

Quick Study Skills

Define tomorrow.

UNISA |  university
of south africa



Navigating your studies at Unisa can be both rewarding and challenging. Distance learning requires a higher level of self-discipline, focus, and effective time management. As you juggle academic responsibilities alongside work, family, and personal commitments, adopting the right strategies becomes crucial for success.

This guide provides practical tips across key areas such as time management, effective study habits, stress and focus management, engagement and support, and continuous improvement. Each section is designed to help you build sustainable academic habits and make the most of the resources available to you. By implementing these strategies, you can boost your academic performance, reduce procrastination, and maintain a balanced approach to your studies.

With these tools at hand, you'll be better equipped to thrive in your Unisa journey, staying on top of your studies while managing the demands of daily life. Whether it's leveraging technology, seeking support, or refining your study techniques, this guide offers the insights and tips you need for academic success.

Time management

Time management is crucial for maintaining a structured approach to your studies, meeting deadlines, and reducing stress.

By organising your time effectively, you can ensure that you stay on track with your assignments, exams, and other responsibilities.

1

Create a study schedule

Block out specific times each day for studying, assignments, and breaks.

Use a [digital calendar](#) or planner.

2

Prioritise tasks

Identify [high-priority tasks](#) and tackle them first.

Use the [Eisenhower Matrix](#) to sort tasks by urgency and importance.

3

Avoid procrastination

Break tasks into smaller, manageable [chunks](#) and start early. Use the [Pomodoro Technique](#) (25 minutes of focused work, 5-minute break).

Further resources

[Study Smart: Time management](#) (video)

[Time management workshop](#) (video)

[Time management and Study Planner](#) (PDF)

[Tips to cope with procrastination](#) (PDF)

Study habits

Developing effective study habits is essential for study success. Good study habits can enhance your understanding of course material, improve retention, and boost your academic performance.

Effective study habits help you organise your learning, manage your time efficiently, and stay motivated. By adopting strong study practices, you can make the most of your study sessions, reduce stress, and achieve better results.

1

Set clear goals

Define **what you want to achieve** each study session. Break goals into **specific, measurable objectives**.

2

Use study techniques

Employ **active learning** techniques like summarising information, creating flashcards, or teaching concepts to others.

* Make notes *

3

Regular revision

Schedule **regular review sessions** to reinforce learning and retain information.

Further resources

[Goal setting and motivation](#) (video)

[How to be a successful Unisa student](#) (video)

[Growth and fixed mindset](#) (PDF)

[Study Skills](#) (video)

[Note making](#) (video)

[Deep learning and motivation](#) (PDF)

Stress and focus management

We often juggle multiple responsibilities. High stress levels and distractions can hinder your academic progress, but with the right strategies, you can maintain a healthy balance and stay on track.

Effective stress and focus management can significantly enhance your ability to concentrate, retain information, and perform well in your studies. By developing these skills, you can create a more productive and positive learning experience.

1

Manage stress

Practice **relaxation techniques** such as deep breathing, meditation, or physical exercise.

2

Stay focused

Find a quiet, **distraction-free study environment** where you can focus solely on your studies. This helps reinforce a mindset of productivity and separates your study time from other activities.

3

Maintain balance

Allocate time for personal activities and **relaxation** to avoid burnout.

Further resources

[Stress management](#) (video)

[Understanding and managing anxiety](#) (video)

[Stress management](#) (Webpage)

[Balancing various life roles](#) (video)

Engagement and support

Staying engaged and seeking support are essential for academic success. Distance learning requires you to take proactive steps to stay connected with your peers, lecturers, and the resources available to you.

Active engagement with your studies, fellow students, and academic and support staff can enhance your understanding of course material, provide motivation, and offer a sense of community. Seeking support when needed ensures that you do not fall behind and can overcome challenges effectively.

1

Participate actively

Attend classes and events as announced on myUnisa and the myUnisa events calendar, engage in discussions, and participate in study groups.

2

Seek support

Reach out to lecturers, tutors, and Unisa support services if you need clarification or support.

3

Utilise resources

Take full advantage of the resources Unisa offers, such as advising, library services, tutoring, academic literacies, and counselling support. These resources are designed to support your learning and can be instrumental in overcoming challenges.

Further resources

[Student support](#) (webpage)

[ODEL and the power of online study groups](#) (video)

[Study @ Unisa](#) (website)

[Academic writing and integrity](#) (course)

Assignment and assessment completion

Effective assignment and assessment completion involves starting early, understanding the requirements, and carefully reviewing your work before submission. Without a regular structure, it's easy to fall behind on submissions or overlook important details.

Create a schedule that allows for ample time to plan, draft, and refine your assignments, ensuring that all necessary components are included. By managing your time well and submitting work on time, you'll reduce stress and increase your chances of performing well in assessments. Remember to always check the assessment guidelines and seek clarification when needed.

1

Plan ahead

You receive information about assignments in your first tutorial letter for each module. Start working on assignments as soon as possible. Allocate enough time for assignment drafts and revisions on your study timetable.

2

Check requirements

Ensure you understand the assignment guidelines and criteria. Proofread for accuracy and formatting before submission.

3

Submit early

Aim to submit assignments a day or two before the deadline to avoid last-minute issues.

Further resources

[Study skills for assignments and assessments](#) (video)

[Exam preparation](#) (video)

[Courses related to online examinations and proctoring tools](#) (courses)

Exam preparation strategies

Exams can be stressful, but effective preparation can make a significant difference in your performance. Effective exam preparation is more about the quality of your study strategies than the quantity of hours spent studying.

Numerous studies have investigated the best strategies for exam preparation, providing evidence-based approaches to help you study smarter, not harder. Here's what the research says about how to optimise your study habits for the best results.

Remember, these strategies are not just for your exams but also for enhancing your overall learning experience.

1

Spaced repetition

Cramming the night before an exam might seem effective, but research shows that spacing out your study sessions over a longer period of time leads to better long-term memory retention. This technique, known as spaced repetition, involves revisiting the material at increasing intervals.

2

Active recall

Active recall is the practice of actively stimulating your memory during the learning process by testing yourself with flashcards, practice questions, or explaining the material to someone else. This will strengthen your memory and is more effective than passive review methods like reading or highlighting.

3

Interleaved practise

Interleaved practice, although it may feel challenging, involves mixing different topics or subjects during your study sessions instead of focusing on just one area. This improves learning and transfer of knowledge, as it forces your brain to continuously retrieve and apply information in different contexts.

4

Sleep, mindfulness and stress management

Getting enough sleep is crucial for cognitive function and memory consolidation. Students who get adequate sleep perform better on exams compared to those who stay up late cramming.

Taking regular breaks and managing stress is just as important as studying itself.

Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is about consistently seeking ways to enhance your academic performance and personal growth. In a distance learning environment, where self-discipline and independent learning are key, adopting a mindset of continuous improvement can significantly impact your success.

The journey of learning is ongoing. By regularly assessing your progress, reflecting on your experiences, and making necessary adjustments, you can steadily improve your study habits, academic results, and overall well-being.

1

Reflect on your performance

Regularly **assess your performance** and identify areas for improvement. Adjust your study strategies as needed.

2

Set incremental goals

Break down larger goals into **smaller, achievable steps**. Track your progress and celebrate milestones.

3

Learn from feedback

Review feedback from assignments and exams to understand mistakes and improve.

Further resources

[Study Smart: Time management](#) (video)

[Time management workshop](#) (video)

[Time management and Study Planner](#) (PDF)

[Tips to cope with procrastination](#) (PDF)

Additional tips

In addition to the core strategies covered, there are several extra tips that can enhance your open and distance e-learning experience. These tips are designed to help you navigate the unique challenges of studying remotely and make the most of your educational journey.

Distance learning requires a high level of self-motivation, organisation, and resourcefulness. By incorporating these additional tips into your routine, you can create a more balanced and effective study experience, tailored to your specific needs and circumstances.

1

Practice self-care

Ensure that you are getting enough rest, eating well, and taking regular breaks. **Managing stress and maintaining your health** can boost your academic performance and overall well-being.

2

Be proactive

Don't wait until you encounter problems to seek help. **Reach out early** if you have questions or need clarification. Proactively addressing potential issues can prevent them from becoming significant obstacles later on.

3

Use technology effectively

Embrace the digital tools available to enhance your learning experience. Use apps for time management, note-taking, and planning. Additionally, familiarise yourself with myUnisa, Office365 (including MS Teams) and online examination tools to ensure you can access resources, submit assessments, and participate in virtual discussions with ease.

Further resources

[Developing resilience in times of adversity](#) (video)

[Study motivation: Climbing Kilimanjaro](#) (video)

[Tips to survive your first year at Unisa](#) (video)

Counselling and Career Development support

The Unisa Directorate: Counselling and Career Development is dedicated to provide students with **confidential and professional counselling, guidance, and academic support services** that add value to your career choices and learning and that are relevant within an open and distance learning context. **Our services are free of charge.**

Talk to us

Send an email to counselling@unisa.ac.za

[Book an online appointment \(MSTeams\)](#)

[Contact us at a Unisa regional centre](#)

How can we support you?

Career guidance

- Career plans
- Understand yourself
- Career exploration

Preparing for job opportunities

- Job searching
- CV writing
- Interview skills

Academic skills

- Adjusting to Unisa
- Time management
- Study skills
- Exam preparation

Personal development

- Self-confidence
- Relationships
- Loss and grief

Mental health

- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress
- Anxiety
- General clinical conditions

Self-help resources

[Self-help resources on our website](#)
Visit our [YouTube channel](#) and subscribe