

Wondering how you can best organise your study load?

Follow these ten tips to help you manage your assessments and conquer your degree.

Story by Bianca Russom.



CREATE A CUSTOM TIMETABLE

Now, this may sound silly since Allocate+ provides you with a timetable at the start of each semester. However, by making your own timetable, you can customise it as you wish. My suggestions include colour coding by unit rather than class type, including individual class dates based off the schedule of activities in the learning guide, and removing those classes you may only have once or twice a semester from the timetable itself and including them as a note at the bottom of the page instead.

CREATE AN ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

Before the start of semester, most learning guides will have been released on Blackboard. Use this to your advantage and create a list (or calendar) of all the individual assessments that you have due. By writing them all out and ordering them chronologically, you can see if all your assessments are due at once or if they are spread out over semester (which, face it, never happens). I recommend including the due day, date, time, task name, associated unit and method of submission, whether it's by Turnitin or hardcopy. The more specific you are, the more you will thank yourself later.

PRINT OUT THE MARKING RUBRIC AND CRITERIA

Save yourself the hassle of having yet another tab open on your internet browser and print out any information regarding the completion of an assessment. By having a physical copy of this, you can read over it, highlight it and scribble notes all over it, no excuses. The same principle applies for other important documents such as readings and journal articles. Be sure to print double sided and recycle them after the assessment has been handed in.

OPTIMISE YOUR DESK SETUP

There is nothing more frustrating than having an annoying study setup. It is well worth spending some time working out what you need to be more productive. Work out what works well for you. Perhaps this means buying a larger desk or a corkboard to stick notes to. I found my productivity improved when I purchased a larger corner desk, a wireless mouse and keyboard for my laptop and had easy access to a printer at home. Either way, this does not have to be an expensive task. Gumtree and garage sales are a great place to pick up desks and office furniture for a good price (and often they can be collected pre-assembled).

COLOUR CODE

For those of us who enjoy organising, this will be a no brainer, but there are plenty of people who dread the sheer thought of having to sort through documents. Fear no more! Colour coding is a great way to keep on top of things and it's super easy, with stationary in every colour readily available. Try using different coloured pens and highlighters when you take notes. I tend to use red pen to write down anything relating to assessments, black pen to write down standard notes and blue pen for any definitions or quotes. By developing your own system, you will easily be able to skim through your notes come exam time.

AVOID ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS AND PLANNERS

Try ditching the laptop in the lecture theatre and swap it out for a book, yes, that's right, actual. By writing down notes, you will be able to keep your hand in tip top writing shape (so it does not hurt in the final exam) but it also helps you remember the content. Not to mention, it limits your ability to open a new tab and get distracted during class time.

Similarly, try using a physical calendar, whether it be a desk planner, diary or a poster on the wall in your room. By having a calendar where you can see weeks in advance, you can better manage your time both in and out of class time. If for some reason you do need this information on you, you can just take a photo of it on your phone.

PLAN YOUR DAY

If you're like me, there is nothing more satisfying than crossing off a task on a to-do list. Planning your day, even if it's just from deciding what time you're going to wake up, can help you be more productive. Setting yourself a "working day" and assigning short breaks can help you develop a good study routine. For example, I know I work best early in the morning and I like to spend time with my family in the evening, so I start working at six in the morning and will finish at four o'clock in the afternoon, with regular breaks.

I also like to pin point exactly which part of which assessments I will tackle. For example, in a day I may wish to complete the introduction of assessment X, find some resources for assessment Y and do the data analysis on assessment Z. Work out which times you are most productive and which times you want to relax to help you develop a routine (which includes a good amount of sleep).

TRY DIFFERENT STUDY TECHNIQUES

There are so many different ways to study and different methods work for different people. Writing notes may not work for you, so why not try something new? Try making mind maps or completing online quizzes (you can even make your own on websites like Sporcle). I like to pretend I am teaching someone else and record my voice teaching someone else and test my knowledge without any notes.

Other ways to help yourself study include creating a song to remember content and recording yourself reading a speech or essay and listening to it on repeat whilst doing something else. The internet is just full of blogs and videos by students like you who have their own unique way of studying.

DOWNLOAD TEACHING RESOURCES

This may sound weird, but I wish I knew it in my first semester of university: Once you complete a unit, you no longer have access to any of the content such as lecture slides, readings and practical manuals. At the end of each semester, download all the content and create a folder for that unit. You have just learnt all that stuff, you may as well keep it. You never know when you might want to look back on some old lecture notes to refresh your brain, or to help you complete an assessment in another unit.

DO NOT THROW OUT YOUR WORK

There is always a unit you dislike and wish to have a celebratory bonfire using the notes from it, but do not throw out all that hard work. Store it away. At the end of each semester, sort through all your papers and organise them by unit. Fill binder folders with this material. Similarly, don't delete that YouTube playlist that was full of videos you watched to help you understand a concept. Keep it all.

If you put in a good amount of effort, you should have created work and notes you are proud of and can look back on in the future. After all, it comprises all the content you learnt during your degree.



Russom, B. (2018) 'Ten Ways To Organise Your Study', W'SUP News Autumn 2019 [Print Edition]
Online Version Available at <http://wsup.news/ten-ways-to-organise-your-study/>