental insurance coverage and opt outs, [visit the UTSU website.](#)

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORTERS

Resources

For a complete list of resources to aid the transition of International Students, please visit [the Centre for International Experience website](#).

Centre for International Experience

[The Centre for International Experience](#) is a meeting place for a diverse community of international students coming to U of T and domestic students looking to go abroad. If your student is an international student, there are some things that they will need to prepare for before they arrive in Toronto -- everything from organizing their travel documents to finding somewhere to live. To check out the center's *Pre-arrival information guide* and *Next Steps Checklist*, [please visit the Pre-Arrival page](#).

Academic and Language Support

As an international student at U of T, your student will encounter many new experiences and challenges. Academic culture can vary greatly from one country to another, and many students need time to adjust to new rules and expectations. Our transition advisors are here to help your student understand how things work at the U of T. The link below will be helpful.

[Learn how to book an appointment
with a CIE transition advisor.](#)

SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT

What to Expect Every Month

We provide this to assist you in supporting your student in making their own choices. It may be helpful to be aware of some of the stresses they may be undergoing throughout the year.

Derived from [The University of British Columbia's Monthly Tips.](#)

SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your student may be experiencing shocks from being in a new place, community and culture.• Your student may be feeling financial pressure, buying textbooks, paying tuition etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some resources that may help: Mentorship & Peer Programs, Financial Aid, Centre for International Experience.
OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your student may be anxious, because of their first set of university mid-terms.• Your student may be excited for Thanksgiving break, or homesick if they are not spending time with others at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your student may be struggling with relationships, friends from before university and new friends and roommates.• Some resources that may help: Health & Wellness, Study Hubs, Academic Success.
NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your student may be stressed as more mid-terms, finals and papers are approaching.• They may feel overwhelmed as they get into the university routine of classes, studying, assignments and more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They may be feeling anxious as their first semester at university is quickly ending.• Some resources that may help: Academic Advising and Support, Get Involved.

DECEMBER

- Your student may be feeling nerves about writing their first final exams.
- Your student may be feeling emotional and physical changes as the weather gets colder.
- For those celebrating holidays involving gift giving, some students may experience financial stresses.
- Some students may be excited to return home for the winter break while others may feel lonely if they cannot return home.
- Some resources that may help: [Health & Wellness, Study Hubs, University of Toronto Library Services.](#)

JANUARY

- Your student may feel excited to start a new term with new classes, but they may also feel anxious as first term grades begin to come back.
- They may be feeling anxious about paying second semester tuition.
- Your student may be beginning the summer job hunt and is experiencing the stress and anxiety that surrounds applying for jobs, interviewing and waiting to hear back.
- Some resources that may help: [U of T Jobs & Recruitment, Get Involved on Campus, Financial Support & Funding Opportunities.](#)

FEBRUARY

- Your student may be excited as Winter Reading Week approaches.
- They may also feel stressed as mid-term exams and assignments approach.
- This is the time where your student may be beginning to think about the Program of Study they would like to enter in the second year. This time could be filled with ensuring their grades and courses meet the requirements.
- As their first year at university is ending soon, your student may be thinking about and exploring off-campus housing opportunities for next year.
- Some resources that may help: [Off- Campus Housing, Career Advising, Academic Advising and Support.](#)

MARCH

- Your student may be feeling extra stressed and overwhelmed academically as mid-terms continue and final assignments and exams approach.
- Your student may also be finalizing their summer plans, this could mean work, travel or leisure plans
- Some resources that may help: [Study Hubs](#), [U of T Jobs & Recruitment](#).

APRIL

- Your student is entering final exam season once again and may be feeling stressed, overwhelmed and anxious.
- They may also be feeling sad as they prepare to say goodbye to friends and move out of residence.
- Some resources that may help: [Health and Wellness](#), [Academic Advising and Support](#).

How to Refer/Coach

Referring Your Student

Entering university can be a big adjustment, one that some students may not manage right away. As the parent or supporter of a U of T student, you can help your student adjust to their new role. Below are some tips and resources to help when you experience changes in your student, including where to refer them to for help.

Coaching Your Student

Coaching and checking in with your student are important. Balancing what each of you thinks success looks like is an important conversation to have and keep in mind as your students enters and navigates university life.

Creating clear communication with your student means expectations can be shared and met by both parties. If your student is living away from home for the first time, it could be a good idea to create a schedule for your communication, perhaps every Tuesday you will have a phone call, for example.



Coaching your university student may look different from your relationship coaching them in high school or before. It's important to adjust as your student grows into a young adult.

Tips for successful coaching include:

- **listening and communicating** regularly with your student,
- suspending judgement and
- letting them guide the conversation so they know that they can rely on you.

The next step is to talk, **reflect on your student's thoughts and repeat them back** so they know you were listening and understand.

Next is to **affirm them, highlight their strengths and positive efforts.**

Finally, **inquire, ask your student what they think they need and want from you.**

Let your student suggest solutions rather than you solving their problems for them.

Academic Support

If your student...	Refer them to...
Has questions about their program	Academic Advising and Support
Needs academic accommodations to support a known, or suspected, temporary or permanent/ chronic disability	Accessibility Services
Needs support with writing their assignments	Writing Centres
Needs support with a specific course/material	Tutoring Support

Health and Wellness

If your student...	Refer them to...
Feels ill	Health & Wellness
Has questions about their student health insurance plan	Health and Dental Insurance Plan
Wants to join a gym, attend a fitness class or join a sports league	U of T Facilities & Memberships
Needs to talk about a mental health issue	Health & Wellness
Needs support to address an act of racism or discrimination	Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office

Career Support

If your student...	Refer them to...
Is looking for a summer job	<u>CLNx – Jobs & Recruitment</u>
Is looking for volunteer opportunities	<u>CLNx – Volunteer Postings</u>
Needs resume/interview help	<u>Career Exploration & Education</u>

Financial Information and Support

If your student...	Refer them to...
Has questions about financial aid opportunities like Ontario Student Assistance Program, other provincial funding, awards, scholarships, Registered Education Savings Plans, University Health Insurance Plan, or more	<u>U of T Financial Aid</u>
Is looking for scholarship opportunities	<u>U of T Awards</u>

Cultural Connections and International Support

If your student...	Refer them to...
Has questions about their visa or immigration office	<u>Immigration Advisor</u>
Wants to learn more about Canadian culture	<u>University Life: Toronto & GTA</u>
Wants to connect with other students who share their cultural background	<u>All Campus Clubs</u>
Is looking for spiritual connection and support	<u>Multi-Faith Centre for Spiritual Study & Practice</u>

Safety and Emergency Services

If your student...	Refer them to...
Is looking for safety and support travelling across campus	<u>TravelSafer Program</u>
Is working alone on campus and would like safety check-ins	<u>Work Alone Program</u>
Is looking for general safety and support, wants to report an incident or needs further support	<u>U of T Campus Police</u>

Additional Reading:

- [Letting Go: A Parents' Guide to Understand the College Years](#) by Karen Levin Corbun and Madge Lawrence Treeger
- [Out to Sea: A Parents' Survival Guide to the Freshman Voyage](#) by Kelly Radi

Access to Information

While we encourage your interest in your student's progress, you should know that you do not have automatic access to student records. It is university policy and law that the university cannot release details about a student to anyone, even parents, without the student's written consent. It is up to the student to address concerns about performance, rules and deadlines, for example. In most cases, that is done through the Office of the Registrar, which employs a staff of experienced and concerned academic and financial advisors to help your student succeed. For more information about the University of Toronto's Privacy Policy, [please visit this page.](#)



IMPORTANT OFFICES

Student Services and Support

Studying at the University of Toronto is challenging, which is why we offer a range of services and support. Find out about writing centres, accessibility support, career advising, and much more by visiting the [Student Services and Support page](#).

Departments and Academic Units

The university's academic programs are organized into faculties and divisions. Our departments, colleges, and centres and institutes provide further support for study and research into focused areas. For more information about [Departments and Academic units, please visit this page](#).

Safety & Support

The University of Toronto strives to maintain an environment free from discrimination and harassment, and a safe space for students. Students will find many activities, programs and supports at the University that can help with safety issues — including WalkSafer escorts at night, self-defence courses, personal counselling or crisis support. For more information about [Safety and Support, please visit this page](#).

Registrar Services

We know that U of T and its many services can make it difficult for your student to know where to go when they are looking for answers. When in doubt, we recommend you direct them to their divisional registrar. Your student's registrar is one of the best resources your student has for navigating university services and resources. Your student's registrar can also refer them to appropriate resources on campus if they are struggling with personal or academic issues that are affecting their schoolwork. For a list of registrars and student life offices, visit the [Meet with your registrar/academic advisor webpage](#).



GLOSSARY

Below is a list of common acronyms used at the University of Toronto. Check out the full list of terms on the [Glossary of Terms for Newly Admitted Students.](#)

- A&S or FAS: [Faculty of Arts & Science.](#)
- ACORN: [Accessible Campus Online Resource Network.](#)
- ASSU: [Arts and Science Students' Union.](#)
- CCR: [Co-Curricular Record.](#)
- CLNx: [Career Learning Network.](#)
- LEC: Lecture.
- OSAP: [Ontario Student Assistance Program.](#)
- PRA: Practical.
- TUT: Tutorial.
- UHIP: [University Health Insurance Plan.](#)
- UTAPS: [University of Toronto Advanced Planning for Students.](#)
- UTORID: [U of T identity card/username used to access UofT services.](#)
- UTSU: [University of Toronto Students' Union.](#)

