

To Study or Not To Study: That Is the Question

There are many factors that impact on your ability to start, or continue, studying at University. Considering these things carefully can make the difference between stress and success.

Motivation

Some people decide to study because they have their sights set on a particular career, others might be looking to advance their current skill set or others still simply want to pursue an interest. Whatever the reason, you will need a big, unlimited pot of motivation to keep you on track! If you are unsure about how much motivation you have, a helpful exercise can be to draw up a “Decisional Balance” table on a piece of paper, as shown below:

	Study	Don't Study
Pros		
Cons		

Put in all the information you can think of that applies to each box. Do the pros to study outweigh the cons? Will the cons be fewer in the future? How will you know when this change has occurred?

Think about your current skills – what are the strengths you have that will lend themselves to study? Gauge how passionate you are about your field of study by talking to a friend about your options – often you will find yourself talking easily for over 10 minutes if it is an area you are passionate about. Talk to people in your field of interest to get a realistic perspective of what it may entail.

Fully considering how motivated you are before making the decision to study or withdraw can help you be committed to your decision.

The Practical Things

On average, you should expect to dedicate at least 10hrs per week per unit of study. To be prepared for this, it will be important to have figured out the financial, time and physical demands. In particular, think about:

- How will I fit this in around my work/family/social commitments?
- Where will I study?
- What resources will I need to purchase? Textbooks? A computer? Good internet?
- What time of day will I most likely find time to study?
- How will I accommodate the travel requirements for intensive schools or pracs?

If you need additional financial support, consider speaking with Centrelink to see what support may be available (<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-for-students-and-trainees>). There are also options to have HECS or SSAF deferred, and you can find out more information about that here: <https://www.ato.gov.au/forms/deferring-your-compulsory-repayment-or-overseas-levy/>

Managing Worries

In addition to the practical considerations, it can be helpful to contemplate what emotional aspects may help or hinder your ability to study. For some people, the thought of sitting exams or public speaking can be overwhelming. Even if this is not you, there will invariably be times when you feel sad or worried or stressed when studying and this is entirely normal. The important thing to know is what your support network is, and how you can access it if required.

The most successful students are the ones who have a good balance between study and the rest of their lives. They are able to organise their time enough to allow for catch ups with friends, social sport, family time, date nights and sleep. Consider your study trajectory like a see-saw; on one end there are things that push the see-saw up from underneath, increasing stress, and on the top of the other side there are relaxing things that return the see-saw to a more balanced position. The aim is to return the see-saw to a horizontal position, because a certain amount of stress is helpful to find the necessary motivation to get things done. What will be helping or hindering your balance?

Mindfulness is a hot topic in many forums at the moment and whilst it takes a lot of practice to use it well, the premise of “thinking mindfully” can be used by everyone. Basically, this means ensuring that you are considering all aspects of the situation – how it makes you feel, think and behave – rather than just reacting impulsively. Imagine you are putting a semi colon before making a decision about your study, whereby you take a deep breath, pause and reflect on the important information.

Beyond this, one of the best ways to manage worries about studying is to gain a realistic understanding of how you will approach your work. If you are still considering whether to study:

- Become familiar with the UNE webpages that contain helpful information about course requirements, such as the online Course and Unit Catalogue (<https://my.une.edu.au/courses/>) or call The Future Students Team on 1800 818 865.

- Contact the UNE Careers staff to explore your interests and find a good study fit. Email careers@une.edu.au or phone 6773 2000.

If you are already enrolled:

- Check out the Current Students webpage which has information on your course, getting started, supports, resources, student life and GRADUATING!
- Have a look at the UNE Facebook Page, or Insiders Guide (a news blog that sits in your myUNE Student Portal and gives updates about relevant events and dates etc).
- You can also sign up for *tUNE Up*, a free online 2 week course, to develop your writing and referencing skills.

UNE has a number of support services available to help make your study journey easier. These include:

- **Academic Skills Office** to boost your study skills and become an independent learner <http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills>
- **Student Access and Inclusion** for assistance with disability, equity and carer support <http://www.une.edu.au/sai>
- **Oorala** - a teaching and support resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students <http://www.une.edu.au/info-for/indigenous-matters/oorala>
- **UNE International** provide a range of services for international students <http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/support/international-students/une-international>

Extra Help

Whilst being prepared is the best defense, of course life sometimes throws us curveballs. If you feel your studies have been impacted by an unforeseeable event that was outside of your control and occurred after the census date, you can apply for a HECS Remission. If successful, this will allow you to withdraw from the unit without academic or financial penalty. More information about this process can be found following the link here: <http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/my-course/managing-my-course/forms-and-procedures>

UNE Student Counselling and Psychological Services staff are available to proactively help with these worries, be they anxiety, depression, relationships or your study skills. This is a free service to all students, and can be accessed face to face or via the phone.

Call us on 6773 2897 to book an appointment. We also have a number of useful tip sheets on our website: www.une.edu.au/counselling