

## TUTORIAL 1: GETTING STARTED AT UNIVERSITY

The primary purpose of this tutorial is to underline and reinforce the differences between the university experience of learning and the one you have previously experienced at school or college. The key concept is one of *independence* – you are now independent learners and as such you must actively engage with the resources offered by the University in order to get the best from it.

### 1.1 The Transition from School to University: some differences and pointers to help you

This advice has been adapted from information on the University of Minnesota Duluth website (<http://www.d.umn.edu/tutoring/transition-to-college/>).

<b>Following the rules in school</b>	<b>Choosing responsibly in university</b>
School is mandatory (i.e. you have to go) and for most people it is free.	University is voluntary and expensive.
Your time is organised and structured by others (usually teachers though parents may assist).	You manage your own time.
You may need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	You decide whether or not to engage in extracurricular activities.
You can count on teachers and parents to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You must balance your responsibilities and set your own priorities. You will face decisions that you have never faced before.
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending six hours (or thereabouts) each day – 30 hours a week – in class.	You will often have gaps between classes, sometimes of several hours; class times will vary through the day and early evening. In total you might only spend about 16 hours a week in class.
It is the teaching staff who help you through the regulations.	Regulations are often complex and may differ from year to year. You have to take responsibility for knowing what regulations apply to you.
<i>In summary ... you will usually be told what to do and will be corrected if your behaviour is out of line.</i>	<i>In summary ... you are expected to take responsibility for what you do and do not do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions and actions.</i>
<b>Going to classes in school</b>	<b>Succeeding in university modules</b>
The school year is about 39 weeks long and nearly all courses run over the whole year.	The academic year is divided into two separate sections (semesters). Each semester has twelve teaching weeks and three weeks for revision, class tests and assignment completion.

Classes are generally small and often well below 25.	Some classes may number 100+ students, particularly in Year One. Classes in subsequent years tend to be smaller.
You do most of your studying in class with homework as a 'back-up'.	You do most of your studying outside of class (a good estimate is about two hours outside class for every hour in class).
You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough.	You need to regularly review class notes, recommended reading and the results of your own desk-based research.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed and often 're-taught' in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading which may not be directly addressed in class but which is important for tests and assignments ('reading for your degree'). Lecture notes are available on Blackboard prior to a class, ensure you read through them before the class.
<b><i>In summary ... you will usually be told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings.</i></b>	<b><i>In summary ... it is up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you have already done so.</i></b>
<b>School teachers</b>	<b>University lecturers</b>
Teachers will check your completed homework.	Lecturers will generally not set 'homework' – i.e. work which does not count towards a final grade or mark.
Teachers will remind you of any work that is not completed.	Lecturers may remind you if work has not been completed but don't count on it.
Teachers will approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Lecturers are usually open and helpful but most will expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance. If you do initiate that contact you should find them helpful.
Teachers are often available for discussion before, during and after classes.	Lecturers expect students to see them during scheduled office hours (many have fixed times for seeing students). Having said that, very few lecturers would insist on seeing students <i>only</i> during designated times.
Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.	Lecturers have been trained initially as researchers in their particular areas of interest. Most now also have a teaching qualification.
Teachers will provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	Lecturers will expect you to make up lost time by getting notes and instructions from Blackboard or class mates.
Teachers present material to help you understand the material in textbooks. (They 'interpret' work for you.)	Lecturers will usually not follow a particular textbook. Instead, they will give information from a variety of books and journal papers. This will allow them to amplify a text by giving further illustrations, providing background information or discussing recent and relevant research about the topic you are studying. They may expect you to relate the classes to the textbook information.

Teachers often write material on boards for you to copy into your own notes.	Lecturers may 'lecture' non-stop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes. Good note taking is a 'must'.
Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading you through the 'thinking' process.	Lecturers expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics. They may do this by getting you to discuss and report discussions in class.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Lecturers expect you to take responsibility for completing work on time. Deadlines will be given to you and possibly class reminders but that is all. You will be given information about the assessment criteria against which your work will be judged.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Increasingly, universities are monitoring attendance because of the strong link between academic performance and attendance rates.
<b><i>In summary ... teachers bear much of the responsibility for YOUR learning.</i></b>	<b><i>In summary ... you bear the responsibility for your learning while your lecturers serve as guides, mentors and resources.</i></b>
<b>Assessments in school</b>	<b>Assessments in university</b>
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material. It may be formative in nature (i.e. it is not used to 'feed-into' final overall grades but is used to show you how well you are progressing).	Testing/assessment is usually infrequent and usually summative (i.e. it contributes towards your final mark or grade in a module). It will cover large amounts of material. You (not the lecturer) will need to organize the material as you prepare for a test or assignment. A particular module may have only two pieces of assessment in a semester.
Teachers will frequently rearrange tests to avoid conflicts with other school activities.	Lecturers in different modules usually schedule deadlines without regard to the demands of other modules or courses; you need to develop good time management skills.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.	Lecturers sometimes offer in-depth review sessions and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant, i.e. one that comes 'armed' with questions.
<b><i>In summary ... success is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to solve.</i></b>	<b><i>In summary ... success is demonstrated by the ability to apply what you have learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.</i></b>
<b>Marks (grades) in school</b>	<b>Marks (grades) in university</b>
Marks (grades) are given for most assigned work.	Marks (grades) are given for most assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	The overall grade is usually determined by performance in a relatively few pieces of work.
There may be extra things you can do to help to raise your overall grade.	All students complete the same pattern of assessment and it is not possible to do extra

	work to improve an overall grade OR to repeat work to improve the mark.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have too adverse an effect on your final grade.	Watch out for your first assignments (tests or coursework such as reports, essays, practical write-ups, etc.). These are usually 'wake-up calls' to let you know what is expected – but they may also account for a substantial part of your overall coursework mark. You may be shocked when you get your grades – but, don't panic.
You may have to pass all pieces of work in order to pass overall.	Generally, you do not have to pass every piece of coursework and you can pass a module overall with fails on a few minor pieces.
<b><i>In summary ... 'effort counts'. Courses are usually structured to reward motivation and enthusiasm.</i></b>	<b><i>In summary ... 'results count'. Whilst motivation and enthusiasm are important in creating a good impression and showing the lecturers that you are keen to learn (and, therefore, someone worth helping), this will not substitute for good marks in coursework and examinations</i></b>

### In summary

School	University
Dependant on teachers for the vast majority of learning materials.	Independent study – lecturers provide the broad introduction to the subject and recommend reading. You augment this through further study and reading.
Standards and extent of learning adhere to a set curriculum.	There are of course minimum expectations required to pass, but there are no limitations on your learning. The more reading you do the more insightful your observations will be and the better your marks.
Extensive set timetables for classes, and homework	Effective time management is needed to prepare for classes and to study to complete varied assignments – get a diary or use a digital calendar.
Dictated priorities	You prioritize and balance your deadlines and tasks, revision and other activities.
Limited expectation on participation and engagement	Take the initiative – in study, fieldtrips, individual work, group work opportunities and presentations.
Broad-based IT introduction	You will be expected to get to grips with multi-media resources, specialized software and supported learning through Blackboard.

### 1.2 What you need to do if you want to do well

It is difficult to adequately summarize all the strategies you could employ to excel in your studies at the University, nevertheless we could recommend the following key areas:

- (a) **Attend classes** You can't orientate or focus your studying if you don't attend lectures, tutorials and practicals. Although many modules are supported through Blackboard this is no substitute for engaging with lecturers and other students.
- (b) **Read** You cannot hope to score high grades if your knowledge is limited by inadequate study, or informed by poor online sources. There is no way to avoid the need to locate and read good quality academic publications. We will recommend general, introductory textbooks for modules but the rest is up to you.
- (c) **Ask** Teaching staff are here to support you, so ask questions in class or arrange to drop by our offices. You will find contact details on the School webpage and in your course handbook. Make sure to use the correct email address when contacting staff. Don't assume Outlook knows best.
- (d) **Engage** with staff and students, as well as the opportunities available. There are many excellent additional training and research opportunities open to you at university so take full advantage of these and improve your CV.
- (e) **Reflect** on your learning, what elements of study are going well and what could be improved. The feedback you receive from lecturers is key – you need to act on it to improve your performance and marks.

### 1.3 How we grade you

Each module outline/handbook will specify the combination of study tasks to complete and should provide details of how the marks are divided between these tasks – a marking scheme or rubric. In addition, we provide feedback on assignments – either directly e.g. at the end of a presentation; or indirectly e.g. the notes on your assignments. Often these provide a breakdown of marks for the task. You need to use this feedback to improve your performance.

#### Marking grades

First class honour	>70%
Upper second class	60 - 69%
Lower second class	50 - 59%
Third class mark	40 - 49%
Fail	0 - 39%

#### Degree award

Your final degree classification is calculated using 30% of the mark from year 2 (level 5) and 70% from final year (level 6).

From 2024/25 the University has introduced the possibility of promotion to the next classification band. Students who are 2.5% or less below a classification boundary and have 50% or more of their credits at their highest level in the higher classification boundary will be eligible for promotion to the higher classification.

For example, an undergraduate degree student who has an average of 57.5% plus 50% of their level 6 modules in the 60+ band will be promoted to a 2:1 classification.