

Studying Independently

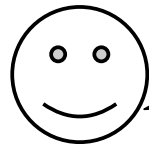
If this is your first year of study in a university, you may be unsure about what to expect. This pamphlet will give you a few ideas about what it means to be an independent learner and information on your responsibility as an independent learner.

Role of the independent learner

You may be used to an education system where teachers supervise you closely. They may have regularly checked on your progress, helped you plan your time, and told you exactly what you needed to study.

Typically, university students spend only a few hours each week in lectures and tutorials and there may be less individual guidance from academic staff. It could appear that you have a lot of free time and not much direction. You will need to organise your own time and study activities. Being an independent learner means that you are responsible for managing your own learning.

For example, it will be your responsibility to make decisions about when to start working on assignments, how many hours to study and how to allocate your time. You are also responsible for completing any set reading and assessment tasks. You are in charge of how you manage your life and work at university.



At home there was more pressure, more deadlines and more tests. In Australia, there is not so much pressure to do the work, it is up to you whether you do it or not. It took me a semester to get used to this. Now, every week, I note everything I need to get done in my diary and tick things off as I do them.
(Korean student)

Role of the lecturer

You may be familiar with an education system where the role of the teacher is to provide the answers and most of the content of the unit. At university, the role of the lecturers is different. They will provide some necessary information and give you feedback from time to time about your progress; however, lecturers will not be the only resource for information about a topic. Information presented by your lecturer is just the starting point for you to develop your learning through reading, writing, and discussion. Therefore, an important part of your learning will not take place in the classroom. You will need to make use of library databases and online resources to locate and read additional information for your study.

You will find lecturers and other staff are concerned about your progress, but they will wait until you ask for help. As an independent learner, you are expected to follow up issues and ask for support when you need it. Lecturers have specific times that students can see them about study issues. This information will often be in their unit outlines.

A good time to ask questions is in tutorials, which are often small group discussions. You are expected to learn from what the lecturer or tutor has to say on a topic as well as to learn from other students' contributions. Tutorials give you the opportunity to take part in discussions and ask questions about issues raised in the lectures.



At home, I used to listen to my teacher and do exercises in class; in Australia, we can give our opinions freely, instead of waiting for the teacher to ask.
(Indonesian student)

Collaborative learning

You will have many opportunities to work with other students on a problem or project; this cooperative learning is encouraged. By engaging in an exchange of ideas, you will benefit from a broader range of perspectives and skills. You may be required to participate in small group discussions in tutorials or to prepare and present a group presentation in a tutorial.

It is an excellent idea to join a study group and continue the benefits of collaborative learning outside formal classes. You will gain a better understanding of study material and be able to share resources and thus save time and energy. Many students find this way of learning productive and enjoyable.



Australian students don't seem as competitive as we are. Everyone was willing to help me and to answer my questions. They were really friendly. (Chinese student)

For further information:

- Contact the Academic Skills Adviser on your campus
- Visit our web pages on myACU.

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Expectations

In your role as an independent learner, your lecturers will expect you to:

- manage your study by setting goals and organising your time
- attend information sessions and ask librarians for help to use the library
- prepare for lectures, tutorials, and practical sessions by doing the preliminary reading
- comply with the attendance requirements for lectures, tutorials, and practical sessions
- prepare for and participate in tutorial discussions
- work consistently on assignments and hand them in by the due date
- study for exams
- ask for help when you need it.