

Tips on getting started

The first few weeks at university can be stressful. A lot of that stress comes from not knowing things like *what you are supposed to do*, *where things are*, *who to go to for help*. The information in this guide will provide some advice in these areas.

To get started:

- read through your Unit Information Guides (UIGs)
- read through your assessment tasks
- understand what each part of your study material is for
- navigate your way around MySCU and Learning sites
- use Session and Weekly planners to manage your time
- make use of services and strategies to help beat the stress.

Read through your Unit Information Guide (UIG)

The Unit Information Guide for each unit is a very important document. It has valuable information to help you with your studies, including:

- **Assessment details:** Know your due dates, word limits and marking criteria for your assignments from Day 1.
- **Graduate attributes and learning outcomes:** These are linked to your assessment tasks.
- **Content:** This gives you a clear picture of the subjects of study.
- **Prescribed texts and materials:** These are required readings. It helps if you know what you have to read from early on.
- **Optional texts and materials:** Revisit this list for each assignment.
- **Referencing style:** This tells you which referencing style you have to use for your writing. Find out which referencing style you need to use in each unit and stick to it.
- **Estimated Workload:** This section gives you an idea of the delivery mode(s) the course will use and estimates the amount of hours involved. It also indicates the 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 organized and avoid stress.

Read through your assessment tasks early and carefully

- In Week 1 read through ALL your assessment tasks for the session and think about how they relate to the unit objectives.
- For each assessment task, ask yourself, "What is this about? What is the main topic?"
- Write down the topic and display it somewhere obvious – this will help you to read actively and purposefully.
- Start recording or highlighting any information that may be related to your assessment tasks from Day 1 – this will save you time locating this information later for assignments and exams.
- When you have a choice of assignment topics, the earlier you make your choice the better.
- Code information related to each assessment task using different coloured post-it notes or highlighters. Alternatively, start a resource list for each task to locate information quickly when you need it or use technology you feel comfortable with to record information.

Academic Skills Quick Guide

What is in this guide

- Tips on getting started
- Related Quick Guides

Understand the purpose of each part of your study material

Most study materials can be found on MySCU. Go to the Learning Site for the unit and look in Unit Content. Study material is also provided in the Study Guide or myReadings. Materials will vary from unit to unit, so always check your UIG for details. Example 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.
- **Prescribed Text:** This is essential for your study in the unit as it presents the main ideas, and you will refer to it often in your assessment tasks.
- **Readings:** These are carefully selected readings and they will give you valuable information for assignments. They might be available in different formats: as a printed book, on CD, or through the myReadings service.
- **Lectures:** There may be a PowerPoint 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 on-line.

Learn to navigate your way about the MySCU site

MySCU lets you access resources, communication tools and links that are important for your study. From MySCU you can access the Learning site (often called Blackboard) for each of your units.

MySCU Home Page

- Spend time navigating your way around this page. Note all the support services.
- All the Learning Sites for your enrolled units are listed in the centre of the page. Click on the unit name to go directly to the site.
- Find direct links to Webmail, Timetables, MyEnrolment, Library and Technology Services.

Learning sites

- Check **Announcements** regularly for important messages posted by your lecturer/tutor.
- Go to the Unit Documents to find most of your unit material and links to myReadings and other resources.
- Read and participate in the **Discussion Forums**, especially those related to assessment tasks.
- Most units require you to submit your assignments from the Learning Site via **Turnitin**.
- Go to **Contacts** for details for staff members here and email them and other students directly from the site. If you need help, ask for it as soon as possible.

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:

- Read through all assessment details at the beginning of the teaching session. This will help you to estimate the time needed to complete each task so that you can plan ahead.
- Follow the Suggested Study Timetable in the UIG (this is usually at the back of the guide).
- 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 Session Planner (see [A step-by-step guide to planning for your assignments Quick Guide](#)) to help you map out the due dates for all assessment tasks for ALL the units in which you are currently enrolled.
- Use a Weekly Planner (see [Managing your time Quick Guide](#)) to help you map out regular commitments including classes, unit study session, work, child care and so on. This will help clarify how much time you can commit to study and assignment preparation.

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. However, you can take steps to reduce the pressure and navigate your new path more smoothly.

There are many support services and resources at university to help you beat the stress. Visit the Learning site for links to counselling, mentors, Academic Skills, 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](#), [A step by step guide to planning your assignments](#)