The Learning Centre and UniPASS Presents:
Make Your Own Study Group: A Form and Function Guide

Curtin University offers substantial academic support for students – from your lecturers and Unit Coordinators through to The Learning Centre and UniPASS. However, forming your own study groups with like-minded fellow students to work in your own time and maximise your study is a fantastic way to improve your grades and gain a deeper, more fulfilling understanding of unit and course content. You might end up working with your fellow students into your career, so forming ongoing connections based on mutual goals is highly beneficial, plus, it’s just more fun than studying on your own!

This guide is aimed at helping you form successful study groups, and provides ideas on activities and organisational tricks that will help you get the most out of your group – making them functional, positive and highly beneficial. This guide also contains a number of links to Curtin areas (such as The Learning Centre, Curtin Leadership and other support services) where you can find personal and professional development resources that will help you work better within a group and/or team, now and into the future.

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Forming the Group
The easiest way to keep in contact for many people these days is Facebook. While some people do not like/want to
be on Facebook, it is a forum used more and more in a university setting and we recommend it for setting up your
group and communicating with them. If you don’t want to use Facebook, an email mailing list is probably the next
best thing, as texting can get expensive and people might be hesitant to share their personal mobile numbers.

If a group member is wary of Facebook, you can suggest that they (and help them to) set up a ‘dummy’ Facebook
account, with a false name (e.g., Amanda Student), a fake date of birth and no photos or other information, and use
this account only during their university study and for nothing else. It’s anonymous and free. If you set up a
Facebook group, people don’t have to friend you or share profile info, they just join the closed group.

Keep numbers limited – having too many people can become a logistical nightmare. We recommend a maximum of
5 or 6 people. If more people than that want to join, then they can access this information and form another group!

BE AWARE: If you are setting up the group, people within the group may see you as the leader and organiser. It is
best to be clear early on about who will be doing the organisational work. For example, in the first meeting you
might set a regular time to meet, and set a timetable of who plans the activities for each week’s meeting, rather
than one person having to do it all. See our information around managing group work here:
http://studyskills.curtin.edu.au/study-resources/top-tips/working-in-groups/. This information is focussed on
group assignments, but many of the tips are relevant to forming study groups.

FURTHER READING/GUIDANCE: Curtin Leadership also has some excellent information around working in groups
and group work for the professional arena – you can start here: https://unihub.curtin.edu.au/docs/239/Forming-
An-Effective-Group.pdf

While you are investigating Curtin Leadership’s webpages, you could also take up one of their Curtin Leaders
Program modules, the Teamwork one would be quite relevant here:
How to set up a Facebook Group

Created by Claire Mueller, 2015 UniPASS Facebook Groups Senior Peer Learning Facilitator, and updated by Hui Yee Wong, 2016 UniPASS Facebook Groups Senior Peer Learning Facilitator, updated again by Amanda Smith, Peer Learning Coordinator, START, Curtin University. Contact unipass@curtin.edu.au for more information.

1. Create a new group titled ‘Your Study Group Name’ (Note: If the group is for a particular unit or course, then make sure you put the semester and year in, or people won’t know which group to join) (hover over ‘Groups’ in left sidebar > More > Create group). **DO NOT INCLUDE THE NAME CURTIN** in your group as it is not a Curtin owned group, it is a private, student owned group.

2. Set the group privacy to ‘closed’, which should allow people to find the group by specifically searching the name or by following a link you send them.

3. Invite someone else to the group (NOTE - you need to be Facebook friends with at least one of the people you invite to start the group off! Friend one of them if you need, ensuring you tell them why you are friending them). Or, just get one of your ‘normal’ friends/partner to join the group, then remove themselves later once you’ve set it all up.

4. Check settings - you should have notifications (Notifications > All posts), new member approvals (… > Edit group settings > Membership Approval > Any member can add members, but an admin or a moderator must approve them) and post approval (… > Edit group settings > Post Approval > ☑ All group posts must be approved by an admin or a moderator.)
5. Fill in the group description and set a pinned post with the group guidelines (to make sure people know what the group is for and that they have to treat it with respect and use it for what it’s made for – read the Curtin University social media policy and Code of Conduct FIRST (also discussed later in this guide). Make sure students know this is not a CURTIN run group, it’s a private student group).

EXAMPLE Pinned Post/Group Guidelines text (make it your own):
Welcome to UNIT NAME 2017 S2 Private Study Group everyone!
This space is for students to interact with other students to gain knowledge, share ideas, discuss content, ask questions and share resources and plan and run study groups. FEEL FREE TO SHARE something relevant that you think is cool, your tutor/lecturer shared a cool study tip, interesting images, quizzes, websites or you have a funny mnemonic for remembering something, or anything about this topic in general.

PLEASE REMEMBER to respect everyone’s opinions and ideas, be polite, friendly and helpful. Remember that there’s no such thing as a stupid question! Disrespect, bullying and academic misconduct WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Here is a link to Curtin’s Student Plagiarism policy, we need to be aware of this: http://academicintegrity.curtin.edu.au/…/StudentPlagiarismG…
This is also NOT a space for whinging about Curtin/lecturers etc. – you can complain on the main page of the Curtin website about this sort of thing (scroll RIGHT to the bottom and click feedback button) or talk with Student Wellbeing advisors in building 101 who can assist you with any issues anonymously! Call: 1800 244 043 Email: studentwellbeing@curtin.edu.au. They are also fab if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, or just have general questions about life as a student!

6. Copy the link to the group page and inform students about it – ask the lecturer to put it up in a lecture maybe.

7. Approve new member requests promptly to get the ball rolling. (... > Manage Group).
SETUP CHECKLIST

- Group created
- ‘Group description’ filled in with a brief description of what the space is
- Group privacy set to ‘closed’ with admin approval required for new members
- Pinned post with guidelines set
- Cover picture uploaded if you want one.

General Group Settings Example

BE AWARE: Ensure you support students who are not familiar with ‘good at’ Facebook to set up their privacy settings to a high level, and to make sure they receive notifications to their phones so they can keep up to date with meetings and messages.
**Asking People to Join Your Group**

Try to meet and chat with fellow students in your tutes and lectures and ask them to join your group. You could also ask your lecturer or tutor if you can take 2 mins of class time to advertise your group – however, be wary of how many people want to join, (remember, more than 6 people gets challenging), and say it’s first in, best dressed but direct those who miss out to this resource and they can set up their own groups. You could also leave a sign-up sheet in the student area of your school or in your tute room.

**BE AWARE:** Curtin’s student and staff body is extremely diverse. Remember to be respectful, communicative and curious about cultures and communication styles other than your own. If you would like to personally develop yourself around this topic, the Curtin Leaders Program modules might be useful, in particular, the module on Understanding Culture: [http://life.curtin.edu.au/leadership-and-community/curtin-leaders-program.htm](http://life.curtin.edu.au/leadership-and-community/curtin-leaders-program.htm)

**FURTHER READING/GUIDANCE:** While you are investigating Curtin Leadership’s webpages, you could also take up some of their other Curtin Leaders Program modules, such as Team Work, Leadership 101, Self-Awareness, Project Management and Conflict Management (among many others) that would all be relevant and enable you to work better in groups now and into the future: [http://life.curtin.edu.au/leadership-and-community/curtin-leaders-program.htm](http://life.curtin.edu.au/leadership-and-community/curtin-leaders-program.htm)

**Finding a Space to Meet**

Unless you know your group members very well, we recommend meeting on campus rather than at peoples’ houses. On campus, you can book a classroom (or ‘teaching space’) if you are a member of a Guild club, meet at a café or and outside table if the weather is good, or book a library group study room.

**Booking a Room (Curtin Library)**

Any student can book a Curtin Library group study room, but book in EARLY as they fill up fast – get your group to confirm the best time and day and book a room at that time every week until exams! (Or twice a week, even better!) Remember though, level 2 of the library has lots of group desk areas where you can work together as level 2 allows conversation and group work (it’s not a silent floor), so you can meet there as well and discuss. Please see information on how to book Library rooms here: [http://bookings.library.curtin.edu.au/](http://bookings.library.curtin.edu.au/)

**Outside/at a Café**

Find a place that has a big table that you can spread out on, and can set up a laptop and some butcher’s paper. Remember, if you are hanging out at a café, they’ll probably expect you to buy a few coffees and donuts along the way!
Running a Successful First Meeting
It is important to make your first meeting useful and organised, so that people will see the value in group study and want to return!

Look at the Study Group Activities section, and plan for a few of those, asking them to prepare in a relevant way. Your group MUST have done the ‘pre-learning’ in order to get the most out of group study. This means, they need to have either attended the lecture or watched the iLecture, and taken notes and probably re-read those notes or re-watched the lecture. They should also have been to any tutorials or taken part in discussion board or collaborate sessions related to that week’s lecture content. You can only get a deeper understanding of the content, discuss it, work through it and help each other revise, if you have made an effort to learn the content in the first place. If you are missing items of learning or don’t understand something, then it’s easier to work through that with the basics of the content already gathered from the lectures, tutorials and readings.

First Session Communication and Activities
When you have a few have students signed up, and a meeting arranged, you could send them an email or post something like this (we have bolded the areas you’ll need to change to suit your relevant information):

Welcome to your new study group!

All of you have indicated that you are free for a study session on **MONDAYS** from **3pm-4pm**.

Please all **send an email/write a post** to the group to introduce yourself (name, degree etc.) in the next day or so, and then we will meet on **Xxxday 3pm library level 2 room XXX**.

I have some activity ideas for the first session, but would like you all to please read this information on how to set up and run study groups, and you can bring along some ideas for future sessions (I won’t be able to organise them all!) **(INSERT LINK FOR THIS GUIDE HERE – SO THAT ALL GROUP MEMBERS HAVE READ IT)**.

FIRST SESSION ACTIVITIES: For the first session, can we all please review the **lecture/tute/reading** material from **week 2**, and think up and bring along 4 questions to the study session that you are having trouble with/want to understand more about. We can then help each other out by talking through them and where we found information about those content topics (in the textbook or the lecture notes/Google etc.).

Can we also all complete individually the **study questions/lecture or extension questions from text book** before the study session and then during the session mark each other’s and discuss our answers as a group?

Then, we’ll talk about what activities to do next week. Please come with some ideas.

Please bring along our **lecture notes & slides, textbooks, lab manuals, guides, workbooks** and any links to useful study webpages/TED talks any relevant study material you’ve found so far.

*(Credit: 2016, Charleigh Lawrence, Senior Peer Learning Facilitator, UniPASS)*
Activity Ideas for Meetings

**Brainstorms** – Brainstorm the lecture content topics onto A3 or butcher’s paper or whiteboard (brain dump) everything you all remember about the lecture that week. Then, start arranging the items into organised lists or a mind map – going out further and further with more detail. *Extension idea* – go to next activity: OK/Bit Foggy/No Idea.

**OK/Bit Foggy/No Idea** – Draw up a table on A3 or butcher’s paper/whiteboard with the lecture/unit topics down one axis, and OK, A Bit Foggy and No Idea as the other axis titles. Group members write their name in the cell corresponding to how much they understand/know about that topic. Then, the ones who are “OK” on a topic, teach the ones who are “A bit Foggy” or “No Idea” what they know. If no one is “OK” with anything – then you instantly know what you all need to study – do a jigsaw (see next activity) and become the experts in the study session, then teach each other and all become “OK”.

**Jigsaws** – As homework, get each group member to study up on one particular idea/content topic, so that they become the ‘expert’ on that topic. Then, in the study session, each member ‘teaches’ the other group members about their topic. This is a great way to reinforce knowledge, and get some really detailed knowledge about each topic. *Extension idea* – each member must come up with 3 questions about their topic (1 short answer, 2 multi-choice) and of course know the answers. Then, you all share your questions and you have an instant revision test. Mark each other’s work, including proof reading the short answer questions.

**Self exams and Proofreading** - Write questions for each other, check and proofread each other’s work – this benefits everyone because you learn to proofread your own work when in an exam!

**Cut up and Matching Exercises** – Cut up tables, flow charts/diagrams, essay structures, etc. and mix them up, then arrange them in the right order.

**Posters and Webpages** - Draw a poster or design a webpage around a topic (just on A3 paper or the whiteboard) and give a presentation to each other on what you’ve done (think, draw, explain – this also helps you improve your presentations and public speaking skills!) Doing this in pairs is a much easier/more relaxing way, as long as both students take a turn to present!

**Apps** - Get any relevant learning apps for your unit’s content/topics and work through them with your group members, 2 or 3 to an iPad (it’s always easier in a group!).

**Kahoot** – Make your own fun yet challenging quizzes using Kahoot online free quizzes; it’s pretty easy to use but takes a bit of set up time initially. Start a group Kahoot username and login so you can all access and use it in group sessions then for revision at home! [https://kahoot.com/](https://kahoot.com/)

**Qzzr** – Similar to Kahoot, a great quiz/test resource online – free and fun. [https://www.qzzr.com/?utm_medium=ppc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=exact&utm_term=qzzr&gclid=EALaIQobChMiwYy_v7zJ1QlVFo6PCh1wyAYJEAYASAAEgKUDvD_BwE](https://www.qzzr.com/?utm_medium=ppc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=exact&utm_term=qzzr&gclid=EALaIQobChMiwYy_v7zJ1QlVFo6PCh1wyAYJEAYASAAEgKUDvD_BwE)
Suggested Resources
Some ideas of resources that might help make your study groups fun, interesting and give you stuff to take home for revision. (Take photos or photocopies of materials like tables, diagrams, posters, etc. drawn up in your study sessions and share on your Facebook group).

- Scrap paper
- Butcher’s paper and markers – especially if you are not in a room with whiteboards – butcher’s paper is big and great for many people to write on/brainstorm/brain dump at once! It’s also good for designing a poster, drawing and labelling a diagram or a graph, etc. Use A3 paper if that’s easier.
- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- iPads/laptops – always sharing, working in pairs is more fun and gets more people’s brains working and sharing knowledge
- Textbooks
- Workbooks
- Unit Guides
- Lecture notes and materials from Blackboard
- For anatomy units – borrow the bones or models from your School and do an activity around labelling them, talking through them, attachments etc. (you can use string and Blu-Tack for muscles, ligaments etc.). Get the 3D anatomy apps and bring an iPad to work through activities)
- Facebook – share as many resources, ideas, study tips, videos, memes, videos like TED talks or Khan Academy sessions and any UNIT TOPIC/CONTENT RELEVANT information as possible!

The Learning Centre’s Top Tips for Working in Groups
This information is based around group assignment work; however, it’s also very relevant to forming your own study groups.

- Be respectful to ALL group members.
- Decide on a schedule and exchange contact details at first meeting (using student email only is a good idea).
- Identify your strengths and say what you can contribute.
- Brainstorm so that each person has a task to do before the next meeting.
- Contribute productively to ALL meetings.
- Remain task-focused. This is crucial.
- Manage time to finalise the assignment or to rehearse together.
- Communicate as much as possible to gain consensus.
- Be fair, patient, flexible and assertive to give your best.
Relevant Curtin Student Policies and Guidelines
Student Conduct at Curtin: http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/conduct.cfm
Appropriate ICT use for students: http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/ict_policy.cfm
Protecting yourself online: http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/online.cfm
Other relevant policies: http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/links.cfm

Support for Study and Personal Issues and Study Skills
Most study groups will be beneficial and a great experience; however, if any students are not behaving appropriately, you should be clear about what you can do about it.

Be clear and respectful, if there appears to be a lack of respect shown either online or face-to-face, remove yourself from the space immediately, and when feeling safe, inform the person clearly and politely that the behaviour is not acceptable. If it continues, you should remove yourself from the group and you can make a formal complaint and/or get assistance from the services listed below.

Similarly, if you have concerns about the personal welfare and/or safety of an individual within your group, or would all like some more academic or personal guidance yourself, you can contact the following services to discuss. Be proactive, and tackle problems before they become overwhelming.

Safer Communities Team (also known as Security) – the nicest, most helpful people around! They can walk you to your car after late group meetings, and will do their best to support and care for all students.
https://properties.curtin.edu.au/safetyatcurtin/

Student Wellbeing Advisory Service – More nice, friendly people to help with anything from ‘I’m lost’ through to major health and wellbeing issues and complaints, they are a ‘one stop shop’ to find support at Curtin.

Counselling and Disability Services – For life skills and longer term support for wellbeing, mental health and physical illness and/or disabilities, access plans, specialist mentoring programs.

The Learning Centre – Online and face-to-face academic skills workshops. Writing, numeracy, assignments – SO helpful.

Feedback and Complaints to Curtin University – Go to main Curtin home page, scroll down to the bottom right, and click the “Provide Feedback to Curtin” button. The option of named or anonymous feedback is provided; this is the appropriate channel for complaints large or small, or general good feedback or suggested improvements, for anything to do with Curtin’s facilities, staff or your experience here.
http://www.curtin.edu.au/
http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/feedback.cfm this page has information about other feedback opportunities.

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For more information, to ask questions or provide feedback, please email The Learning Centre at tlc@curtin.edu.au Please also visit our webpages: