

TIME TIPS FOR TRIMESTERS!

Trimesters = 3 academic teaching periods in a year – giving you, the student, more flexibility as to when, which, and how many units you study over the entire year and throughout your course. The number of units offered in T3 is increasing.

You can choose to keep your studies to T1 and T2 if you wish, or spread them over into T3 if the units you need to do are available. T3 may also be used to accelerate your progress through your course, and/or to re-take units. Many courses also offer units that permit students to start their study in the third trimester.

Full-time = 8 (trimester) units of study in a year. However, for Centrelink purposes a full-time student is defined as someone who is studying 75% or higher of a full-time study load i.e. 6 to 8 units per year.

If you enroll in 2 units per trimester (total of 6 for the year), or in 3 units in each of T1 and T2 trimesters (total of 6), you would still be deemed a full-time student by Centrelink. **If you are spreading the minimum number of units across 3 trimesters, Centrelink requires you to enroll as a full-time student (ie enroll in all 3 trimesters) at the beginning of the year. Check with Centrelink that you meet their requirements for payment.**

Keep in mind that Centrelink payments such as Youth Allowance or Austudy generally do not go beyond 3 years. This means you will have to consider how to finance your studies beyond that 3 year period if you stick with the minimum of 6 units per year. You might, for example, be eligible for another type of payment from Centrelink. Do not assume you are ineligible. Check out your eligibility for various payments by going onto the [Centrelink](#) webpage or into your nearest Centrelink office.

If you are eligible for some type of student payment from Centrelink (eg Youth Allowance or Austudy), and you plan to spread the minimum study load across the 3 trimesters (eg 2 units each in T1, T2, and T3), check at the start of the year what course units are offered in the various trimesters, and enroll in all 3 trimesters. If, for some reason, you can't study the necessary number of units in any given trimester, then notify Centrelink straight away— to avoid a debt and to check eligibility for other types of financial support within that given trimester. You might be able to pick up extra units in the following trimester—subject to their availability.

If you want to complete your degree in a shorter time frame, you may wish to study 4 units per T1 and T2 and 1 or more in T3 (i.e. 9 to 12 per year) - assuming all the units you are seeking are available and depending on the structure of your course. It is important to not take on more than you can manage. The number of units you study will have to take into account what commitments you have or are likely to have in the year. If you are working full-time, trying to study full-time is not recommended.

Most units of study require **at least** 10 hours of study per week (private study and class time included) in order to do justice to the unit and to achieve results that are a truer indicator of your ability. If you are factoring less than 10 hours per unit, you might be short-changing yourself in terms of time and energy for study.

If you have “bitten off more than you can chew” in any given trimester, keep in mind what are called “principal dates” - these are dates by when things have to happen at UNE e.g. when trimesters, lectures, exams, etc start and end. Each trimester has a “Census Day”. This is the date by which you can withdraw from a trimester unit without incurring the HECS debt for that unit. There are also dates by which you can withdraw from units without academic failure. Check out these dates and highlight them on a wall-planner diary/ computer/ Smartphone. There are also dates by which you can add units to an enrolment – useful to know if you change to another unit, or your circumstances allow you to take on another unit of study.

Check which units are offered once yearly and which are repeated within the year. If you cannot manage studying a unit in one particular trimester, you might be able to enroll in it later that year. If you fail a unit, you might be able to repeat it within the year. Check the [online course and unit catalogue](#) when having to make such decisions. Type in the unit code to see when units you are interested in are available.

In 2020 Trimesters 1 and 2 have 11 weeks of lectures and T3 will have 10 lecture weeks. T1 and T2 will include a mid-trimester break of 2 weeks. In T1 and T2, this break will coincide with the intensive schools period – keep this in mind if you are studying online units that have intensive schools – particularly mandatory ones.

Once lectures end, exams commence in the following week over a 2 week period. There is then an approximate 3-week end of trimester 1 break, before trimester 2 starts in early July. T3 starts in November and includes the UNE Christmas/New Year break and a 2 week exam period at the tail end of the overall 14 weeks before all T3 activities are over.

If you have school-aged children, take note of when school holidays fall, whether they coincide with trimester breaks, exam periods, intensive schools, or lecture time. Plan in advance how you will manage school vacation periods.

Advantages of trimesters for you are:

- Option to finish your course in less time – depending on unit availability
- Option to keep studies to T1 and T2, and use the summer period for work, recreation, family time, travel, rest
- Option to start a course in T3 where units are available
- Option to spread your study load across the year
- If you move to Armidale for study, the option of staying in accommodation for the full-year if studying in each trimester (as opposed to leaving Armidale over the summer period)
- Option to repeat units within the year if you fail any (subject to availability)
- Ability to plan study load around leave, work, family, health, financial and other commitments
- Ongoing engagement with learning if long breaks do not work for you
- Option of part-time work to supplement any Centrelink entitlements – noting that you must keep Centrelink informed of your earnings.

Other time tips for trimesters include:

Create a “map” of your time – i.e. make a spreadsheet that includes all days and hours of the week. Note down what you **currently** do in each hour – i.e. hours spent sleeping, showering, cooking, eating, cleaning, parenting children, doing paid work, participating in sport, watching TV, surfing the internet, travelling, spiritual/religious practice, visiting family and friends, wining and dining, etc.

Be honest about how you currently spend your time. There are 168 hours in the week. Most of us sleep 56 of these, leaving 112. There are lots of hours to account for – but sometimes we aren’t aware of where the time goes. This exercise will make you aware of where your time goes.

See if the hours left will be enough for fixed study commitments (lectures, prac classes, online discussions) and private study time. Think about that minimum of at least 10 hours per unit of study.

Check if the hours left in your “map” would permit you to study at times when you are most alert – e.g. in the morning?

Once you have drawn up a map of “current” time use, draw up a map or spreadsheet of “future” time use– so that it realistically accommodates your study needs. Keep in mind points that follow.

The support you need to succeed

If the hours needed for study are currently not there, something has to give – ideally this should not be your health, sleep, or the quality of your relationships with others. Perhaps some non-essential activities can go (TV or online activities? less socialising?). But don't give up all of the fun stuff. Being chained to your desk all the time is definitely not an ideal way to study. Aim for balance. Consider enrolling in less units per trimester, and gradually taking on more units as your confidence and ability to gauge how long things take improves.

Allow for some “slack” in your week – i.e. some “just in case” time that you do not commit to anything in particular and that you can fall back on if the unexpected arises or there is an activity you do not want to miss. If you borrow some study time for other activities, you can pay it back in your “just in case” time.

Identify whether you want to study in short or long blocks of time - morning? evening? whole days for just study? 9 to 5 routine? Identify times you can use for study (e.g. while waiting for a bus? On the train? When the kids are in bed?) It is also wise to deal with more difficult and less interesting subjects when you know you are most alert.

Consider using time between classes. Many types of study fit into short blocks of 10-20 minutes (e.g. pre-reading for a lecture, reviewing notes, learning specific vocabulary, formulas, etc).

Note what study tasks you will do into your map or spreadsheet (eg listen to lecture on train 8am; essay reading for sociology 11am to 12)

Our concentration often wanes after 20 minutes. Spend 5 minutes identifying what you want to study, 20 minutes doing it, and 5 minutes reviewing it. This approach means that every half hour of study is really focused and you are monitoring how you are going (as opposed to staring at the same paragraph for hours and then wondering where the time went. Sound familiar?)

Concentration and time use is often more effective by changing your study location. Take note of environmental factors on your concentration (e.g. amount of light, degree of warmth, amount of noise, amount of space, movement of people, etc). Experiment with studying both at home and in the library.

Some types of work are better accomplished working with and beside someone else rather than working in solitude. Note these differences and attempt to use them to your advantage. You may like to form a regular study group for each subject.

Say 'no' to some requests for your time when you know you can't afford to give it.

Plan ahead for the day, week and trimester. This will reduce wasted time and a rush to make due dates. Indecision about what to do next is an energy user and tends to make initiating study difficult.

Use a wall planner for recording assessment due dates. If assessments are due at the same time, decide if you can work on several concurrently or if you need to stagger the time you spend on each. Begin work early to allow for the unexpected.

You will feel better, look better, and work much more effectively if you exercise regularly. Aim for 20-30 minutes of exercise per day – power walking, squash, gym, cycling, running, and skipping are economical in time spent for benefits gained.

Give adequate time to sleep every night. If sleep has to be reduced because you 'do not have time' to complete your work, re-examine your lifestyle and your priorities.

The support you need to succeed

Try not to spend excessive time on low priority items. Put most of your time and energy toward items which have high value and payoff for you.

Be careful of not fooling yourself about how much you are achieving simply because you are able to make yourself busy. Work effectiveness should be measured by output rather than in time taken (or wasted).

Have a clear study desk. Work with only the materials that you need for one subject in front of you. Have an organized space for all other books and material and do your best to store them in that place when you are not actually working on them.

The emphasis in your work should be quality, not quantity. Experiment with study techniques which give better quality results.

Be flexible with your time rather than sticking rigidly to a schedule. Be honest about paying back time borrowed from study. Plan your study for the week ahead – perhaps on Sunday night.

When you develop a work and relaxation map or schedule that works well for you, display it in a noticeable place and use it. Carry a copy with you at the front of your folder or notebook, on your computer desktop, or on your phone.

Before you sit down to do some intensive study, decide what you want to accomplish during your study session, and set a finishing time. This will focus your attention and help you initiate your study. It will also give you a goal to achieve and provide you with the opportunity for gaining satisfaction from realizing your goals.

Be sure to build in breaks when you study intensively. Only you can decide how regularly to take breaks.

If you have to share study or work facilities with someone else, discuss your respective needs, approaches, and aspirations openly and frankly with one another. In some areas you may have to agree on a compromise suitable to both parties.

If you feel tired when you are working, stop for a short while. If you are really fatigued, reschedule your time and get some rest.

Consult as needed with your lecturers to make sure your efforts and their expectations are similar. Should you anticipate or be experiencing difficulties, the sooner you seek help, the sooner you regain control over your own life again.

On and off-campus students can contact the Student Support team for further information and other tip sheets. Also go to the [UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) webpage to look at the range of self-help resources online.

**Contact UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) on
(02) 6773 2897 for a free appointment. Email studentcounselling@une.edu.au
or via [AskUNE](#)**

The support you need to succeed