



Rural and Online Study

Student Tips and Communities

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Community and connection

Community plays a vital role in your wellbeing and progression throughout your degree. A community fosters collaboration, which builds motivation, opportunities, and a sense of belonging. These are vital for the fulfilment and connection required to help you strive. While online study may feel like it is you and your laptop against the world, the truth is, there is a community awaiting you.

94.96% of students are off campus or **online** students.
[1]

Just over **45%** of students are in **rural or remote** areas.
[2]



'As an online rural student, I understand the feeling of isolation while studying. My biggest recommendation is to build your own supportive community. Sometimes all you need is one encouraging message! It is important to remember that while studying law is very challenging, it is an honour to get an education. If you want to achieve big things, make sure you take care of yourself along the way.'

Meg Watson

Social Justice and Equity Director

[1] School of Law, University of New England (2025).

[2] Ibid.

Clubs and Societies

Clubs and Societies are a great way to meet people. There are over 47 societies and clubs running through UNE Life and these are available to browse on their website.[3]

UNE Law Students' Society

The LSS has over 600 members and is the largest of all the clubs and societies at UNE. It provides an opportunity to connect and engage with other law students. The LSS offers online and in-person social and academic events, publications and information for students.

A snapshot of other clubs available

UNE Zoology Society – for anybody who loves animals! You do not have to study zoology to join.

UNE Games Society – if you are interested in board games, video games or card games. They also cater to online students.

UNE Postgraduate Student Society – if you are a postgrad student or moving into postgrad study, this society can be a fantastic space for networking, skills building and meeting others.

UNE Scuba & Snorkelling Club – this club will often host try dives in Armidale or trips out to the coast. It's a great opportunity to learn a new skill in a friendly environment.

UNE MOSAIC – this club is a great opportunity for international students to connect and create a sense of community.



A sense of belonging

A known predictor of distress among law students is social disconnection. Feeling unsupported or isolated can worsen anxiety and depression. A 2020 study found that for law students studying online (often mature-age or remote students), a strong sense of belonging and perceived support within the law school community was crucial for their well-being.[4] The good news is, UNE has plenty of opportunities to connect for online and rural students!



Other ways to connect

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS):

<https://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/peer-assistance/pass>

Peer Academic Mentoring (PAM):

<https://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/peer-assistance/peer-academic-mentoring>

Tutorials

Class forums on MyLearn

WhatsApp Group-chats – ask your classmates if there are any, or start one!

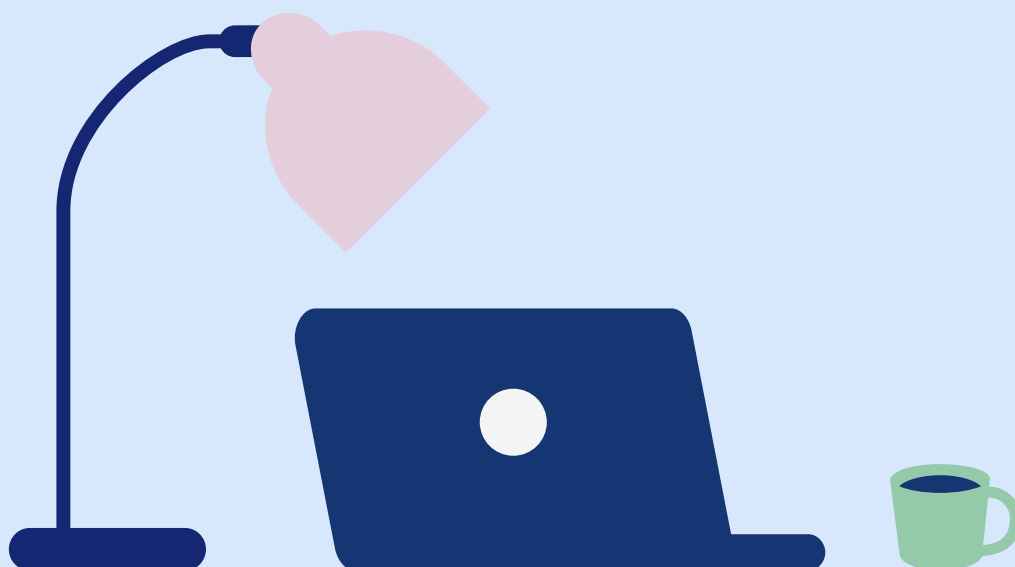
Facebook communities for UNE law students: UNE Law & Business, UNE Law Students 2025.

Instagram: UNE Law & Business.

[4] Law Society of NSW, 2023 Annual Profile of Solicitors in NSW (Annual Report, 4 June 2024) ('LSNSW').

Law school does not have to be a solo journey!

Social support and a sense of community is a critical buffer against law school stress. Even if you're studying remotely, **try to stay in touch with friends, family, and classmates.** Students who feel connected tend to have better mental health outcomes.[5] Headspace (Australia's youth mental health foundation) suggests reaching out in the early weeks of coming to university, especially if you've moved or feel lonely.[6] If you're feeling isolated, speak to someone from the **UNE Wellness Centre** by calling (02) 6773 2897 or emailing studentcounselling@une.edu.au. [7] Forming study-buddy relationships or mentoring connections can provide encouragement and perspective.



[5] 'Mental Health While Studying', *Headspace* (Web Page) <<https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/mental-health-while-studying/>> ('Headspace').

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

Working in rural and remote areas

Are you a rural student and want to remain in a rural area? **Only 10% of lawyers practise in rural, regional or remote areas.**^[8] As one-third of the Australian population lives outside of capital cities, there is a pressing need for lawyers in rural areas.^[9] The dire number of lawyers in rural and remote areas is due to a lack of advertisement and a sense inferiority.^[10] However, these areas can offer rewarding and fulfilling careers.^[11]

In 2023, **55%** of NSW solicitors were **female**.

[12]

31% of NSW solicitors are **born overseas**.

[13]

67% of NSW solicitors work in **private practice**.

[14]



'In 2025, I left Sydney for the Central West because I wanted to start my law career in a regional area. I've been here for a full year and I'm staying on because I have enjoyed it so much. I have found there are plenty of opportunities to do practical, fulfilling work.'

Deb Russell

President of the UNE Law Students' Society

[8] Tamara Walsh, "'This could be me': Law Students' Experiences of a Rural, Regional, Remote (RRR) Clinical Program' (2025) 35(1) *Legal Education Review* 75, 75.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Nadia Hess, Mark Giancaspro and David PlaterView, 'Law Beyond the Glass Skyscrapers: Encouraging Law Students to Embrace Regional Life and Practice' (2023) 49(1) *Alternative Law Journal* 68.

[11] Ibid.

[12] LSNSW (n 4).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

Wellbeing

Studying law online brings significant academic pressures alongside unique wellbeing challenges. Law undergraduates consistently report higher rates of psychological distress than other students.[15]

Over one-third of Australian law students experience high or very high distress, far above the general population.[16] This is often attributed to the heavy workload, competitive culture, and self-imposed perfectionism in legal education. [17] Remote learning can further exacerbate stress by increasing isolation and blurring boundaries between study and personal life. Without the in-person peer support and routine of campus life, online law students may feel disconnected and prone to burnout.



The good news is, this next section compiles evidence-based strategies and practical tools to support your wellbeing while studying law online.

[15] Linda Crowley-Cyr, 'Promoting Mental Wellbeing of Law Students: Breaking-Down Stigma and Building Bridges with Support Services in the Online Learning Environment' (2014) 14(1) *QUT Law Review* 129, 129–30.

[16] Rachael Field and Sally Kift, 'Addressing the High Levels of Psychological Distress in Law Students through Intentional Assessment and Feedback Design in the First Year Law Curriculum' (2010) 1(1) *Student Success* 65.

[17] Natalie K Skead, Shane L Rogers and W Rupert Johnson, 'The Role of Place, People and Perception in Law Student Well-Being' (2020) 73 *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 101631, 101632.

Wellbeing

Practice mindfulness

Anxiety before an exam, frustration at a difficult case, or disappointment with a grade are common feelings that will eventually pass. Developing techniques to manage these feelings will help you think clearly under pressure. Evidence-based approaches include:

- mindfulness **meditation**
- **breathing** exercises and
- **healthy distractions**.^[18]

‘[N]early all our anxiety is about something in the past or future’, so techniques that bring you into the present moment are valuable.^[19] When stress spikes, try a short break:

- go for a **walk**
- listen to **music**
- employ a quirky trick, like silently counting objects in your room to **interrupt racing thoughts**!^[20]



The key is to **catch signs of stress early** and respond with a coping strategy before it overwhelms you. Common signs to watch for include sleep disturbances, muscle tension, irritability, difficulty concentrating or lack of motivation. If these issues are affecting your studies or daily life, consider it a signal to ramp up self-care or seek support.

^[18] *Headspace* (n 5).

^[19] *Ibid.*

^[20] *Ibid.*

Wellbeing

Manage Your Mindset (Cognitive Strategies)

How you mentally frame your law school experience can greatly impact your wellbeing. Cognitive-behavioral strategies help prevent **negative thought patterns** from dragging down your mood.[21]

For instance, try to avoid catastrophising. Instead of thinking: “I completely ruined my assignment, this is a disaster,” reframe it as, “I didn’t do as well as I wanted on that assignment; it’s unfortunate, but I can learn from the feedback for next time.” Likewise, avoid all-or-nothing thoughts. Instead of, “I always mess up exams,” try, “I struggled on this exam; I can improve my approach for the next one”.

Maintain a healthy routine



Prioritise the basic pillars of wellbeing:

1. Sleep
2. Exercise
3. Nutrition

Getting good quality sleep on a regular schedule, staying physically active, and eating a balanced diet are all proven to **boost mood** and cognitive function.[22] Law students often sacrifice sleep or meal quality during busy periods, but this can backfire by worsening concentration and stress. As Beyond Blue emphasises, ‘getting good sleep, keeping active, eating well, and establishing a healthy routine’ form the foundation of good mental health.[23]

[21] *Headspace* (n 5).

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*

Wellbeing

Maintain a healthy routine

Avoid the temptation to rely on stimulants or junk food to push through studies. Overusing caffeine, alcohol or skipping meals will erode your wellbeing in the long run.[24] Instead, **pace yourself** with healthy habits. Take 5-minute exercise or breathing breaks per hour of study. Keep water and nutritious snacks at your desk, and don't let study bleed into all night work. A well-structured study plan is more effective than last-minute all-nighters.[25]

Stay motivated and avoid burnout

To keep your drive alive, reconnect with your purpose for studying law and **set realistic goals**. Visualising success can be a powerful motivator – picture yourself at graduation or imagine the career you're working towards; this can help put today's tedious reading into perspective.[26] It also helps to break big tasks into small, achievable goals.[27]



Balance work with rest to prevent burnout. Schedule downtime as if it were as important as an exam.

[24] Headspace (n 5).

[25] 'Top Tips for Wellbeing When Studying Remotely', Country Universities Centre (Web Page) <<https://www.cuc.edu.au/>>.

[26] Headspace (n 5).

[27] Ibid.

Wellbeing

Conclusion

Studying law is a wonderful opportunity. You have chosen well by completing it at UNE as they provide many opportunities to connect with others. Law is hard but you do not have to sacrifice your wellbeing in the process. By establishing a **supportive community** and developing a healthy routine, you can maintain wellbeing and academic success. This guide has outlined connection opportunities and evidence-based strategies that can build your resilience and community as a law student.



Wellbeing is a skill, one you can cultivate over time.

Further resources

Beyond Blue – offers forums and a 24/7 support line: beyondblue.org.au.

Headspace – provides free online communities and one-on-one chat with clinicians for 12–25 year-olds: headspace.org.au.

UNE Wellness Centre – the Wellness Centre provides mental health support to all students: <https://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/student-support/une-wellness-centre>.

UNE Urgent Mental Health Support Line – available 24/7: [1300 661 927](tel:1300661927) or text: [0488 884 169](tel:0488884169).

Orygen's University Mental Health Framework – an evidence-based framework guiding what universities can do to support student mental health: orygen.org.au.

Lifeline – if you or someone you know is in crisis or experiencing severe distress: [13 11 14](tel:131114).



Connect with the LSS

If you have any feedback or any requests for future student guides, please email us at lss@myune.edu.au.

Web: <https://mylearn.une.edu.au/course/view.php?id=1919>

Email: lss@myune.edu.au

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/unelss>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UNELawStudents>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unelawstudentsociety/>