



VOLUNTEER GUIDE

This is a guide for volunteers in the UTS HELPS Buddy Program.





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INTRODUCTION: YOUR ROLE AS A VOLUNTEER

Thank you for volunteering with UTS HELPS. Past volunteers have told us the experience helps them feel more connected to the university or their workplace; their communication skills are developed and they enjoy the cross cultural interaction with international students. We hope you also feel the benefits from this experience!

As a volunteer, you don't have to be a grammar expert or prepare anything for your meetings. Students are very interested in your use of informal spoken language. When you first meet them, ask your buddy what support they need and be guided by them.

You will naturally model conversation and pronunciation skills. Only make corrections when required. How to give corrections and what topics to talk about are discussed in detail in this guide.

Other than that - just turn up and talk!





VOLUNTEER BUDDIES ARE EXPECTED TO...

- Provide casual conversation as a sympathetic listener
- Model fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation skills through speaking, not teaching
- Ask questions to clarify understanding and vocabulary
- Answer questions about your language, culture, experience in Australia and in the Australian workplace, if relevant
- Give feedback and make occasional corrections
- Consult with HELPS if you would like access to any other resources

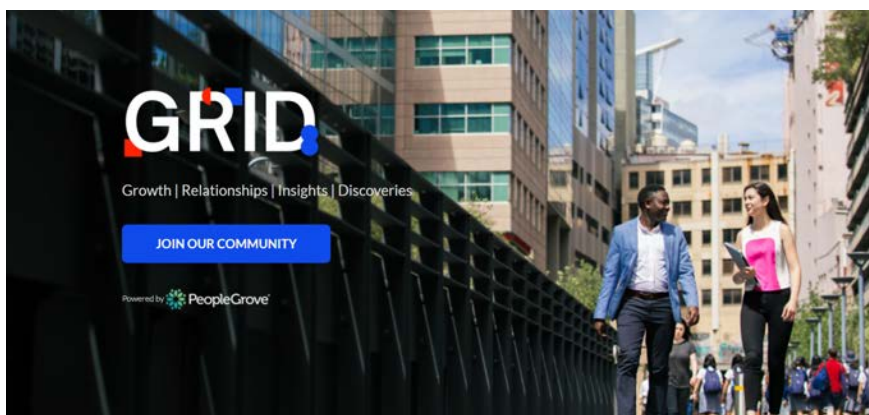
VOLUNTEER BUDDIES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO...

- Prepare lessons
- Help with student assignments
- Be an expert in English grammar and pronunciation skills
- Give advice to students beyond their skill set and qualifications e.g. English exam preparation
- Have contact with students outside the buddy volunteer arrangement (6 meetings at UTS) unless agreed by both parties
- Be available to students once the buddy meetings have completed unless agreed
- Share contact details unless agreed

GETTING STARTED

1. Registering on GRID

You can register a GRID account on the [GRID website](https://grid.uts.edu.au/). Click “**Join our community**”. Please note this account does not mean you have registered for the UTS HELPS Buddy Program.



GRID homepage, <https://grid.uts.edu.au/>

2. Registering for the HELPS Buddy Program

After registering for GRID, you will have the option to join a hub. Click ‘**HELPS Buddy Program**’.


- **Student Buddy:** If you are a UTS student who wants to improve your English.
- **Volunteer Buddy:** If you are a UTS student interested in volunteering to help international students.



- **Staff Volunteer Buddy:** If you are UTS staff interested in volunteering.
- **Community Volunteer Buddy:** If you are UTS alumni or outside UTS, such as an ABC volunteer.

By submitting this data, you agree to our [privacy policy](#).

I'M JOINING AS A...

STUDENT BUDDY I want to improve my English
VOLUNTEER BUDDY I am a UTS student volunteer
STAFF VOLUNTEER BUDDY I am a UTS staff volunteer
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER BUDDY I am an alum or volunteer from outside UTS

Follow the registration questions. If you get stuck, use the tips we have provided by hovering your mouse over the  icon.

Remember, you can edit your answers after you have registered by visiting ‘My Profile’, , then clicking  to edit various sections.

3. Finding a Buddy

Only students looking for volunteers are able to choose a buddy on the GRID platform. Students can choose buddies via **recommendations** (which are based on matching criteria) or **manually**. The details you provide during registration will be used by students to find a suitable match.

Students are not obliged to choose any particular volunteer and each student is limited to choosing one volunteer at a time.

How do I match with a student I met in person?

If you meet a student in person that you would like to match with for buddy meetings, you must both register on GRID where the student can then choose you as their buddy.

What if I want more than one buddy?

If you would like to meet 2 students, it's recommended that you meet as a group (not individually). If you do choose to meet 2 students separately, it's your responsibility to meet them 6 times each (total of twelve, 1 hour meetings).

WHAT STUDENT BUDDIES SEE

The screenshot shows the HELPS Buddy Program dashboard. At the top is a red navigation bar with links: HOME, FIND A BUDDY, RESOURCES, DISCUSSION, CONTACT HELPS FOR SUPPORT, and SHARE. Below the navigation bar is a banner image with the text "Welcome to the HELPS Buddy Program! Autumn 2018". The main content area is titled "DASHBOARD" and contains three cards: "FIND A BUDDY" (with a magnifying glass icon), "OPEN YOUR INBOX" (with an envelope icon), and "DISCUSSION" (with a speech bubble icon). Below these cards is a section titled "RECOMMENDED FOR YOU" with a link "Update Matching Preferences | Browse All". This section displays three volunteer profiles: Supattra Lueangsangthong, Alexandra Lazaris, and Georgia McCarthy. Each profile includes a star icon, a "SKIP" button, a profile picture, a name, a degree program, a list of interests, a location, and two buttons: "Let's Connect" and "Full Profile". The "Full Profile" button for Georgia McCarthy is highlighted with a red box. Below the "RECOMMENDED FOR YOU" section is a "DISCUSSION" section with a link "Browse All" and three "NEW POST" buttons. Annotations with arrows point to specific elements: one points to the "FIND A BUDDY" link in the navigation bar, another points to the "RECOMMENDED FOR YOU" section, and a third points to the "Full Profile" button for Georgia McCarthy.

Only student buddies are able to choose volunteers. Volunteers are not able to choose students.

Students are given recommendations based on matching criteria.

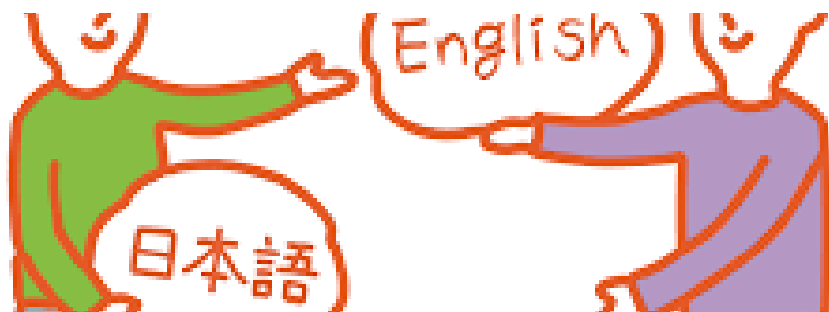
Students can view a volunteer's profile before they choose him/her.

3.1 LANGUAGE EXCHANGE

Most volunteers help students practise their English conversation skills but some volunteers are interested in exchanging languages e.g. English/French; English/Mandarin.

*How do I indicate I'm **only** interested in language exchange?*

You can indicate that you are only interested in language exchange by answering, 'This volunteer will help with English. They are also learning another language and would like to practise'. As not all students are interested in language exchange, it may take longer for you to be chosen.



Please note that while students can see which languages you are interested in learning, you may receive requests from students who do not speak the language you desire to learn. In these cases, you can **politely decline** their request.

If after **two weeks** you remain unmatched, [contact us](#) and we will assist you. You may receive recommendations from the HELPS Buddy team if we find students who speak your interested language.

4. Getting Matched

When a student is interested in meeting you, you will receive a message from them through GRID requesting you as a Buddy Volunteer and a notification (see below). You will be able to view their profile before you respond to their request.

NEW MENTORSHIP REQUEST FROM CHLOE HA

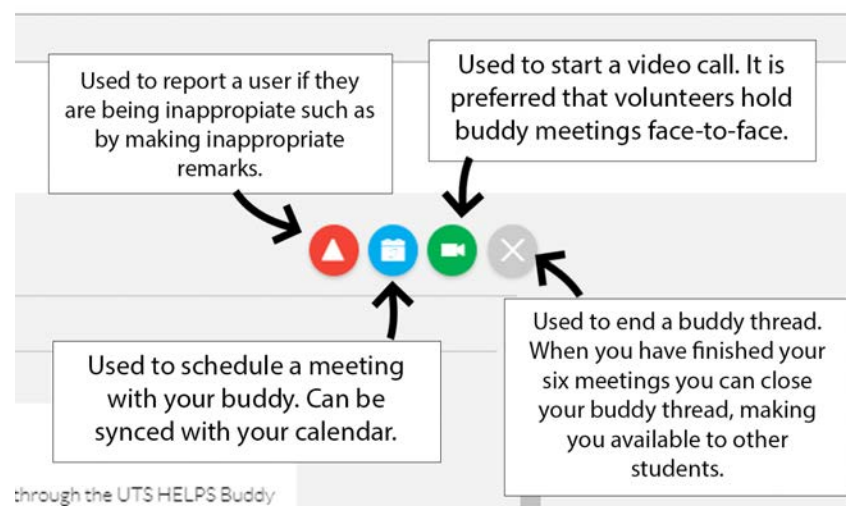
Please review and let this Student Buddy know if you can help.

You will receive a notification when a student has chosen you.

Once you have found a match, a communication thread will open between you and your new buddy. We have set up goals to get you started. These can be viewed under 'Goals'.


It's important to complete these goals. They are used by the admin team to monitor buddy progress and will ensure you receive a Buddy Program certificate after your 6 meetings.

THE BUDDY THREAD ICONS



through the UTS HELPS Buddy

5. Meet your buddy!

Organising a meeting with your buddy can be done through the communication thread with your buddy by clicking  . This is a record for HELPS that you have tried to set up meetings with your buddy. It also protects your privacy while you are waiting to meet your buddy.

Although organising an online video call is an option, it is preferred that volunteers meet students **face-to-face** at UTS.

To complete the Buddy Program, you are expected to meet six times for one hour across a three month period. Once you are approaching the end of three months, you will receive a notification.

5.1 AN EXAMPLE OF SIX MEETINGS:

#	Date and time	Location
1	22 July, 12.30pm	B11, Penny Lane
2	27 July, 2.30pm	UTS HELPS Volunteer Lounge
3	9th August 12.30pm	UTS Library
4	18th August, 12.30pm	UTS HELPS Volunteer Lounge
5	5th August, 1.00pm	UTS HELPS Volunteer Lounge
6	12th September, 2.30pm	UTS Library



5.2 SHOULD I CORRECT THE STUDENT?

You don't have to be a grammar expert to be a volunteer buddy! Just turning up and modelling clear conversation and pronunciation skills is enough.

Here are some ideas you can discuss with your buddies:

- **Don't correct every mistake** unless your student is very confident – you don't want the meetings to be all about errors. It's important that students get the opportunity to talk freely without constant interruption.
- Talk to them about the balance that is needed between being fluent and being accurate and about when and how they would like to be corrected.
- Help your student if they are searching for a particular word or phrase. It's helpful sometimes to write them down so they can slowly build themselves a list of new vocabulary.
- You can both try to **identify patterns** over time e.g. problems with particular sounds, words or sentence structures.

Ref to [page 12](#) for more information on helping students with conversation skills.

5.3 CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

People from different backgrounds may be comfortable with different levels of interaction, formality, discussion topics or physical contact. Sharing personal stories may only occur over time once trust is built.

They may also have different perspectives and values and understanding their values are important to them without judgement is an important part of building cross cultural communication skills. At the same time, it's important to try to avoid assumptions and get to know people based on what you learn rather than cultural stereotypes.

All HELPS staff, volunteers and students are expected to demonstrate tolerance, respect and patience. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns.



5.4 CONVERSATION TOPICS: WHAT TO TALK ABOUT

The first couple of meetings are about getting to know each other. Some topics include:

- Their cultural background and experience in Australia – what is different from their country?
- Their schooling, current studies and future life/career plans
- Their travel experiences and yours
- Their reason for wanting to improve English – work; residence; social; IELTS exam
- How you would both like to manage the meetings – casual conversation is fine.



What should we NOT talk about?

Though it is a good opportunity for students to talk about their studies and clarify ideas, it is not a volunteer's responsibility to edit written assignments. This may be in breach of the university's plagiarism policies. For help with writing, students can come into the HELPS centre and talk to our academic advisors.

5.5 PREPARING FOR MEETINGS

As the volunteer, **you don't need to prepare anything** unless you think additional materials might help (e.g. newspaper articles; photos). It's good for students to think about their aims for this program. Ask them to bring topics or questions for you each week.

5.6 HOW MUCH HELP SHOULD I GIVE MY BUDDIES?

We very much appreciate the time you commit to your volunteer role which is why you are not expected to assist students outside of that. It's important to be **clear** about the expectations between you and your buddies in relation to time commitment and assistance.

You want students to ask your advice but not become dependent. Over-involvement by a volunteer or overdependence from a student can have a negative impact on your volunteer student relationship and the UTS HELPS Programs. If you take too much responsibility for students your own study or work schedule might suffer and they won't get that learning opportunity. At the same time, not following up on a commitment can reduce their level of trust. It's about trying to get that balance right.

Any group activity arranged through a volunteer at UTSHELPS may need a risk assessment process. Please [contact the HELPS Volunteer Coordinator](#) for more information.

Assessment of risk can include any activities associated with sport, travel, alcohol or interaction with children under 15.

UTS has a number of support services available for students including [counselling](#), [special needs](#), [legal](#), [housing](#) and [financial assistance](#). Please [let us know](#) if you have any concerns or you are unsure about any of these services.



6. Receiving a certificate

In order to receive a certificate, you must have:

1. Completed and recorded six meetings,
2. Completed our online evaluation.

The online evaluation will be sent out via e-mail towards the end of session. Volunteers are asked to pick up their certificates from UTS HELPS (CB01.05.25) during office hours.

If you have not finished your meetings by the end of session, don't worry! As long as you continue meeting with the same student, your meetings will still count next session.

Completing your 'GOALS' in GRID will show us that you have completed all of your meetings and read the volunteer guide.

7. Continuing with a new buddy

After your 6 meetings are finished, you can stay in the GRID platform and become available for a new buddy. **Ensure that you have closed the communication thread with your previous buddy.**

Can I keep meeting my buddy from last semester?

Only the first six meetings you have with your buddy are counted towards the Buddy Program. Any meetings beyond this are not considered part of the program.

If you would like to continue volunteering in the Buddy Program, you are expected to meet with a different student after you have completed six meetings.

What if I want to stop volunteering?

If you are too busy to participate in the Buddy Program, please [send us an e-mail](#).

SOME FINAL NOTES ABOUT PRIVACY

The new GRID system includes a privacy statement that outlines how your information is used and stored. It also provides a safe place to interact with students before you agree to meet.

It's important to consider your boundaries before the volunteering occurs e.g. sharing your contact details; sharing details about your personal and professional life and your availability once the volunteer role is completed.

To ensure privacy of information shared confidentially by both student and volunteer, consent of all parties – including the HELPS Volunteer Coordinator – must be obtained before any statements or photos are published or distributed publicly.

Photos taken in the HELPS Volunteer Lounge will be used for promotional purposes – if you do not want your photo used when engaged in any volunteer lounge activity please let us know.



HELPING WITH CONVERSATION SKILLS



Fluency

International students need opportunities to talk at length without too many pauses or hesitations. Talking with a buddy can help them develop the right speed and give them practice linking their ideas together well.

Ask questions to keep your student talking. You will naturally model how to start sentences and link them together without thinking about it.

e.g. 'apparently'; 'because of that'; 'what I mean is ..'

Vocabulary

International students are trying to increase the range and accuracy of their vocabulary.

- For study (academic vocabulary)
- Within their particular field (nursing, business, law etc)
- Within the Australian context (slang, informal language, casual conversation)

Let them know if you notice them using incorrect word forms *e.g. 'economy'/'economic'*. Help them find the words they are looking for and different ways of saying the same thing.





Grammar

International students are trying to reduce the number of errors and increase their range of grammatical structures. Help them identify regular errors without over-correcting them. For example:

Verb tense	<i>I go (went) to the beach</i>
Subject/verb agreement	<i>I go/she goes</i>
Articles	<i>the/a/an</i>

You will model different grammatical structures without even trying.

Pronunciation

International students are looking for pronunciation errors that cause confusion.

It's not about having an accent – everyone has an accent! – it's about being understood.

Tell your buddy when you don't understand a word or phrase.

Write down what you hear and show them so they can see what you hear. You can model the word or phrase and ask them to repeat it and compare.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some answers to some commonly asked questions about the UTS HELPS Buddy Program.



1. WHAT IS THE HELPS BUDDY PROGRAM?

The Buddy Program matches international students with a volunteer who is more confident with English to practise conversation skills; learn about Australian culture and/or exchange languages eg. English/French.

2. HOW HAS THE BUDDY PROGRAM CHANGED?

The Buddy Program is now accessed through our new matching platform called GRID.

3. WHO ARE THE VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers are UTS students and staff; UTS alumni and people from the general community including the ABC.

5. HOW DO I FIND A BUDDY?

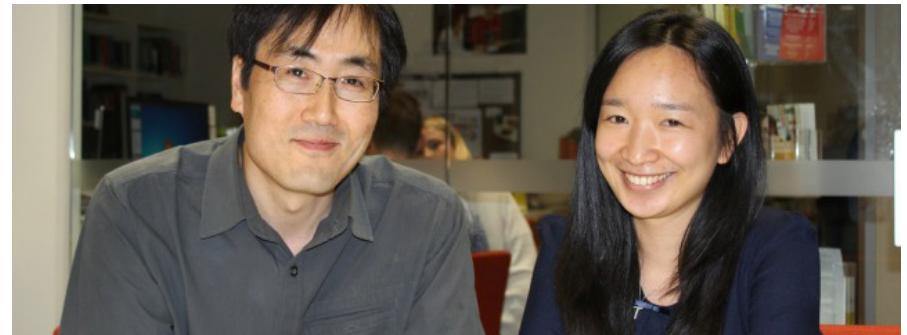
Students choose volunteers through our new GRID platform, volunteer do not choose students.

If you are a volunteer hoping to help students:

- You can build a profile about yourself in GRID.
- If it takes too long to find a student our HELPS team can automatically match you with someone through GRID who matches your interests.

6. WHAT DO I DO IF MY BUDDIES DON'T REPLY TO MY MESSAGES?

The new GRID system will help us track anyone who is unresponsive. You can also [contact us](#). We may be able to help you connect with your buddies or find new buddies.



7. WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF STUDENT AND VOLUNTEER BUDDIES?

Ref to [page 3](#) for more information about your role and how to best help your buddy.

8. WHERE AND WHEN DO WE MEET?

We ask you to meet your buddy here at UTS for at least 6 meetings. You are only insured while you are on UTS premises.

You can meet anywhere at UTS eg. cafes or a quiet place on campus. You can also meet in our HELPS Volunteer Lounge on level 5, with tea and coffee available.

9. HOW DO I ACCESS THE VOLUNTEERS LOUNGE?

UTS HELPS Volunteer Lounge (CB01.05.01) is accessible to all volunteers during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). You are welcome to hold your meetings here! There is tea and coffee available. If it isn't open, drop into the HELPS office and you will be given a guest key card.



10. WHAT IF I WANT TO CHANGE MY BUDDY OR STOP BEING IN THE BUDDY PROGRAM?

Contact us at HELPSBuddies@uts.edu.au for any information about changes you would like to make.

11. CAN I HAVE MORE THAN TWO BUDDIES?

We ask all our volunteers to meet with a maximum of two buddies. Ref to ["What if I want more than one buddy?"](#) on page 6.

12. DOES THE UTS HELPS BUDDY PROGRAM INVOLVE ANY SOCIAL EVENTS?

As part of the Buddy Program you can join in at Talkfest, a weekly social event where you can meet more people and develop communication skills. To register for Talkfest go to the [HELPS webpage](#).



HELPS also run thank you events for volunteers who give so much time to this wonderful program. Email invitations will be sent to every Buddy Volunteer.

13. IS THERE A UTS HELPS BUDDY FACEBOOK GROUP?

Yes - updates are regularly posted in our Facebook group. You also have the option to post questions or suggestions!

14. WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE BUDDY PROGRAM?

As a volunteer it's important to **complete your goals** in GRID and our evaluation survey so you can receive a Buddy Program certificate. The Buddy Program can also accumulate volunteer hours for other UTS award programs such as BUILD.

Students improving their English skills do not receive a Buddy Program certificate



15. ARE THERE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER AT HELPS?

There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer at HELPS including becoming a conversation leader or a peer advisor. If you would like more information about our volunteer programs, [check out our website](#).

16. I'M AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND I WANT TO BE A VOLUNTEER BUDDY. IS MY ENGLISH GOOD ENOUGH?

Many of our volunteers are international students. Generally, we recommend international students to have an IELTS higher than 7. If you are unsure about your English speaking ability, [send us an e-mail](#) and our Volunteer Coordinator will meet with you.



17. WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

More information about the Buddy Program can be found on our website. Head to the [UTS HELPS website](#).

Alternatively, [contact us](#) at HELPSBuddies@uts.edu.au.

Can't find an answer? Send an e-mail to HELPSBuddies@uts.edu.au.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Please read these terms and conditions carefully before participating in the UTS HELPS Buddy Program. These terms apply to both students and volunteers. By participating in the program, you agree to be bound by these terms.

Participation

- I confirm that I am 18 years old or older. (Any participant who is under 18 years of age should contact the HELPS Volunteer Coordinator.)
- I have read the Buddy Program guides. I also agree to abide by the UTS Student Charter (UTS students) and UTS Code of Conduct (UTS staff, alumni and community volunteers).
- I understand that students choose volunteers in this program and volunteers do not choose students. (At certain times within the semester, it may take longer to find a buddy. If you have any concerns please email HELPSBuddies@uts.edu.au for assistance.)

Meetings

- I agree to meet my buddy on UTS premises for a minimum of 6 meetings. (You are only insured while you are here on UTS premises. If meetings continue or are conducted outside of UTS they are no longer considered to be part of the HELPS Buddy Program. Buddies are also not expected to meet more than 6 times unless they would like to.)
- I understand my buddy and I can decide where on UTS campus to meet. (Some people go to a busy café and others prefer a quieter place on campus, like the UTSHELPS Volunteer Lounge on level 5. You can also meet up through GRID using video calls if you are both comfortable with that but we encourage you to meet in person whenever possible.)
- I understand some volunteers will meet 1 student and others will meet 2 students. The volunteer has the option of meeting 2 students at the

same time for 6 meetings as a group of 3 or they can meet with each student separately for 6 meetings each. (It is the volunteer's responsibility to record 6 meetings with each student if they decide to meet them separately).

- I understand the Buddy Program is for conversation practice only. (Though it is a good opportunity to talk about assignments to help clarify ideas, it is not a volunteer's responsibility to edit written work. This may be in breach of the university's plagiarism policies. For help with writing, students should come into the HELPS centre and talk to our Academic Advisors.)
- I understand asking someone to wait for longer than 15 minutes in case of delay is considered unreasonable. (At the first meeting discuss how you want to keep in touch - through the GRID platform or by exchanging phone numbers and email addresses, if agreed by all buddies.)

Completing the Buddy Program

- If I want to stop my meetings I understand I should contact HELPS. (It is important to also confirm with your buddy that you can no longer continue. If needed, HELPS can contact your buddy for you.)
- If I am a volunteer buddy I will be entitled to a Buddy Program certificate after I have completed the online evaluation and recorded 6 meetings in GRID (using the GOALS page). Certificates are only issued to volunteer buddies.

Contact Us

Any concerns or queries can be directed to the HELPS Volunteer Coordinator or HELPSBuddies@uts.edu.au.