How to be a successful student

To be a successful student requires certain skills; but, these are skills that can be learned.

Minimise your commitments

Minimise your commitments before the semester starts to make sure your schedule is free enough to allow a balanced lifestyle of study, sleep, and regular exercise and recreation. Many people overestimate how much they can get done in a day. If you are overworked and feel that you aren’t coping, then discuss your current schedule with an Academic Support Advisor.

Create a study plan

Check your unit guides at the start of the semester and chart the due dates of every assignment from every class in a calendar (you can use the calendar in Learnline to do this). Then, work backwards to determine what you need to complete by certain dates. For example, if you have a 10-page assignment due in a month, aim to have a full draft done a week before the due date, 5 pages written by the week before that and an outline the week before that. Treat these ‘milestones’ like regular assignments to avoid last-minute panic when major deadlines loom.

You could also tell at least one other person about your study plan to create an accountability system. For example, you can arrange with your lecturer to ask you for the partial completions (such as a copy of your outline or 5-page draft) on the dates you have specified.

Get organised.

Staying organised while studying is really important and by being organised you are one step ahead in being successful. Keep a folder for each unit you are studying in the semester, and put your notes and handouts in each unit folder. Color code or label your folders for easy identification and remember to bring them to your workshops.

Be prepared

It is extremely important to bring everything you need with you to campus, and to class. Laptop, books, folders, pens, pencils, homework, and review sheets. Whatever you need it would be a good idea to bring it.

Pay attention

All good students know that they wouldn’t have succeeded academically without having paid attention. When your lecturer is giving a lesson, take notes and if you don’t understand something, raise your hand and ask questions. The more questions you ask, the more you’ll learn.
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Study

Schedule a specific time each day for studying, reading and working on assignments. Alternate 20 to 30 minutes of working with 5- to 10-minute breaks to keep your mind fresh and alert. Do your best to avoid other activities during your allotted study times; keeping them consistent will begin to build habits and train your brain to move into study mode at certain times and in certain settings.

Ask for help

If you are having trouble completing assignments on time or understanding a subject then ask for help, from your lecturer, Academic Support Advisor, or other student services such the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS). Instead of looking down on you for not understanding, lecturers at BIITE will be eager for the chance to work with a student who cares enough to seek help. Another way to get help is to form a study group with any classmates who are interested. This could include an online study group using technology like SKYPE or even just ringing or emailing the members to discuss issues and share your thoughts. This is not “cheating”; it is part of being a collaborative student and is an important part of being a Higher Education student.

Maintain a balanced lifestyle

Maintain your mental and physical health by sleeping enough, eating healthy foods in wise quantities and exercising regularly. Even a daily walk can keep your mind more alert and receptive.

Form a positive self-image.

When you begin Higher Education it is natural to have doubts about how well you will do. Try to do your best right from the start so that you develop an expectation of continuing to do well. It is important, though, to try not to be restricted by your past performance and experiences, good or bad.

The key to academic success is to improve on what you have done in the past.