



YWCA CANBERRA

Online Mentoring for Women

Study

This module was drawn from Marshall, L. & Rowland F. 2006. 4th ed. A guide to learning independently. Pearson Education Australia: Forest NSW.

To study or not to study

Studying is rewarding in many ways. It is a wonderful way to develop skills and knowledge to prepare you for your chosen career and is a great place to develop confidence and find out your strengths and passion.

At times it can also be very challenging. This is especially the case when many of us play a number of roles in addition to our role as students, including paid work, volunteering or caring roles. Study requires a significant investment of both time and money, so it is worth spending some time thinking about why you want to study and what you hope to get out of it.

It might be useful to ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I aspire to in life
- What do I aspire to in work? Where do I see myself in 5 years, 10 years and beyond?
- How will studying contribute to this?
- What are my study goals?
- How do my study goals relate to my life aspirations and where I want to go in relation to career?
- Is study the best thing for me now? Where does it fit with my other life goals?

Being clear about your study goals will help to give you a sense of purpose and direction which you can draw on to give you drive and motivation during some of the more difficult times. However, you should also keep your goals flexible so you can modify them in response to new experiences and information.

Allow yourself time to settle in to being a student. You can expect to experience a wide spectrum of emotions when settling in including feeling confused, excited, intimidated, inspired,

and stimulated. This is all normal! You are likely to become more confident when you begin to understand what is expected of you. Put some energy into learning how to learn and into making contact with other students and teachers.

- What tips does your mentor have about learning to learn?
- What about adjusting to University life?

Getting the most from studying

As a student you will have the opportunity to be involved in both the formal and informal aspects of student life. The social aspects of your study experience have the potential to contribute positively to your success as a student.

Try to take advantage of the richness and variety of experiences within the student body. Learning to embrace different world views and new ideas and perspectives is an important part of your learning and is essential for developing critical thinking skills. Be open to the idea that this can occur in informal social settings as well as within the formal aspects of the curriculum.

Being exposed to a diversity of opinion is an important part of your learning experience. Try to remember that you have much to offer other students, and as such you should try to express your interpretations and understanding of issues, even, or perhaps especially, when you are alone in your point of view. For many of us, feeling comfortable with this will take practice, persistence and courage, but remember you are not alone, it is likely that many of your classmates will share your fears and reservations.

You may feel more confident if you ensure that your opinions are supported by explanation, evidence and examples. This will also increase the likeliness that your peers will consider and accept your ideas.

When student life becomes busy it can be easy to slip into a mundane routine of attending classes and submitting assessments rather than taking advantage of the opportunity to expand your knowledge and challenge your views of the world.

Allowing time to reflect on your learnings from readings, discussions and lectures will help to ensure that you get the most from your time. Reflection is an important tool for understanding remembering, learning and perhaps most importantly, for thinking critically.

As in every other area of our lives, our learning and studying style will be unique to us and reflect our personality and our experience.

Thinking about the way you think will give you insights about how you learn. Understanding and embracing your learning style will facilitate the development of the most efficient and effective studying practices. It might be useful to ask yourself the following questions:

- When am I the most mentally alert?
- Does it work well for me to apply myself in regular short bursts or to commit to longer periods of study less often?
- Do I study better in an open, active environment (for instance a cafe) or in a quiet academic environment (a library or study corner in your home)?
- Do I work well under pressure?
- What are my studying/learning strengths and what areas might require more work?

Staying positive and keeping on track

Learning is often stimulating and satisfying, however you will inevitably experience dips in your motivation and enthusiasm. This can happen for a number of reasons including because you are not particularly interested in the topic, you are tired and overworked, you have difficulty with an assignment or you have other things on your mind. Below are some tips

to help you to stay positive and keep on track during these more trying times.

- Determine your minimum sleep needs and do your best to always get this much sleep. You may be surprised at the difference a good night's sleep can make to your frame of mind.
- Physical exercise complements mental activity and can make a significant difference to your ability to cope with stress as it reduces tension, increases the oxygen supply to your brain and helps with sleeping.
- Even when you feel time pressured, try to allow time for activities that replenish your energy and leave you feeling more positive and relaxed.
- Remember, a small amount of pressure and tension is not always negative, it can help motivate you to study and learn and keep you focused. The trick is to keep your level of pressure to your optimum level. If you find yourself overly stressed or pressured you may need to review your study methods.
- If you feel overwhelmed by your workload, or you are dreading a particular piece of work, try sitting down straight away and doing an hour of work. This will give you a sense of achievement and relief and help to make the task feel more manageable.
- If you are having difficulty with a piece of assessment try tossing around your ideas and your problems with a student, teacher or friend. Talking about your issues out loud may be able to help you to see the forest through the trees.

