



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

BACK ON TRACK

How to get there

Student Life - Counselling Support

Sometimes students find that the focus of their lives has shifted away from study and that they have fallen behind and want to refocus. Here are 10 simple tips to help get back on track with study.

ALLOCATE TIME APPROPRIATELY

There are 24 hours in a day and 7 days in a week. Allocating those 24 hours and 7 days effectively will get you back on track. Each of the next nine topics describe what needs to be done with your time to get you back on track and to study effectively.

ATTENDANCE

Just going to lectures is likely to keep your study life on track and prevent you from getting too entangled with non-study activities. You may be thinking 'I do not have to go to lectures because I can get the information off the web, or from the text book, or from a friend', however often this does not work.

When you go to lectures you organise your life so that it is focused on study. When you do not go to lectures you are often organising your life so that it is focused on things other than study. Going to a lecture begins the process of learning long before exam time. Lecturers have a tendency to emphasise what they think is important and this is not always clear in their lecture notes. Also hand up all practical reports and practice assignments. In some subjects, there are many small assignments for which you do not get many marks. These are not as important for grades but they are important for learning.

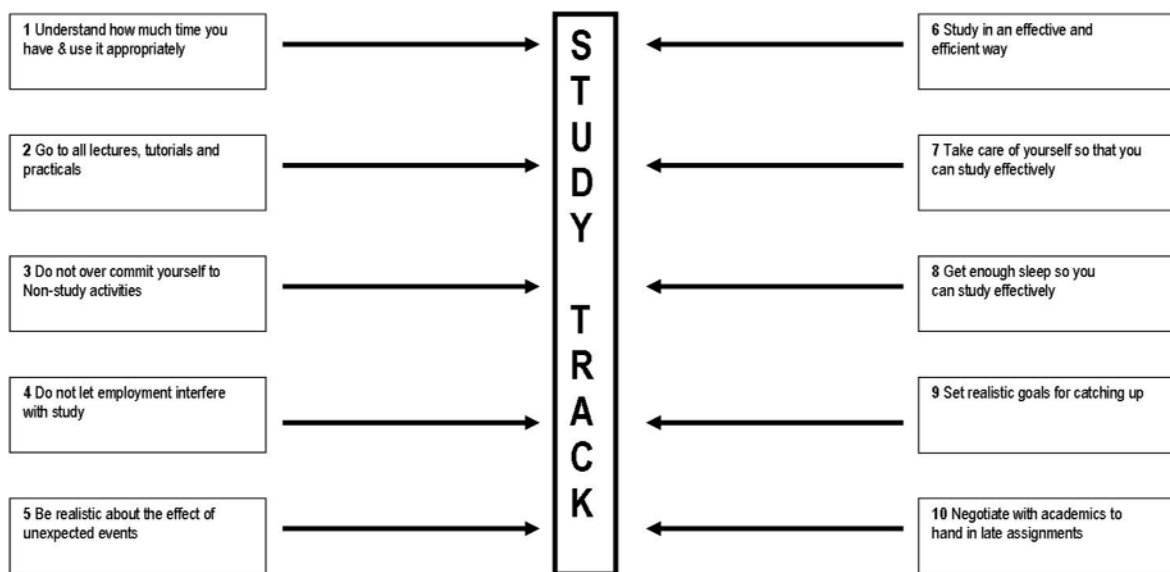
DON'T OVERCOMMIT

You may have interests that take time and effort from study. For example: sports, hobbies, politics, clubs, social life, art, crafts, etc. These activities in the correct amount can support study, or they can detract from study if you do them too much. Adjust your commitments to support study.

There should be at least 35 hours every week available for full time study. It is similar to a full time job. Some students get deceived by the contact hours which are less than 35 hours and then think that they can fill all that extra time with other activities. However, the non contact time is needed to do the assignments, reading, and learning.

Do not overload your enrolment if you are having trouble keeping up with your study. A normal full-time commitment at this university is 12 units.

GETTING BACK ON THE STUDY TRACK



WORK AND STUDY

It is important to not let work interfere with your study.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- After the time you spend at work, is there enough time to sleep and study effectively?
- How many hours do you work a week? Take into account the time it takes to get to work and the fact that most people can not study for 2 hours after work – they need to wind down.
- Is your job the best one to support study?
- Are you working because you need to? In this case, you keep doing it.

- Are you working because you want to or want to spend the money on something? If you are failing because you do not have enough time to study, then perhaps you need to reduce or stop working. Sometimes it helps to reduce work hours during exam times, if your employer will allow it. So ask if you can reduce your work hours and explain why to your employer. Ninety five percent of employers are quite reasonable if they understand that you will fail if you do not find more time to study.

BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE EFFECT OF UNEXPECTED EVENTS

Are there demands on your life that you can not control and that make it difficult to study?

Are you:

Needing to work to live, pay off debts etc?

Managing an illness (yours or others)?

Affected by a family matter?

Grieving over the death of someone?

Required to do things other than study?

Then:

You may be better off reducing your study commitments

Or

Reduce your expectations for grades.

BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

Many students study until they can't study any more. Time sitting at your desk trying to study but not studying is wasted time, it is psychologically exhausting. It is much better to get up, have a break, and then return when your mind is clear. It is even more efficient to stop studying while it is going well because it is much easier to return to study that was going well. During the short break do things that refresh you: go outside, do something physical, dance, walk, play a musical instrument, whatever gives you a break from study. Then return to your study.

Very few people can study for more than thirty to fifty minutes with full concentration. Have a short break, maybe 10 to 15 minutes, then

continue to study. Take a break again — keep this rhythm going. People can study for a long time like this. For more information see the *Managing Stress* brochure.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Study is most productive when alternated with proper relaxation. Relaxation then becomes a valuable support for study. This balance between study and non-study is best maintained by having a number of non-study activities in your life. Do too many non-study activities, you will not do well at university, because too much of your time and effort will go into them rather than study [see section 3 and 4]. With too few non-study activities, you may get so stressed that you will not be able to study effectively. Non-study activities can include sport, hobbies, part-time job, relationship, friends, partying, movies, clubbing, walking, sleeping, pets, friends, gardening, sports, hobbies, music etc.

All these in the right amount will give you a useful break from study. If you rest and relax, you can return to study refreshed and can have something to look forward to when you are studying. Rest is most efficient when it is worry and guilt free.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

When you are sleep-deprived, it is very difficult to be motivated to study or concentrate properly. You can do many things when sleep-deprived such as surf the internet, chatting online, speak to friends, play sports, and work (sometimes).

Although you can do these things, it may create the illusion that you can get by on little sleep. However, it is very difficult to effectively study when sleep-deprived. When students have too many non-study activities, they often manage by reducing sleep. On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, it is best to go to bed at the same time and get up eight hours later. Once you set the alarm, lights should be out eight hours before the alarm goes off. It helps to leave at least 30 minutes for the transition from waking activity to sleep. In this time, you should not do things that will wake you up.

It is a time to calm down. Many sleep problems are caused by trying to sleep and trying to think at the same time, which is impossible. The

simplest solution to this problem is to commit eight hours to rest and do your thinking after you wake up.

For more information see the Sleep – Improve It brochure.

SET REALISTIC STUDY GOALS

It is better to pass one or two subjects than to attempt all of your subjects and fail them all. It is also better to aim for a pass than to aim for a high grade and not hand in the assignment. It helps to prioritise study or assignments.

Ask yourself:

- a. Which is the most important?
- b. What will be easiest to finish?
- c. What one should I start with?

Once you have clear priorities, there are two ways to proceed.

1. Do one assignment or subject until it is finished putting others aside until you have finished the first assignment. It can sometimes help to put the books associated with other topics away so you do not think about them until you are ready to do them.
2. Only study one subject at a time. For example, for half a day, study only one subject and do not think about any other subject during that time. Then for the next half day study another subject and only think about that subject during that period of time.

HANDING IN LATE ASSIGNMENTS

You may need to negotiate with lecturers to hand assignments in late.

Academics are often willing to do this so seek their help.

Counselling Support is available to assist students with personal difficulties that are affecting their study.

The service provides:

- Individual Counselling by appointment
- Telephone Counselling by appointment
- Mental health emergency response

Counselling Support

Ground Floor, Horace Lamb Building

The University of Adelaide

Ph: +61 8 8313 5663

After hours support: 1300 167 654 or sms 0488 884 197

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