



**DEAKIN**  
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

SUPPORTING A DEAKIN STUDENT:

# a practical guide for parents and partners





## getting started

Starting a degree at university is both exciting and daunting – for the student and the people they live with! Parents and partners can be unsure about what the next few weeks, months and years hold. The aim of this booklet is to explore ways that you can help the student in your life develop vital skills to achieve academic success.

It's not always easy to know how to provide appropriate support to those starting the university journey, but encouragement and understanding can make a substantial impact on their growth as a learner and as a person.

In order to maximise success at university, students need to develop:

- > **Independence:** the ability to structure and shape their own learning
- > **Confidence:** belief in their ability to succeed as a university student
- > **Assistance-seeking skills:** the ability to determine when and what help is needed and where to go to for advice
- > **Perseverance:** the ability to see the end goal and to work towards it
- > **Resilience:** the capacity to 'bounce back' when things don't go to plan

# independence



## Fostering independence

Deakin University expects students to take responsibility for their own study, time management and meeting of deadlines. University students will have timetables, but will not be chased to attend lectures or reminded to hand in assignments.

You will notice that all communication from the university is directed to the student – you are not consulted nor informed of activities by the university. This can be particularly difficult for parents, as you are required to ‘let go’ and to learn to support in a new way. It can also be hard for the student as they will have to develop self-discipline and motivation to meet these new challenges.

If you have not been to university yourself or if it’s some time since you studied, you may be uncertain about your ability to help in the way you have in the past. Try not to give too much advice. This is the time for the student to take responsibility for their own learning and your role should be to encourage and trust them to do this. It is okay to be curious

and at times concerned, but try not to be intrusive. Encourage decision-making rather than making decisions for them.

### Ask:

- > *When are your lectures?*
- > *When are your first/next assignments due?*
- > *How do you plan to keep track of due dates?*
- > *How does the university let you know what’s happening?*
- > *What do you have to do to prepare for your assignment?*
- > *What’s your priority for uni this week?*

Many students need to be more independent financially when they start university study. Encourage the student to check Deakin’s online jobs board for students (Jobshop) and to contact the Division of Student Life to find out about the financial assistance available on campus. They may also qualify for Centrelink support or scholarships.

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- > **TIME MANAGEMENT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/)
- > **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/jobshop/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/jobshop/)
- > **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SCHOLARSHIPS**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife/)
- > **CENTRELINK**  
[www.centrelink.gov.au/](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/)

# confidence



## Fostering confidence

It is not unusual for a student to question whether they wish to continue with their enrolment at university. Sometimes this is related to a drop in confidence as the demands of university increase or if they are having difficulty getting to know people.

University students spend less time in class than they did at school. This, and the sheer size of the campus, can make it more difficult to get to know other students and develop new friendships. Confidence increases as they get to know others and put their own uncertainties in perspective with those around them.

Questions like: “How can I cope with all this work?”, “Am I smart enough?”, “Do I fit in?”, “Will I make friends?” are quite common. Encourage them to join in and make the most of opportunities, and empathise with them over the unfamiliarity and insecurities they experience. Celebrate their successes,

big and small, such as handing in an assignment, joining a club and attending classes regularly.

### Try:

- > *Reminding them that other students in their course are new to uni also.*
- > *Encouraging them to make the first move in getting to know someone by introducing themselves or starting a conversation.*
- > *Asking them who they sat with in tutorials today – this encourages them to find out!*
- > *Reminding them how well they have done getting to this point.*
- > *Pointing out that it takes time to learn new things, and becoming a successful student is no different.*
- > *Encouraging them to find out about clubs, activities on campus, study groups and sporting teams.*

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- > **ADJUSTING TO LIFE AS A UNIVERSITY STUDENT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/)
- > **CLUBS AND SOCIETIES**  
[www.dusa.org.au](http://www.dusa.org.au)

# assistance



## Encouraging the seeking of assistance

We all need help sometimes, but we don't always have the confidence to ask for it. While there are things that you will be able to help with, you are unlikely to have all the answers.

There are two key components to getting quality assistance:

1. **Defining the problem** – You can help identify what the real problem is, but it may take some coaxing to get past the big assertions like, “I can't do this!”

Ask:

- > *What do you think you're being asked to do?*
- > *What is it that you don't understand?*
- > *Why do you think you're struggling with that part?*

2. **Identifying the area to find help** –

At Deakin, we want our students to succeed and we are here to help! Students can contact one of their **lecturers or tutors** for advice or post a question on Deakin Studies Online

(DSO). Student advisers in the **Faculty office** can assist with uncertainty about courses and academic procedures. Professionals in **Student Life** (responsible for student services) offer support with health, academic, personal, career and financial issues. The student association **DUSA** is run by students for students and can offer advice. Specialist assistance is also available from the library and the IT help desks.

Ask:

- > *Have you asked your tutor or lecturer about this?*
- > *Have other students had similar problems? What did they do?*
- > *Where can you get help? Have you checked your guide to services? (All students receive “The A–Z to Deakin” – encourage them to keep this handy.)*

Encourage the student to get help early so that they have time to make the most of that assistance – it is often too late to get help with an assignment the day before it is due.

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- > **FACULTY SUPPORT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/faculties/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/faculties/)
- > **STUDENT LIFE SERVICES**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/studentlife/)
- > **DUSA**  
[www.dusa.org.au/](http://www.dusa.org.au/)
- > **LIBRARY HELP**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/library/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/library/)
- > **IT HELP**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/its/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/its/)
- > **STUDY SUPPORT AND STUDENT SERVICES**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/)

# perseverance



## Fostering perseverance

It is useful to have some idea of the ebb and flow of the academic year. The beginning of first year is a high point with enrolment choices and decision making, followed by orientation activities, getting to know the campus and meeting staff and students. The first couple of weeks are usually a blur as students begin the journey, attend lectures and tutorials and begin making sense of the higher education learning environment.

First assessment tasks are often due a few weeks into semester. Results are returned within a couple of weeks; in the meantime uni life goes on and other assessment tasks fall due. Weeks 6 to 8 can be a difficult time between assignment submissions and results and prior to the planning for exams. It can be difficult to stay focused and motivated at this time.

Maintaining support and patience is a challenge for parents and partners as they see the student ride these highs and lows. Encourage them to use time management strategies, and include a balance of activities outside of study. Make suggestions about drawing up a timetable, for example, or relieve them of duties at high-stress/demand times.

It takes time to feel confident as a uni student. If stress gets very high or motivation very low, remind them of the support services to help them manage this normal experience.

### Try:

- > *Encouraging students to list all their assessment tasks at the start of trimester and tick them off as they go to see what they have achieved as well as what lies ahead.*
- > *Encouraging them to maintain involvement in other things, such as sport, contact with friends and part-time work.*
- > *Helping them to maintain focus by looking at what they have achieved leading up to university and since they started.*
- > *Reminding them of their longer term goals and prospects.*
- > *Encouraging them to look to the short-term future – what's happening in the next week or two – rather than the end of the year or end of the degree.*
- > *Relieving some of the other responsibilities around high-stress times.*

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- > **THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/handbook/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/handbook/)
- > **STRESS MANAGEMENT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/)

- > **TIME MANAGEMENT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/)

# resilience



## Fostering resilience

University is a rewarding experience, but the transition period may be hard for some. People are generally resilient and have an amazing capacity to bounce back. Friends and family can provide great support and help students get back on their feet after a negative experience. Be encouraging, recognise disappointment and help refocus on the goal ahead.


It is not unusual for students to fail assignments or units, change their mind about what they want to study, defer or change course. Try to be tolerant of their choices and not to be too fearful that they will not succeed. The journey is rarely straight and narrow and it is often important to take detours or alternate paths to reach the best destination. Take a deep breath and help them work through their confusion or disappointment.

## Try:

- > *Recognising the disappointment the student feels – it is hard to fail or acknowledge a mistake, particularly when something is important to you and others are interested in your progress.*
- > *Encouraging the student to put this decision, assignment or unit in perspective of the whole journey – it is a piece of work in their life, not their life work.*
- > *Pointing out that failure and mistakes sometimes happen. Ask where the student thinks they can improve or get help.*
- > *Celebrating successes, but not dwelling on failures.*
- > *Focusing on the end goal and the areas of success to encourage a positive attitude going forward.*
- > *Encouraging students to talk to course advisers in the Faculty, to careers or study skills advisers or counsellors in Student Life.*

### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

- > **COURSE ADVICE FROM FACULTY STUDENT ADVISERS**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/faculties/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/faculties/)
- > **CAREERS ADVISERS**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/careers/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/careers/)
- > **STUDY SKILLS ADVICE**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/study-success/)
- > **PERSONAL SUPPORT**  
[www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/counselling/)



For the family of first year university students, life can be a roller-coaster that mirrors the student's journey. Keep this booklet handy as the suggested tips may be useful during the student's first year of study.

Step back and allow the student to take responsibility, and be ready to support where necessary. Encourage them to take advantage of the many support services and opportunities on campus.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

> Visit the information for parents and friends link on the Deakin transition page at [www.deakin.edu.au/transition/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/transition/)

> Get a sense and understanding of the things your student is engaged in at university by visiting [www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/](http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/)

> Read *Into Adulthood: A Parent's Guide to life with an 18 to 25 year old student* by Jean Edwards and Jenny English (*Finch Books* [www.finch.com.au/](http://www.finch.com.au/))

### FEEDBACK ON THIS BOOKLET

If you have feedback on this booklet or suggestions on ways to improve it, please email [transition@deakin.edu.au](mailto:transition@deakin.edu.au). We value your input.