Tips on getting started at university

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For the best stress-free start to university, it is important that you know what you are supposed to do, where your learning materials are and who to go to for help.

To get started:
- learn to navigate your way around My SCU and your Learning Sites
- understand how your learning materials are organised
- locate and read through your Unit Information Guides (UIGs)
- read through your assessment task instructions
- use session planners and weekly planners to manage your time
- make use of services and strategies to help beat the stress.

Learn to navigate your way around the MySCU site
MySCU (also referred to as Blackboard) is the online learning environment all students use to access study materials, enrolment information, support services, technology services and library resources. The “Portal” is a new interface that also provides access to these resources.

MySCU Home Page
- Spend time navigating your way around this page. Note all the support services.
- Find direct links to Email, Timetables, MyEnrolment, Library and Technology Services.
- Find your Learning Sites for your enrolled units and click on the unit name to go directly to the learning site for that unit.

Learning sites
- Each unit has a learning site that contains all the information you need for that unit
- Check Announcements regularly for important messages posted by your lecturer/tutor.
- Go to Study Resources to find most of your unit material, including Unit Information Guides, lecture recordings, study guides, and links to MyReadings and other resources.
- Read and participate in the Discussion Forums, under Connecting, especially those related to assessment tasks.
- Go to Assessments to find information and resources related to your assessment tasks and links to submit your assessments via Turnitin.
- Look through Learning Help to access study-related support services

Read through your Unit Information Guide (UIG)
Unit Information Guides are essential guiding documents and can be located under Study Resources in each of your learning sites (see What is in a Unit Information Guide Quick Guide). It is important that you read through each UIG carefully at the start of session for:
- Assessment details: Due dates, word limits, weighting and assessment type. Full assessment details, including instructions and marking criteria, are found under Assessments in your learning sites.
- Graduate attributes and learning outcomes: Knowledge and skills you are to demonstrate.
- Content: An overview of the subjects of study.
- Prescribed texts and materials: Required readings. It helps to get started on these early on.
- Optional texts and materials: Revisit this list for each assignment.
- Estimated workload: This section gives you an idea of the delivery mode(s) the course will use, an estimate of the number of hours involved and the estimated number of hours of personal study you are expected to do.
- Suggested study timetable: Use the weekly outline of topics to plan your study. This helps you to get organised and avoid stress.
Read through your assessment tasks early and carefully

- In Week 1 read through ALL assessment tasks for the session and think about how they relate to the unit learning outcomes and what you are required to do
- For each assessment task, ask yourself, "What is this about? What is the main topic?"
- Early awareness of these main topics will help you to read actively and purposefully, and recording or highlighting information related to your assessment tasks from Day 1 will save you time locating this information later
- You may also start a resource list for each task to locate information quickly when you need it
- Use a session planner (see Managing your time Quick Guide, Session planner worksheet) to organise your assessment task due dates, start dates and edit dates

Use session and weekly planners to manage your time
If you are organised and manage your time well, you will find it easier to cope with your study and the other commitments in your life.

Here are some strategies that will help you:

- Use a session planner (see Managing your time Quick Guide, Session planner worksheet) to organise your assessment task due dates, start dates and edit dates for all assessment tasks across all units for each session.
- Use class and tutorial time to find out more about assessment tasks and to clarify what is expected. Never be afraid to ask.
- Use a Weekly Planner (see Managing your time Quick Guide, Weekly planner worksheet) to help you map out regular commitments including classes, unit study sessions, work, child care and so on. This will help clarify how much time you can commit to study and assignment preparation and keep you working efficiently.
- Follow the Suggested Study Timetable in the UIG (this is usually at the back of the guide).

Understand the purpose of each part of your study material
Online study materials are located under Study Resources in the Learning Site for each unit. Materials will vary from unit to unit, so be sure to take a good look through each of your learning sites. Always check your UIG for details. Some examples of online study materials might include:

- Study Guide: This is broken up into modules or topics and provides the main ideas and concepts for the unit. It guides you through the unit, directs you to readings and other study material, and often provides activities to reinforce your learning.
- MyReadings: These are carefully selected essential readings that connect to each topic and provide valuable information for assignments.
- Lectures: There may be PowerPoint slides uploaded in advance of the lecture and a recording after the lecture is delivered. Make sure you can access the Collaborate site if your lectures are delivered online.
- Prescribed texts: Some units require you to access a textbook. Look for this information in your Unit Information Guide.

Make use of services to overcome stress
Coming to university is a significant time of change and it is not unusual to feel overwhelmed or stressed, especially during the first part of your first session of study.

There are many support services and resources at university to help you beat the stress. Visit the Learning site for links to counselling, mentors, learning support, the gym, and much more. Remember, if you are feeling stressed, seek help early.

Related Quick Guides

What is in a Unit Information Guide
Managing your time
Session planner worksheet
Weekly planner worksheet