

# Success in your postgraduate studies in the Faculty/School/Department of [name to go here] at University of [name to go here]

Your postgraduate study in the Faculty/School/Department of [name to go here] at the University [name to go here] should be exciting, rewarding and challenging. We want you to enjoy your subject, gain experience in different ways of thinking and working and leave with the knowledge and skills that will help you take control of your future. You will be studying new and fascinating ideas in ways that may be very different to those you will be used to, and university study involves an approach that you may never have experienced before.

As a postgraduate student, you:

- will find that you have access to a wide range of resources and support
- will be able to make your own decisions and study things that really interest you
- will become increasingly independent in your work, yet skilful at working with others.

Your patterns of study will be different depending on your programme and discipline, but the opportunity to study at the cutting edge of your subject and to commit yourself to achieving your full potential is the same for everyone.

## Academic advice on how to prepare for postgraduate study

One of the most important handbooks that you should read is your programme handbook which contains information on:

- Study support and advice for your programme
- Semester and examination dates
- Assessments and assessment rules and regulations
- Useful contact numbers for academic and non-academic issues
- Information on the University Charter.

As a postgraduate, you may be seeking to widen your knowledge or specialise. Try not to forget the knowledge and skills you obtained from previous study or work experience, and where you can, incorporate them into your studies here at the University [name to go here].

## Learning and teaching methods

For most students the workload will involve a combination of lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials as well as time for independent and group preparatory work. The number of teaching sessions you will have will vary according to your subject and the year that you are in, but they normally occupy most days of the week. For the remainder of the time you will be expected to study independently and prepare for assessments, so developing good study habits early will be beneficial.

## **Lectures**

- Many units are built around a series of lectures
- Lectures usually take place in specially designed lecture theatres and offer a regular opportunity for the whole student group to be taught together
- Lectures are given by members of teaching team on a particular prepared subject
- Often a number of different lecturers will contribute to a series covering a broad subject area
- Lectures provide a number of different opportunities for you to learn. Key information is disseminated for further study. A framework of ideas can be established for exploration through further reading and research within the format of the lecture. Small break-out discussion groups help define, explain and apply complex information
- The lecture notes that will be posted on the web are essential, but they only represent a starting point. The lecture notes will not contain all of the information that you will cover in the lecture so it is essential you attend and that you do any preparatory work. You will need to build on what you learn through your own reading and independent study.

## **Seminars**

Lectures are often supported by seminars, in which a group of students and their tutor talk through ideas, question assumptions and discuss aspects of a topic in depth. Sometimes a student presentation or problem exercise provides the starting point for discussion. Again, it is essential you attend and that you do any preparatory work. Other key skills you will develop will include writing and working collaboratively.

## **Tutorials**

In a tutorial you can ask questions, check your understanding, solve problems and discuss work assignments individually with a tutor or in a small group. This encourages you to be self-reliant, analyse problems, think imaginatively, develop new ideas and argue your case.

## **Workshops**

Workshops are an important opportunity for you to develop practical competencies essential for your development on your programme and future employment.

## **Group work**

You may be involved in group work, in which you collaborate with other students on a presentation or project. This encourages you to take different roles and responsibilities, to share expertise and tackle tasks that you would not be able to undertake alone. The ability to work effectively in groups is much sought after by employers.

## **Independent study**

Independent reading and activities, guided by lecturers, will enable you to prepare for – and follow up – topics in greater depth. This is especially important when you are undertaking an assignment or preparing for an exam.

Much of your learning will depend on:

- How you use the learning resources available to you
- The extent to which you participate in discussions and practical or group work
- How you tackle course assignments and assessments.

### ***Learning support***

We understand that starting anything new can seem quite overwhelming, so we put a lot of effort into ensuring that your first semesters go well and leave you feeling positive and confident. Some of the things we do to support you will be organised alongside your studies. You will have a thorough orientation programme to get you going. Your Unit Tutor is your first point of contact for your unit specific learning. Your Academic Advisor can help you review how you are progressing across units. If you have any issues with your programme, you need to speak to your Programme Leader.

### ***Learning resources***

Don't forget that it is important to use a range of resources such as books and journals rather than just articles that you have found on the internet. The University Library has many free resources, so do utilise them.

### ***Assessment***

At the University, a range of assessments are designed to give you the best opportunities to demonstrate your learning and achievements, with a variety of assessment methods measuring different aspects of your progress.

For example:

- A project evaluates your capacity to apply knowledge and understanding
- An exam tests your grasp of the breadth of a subject
- A dissertation examines your ability to conduct research and sustain an original argument
- An essay encourages you to read widely to answer a specific question.

Other methods of assessment can also include:

- Oral tests
- Poster presentations
- Practical competence tests
- Portfolios of material compiled during a course.

## **Top 10 tips to study success**

### ***1. Read your programme handbook***

It contains valuable information on a variety of key topics such as:

- a. semester dates
- b. student support
- c. exams
- d. academic offences

### ***2. Read and keep revisiting your assignment briefs***

Make sure that you keep reminding yourself of what will maximise the marks for an assignment by revisiting the assignment brief. Do not be tempted to do extra work that will not get you anymore marks! If you are unclear about the assignment brief, ask the unit leader.

### ***3. Plan your study time on a daily and weekly basis***

By planning your study daily and weekly, it will enable you to keep on top of your work.

#### **4. Check your teaching timetable weekly**

In the Faculty/School/Department, the teaching timetable is designed to be varied and provide you with a range of learning experiences. This means that your teaching timetable may be different from week to week.

#### **5. Start your assignments early**

Plan the work for your assignments in order to give you plenty of time to research and complete it. Don't be tempted to leave it until a few days before it is due!

#### **6. Attend all of your lectures, seminars and workshops**

By attending all of your scheduled sessions, you will be better placed to access all of the relevant information that will help you succeed in your studies.

#### **7. Read your feedback**

Make sure that you collect and read the feedback on your assignments. Using the feedback to help you undertake further assignments will help you improve your study skills and marks.

#### **8. Take advantage of the learning resources available**

There are a lot of resources that you can take advantage of at the university. They include hiring equipment, learning support and the PAL scheme where you can get learning advice from experienced students.

#### **9. Don't panic**

If you are worried about anything to do with your programme, don't panic! Talk to your programme or unit leader or academic advisor.

#### **10. Enjoy your studies!**

Being at university is a transformational experience. As well as working hard, try to enjoy yourself.

### **University's conduct rules and regulations**

Remember to abide by the University's conduct rules and regulations. As a University of [name to go here] student you are joining a community where all members are expected to conduct themselves as adults working together to achieve a friendly, safe and comfortable environment. We spell out what this means in practice via several codes of conduct. You can find details at:

### **Study Etiquette**

It is important that you:

- Attend and actively participate in all sessions
- Remain focussed on the task at hand – acting professionally and supportively/respectfully towards others on the unit
- Take responsibility for signing-in to each session
- Undertake the required reading/viewing and preparation ahead of each session
- Engage with and complete the formative assignments
- Regularly check the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for unit updates, as well as your university e-mail account and timetable
- Let your tutor know if you are experiencing any problems with the unit
- Complete the summative assessment and submit it on time.

## **The University's Student Charter**

The University's Student Charter gives a clear idea of what we should expect from each other.

### ***Working together, you can expect our commitment to you to provide:***

- An organised, engaging and stimulating learning environment
- Resources to support learning and future employability
- Professional staff who want you to realise your potential to succeed, and who will work to help you achieve the most from the programme of study
- Advice from tutors in a timely, approachable and constructive manner
- Work which has been assessed fairly and attentively
- Timely feedback which will include constructive comments as to how you can enhance work in the future
- Staff who interact with you professionally, courteously and respectfully
- A wide range of support and opportunities beyond your individual course.

### ***Working together we expect your commitment as a University [name to go here] student to:***

- Be respectful, fair, honest, inclusive and courteous as part of the community
- Bring a sense of curiosity, creativity, drive and enthusiasm to the learning environment
- Aim to become a responsible and autonomous learner, capable of working independently and reflecting critically upon your learning
- Prepare for, attend, and actively engage in the range of learning opportunities provided
- Embrace the range of different approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, engaging fully with the technologies and online resources available to you
- Be responsible for your own wellbeing and to access the support and personal development opportunities offered
- Appreciate the contributions of other students and see the opportunity to learn from them
- Be an active partner in building a better university.

### ***The University of [name to go here] Students' Union is committed to:***

- Being a major collective force for all students
- Helping students to realise their potential
- Creating friendships
- Understanding and recognising, more accessible and approachable to all students
- Supporting ethical and environmental issues.

**Written by Dr Michelle Morgan**