



TIP SHEET FOR MATURE AGE STUDENTS

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined (Thoreau)
When I let go of who I am I become who I might be (Lao Tsu)

Congratulations and welcome. It's great to have you here.
Half of Newcastle University's students are mature age (21 years plus).
Mature age students tend to be committed, enthusiastic and successful.
Allow yourself time to make this new transition and adjust to university life.
We hope you enjoy this rewarding and challenging journey.

Common fears

It's common to feel anxious, excited and confused starting out. You may be the first person in your family to study at university. Mature age students sometimes doubt themselves or feel like impostors to begin with but this will pass.

Take stock

Consider how your current strengths and skills will help you along the way. Mature age students bring rich and valuable life experience to study such as communication and time management skills. You're probably clear about why you've returned to study at this time, what you hope to gain and what you're willing to sacrifice.

Tips from mature age students who've graduated

- Believe in yourself. Be patient. Your confidence will grow.
- Ask questions and keep asking questions. It's your education.
- Listen to others' perspectives.
- Expect hiccups along the way. Don't give up easily.
- Be proactive when you study. This includes such activities as summarising your notes or drawing tables and diagrams.
- Find a study buddy and support group.
- Encourage and reward yourself. Celebrate your achievements along the way. Set up a cheer squad.

Keep your goals in mind

- Stay motivated by keeping your goals in mind. What are the benefits of study?
- Get organised and plan your semester and weekly schedule.
- Set realistic goals and prioritise your activities by yield.
- Take a moment to notice your progress.
- Develop a study routine.

Be proactive

- As a university student, you need to take responsibility for your studies. It's up to you to get organised and decide what effort to put in.
- Read your faculty and course handbooks and know what's expected of you. How do your assessments relate to your course?
- Attend lectures and tutorials
- Become a strategic learner. You can relearn how best to learn. Ask for feedback. After all you're here to learn.
- Make the most of your opportunities. Take risks. Don't get stuck on perfect assignments.
- Consider setting your own deadlines for assignments a few days ahead of time to allow for unexpected events such as family illness.

Make yourself at home

- Attend faculty welcomes and activities
- Explore your campus
- Discover the support services here for you. Visit the Hubs – this is where you can find them <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/students/hubs/where-to-find-us.html>
- Take library tours and skills classes. What data bases might be useful for your courses?
- Check out the union building, health services, The Forum for sporting activities.

Build your skills

- Read the helpful information for new students on the Uni web page by going to 'students' then 'new students'.
- Become familiar with the computer technology you'll need. Activate your email account, get onto Blackboard, locate your computer labs (see <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/unit/it/labs/index.html>).
- Computer support is available at the IT Helpdesk. You can call in on campus, phone 49217000 or email 17000@newcastle.edu.au. To build on your computer skills go to <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/teaching-learning/itskills.html>
- Explore the learning skills unit resources at <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/learningsupport.html>. Enrol in relevant workshops. Take a look at the tips on surviving first year exams.

Find a study-life balance that works for you

- Juggling the demands of study with work and family life involves many challenges
- Consider your commitments and be realistic. Review how much time and energy you need to allow for any paid work and carer responsibilities
- Keep in touch with yourself and manage your stress
- Take time out to rest and play
- Be kind to yourself

Develop a support network

- Share your experiences with family and friends. Tell them why study is important to you and suggest ways they can support you, such as a new roster for household chores. They'll require time to adjust. Negotiate with them.
- Plan regular catch up times with friends.
- Get to know fellow students and staff. Introduce yourself to classmates, greet them around campus, exchange phone numbers, ask questions, discuss ideas and share resources.
- Your tutors and lecturers are interested in your progress. Don't hesitate to make an appointment.
- If you've recently moved to the area or you've chosen part time or distance study then make the most of email, Blackboard and online services to communicate with lecturers and fellow students.
- If you experience personal or academic problems seek help early. We really want to support you to succeed.
- If you experience a major hiccup you can apply for consideration of special circumstances online at <http://webapps.newcastle.edu.au/index.cfm>
- Both NUSA (Newcastle University Students Union) <http://www.nusa.org.au/> and NUPSA (for post graduates) <http://www.nupsa.org.au/> are there to offer support and advice.
- For information about Student Support Services including Counselling, Health, Careers, Disability Support, Chaplaincy, Accommodation and Loans, go to <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/>.

Check out these resources

For references and related links go to:

Acknowledgement: Melbourne University Learning & Language Skills Unit

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/download/Study-MatureAge-Top10Tips.pdf>

Scevak, Jill and Cantwell, Robert (2007) Eds. *Stepping Stones A Guide for Mature Age Students* ACER Press, Victoria.