

# HIGHER EDUCATION PREPARATION

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Whether you are undertaking higher education studies to gain an in-depth understanding of your subject of interest, to continue developing your study and employability skills or to help pursue a professional career, this guide explains what to expect and how to prepare for this.

### KEY FEATURES

#### DEEPENING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You will **expand** your **knowledge** beyond textbook summaries and read from a wide range of sources, such as **scholarly books, journal articles** and **research papers**. Upon completing your course, you will have a **thorough** and **up-to-date knowledge** of your **discipline**.

#### CRITICAL THINKING

**Rigorously questioning** and **analysing** the content you are learning, alongside developing your **skills** in how to apply the **tools** of your **field** in **original** and **new ways**, are **key elements** of higher education study.

#### INCREASED SPECIALISATION

At higher education level, there is **no national curriculum**. Instead, the **topics** covered on your course are typically related to the **expertise** of your **lecturers** and the **research** that is taking place at your college or university. There is also more **freedom** to **identify, explore** and **develop** your **area(s) of interest**, for example in a **dissertation** or **major project**.

#### MORE INDEPENDENT STUDY

The **hours** you spend learning with **teaching staff** ("**contact time**") may be **lower** compared to your previous studies. Instead, your lecturers **introduce** you to a topic and you **build upon** this knowledge in your **own time**, for example by completing **set readings** and **researching** around your topic. As such, **successful students** often spend a lot of time in the **library**!

#### MANAGING YOUR OWN TIME

It will be your responsibility to **manage your workload**, **attend** your **sessions** and **submit** your assignments **on time**. You may receive a **handbook** for your modules, which typically includes a **timetable** plus **key deadlines**.

#### DIFFERENT STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

Typically, relationships with your lecturers will feel more **equal** than at school or college. It can often seem like, rather than being told what to do, you are **working through an issue together**.

### COURSE ORGANISATION

#### MODULES AND CREDITS

Your course may be split into **modules** (or **units**), which are typically:

- **Compulsory/core**: you must study
- **Optional**: you choose to study

You may be able to study **optional modules** from **outside** of your **main subject** area. Some modules can involve **more work** to complete, in which case you **earn you more credits** towards your **qualification**.

#### SEMESTERS

Most colleges and universities split their academic year into **three semesters** (or **terms**). If you are studying an **accelerated degree**, a **fourth term** may replace your **summer holiday** period.

#### READING WEEK

Your college or university may set this **halfway** through a **term** to help you **complete** your **reading** and **work towards your assignments**. As such, **teaching sessions** are typically **not scheduled**.

#### TEACHING METHODS

Depending on your subject, you may **attend**:

- **Lectures**: a lesson delivered in speech or presentation format to a large number of students. There may be little interaction with your lecturer(s)
- **Seminars**: meeting in smaller groups to discuss your readings and the content recently covered on your course. These are typically more informal than lectures
- **Tutorials**: one-to-one sessions with your lecturer/personal tutor where you can discuss your understanding and assignments plus receive feedback
- **Laboratories/workshops**: these help you develop your knowledge of the typical working environment, methods, and techniques of your discipline
- **Field work**: where you apply the knowledge you have gained in lectures, seminars etc. beyond the college/university setting
- **Work placements**: gaining skills and experience in a realistic setting

**Digital platforms** can also play a key role in higher education teaching and learning.

## PREPARATION



### STRENGTHEN YOUR STUDY SKILLS

The **SkillsYouNeed** website provides **free advice** on **improving** your **study skills**: <https://bit.ly/3hirZrE>

FutureLearn offer **free online study skills courses**, including:

- **Preparing to Learn Online at University:**  
<https://bit.ly/3hgGBrr>
- **Improving your Study Techniques:**  
<https://bit.ly/3f7k26K>
- **Critical Thinking at University (An Introduction):**  
<https://bit.ly/2YpV8bB>



### COMPLETE YOUR PRE-READING

Your college or university may provide you with **material to read before starting** the first academic year. Completing this will put you in a **strong position** for when teaching and learning starts.



### UNDERTAKE WIDER LEARNING

The summer holidays are a **perfect time** to **broaden** both your **general** and **subject-specific** knowledge. You could achieve this by:

- Keeping up to date with **news** and **current affairs**
- Reading **sector magazines** and **publications**
- Listening to **Open University podcasts**:  
<https://bit.ly/3dRTo1y>
- Watching **TED-ed videos**:  
<https://bit.ly/2BYhNEW>
- Completing **FutureLearn courses**:  
<https://bit.ly/2Yq1Nm7>

## MY PREPARATION PLAN

