We would like to acknowledge the mature age students of UWS for sharing these tips and hints. We would also like to acknowledge the following UWS students for initiating this project: Sylvia-Irene De Silva, Cordelia Miller, Michelle Reeves and Manal Beydoun.
At UWS, one third of the students enrolled are mature age. Mature age students make up a socially, culturally, religiously, financially and academically diverse community. They have the ability to integrate motivation and a genuine love of lifelong learning into their university experience, as well as possessing the determination, perseverance, resilience and capacity to succeed and overcome hardships.

This Peer Guide offers a collection of tried and tested tips and tricks submitted by mature age students at UWS. Mature age students were approached and asked to share their best pieces of advice on how to get the most out of their university experience.

The Peer Guide can be referred to throughout the year as a practical guide to help you through each stage of your course. It is a tangible token of student partnership, responsibility to others and culture of caring that is central to the UWS ethos.

The Peer Guide is best read in conjunction with the Guide to University Life for Mature Age Students booklet.
Pre-session preparations

- **Attend Orientation!** It will really help you feel more comfortable in the university environment.

- **Gain confidence with the basics.** Prepare yourself before uni starts. If you’re weak at spelling, grammar, or mathematics, it’s very worthwhile checking out the free Bridging Programs offered by the Student Learning Unit for help with academic literacy, mathematics and statistics.

- **Take a mind-mapping course.** It will be great in terms of helping you to think about concepts and their related ideas. You could also try a speed-reading course. Both courses normally don’t cost more than $100 and are usually run through your local community college.

- **Make a monthly or yearly planner** on Excel to stick on the wall next to your computer. Have one row per subject (unit), each in different colours, and then two columns for each day of the week: a thin one as a tick box and a fat one for the assignment. Do this in Week 1 when you read your Unit Outlines.

- **Keep a yearly diary.** This way you can keep track of all assessments, meetings, events, etc.

- **Get a whiteboard to hang on your wall.** You can quickly write up important notices and due dates as you need them and easily erase them when you’re done. Having a whiteboard is also great for scribbling down your essay and research ideas before you forget them!

- **Try practicing touch-typing.** This is something that many people overlook as they type with five fingers and feel that is efficient. The difference is that when you touch-type you don’t look at the keyboard and only need to think about what you’re typing.

  You are able to maintain your focus on the screen rather than constantly looking up and down. It also means that you can more easily copy-type (when you’re typing quotes for instance). Once you’re at 80wpm then you no longer type in letters, but words.

- **Before starting uni, get your eyes checked.** If you’re going to have to wear glasses, don’t despair! It will make you feel more intelligent!

- **Keep phone numbers handy.** Make sure you know who to call for technical support and keep your home ISP handy in case your systems fail.

  A list of helpful phone numbers can be found at the end of this booklet.

- **Find out what it all means.** If you’re unsure about what all the terminology means around here, there’s an A-Z guide available on the UWS website.

  Check out the A-Z guide of terminology used at UWS online at www.uws.edu.au/a-zguide

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**Bridging Programs**

There are a number of pre-session courses available at UWS in academic writing, study skills, mathematics, statistics and nursing maths.

More information is available at www.uws.edu.au/bridgingprograms
Balancing workload

- Try to balance the workload between all your units of study. Allocating equal time to each for revision, readings, and assignment time. Refer to your Unit Outline for an indication of how much time you need to allocate to each unit.

- Start slowly and pace yourself. It might be helpful to start with one unit per session for two years and then move up to three units per session. It’s less overwhelming this way.

- Hire some help. Hiring a house cleaner, babysitter or even ordering your groceries online might free up some time for you to fit in extra study.

Social connections

- Find some volunteer work in an area you enjoy. This would be a great experience to put on your resume and help you apply what you are learning in a practical situation.

- Contact some students who did the unit before you. This will help to release any fears or doubts you may have about the unit.

- Dedicate time to unwind with friends or family, even if it’s just going for a walk.

- Form supporting relationships. These will help you in completing your assignments, like a group of study buddies.

- Surround yourself with fun and interesting people so you’ll always have good conversation, second opinions and different perspectives of the world.

- Look after yourself. It would help to have access to a good doctor, counsellor or massage therapist.

- Swallow some of your pride. If you don’t know the answer to something, just ask. If you don’t get an appropriate answer, try asking someone else.

- Make friends with other students from your tutorials or lectures. You could suggest lunch or coffee together before or after class as a way of connecting with these students.

Help’s available

Give yourself time to develop the necessary academic skills and to settle in. Have realistic goals for this period and don’t set the bar too high!

The University offers a range of resources and services to help you on your way to feeling more confident in your abilities, such as skills workshops and programs run by the Counselling Service and Student Learning Unit.

More information about these and other resources is available at www.uws.edu.au/gettinghelp

UWSconnect

Each UWS campus has a number of social groups and sporting activities that new students are welcome to join. Information about these groups is available from uwsconnect at www.uwsconnect.com.au

Campus Connection

Campus Connection is an online meeting place for students from UWS. There are also weekly drop in sessions for mature age students run by the UWS Counselling Service. www.uws.edu.au/campusconnection

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

PASS are small study group sessions with senior students from various courses. More information is available at www.uws.edu.au/pass
Librarians, lecturers and tutors

- Lecturers and tutors like people who are keen and interested in their material. Remember, what they are teaching is very likely to be their field of interest so go up to them if you have any questions or to discuss the material they are sharing.

- Consider getting some tutoring if you’re struggling with one of your units. It’ll cost in the short term, but it will be money well spent.

- The librarians are really helpful and friendly. Don’t be afraid of asking for help from the librarian; they’re your best friend at uni!

- Post on the vUWS discussion boards for a study buddy. This is extra assistance and extra motivation. It might also be better to go for a mature age student rather than a recent school leaver—the needs of each group are different.

- Ask for help if you’re feeling lost with the computer systems or the library computer system. Librarians and technical officers in the IT Labs are more than happy to show you.

- Pass on your knowledge. If you’re willing, leave your contact details with your lecturer at the end of the session and ask them to refer any future students to you who are looking for peer assistance with the same unit.

  This way you can pass on what you learned in the unit which is good practice for you, and help alleviate the anxiety that a future student might have about the unit!

Learn to love the library

Spend time familiarising yourself with your library resources.

Do a tour - it’ll help with navigating the library and how to search for books, journals and other useful resources.

Also check out the library website and the relevant library resources for your discipline, such as the main journals, books and databases for your area. http://library.uws.edu.au

Equipment and ergonomics

- Make sure your work station is well positioned (not in direct sunlight) and is properly equipped. If you’re serious about your studies, be serious about your working environment.

- Make sure your study space is well lit with natural light and has natural ventilation. Good air flow is conducive to clear thinking. If good air flow is missing, open a window or door or introduce an air-purifying plant to the room.

- Make sure you have a sturdy student desk, a comfortable chair, a desk lamp and something nice to sit on the desk like a plant, photograph or essential oil burner.

- Keep your workspace clean. To remove dust and bacteria from your computer keyboard, simply dip a cotton wool bud into methylated spirits and clean between the keys.

- Buy a big screen monitor. You’ll be able to see two documents at once and by using the compare side by side function, you can review both simultaneously.

- Get mobile with a laptop. If you have to buy a computer, go for a laptop. It’s also a good idea to have a monitor, keyboard and mouse to plug into your laptop when you’re using it at home—this is easier to use than the laptop’s screen and keyboard and will also help prevent bad posture from sitting with your laptop on your lap.

- Consider going wireless. It’s worth buying a wireless modem as it saves you having to figure out how to configure your computer in new environments, having to wait for the computers at uni to be available and from losing your documents on the library computer.

- Take advantage of AirUWS, UWS’s wireless network. AirUWS allows you to connect to your MyUWSAccount and the internet from the lecture theatres, tutorial rooms and outdoor areas around each campus. www.uws.edu.au/wireless

- Label your USB. In addition to having your name and mobile phone number written on your USB, you could also type up a ‘If found, please contact...’ document with your contact details on it and save it onto your USB. That way, if you leave your USB behind (at the library for instance), the librarians can open up the document containing your contact details and let you know where your USB is.

- Watch your posture. Try not to slump or hunch over your desk or laptop while writing or typing. Hours spent bent over an essay does no favours for your back or posture.
Books

- Get the books to come to you. Campus libraries can actually send books to other campus libraries so that you don’t have to travel. Books can also be put on hold by request. So if you need a book from the library but it isn’t immediately available, don’t just give up on it!

- Textbooks can be quite expensive. If you can’t afford to get them all, most of them will be available for loan from the library. Try looking for them in the Reserve section for your course.

- Check out other libraries. If you have a friend at another uni and they are really nice, ask if they can get a book out for you from their uni library.

- See if you can apply for a scholarship, even if you don’t think you’d qualify. It would make a huge difference in terms of being able to buy all the required textbooks and other equipment.

  Ask a Student Welfare Officer to help you with the Scholarship application if you’re unsure how to do it.

- Finding the cost of books too much? See the Student Welfare Service who have textbook vouchers, financial grants and loans available.

  

  Reserve collection
  The Reserve collection consists of high-demand course related materials, such as reading list items, and comprises print and electronic resources. Material is placed on Reserve at the request of academic staff. Check with Library staff for borrowing conditions.

  Second-hand textbooks
  Second-hand textbooks are often advertised around campus, on Campus Connection and through the Hive Student Union. Find out more at www.thehive-studentunion.org.au

  Connectbooks
  Bookshops are run by uwsconnect on each campus for the purchase of textbooks. Be sure to check that the books you wish to purchase are the correct editions.


  

Tutorial preparation and revision

- Start revising from Week 1! Start organising your notes at least a week before you need them for tutorials so you’ll always be prepared.

- Make a PowerPoint presentation for each unit. For each week or chapter, use a different background colour. It’s important to write down the page/column number you’re taking notes from otherwise you’ll never find it again if you need to refer to it later.

  Start at Week 1 when nothing is due and when you’re still finding your way around. If the Unit Outline says they’re covering chapter 5 in week 3, then make sure you keep up with the revision PowerPoint’s and see if you can get ahead in quiet weeks.

- Prepare for lectures even though they are online. Get dressed, take notes and think of questions you might like to ask your lecturer.

- Before tutorials, read all the required readings, have questions prepared to ask the tutor or just turn up and do what is required. Make sure you go to your tutorials because they are a good opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues that you might not have had the chance to raise in the lecture.

  

  Scholarships
  Check out the Ann D. Clark scholarship for mature age women and other scholarships available at www.uws.edu.au/scholarships

  Textbook vouchers
  Check out the Student Welfare Service for textbook assistance at www.uws.edu.au/welfareservice
Starting the day preparations

- Make a list of the things that you need to do for the day. Put a little square next to each of the things and then tick them off as you complete them. It’s a psychological mini-reward.

- When making your ‘things to do list’ and it’s particularly long, alternate each bullet point with different formatting or a different colour (e.g. bold/normal/bold or red/blue/red etc). It makes your list easier to read especially if your eyesight is not great.

- Allocate an hour at the beginning of each day to laze around in which time you can sit down, get up, feed the fish, sit down, get up, water the plants, sit down, get up, make some tea or coffee and check emails.

- Get dressed every day. Don’t stay in your dressing gown all day or you’ll never get into ‘work mode’.

- Establish a routine from when you get out of bed, get dressed to when you start studying. Make sure your work space is clean and free from distractions. This will help you get in the right frame of mind for studying.

- Separate your ‘work’ area from your ‘living’ area and ensure any possible distractions are out of reach (e.g. TV, food).

Essay preparations and referencing

- Check out the referencing textbooks available from the library or bookshop. They’ve got heaps of basic information about how to write according to academic standard and will also have referencing explained in an easy-to-understand way.

- Start thinking about your essay question as soon as you get it. Often they’re in the Unit Outline before you start the teaching session.

- Early in the unit, organise your essay cover pages, the styles for paragraphs and referencing, and put in page breaks where appropriate. That way there’ll be less to think about when you’re busy working on the essay itself.

- Try to get a dot point version of your essays, a first draft and a final draft completed with one week between each. This helps avoid procrastination and helps dispel the ‘desperate fear of the blank white page’.

- When you’re editing an essay, put all the discarded bits on another page with the appropriate reference. If you need to pick up the info again, there it is.

- Format your references exactly how you’re instructed. Always be consistent with margins, font, referencing and presentation as you may lose marks for inconsistent formatting.

- Where possible, complete assignments in advance and tick them off! For example, a portfolio that requires you to summarise any five texts in the reader can be completed well in advance of the due date.

- It’s probably easiest to write the essay’s main paragraphs first so you get a feel for what you’re writing. Then write the introduction afterwards once you know what your argument is. Then write the conclusion—it will say how you’ve covered the points you were going to cover in the introduction, plus an analysis.

- In essays, insert your references and format them correctly as you go along. It can take an hour or so to format the references if you leave it all to the end—use that hour for your editing, not formatting!
Essay preparations and referencing (continued)

- Don't underestimate how long it takes to reference, especially if you have a variety of resources to reference (e.g., books, journals, websites, newspaper articles, etc).

- Make sure to double check all your references are included when you're at your final draft and that the references at the end are still part of the content of your essay.

- When you insert your references, you might like to type them in a different colour so that when you're checking them up against your reference list, you don't accidentally skip any.

- Always do a cover page.

- UWS always provides marking criteria. Read this in advance and make sure you think you have everything to achieve marks in the High Distinction column, then attach a copy to your essay. Your tutor will usually write something on it and they'll probably give you quite a lot of detail.

- Customise your toolbars in Microsoft Word or your word processing program of choice. In pre-Vista versions, you can do this by right-clicking on the toolbars at the top. Choose all the icons that you would use frequently like New, Open, Save, Print, Print Preview, Undo, Bulleted, Text Alignments, etc. Then you can remove the icons that you don't use so that you can free up some room to view more of your document.

- In Microsoft Word, put a document location box on your toolbar. This will help you to copy and paste essays easily to Turnitin to ensure the one you're using is the one you submit.

- Send yourself an email with the latest version of your documents as attachments to make sure you don't lose your documents in case you misplace your USB or your computer crashes. You'll now have constant backup as Google, Yahoo, and Hotmail don't crash as often as USBs and computers. If you need to pick something up from an earlier version, you can search through old sent emails, and there it is!

- Print out your final copy and read it thoroughly. Before you read it, take five minutes away from your desk. Things look different on paper than on screen.

Student Learning Unit

Check out the Student Learning Unit which has resources on essays, reports, referencing, algebra, statistics, nursing maths, and much more.

For more information, check out www.uws.edu.au/slu

Check your references

Try using Turnitin, a useful tool to check that all submitted work is referenced properly. http://library.uws.edu.au/turnitin.php

Document tips

- You can use your old Pringle containers to roll up and store assignments, readings, notes, or cover sheets for each unit if you want something quirkier than an ordinary filing folder.

Plagiarism

Turnitin is a software program which checks assignments for plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work.

This is why correct referencing is very important.
Printing

- Read all your documents and readings well before deciding whether or not they need to be printed out.
- Make your ink go further! If you have an inkjet printer, change the colours of your font for each draft or journal article/reading that you print. This way the black ink won’t run out so quickly and you can see each document in different colours so you don’t get confused searching through them all.
- Always keep some spare ink cartridges so you don’t run out of ink in the middle of printing out your assignment.
- Save paper. In a small effort to conserve the environment, you could also print your drafts, readings, and journal articles double sided. Less paper wastage and less clutter to sift through.
- Use the ‘print in multiple page’ feature on your printer for early drafts to conserve paper.
- Take advantage of Print Services. They offer in-house digital printing, copying, scanning and more. www.uws.edu.au/printservices
- Familiarise yourself with the printing and photocopying services at the library. All UWS campus libraries deliver high speed, quality copying and printing at reasonable cost. Information on these services, operating procedures and associated equipment can be found in the Photocopy Rooms or by asking at the Library Service Desk.

Physical wellbeing

- Get adequate sleep. Your body and brain need the opportunity to recharge.
- Exercise increases your ability to think and it also de-stresses you. If you live close to the uni, get a bike and cycle there. It’ll help you feel fitter, smarter, and better. You’ll be reducing your carbon footprint too.
- Buy lots of little tins of tuna — no preparation required and it’s instant brain food.
- Eat a balanced diet to ward off sluggishness.
- Keep your supplies well stocked! Keep a bottle of water and a small packet of lollies in your bag at all times — fun and harmless energy boosts.
- Staying up for all-nighter essay writing can mean pigging out on lollies and soft drinks. If that’s the case, at least save yourself some money and make your soft drinks go further by diluting them with water or soda water — you can dilute it quite a bit before it even starts to go bland.
- If you’re on a budget, bring a small thermos filled with tea or coffee from home to save you from spending money at the cafe.
- Boost your immune system. Having lots of assignments and readings and staying up late can take a toll on the immune system. Up your intake of garlic for a few days: it helps break down mucus, is anti-viral, anti-fungal, anti-bacterial and an antioxidant, so it will help fight infection and boost the immune system.

Get active

Find out about sporting activities and sporting facilities available on each campus on the uwsconnect website.

www.uwsconnect.com.au
Mental wellbeing

- An aromatherapy oil burner is great. Make sure it has a deep dish. Lavender incense and oils are very soothing and tea light candles are relatively cheap from budget stores.
- Peppermint oils and incense encourage mental clarity and focus. Great for studying.
- Let your family and friends know about the workload you’ll be facing for the session so they’ll understand why you can’t spend as much time with them as you and they would like.
- As cliché as it sounds, believe in yourself. Have faith in your abilities; try your best and hope for the best.
- Meditating can help to calm nerves before or after an exam or completing an assessment like group presentations.
- Schedule down time throughout your day and/or week to do something you enjoy. This may involve exercising, reading, watching a movie, catching up with family and friends or even catching up on some sleep!

Not a failure

When you get your assignments back with a low mark, don’t despair because this is the perfect opportunity for you to learn from your mistakes.

Go to your tutor and ask where you lost your marks and see how you can improve. Do this for every assignment. This will also help you develop a good working relationship with your tutor.

If you fail a unit, you are not a failure. There are alternatives like taking an extra unit or completing summer school.

www.uws.edu.au/summersession

Reward yourself

When you have achieved your goals, reward yourself! Make a list of the activities you can’t fit in to your schedule while you’re studying and use the Session break to do one or all of them.

You may like to go for a massage, see a band, play some sport, take a holiday or organise a night out with your friends.

Mental wellbeing (continued)

- Always be on time—to lectures, tutorials, when submitting assessments. Running late to things can add unnecessary stress to your life and make you feel like things are getting a bit out of control.
- Goal setting is a good way to keep you motivated throughout the teaching session. Placing an image, photograph or list of these goals on your desk will act as a constant reminder of what you are working towards.

Find out how UWS can support you

The UWS Counselling Service offers students an opportunity to talk in confidence and privacy about problems of concern including relationship difficulties, mental health concerns and traumatic life events.

The Counselling Service also offers individual and group programs aimed at assisting students with adjusting to university life and developing skills including managing exam anxiety, presentation skills, time management and study skills.

www.uws.edu.au/counsellingservice
Information and services

A-Z Guide
UWS terminology explained www.uws.edu.au/a-zguide

Accommodation
http://residences.uws.edu.au/

AirUWS
UWS wireless network www.uws.edu.au/wireless

Bridging Programs
Maths and Academic Literacy
Email: unistep@uws.edu.au
Phone: 02 4736 0850
www.uws.edu.au/bridgingprograms

Campus Connection
Online interactive website for UWS students www.uws.edu.au/campusconnection

CampusLife
Online student newsletter www.uws.edu.au/campuslife

Campus maps
Interactive and printable maps and transport access guides www.uws.edu.au/campusmaps

Careers and Cooperative Education
Email: careers@uws.edu.au
Phone: 02 4736 0370
www.uws.edu.au/careers

CareerHub
Jobs, placements and careers events www.uws.edu.au/careerhub

Chaplaincy
Phone: 02 9685 9324
Email: v.powidzki@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/chaplaincy

Childcare
www.uws.edu.au/childcare

Connectbooks

Counselling Service
Central Booking number: 9852 5199
Email: counselling@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/counsellingservice

Current Students site
News and information for current students www.uws.edu.au/students

Disability Service
Central Booking number: 9852 5199
Email: disability@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/disabilityservice

Exchange programs
www.uws.edu.au/exchange

HIVE Student Union
Email: r.mlartino@uws.edu.au
Phone: 02 9772 6235
www.thehive-studentunion.org.au

IT Service Desk
Email: servicedesk@uws.edu.au
Phone: 02 9852 5111
www.uws.edu.au/itservicedesk

Library
Phone: 02 9852 5353
http://library.uws.edu.au

Mature age student drop-in groups
Phone: 02 4620 3194
www.uws.edu.au/matureage

Orientation
www.uws.edu.au/orientation

Parking
www.uws.edu.au/parking

PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions)
Email: pass@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/pass

Print Services
Order your printing and binding online
www.uws.edu.au/printservices

Services Market Days
Find out more about UWS services
www.uws.edu.au/marketdays

Scholarships
Email: scholarships@uws.edu.au
Phone: 1300 897 669
www.uws.edu.au/scholarships

Security and Emergency Information
24-hour Security Hotline: 0414 240 458
First Aid Emergency: 4736 0300
Police Assistance Line: 131 444
www.uws.edu.au/security

Services for Indigenous Students
Phone: 1800 032 923
www.uws.edu.au/indigenous_edu/education

Services for International Students
Email: internationalstudy@uws.edu.au
Phone: +61 2 9852 5499
www.uws.edu.au/international

Skills workshops
www.uws.edu.au/skillworkshops

Student Central
Your first point of contact
Student Cenral Infoline: 1300 668 370
studentcentral@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/studentcentral

Student Learning Unit
Email: slu@uws.edu.au
Phone: 02 4736 0850
www.uws.edu.au/slu

Student Welfare Service
Email: welfare.service@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/welfareservice

UWSConnect
Email: contact@uwsconnect.com.au
- Bankstown 02 9772 6337
- Campbelltown 02 4620 3601
- Hawkesbury 02 4570 1159
- Parramatta 02 9685 9106
- Penrith 02 4736 0734
www.uwsconnect.com.au

UWS Facebook page
Become a fan of the official UWS page on Facebook
www.uws.edu.au/facebook
Student Support Services

UWS offers a range of free professional services, programs and special activities for students through Student Support Services.

Counselling Service

If you are feeling confused or overwhelmed during the first few weeks of session, don’t hesitate to make contact with the UWS Counselling Service on your campus.

These services are free and confidential and can help you get back on track before matters become too overwhelming.

Central Booking number: 9852 5199
Email: counselling@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/counsellingservice

Disability Service

If you have a disability, chronic health problem or temporary health condition that may impact on your ability to meet the demands of university, you may want to talk with a Disability Advisor to see what special accommodations may be available to you.

Central Booking number: 9852 5199
Email: disability@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/disabilityservice

Student Welfare Service

If you have any financial difficulties, require information on sexual health, legal problems, or require assistance with accommodation, Centrelink, university disciplinary matters, food and book vouchers, grants or loans, you can speak with someone at the Student Welfare Service.

Bankstown Campus      Ph: 02 9772 6338
Campbelltown Campus    Ph: 02 4620 3013
Hawkesbury Campus      Ph: 02 4570 1965
Parramatta Campus      Ph: 02 9685 9366
Penrith Campus         Ph: 02 4736 0674

Email: welfareservice@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/welfareservice

Chaplaincy

Phone: 02 9685 9324
Email: v.powidzki@uws.edu.au
www.uws.edu.au/chaplaincy

Student Central - your first point of contact

Each campus has a Student Central where you can pick up forms and brochures, lodge forms and seek advice about a wide range of student issues, including admissions, enrolment, examinations, graduations, special requirements, course transfers, results and review of grades.

Student Central Infoline
1300 668 370
studentcentral@uws.edu.au

Opening hours

All Student Centrals generally operate from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and are closed on public holidays.

Student Central locations

Bankstown Campus      Building 1
Campbelltown Student Centre   Building 5
Hawkesbury Student Centre    Building G7
Parramatta Student Centre    Building EJa
Penrith Student Centre     Building K

www.uws.edu.au/studentcentral