

Introduction

Assuming ***personal*** responsibility for your learning experience is the most important first step you can take now that the landscape of your teaching and learning experience has changed.

Self-directed learning, in essence, means that you have to **actively** and **constructively self-regulate** your emotions and your behaviours for an optimal learning experience in order to make full use of what is provided online by the university.

So, how do you do this? It boils down to a **simple strategy**:

1. Plan and Prepare for your learning
2. Engage in the process
3. Monitoring your progress
4. Reflect and adapt where needed

1. PLAN AND PREPARE FOR YOUR LEARNING

- **Self-Reflection: How ready are you for online learning?**

What are my current study habits? Should I adapt these habits for learning independently online? Why? How? What has worked well in the past and what should I adapt?

How could I discipline myself to stick to the schedules I draw up?

Do I usually seek help reactively (after something went wrong) or proactively (in anticipation of potential problems)?

When I feel demotivated or stressed about the work, do I handle it constructively by addressing what gets me down, or do I engage in destructive escape mechanisms that do not help in solving the problem?

- **Determine your learning needs and set learning goals for each unit of work**
- Consider what you will have to achieve in order to be competent in terms of the outcomes of the module. Think about what your specific needs are. For example, if you study a module where concepts build on each other, it might be a good idea to revisit a challenging concept or principles in the previous unit before you start with the new section.
- Break down your learning objectives into smaller progress/process goals (Eg. I will be able to distinguish between *assets* and *liabilities* in various contexts)
- Set small goals for each study session (Eg. By the end of this study session, I will have a concept map of chapter 3)
- ***Be practical*** - think of how you will go about reaching these goals. This could mean that you will do all the weekly activities or quizzes and your assignments. If you are sharing an electronic device with a family member, negotiate a timeframe for using the device and plan those sessions constructively.

2. ENGAGE IN THE ONLINE LEARNING PROCESS

Make use of your UJ resources.

- Communicate and seek clarification proactively. Don't hesitate to seek help or clarification when you need it or when you anticipate a potential problem.
- Check your student email and course sites for important updates, announcements and course information.

Learn for your own personal growth in the area of study.

- connect theory to real life examples and current issues
- Take part in discussion forums with peers, tutors and lecturers.
- Pick up the narrative in the study material and try to understand the theory and explanations behind formulas, etc.
- Work out problems or exercises first and *then* only look at the solutions or correct answers.
- Do not be tempted by shortcuts if it will cost you the growth

3. EVALUATE YOUR LEARNING & MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

- Record your progress on the same calendar on which you scheduled your week's work – in a different colour.
- Use habit trackers (find ideas on Pinterest, etc)
- Revisit the outcomes of units of work and see if you have achieved them to a level that you feel confident with
- Evaluate how you have fared in formative assessments such as quizzes, etc.
- Take note of feedback received by lecturers and tutors

4. REFLECT AND ADAPT WHERE YOU NEED TO

Be honest, realistic and flexible. Think about your own thinking in terms of attitude and motivation. (Eg. Do you think: "*Online learning is not working for me*" instead of "*I will have to develop structure and routine if I want to make online learning work for me.*")

You do not only have to reflect **individually**. You will also find **collaborative reflection** useful where you reflect with your online study groups or peers. Be mindful not to engage in a 'pity party' about all the obstacles. Rather use your collaborative reflection to:

- Identify areas of improvement (this includes mind set, motivation, learning behaviour)
- Share creative and effective ways to improve on what did not go so well
- Encourage each other to do better the next week
- Acknowledge your progress and small victories