Study Skills for Independent Learning

GAC003-aligned support; the centre's current assessment brief sets requirements.

Study Skills for Independent Learning

- Keep a **reflective learning journal** and use **reflection** to improve.
- Use a **semester planner** and a weekly **schedule** .
- Understand how university teaching, **academic integrity** and **referencing** work.

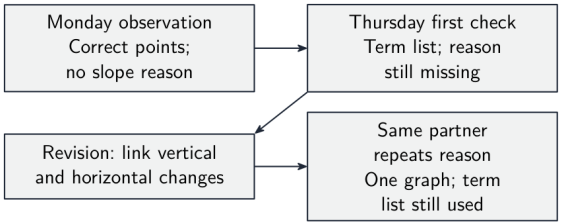
Study Skills for Independent Learning (2)

- Practise **independent learning** with proven study strategies.
- Write a truthful **curriculum vitae (CV)** and **personal statement** .

Reflective learning

- **Describe** : the task, what you did and the conditions. "I plotted four points but could not explain in English why one segment was steeper."
- **Evaluate** : what the result shows, and what you still do not know. Was the problem the maths, the vocabulary, or both?
- **Plan** : one change, a way to check it, and when you will check.

Figure: Reflective learning



- A practice check leads to a revised explanation and a bounded result.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Time management I: planning the semester

- Enter every fixed **assessment deadline** and commitment first.
- Break each assignment into tasks, and note which must come first: data before a draft, feedback before revision.
- Work backwards to choose a **start date** . A report due at the start of week 10 that needs three weeks of work must begin by the start of week 7.
- Look for **collisions** : tasks that need the same hours, not just deadlines in the same week.

Time management II: the working week

- A **to-do list** names tasks; a **schedule** puts each one in a time and place.
- For each study block, write the first action, the materials needed and how you will check the result.
- End each block by writing the next step, so the next session starts quickly.

The higher education study environment

- A **lecture** presents material to a large group; a **seminar** is a smaller discussion, usually of prepared reading; a **tutorial** gives close guidance on your own work. Your handbook sets the actual rules for each.
- **Academic integrity** means doing honest work, using only permitted help and acknowledging sources. **Plagiarism** is presenting another person's words or ideas as your own. Copying with a **citation** can still break the rules if the task requires your own words.
- **Referencing** links each **citation** in your text to a full entry in a **bibliography**, in the required style.

The higher education study environment (2)

- A **transcript** records your results; a **grade point average (GPA)** summarises them on a stated scale.
- **Academic advisers** help with course choices and problems. Ask specific questions, early.

Independent learning

- Set a **learning goal** you can check. "Study science" cannot be checked. "Explain the water cycle without notes, then compare my account with the diagram" can.
- Preview the reading before class and write down what is unclear.
- Use the **library and databases** . Check each source's author, date and evidence; easy to find does not mean reliable.
- In **group study** , explain ideas to each other, then check the explanations against course material. A confident explanation can still be wrong.

Effective study strategies, and the CV

- **Active recall** : try to answer from memory before looking. Check, and correct mistakes at once.
- **Spaced practice** : return to material over several sessions, for example after one day, one week and one month.
- **Note-taking** : record main points and how they connect, not every word. The **Cornell method** , developed by Walter Pauk at Cornell University, divides the page into notes, cue questions and a summary.

Worked example: planning backwards from feedback

- The order is fixed: check data, draft, send, receive feedback, revise.
- So the data check and draft (3 hours) must be done by Friday of week 7; the revision (1 hour) fits between Monday and Friday of week 8.
- Starting the draft in week 8 would still meet the deadline but miss the feedback, which is the main chance to improve the mark.

Figure: Worked example: planning backwards from feedback



Send draft by Friday, week 7
Comments return Monday, week 8

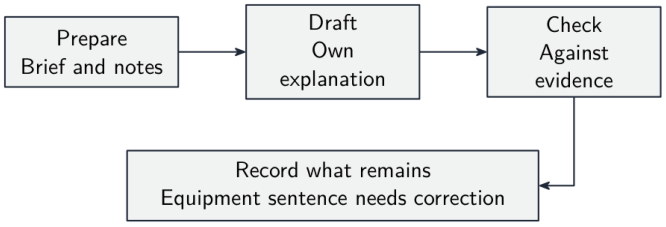
Revision uses the returned comments
Report deadline: Friday, week 8

- The report's order and feedback dates constrain when revision can occur.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Worked example: a 45-minute block

- **Plan**: 5 minutes to reread the brief and notes, 15 to draft, 10 to check against the notes, 5 to revise, 5 to write the next action, 5 for a break: $5 + 15 + 10 + 5 + 5 + 5 = 45$.
- At the check, one sentence about the equipment differs from his notes. He corrects it and checks again.
- The paragraph is ready because it was checked, not because the time ran out. His next action: "Write the method paragraph; check the list of equipment first."

Figure: Worked example: a 45-minute block



A completed block is not proof of readiness

- The block connects preparation and writing to a check and a recorded next action.
- Match each part of the diagram to the text.

Common errors

- Writing journal entries that **describe** but never **plan** a change.
- Planning only deadlines, not the tasks and their order.
- Leaving the **buffer** after the deadline instead of before it.

Common errors (2)

- Rereading notes instead of testing yourself.
- Copying text with a **citation** when the task requires your own words.
- Claiming a whole team's result as your own on a CV.

Key terms

- **reflective learning journal**: A regular record of what you did, what you learnt and what you will change.
- **reflection**: Thinking about an experience to decide how to improve.
- **semester planner**: A calendar of tasks and deadlines for the whole term.
- **schedule**: A **plan** that puts tasks into particular times and places.

Check yourself

- Rewrite "I am bad at essays" as a useful journal entry.
- A project due on Friday of week 12 needs two weeks of work and a draft for feedback, which takes three days. When should you start?
- Which works better for a test next month: rereading notes three times tonight, or answering cue questions on three different days?