Getting Started at University
VALUE MaP
30/09/2017

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Aims of this workshop

• To reflect on the experience of starting university study
• To draw from your strengths as mature students
• To consider how this experience can be combined with successful study
• To outline ways of managing your learning and study effectively
• To provide some brief general advice on core study skills areas
  – Academic reading; academic writing; note-taking etc.
Build on existing strengths!

• The “I can do this...” model works by building on experience

• Discussion: 2 minutes
  – What strengths do you bring to university study?
Typical strengths of adult learners

- Time management, organisation, self-discipline
- Concentration and application
- Multi-tasking
- Working co-operatively
- Coping with setbacks
- Perseverance, determination
Typical strengths of adult learners

• ‘Holistic’ thinking: ability to see things ‘in the round’
• Ability to draw on life experience
• Willingness to raise/ask questions
What are the possible (likely?) challenges of University study?

• Varies from individual to individual, clearly...
• But common factors are:
  • Language
    – Pre-requisite; progression; credit framework etc.
  • Assessments
  • Depth and pace of study
    – Everything seems to happen very quickly: ‘one topic per week’ syndrome!
  • Underpinning study skills
    – Especially writing
• Using evidence effectively/referencing
Where to get help: SLAS

• The Student Learning Advisory Service
• [Obviously, VALUE MaP!]
• 4 ways of helping you
  – 1. Resource Bank: books to borrow [Library], study guides to take away (free)
  – 2. On-line resources + downloads
  – 3. Workshops (VALUE MaP + others)
  – 4. 1:1 Advice & guidance appointments: includes Maths!

• www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/learning
The Royal Literary Fellows

- [https://www.kent.ac.uk/learning/academic-advice/literaryfellow.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/learning/academic-advice/literaryfellow.html)
- Maggie Butt, RLF Canterbury Campus
Information, information, information

- You will receive a deluge of new information
- Be selective: concentrate on the essentials
  - Faculty Handbook
  - Credit framework
  - Module guide
  - School Handbook
  - Moodle
Information, information, information

• Write down questions *as they occur to you!*
• Keep a notebook
• Much information will be on-line/www, or on the VLE, Moodle
• Example
  – [http://www.kent.ac.uk/sac/current-students/student-resources.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/sac/current-students/student-resources.html)
• Many links will be password-protected
  – Establish good practice in password use!
Information, information, information

- Keep all course literature and school guidelines
- Get to know your seminar leaders, the personal tutorial system etc.
- Use e-mail selectively and effectively to clarify things
Using the Library

• More complex than other libraries you have used?
• Organise your library use and research skills
• Seek guidance – use induction events, subject guides + subject librarians (Academic Liaison Librarians)
  http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/subjects/index.html
• Be creative: you need to use texts; journals and electronic/multi-media material
• Start using journals as soon as you can
• Spend some time in the library! Don’t be apprehensive...
Managing reading

- Remember you can’t read everything
- Be selective
- Seek guidance
- Use reading lists selectively and effectively
- Share resources
- Remember to ‘read for different purposes’: skim – scan – read for detail
- Read actively
Writing essays and reports

- Seek help where needed
- Follow guide-lines
- Remember the importance of
  - structure
  - clarity
  - focus on the question
Writing essays and reports

• Remember the golden rules of academic writing:
  – independent evaluation
  – evaluation supported by informed reading and preparation
  – evidence always provided
  – citations and references always provided
Two key ‘overview’ elements to academic writing

- **PDW**
  - Plan – draft – write – (edit)
  - *In this order*
- **IDC**
  - Introduction – development – conclusion
  - The basic structure of most academic writing
  - 10% + 80% + 10%...(approximately!)
Time management

• The basic ‘maths’!....
• 120 credits
• 10 hours study per credit
• 1200 hours study in total
• 30 weeks of the academic year
• 40 hours per week...
• *You will feel ‘pressurised’ at times, but there is time to manage what you need to do!*
Time management

• Use some form of **schedule** to map out your commitments
  – Daily, weekly, monthly and termly
• Have clear – and realistic – **targets**
• Have clear **priorities**
• Keep a **record** of what you need to do!
• **Review** time-keeping records regularly
Communication

• Talk to other students!
• Talk to staff!
• Office hours
• Preliminary e-mail
  – Clearly planned; not rapid-fire ‘tweets’!
• Ask questions
• Make sure that you deal with any difficulties via formal university/department procedures
Working with others

• Something mature students are good at!
• (Re)explore ways of working together
• Share information/resources and ideas
• Revise with others
• Use seminars actively: learn from others
The skills and aptitudes we expect...

• Managing your time
  – Preparation for lectures and seminars
  – Deadlines

• Research skills

• Presenting an argument
  – Academic writing
  – Presentations
  – Participating in seminars
You can expect from us...

- High standards of teaching
- Fair marking
- Feedback on performance
- Transparency of decisions
- Timely information/communication
- Support and guidance
- Finally....
An academic’s view....

• Attend lectures and seminars
• Start work early!
• In written work especially: less description, more reflection
• Practise selective academic reading
• Remember that academic thought is always evaluative and evidential
• Get hold of all the course documents!
Academic survival...

• The learning advisor’s view – 5 key points
• Use short periods of concentration that build up to longer ones!
  – 1 + 1 + 1 hours with short breaks between may be more productive than 3 hours in one ‘block’
• Try and manage your time
• Record all sources that you use!
  – You may want to use something for an assignment later on
Academic survival...

• If you run out of time for reading, *some* reading is better than no reading!

• Don’t take too many notes while you read
  – Avoid the problem of being ‘bogged’ down in reading...’light touch’ notes
GOOD LUCK

for all your studies!

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www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/learning