You may be enrolled in a unit delivered totally or supplemented with an online component. Here you can find tips and advice on how to get the most out of your online learning experience.

Studying online provides you with the flexibility and convenience to study where and when you like, as long as you meet all of the unit's requirements. It is very well suited for those who are self-starters and motivated to learn. You can expect the workload for your online unit to be the same unit delivered face-to-face. However, studying online does require greater discipline than studying face-to-face. Here are some tips that help you maintain this discipline:

- **Check to see if you are suited for online learning.** Many online course providers have resources to help you determine if online learning is suited to you. These examples are from eLearners.com:
  - I am disciplined and self-motivated.
  - I am comfortable with navigating the Internet and using email.
  - I do not have the time to commute to classes and find parking on-campus.
  - An online course or degree program in my field would be accepted or respected.

- **Ensure that you are ready for online learning.** As with face-to-face courses, ensure that you meet the prerequisites (and experience) and co-requisites and have the necessary reading and writing skills. There is a lot of reading with most online learning units.

- **Become familiar with how the online unit you are enrolled in works.**
  - What are the administration procedures (e.g., changing enrolment details)?
  - What are the technological requirements (e.g., do you need specific software?)
  - What is the expected workload?
  - What is the nature of the assessments and how do you submit them?
  - Are you expected to participate in online discussions or chats? If so, how do they work (e.g., frequency of participation, specific browser plugins, etc.)?
  - How do you contact your tutor/instructor and other students enrolled in the same unit?
  - Are there other facilities that you need (e.g., library)?
  - Are there any specific examination requirements (e.g., having to go to a specified examination centre)?
  - Is the online unit being delivered from an institution in a different time zone? If so, will this create any foreseeable problems for you (particularly for any live chat requirements)?

- **Avoid enrolling in too many online units within a semester or study period.** You may consider enrolling in just one online unit to begin with to see if online learning is suited to you. You can increase the number of units in subsequent study periods if you wish to continue.

- **Keep a weekly calendar for the duration of the unit.** Write in your calendar important information such as assessment dues dates, weekly online chat times, final date for withdrawing from your unit before penalties apply, and so on.
• **Create a weekly study routine.** Find out how many hours per week you are expected to study for the unit you are enrolled in and then add these hours to your weekly calendar in time slots most conducive for studying to allow you to perform at your peak. Include time to get settled and for study breaks. Stick to these time slots as though you had to attend a face-to-face class. Having set weekly times to study helps to set up a weekly routine for you as well as others you live with. Remember to maintain a healthy life/family/work/study balance.

• **Choose a place to study that works well for you.** Your place of study should have everything you need on hand and is as free from distractions as possible. Some people like to create an atmosphere that is conducive to studying, by incorporating some or all of the following in their study space:
  - playing relaxing music set at low volume,
  - using aromatherapy,
  - surrounding themselves with relaxing or inspiring pictures or paintings,
  - placing their study desk near natural lighting,
  - and so on.

• **Read ALL the information given to you.** If you are enrolled in a fully online unit, you will be sent information to help you get started. Avoid procrastination – start reading through the material as soon as you receive it. You will be provided an outline of the unit which will include information such as weekly study topics, assessment requirements and their due dates, textbook requirements, online resources, and so on. Many questions you may have when starting online learning may be answered in this information.

• **Find out what study help may be available to you.** Some online courses have mentors or student advisors available to assist you with any study or administrative issues you may encounter. In some institutions, student mentors may contact you to see how you are going during the study period.

• **Maintain a positive attitude towards your study.** Think positively and be confident that you will be able to complete all the set tasks. Although you may have set up study routines to follow, there are times you will need to be flexible, particularly when juggling your study with family and work commitments. Remain clear of your goals and the bigger picture – remind yourself of why you began studying and where you hope it will take you in the next few years. Be realistic of your expectations and make adjustments as necessary. Most of all, remain persistent – successful students are those who are able to sustain the effort over the study period.

• **If you are having problems keeping on top of your studies, contact your tutor.** Your online tutor understands that you are trying to juggle your studies with other commitments in your life. It is better to contact your tutor sooner than later if you need to negotiate an extension.

• **Enjoy your successes.** Don’t forget to reward yourself after completing a significant study task (e.g., submitting an assignment). A reward may be going out to a favourite restaurant, or going to the movies, or enjoying time with family/friends. Remember to take a little time to reflect on what you have learnt from this study task.