

STUDENT SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR MANAGING ASSESSMENT LOAD

This guide was developed by our [UCD Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning](#).

Welcome to your quick guide on managing assessment load - tailored by students for students! This guide is created by student partners working with UCD's Teaching and Learning unit alongside Teaching and Learning staff partners and colleagues. The collaborative team utilises both student and staff voices to create tailored toolkits and resources which optimise student learning both in and out of the classroom.

We know that no matter what course or stage you may be in, managing assessment load can be challenging for everyone. That's why we've pooled together student experiences with various modules, assignments, and courses to help equip you with strategies to navigate your academic journey. In this guide, we have a few tips to help you manage your assessment load with confidence and efficiency, all while still maintaining your sanity.

Tip 1: Use All Available Resources

First things first, let's talk about tapping into the resources the university offers. The [Writing Centre](#), [Maths Centre](#), [Library](#), [Library Guides](#), and online databases like [OneSearch](#) are all goldmines when it comes to getting the support you need to tackle those tough assignments. These resources can provide extra support when you're struggling with an assignment and stuck about your next step so feel free to utilise them at any point during the trimester. Links for each university resource can be found at the end of this guide where you can check them out and book appointments to discuss your work.

Also, don't be shy about reaching out to your lecturer for some clarity on what they're expecting from you and your work. Understanding assignment expectations can help shape your study techniques and also structure your time, making it more effective. So if you're looking for some clarification or guidance, be sure to check Brightspace, go to their office during their office hours, or send them an email. Remember, faculty are there to help and enhance your learning.

Tip 2: Understanding Assessments

Wrapping your head around what exactly you're supposed to do in those assessments is crucial. So, take a minute to familiarise yourself with [the different types of assessments](#) - MCQs, essays, reflective assignments, the whole lot of them. Don't feel shy to email or ask your tutors and lecturers a message if you're feeling a bit lost. And most importantly, don't forget about those handy rubrics and assessment

criteria. Make sure to ask for rubrics, in case they are not made readily available. They're like your GPS for navigating through your assignments and will help greatly in planning your assignments and achieving the grade you want.

Tip 3: Practice Time Management

Once you've got the lowdown, it's all about managing your time to get the most out of those library days. We're talking about prioritising tasks, breaking them down into bite-sized chunks, and planning your trimester. You might at some point find yourself in a position where deadlines are piling up and ask yourself, "What do I do?" The answer: **Prioritise like a Pro**. This means focusing on the assignments that carry the most weight for your final grade and tackling them first. A good practice is to always start early - it's all about staying flexible so when life throws stuff your way, you aren't drowning in work, stress, and all-nighters.

You should always switch on the alerts that Brightspace sends for the upcoming deadlines. Additionally, there are various other tools that could help you with this. You could use Google Calendar to set reminders of deadlines/events, and specific applications that are made for task management like Google Tasks, Microsoft To Do, or Trello. You can utilise these to break your tasks down into smaller segments and add details pertaining to each of those. This helps a lot especially when the assessment has different stages.

Tip 4: Plan Ahead

Time to get organised! Write up a document that lays out all your assignment deadline dates and their respective assessment weights. This will be your roadmap for the trimester. Plan out how much time you might need for each assignment, estimate a starting date for that assignment, and when the time comes to start, stick to that guide you've made. Use whatever tools keep you on track - like Brightspace schedules, Google Calendars, app notifications and the like. Don't forget to set some achievable goals for yourself, both short-term and long-term. Life's full of surprises, so plan the trimester away as soon as you can and avoid the unexpected knocks on the door with grace.

Tip 5: Use Learning Techniques

Studying isn't always going to be the most important part of your day, but it also doesn't have to be a drag. When it comes to spending time with the books, find out what works best for you.

Whether it's the Blurting Technique (Birmingham City University), Spaced Repetition (Tabibian et al., 2018), diving headfirst into the Pomodoro Technique (Sofiyana & Utami, 2022), or just good old-fashioned cramming (no judgement here), practise the technique that helps you retain that info. You can experiment as much as you like until you find your groove. And remember, it's all about understanding the material, not just memorising it.

And if you're just starting your study journey, here's some more information on some studying techniques to help you figure out if they're for you. (Find out more about any of these techniques by clicking on the links at the end of this guide.)

- The Blurting Technique (Birmingham City University, n.d.): after understanding and memorising your topic, get a blank piece of paper and start writing down everything you can remember. After you've written down as much as you could remember, note down any gaps in your knowledge and revise your topic to re-study. Continue the process until you have all the necessary information understood and memorised. This technique might take some time, but if you use it weekly, it can be really effective when studying long texts of information.
- Spaced repetition (Tabibian et al. 2018): over time, knowledge that you've learned will naturally slip out of your memory. In order to keep the knowledge fresh and embedded in your long term memory, go over the same information after every 3 days. So if you've memorised something on Monday, make sure to revisit it by Thursday, and then Sunday, etc.
- Pomodoro (Sofiyana & Utami, 2022): a technique to get you in the habit / routine of studying. Allow yourself to study for 25 minutes with a 5 minute break afterwards. Repeat this study time and break time 3 times in a row and then finally enjoy a 30 min break. Once you've gotten into this study routine, you can slowly start increasing your study time and relaxation time ratio to what suits you best. So, whatever your beginning study times may be, Pomodoro is a great technique to help you get into the habit of blocking time for studying and staying consistent with it by using frequent breaks as part of the technique.

Tip 6: Review and Reflect

Okay, so you've handed in your assignment and got some feedback. Now what? Take a good look at that feedback alongside your assignment brief and rubric. See where you can improve, by actively reviewing your work. You can do this by jotting down some notes on how you could improve some parts for next time, highlight some parts that were good and why, and lastly maybe even take the time to rewrite some paragraphs from your work, making sure you rewrite it better to gain active practice on what to do next time around. Don't be afraid to chat with your tutors (or other staff) and your peers about any parts that are still a little unclear. And remember, it's all about that long-term growth.

Tip 7: Take Breaks and Celebrate

Last but not least, don't forget to pat yourself on the back once in a while. You're putting in the hard work, so give yourself some credit. Take breaks when you need them, and don't be afraid to celebrate your wins, big or small. Remember, it's all about finding that balance and enjoying the experience. You've got this!

So, you've made it to the end of our student survival guide to managing assessment load like a champ. Remember, whether you're diving into those tough assignments or gearing up for exams, you've got a whole arsenal of strategies at your disposal.

But.. it's not just about the grades. It's also about enjoying the journey, taking breaks, celebrating your wins, making memories, and avoiding burnout.

So, keep pushing yourself, stay organised, and don't forget to give yourself a high-five every now and then. You're on your way to academic greatness!

And if you ever need a helping hand or some words of encouragement, your fellow students are right there with you. You've got this! Now go out there and show those assignments who's boss!

Resources and References

Resources

[UCD Writing Centre](#): If you need help getting started on planning an essay, need some guidance on how to structure your paragraphs, or just want some general tips on academic writing, referencing, and sourcing, drop down to the Writing Centre located in the James Joyce library for a one-to-one session.

[UCD Maths Support Centre](#): Similarly, if you're looking for support with maths and statistics, the Maths Support Centre located in the James Joyce Library can help you with sessions both online and in person (depending on the tutor). Click here to see available sessions.

[UCD Library](#): Whether you're looking for help finding articles or academic opinions during your research, looking to borrow a laptop, or simply wanting to check your library account, this link will be an organised necessity when managing your way around university and studying. This is the all-in-one link to help you find journals, access the UCD Digital Library, and navigate any databases you might need. Just make sure you have your UCD login details ready to access the link.

[Library Guide](#): Irrespective of what role you assume, there are guides and help for everyone. You could delve deeper into different areas and access video and interactive tutorials, quick links and guides on a variety of topics. These can help you steer clear of plagiarism. You can find video tutorials on citing and referencing using different standards like MLA, APA etc.

References

Birmingham City University (n.d.) How to revise with the blurring method. *Birmingham City Exams and Revision*. <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/exams-and-revision/best-ways-to-revise/the-blurring-method>

Sofiyana, H., & Utami, A. (2022). Enhancing 'how to learn' skills: Its impacts on academic performance and students' motivation. *The Asian Conference on Education & International Development 2022 Official Conference Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.22492/issn.2189-101x.2022.11>

Tabibian, B., Upadhyay, U., De, A., Zarezade, A., Schölkopf, B., & Gomez-Rodriguez, M. (2019). Enhancing human learning via spaced repetition optimization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS*, 116(10), 3988-3993. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1815156116>