

# How to succeed at University

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# Program

3 days, 2 h each:

1. Orientating yourself to your studies
2. Recognising your own strengths and areas of development
3. Making your PDP (Personal Development Plan)

How to prepare yourself  
for higher education

## **ACTIVITY**

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN RELATION TO DEVELOPING THE SKILLS  
(Self score each question on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is low and 10 is high)

- How confident do you feel about starting your course and meeting new people?
- How much attention have you given to planning your future development?
- How organised do you feel you are in terms of your studies?
- How good are you at living independently?
- How good are you at completing assignments?
- How much do you know about conducting research?
- How good are you at taking examinations?
- How confident do you feel that you can complete your course?
- How confident are you about getting a job after your course?
- How confident are you about developing yourself after university?

# Aim

- Not all student achieve their full potential because they lack some of the basic personal, academic and employability skills
- The aim is to provide you with ideas and inspiration, and to encourage you to think for yourself about what you need to develop
- To provide a framework for you to reflect upon and set your own goals, and to develop your own path in order to achieve those goals

- Producing good academic work is largely about understanding certain conventions that operate
- i.e. rules for football or tennis



- However, success in higher education is not all about academic skills
- In order to achieve good results you need good personal skills too (i.e. time management, stress handling etc.)

# Transition into higher education

- Confusion, overload, new people, accommodation
- Keeping motivated and handling any anxieties will be vital to you in achieving success at university



# Getting prepared

- Check through all the information you have been sent and look at the university website
- Look at student groups on social networking sites
- Talk to anybody you know who has been to university and find out what their experience was and what you can learn from this
- Make a list of everything you want to take with you, including some home comforts to make your university accommodation more like home

# How did you feel on the first day?

- Can be quite traumatic for many new students
- Many people feel that they are subject to information overload

# Culture shock

- is experienced when people are first exposed to a new and alien culture
- They may feel confused and disoriented
- i.e. when enter higher education
- International students: language and culture!

# Overcome culture shock

## Good ways...

- Get connected socially
- Eat in the refectory
- Visit the Student Union and see what is on offer
- Go to the 'freshers' fair', join student societies, attend meetings and activities etc.
- Read and file away all that 'stuff' from induction
- Get your studies organised, check out your timetable, etc.
- Log onto the computer system and check student websites, blogs, etc.
- Visit the library and check out the facilities and the nearest book shop

# Overcome culture shock

## **Bad ways...**

- Avoid everybody, especially anybody from your course
- Eat in your room
- Do not attend classes
- Don't do any work
- Deny what is really happening
- Resort to drink or drugs
- Think about leaving
- Go home for good!

# Do you feel homesick or like leaving your course?

- Culture shock can lead to homesickness
- Particularly if you feel overwhelmed by the workload, the place or the people
- It is a really big life changing decision and so deserves really thorough consideration

- Talk it over with your friends/other people on the course
- Talk it over with your course leader, personal tutor or any other member of the academic staff you feel comfortable talking to
- You may have accommodation problems or just be unhappy where you are. Talk with the accommodation officer
- You may be an international student and you should be able to access language support
- You may have special needs that can be accommodated by the institution and there should be someone to talk to about this
- You may actually feel depressed or be suffering from anxiety problems. This is not necessary a reason for leaving, but may be a reason for staying and working through your problems. You should be able to get support through a student counsellor
- Your students' union can also help with welfare and academic problem and will be experienced in giving advice and support

# How are you meeting new people?

- Naturally for most people in the first days, but maybe you found it difficult or met wrong people
- The first time you meet someone is very important!



# SOCIAL PHOBIA:

*irrational or exaggerated fear of involvement in social situations and possible implications or outcomes of doing so*

- Difficult to talk to strangers
- Tend to avoid making new connections
- It can be overcome with perseverance!



# Golden rules for overcoming a fear of talking to new people

- You have a perfect right to speak to strangers
- It doesn't matter what they think of you, because you are still you
- It doesn't matter how many rejections you get because eventually you will get into meaningful conversation with someone
- The more you do it, the better it will go and the more your fears will reduce
- You are OK!

# Higher education

- Independent study= organisation essential!
- Independent learner= know what you are supposed to be doing, when and where, and how to access the support facilities that you need

# Getting organised for study

- Get connected (i.e. social networks)
- Check your timetable (i.e. app)
- Full participation
- Pre- and post-session work
- Library and bookshops
- Notes/folders

# ACTIVITY

tick as honestly as you can

- made friends and developed a social life?
- read for all your modules?
- attended taught sessions regularly?
- contributed your fair share to group work?
- done the required preparation for taught sessions?
- got your notes and folders organised for your studies?
- joined any student societies or sport clubs?
- checked your university emails regularly?
- wanted help but didn't like to ask anyone?
- been to the library and/or used library resources?
- been punctual for taught sessions?
- been homesick or thought about leaving the course?
- settled into your accommodation?
- felt overwhelmed?
- learnt new skills?
- engaged with online course material?

# Motivation:

*has to do with the motives or drives  
we have for taking or avoiding actions*

- People do not all have the same motivations
- Identifying what you want to achieve and why at start of your course is important, because there will always be days when you wonder what you are doing it all for

# ACTIVITY

write down your thoughts concerning the following:

- What do you want to achieve during your time at university?
- Why do you want to achieve this?
- What barriers you think you might encounter in achieving your aims?
- What new skills do you think that you will need to learn in order to overcome these barriers?
- How anxious are you about your ability to achieve your aims? 1-10

Succeeding in higher education will require you holding onto your dream!





# Checklist

Have you...

- got connected to the university's internet?
- made good efforts to get socially integrated?
- checked out your academic timetable and located rooms?
- started dealing with the information overload by setting up files etc.?
- checked out the library and bookshop?
- explored any online reading lists if these are available?
- accessed any other support services that you will need?
- considered your motivation and how it compares to that of a friend?
- recognised the role of your own emotions and self-efficacy in your development and success?