

From TAFE to Uni Survival Guide

Prepared by Student Learning, La Trobe Learning and Teaching, La Trobe University

Also available online at:

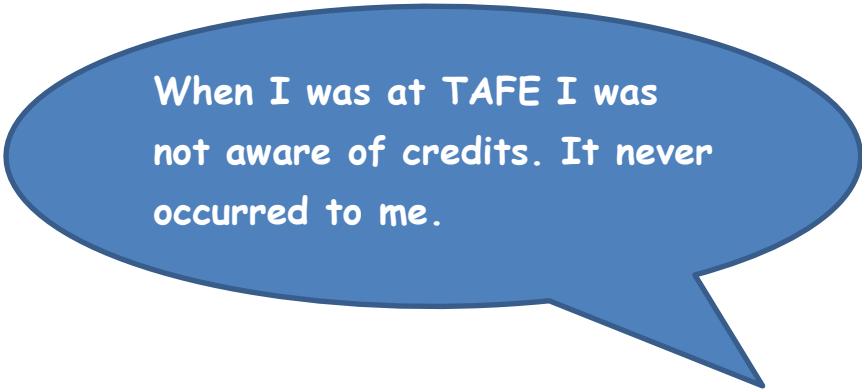
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/learning/starting-out/tafe-to-uni>

Welcome to uni!

So you've come, or plan to come, to study at uni after your TAFE course and you're likely to have plenty of questions. Orientation will answer a lot of them, so be sure not to miss it. But we know that some of you - especially if you've been granted credit so you can start your uni course partway through - are likely to miss out on useful information and resources for your studies. Moving from TAFE to uni has some challenges which can be avoided or overcome. In most ways, your experience will be the same as other students, but previous students who came to uni from TAFE have told us about some challenges which we've listed below alongside student advice and links to relevant guidance.

The students want you to know about:

Credits and pathways



When I was at TAFE I was not aware of credits. It never occurred to me.

- To look into whether you can get any credit for your TAFE studies, you may want to check out this page: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/mature-age/apply/credit-for-previous-study>.
- For more in-depth information, download the "Pathways Guide" from the link at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/mature-age/apply/pathways>

Orientating yourself to Uni

Don't miss out on the first week. It's when you get all the information - they inform you of different resources available. You definitely need to be there. You can't be sick. Friends who missed Orientation - when you get told important things ... the first week they got chucked in the deep end and didn't know what they were doing.

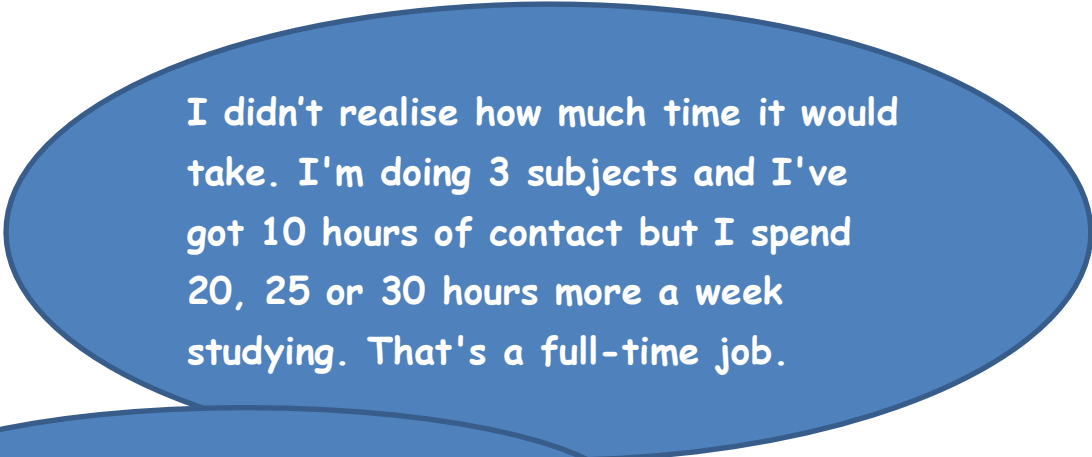
- Plan to go to Orientation which is at the start of each semester. Attending Orientation is fun and will enable you to meet some people before you attend your first class <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/orientation> .
- If you can't attend it all, at least have a look at the "Ready 4 Uni" pages: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni> . There, you will find a short introductory video and a wealth of information under these headings:
 - The essentials
 - Life as a student
 - How we support you
 - Your Faculty
 - Academic preparation

And if you're wondering what people actually do at uni, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page will tell you that too! For example see Academic Expectations (what a lecture is, what a tutorial is, and what is expected from you?):

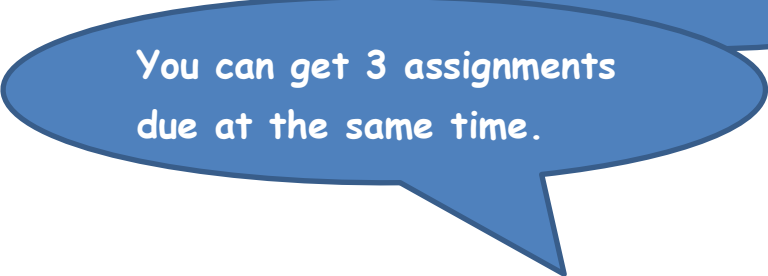
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni/essentials/frequently-asked-questions>

Managing Time and Tasks

The very common problem, which hardly anybody is really prepared for, is how to manage your time and tasks.



I didn't realise how much time it would take. I'm doing 3 subjects and I've got 10 hours of contact but I spend 20, 25 or 30 hours more a week studying. That's a full-time job.



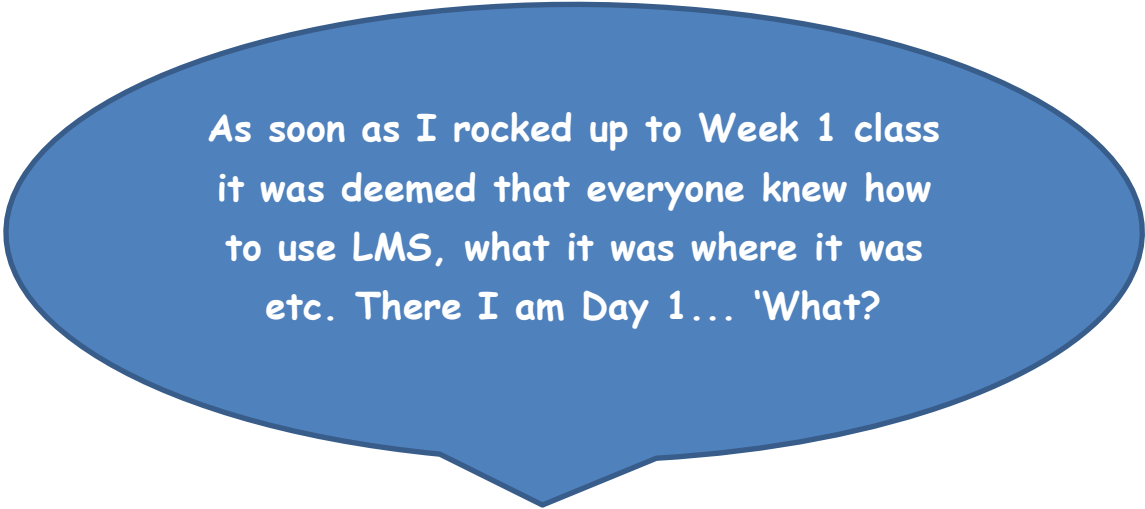
You can get 3 assignments due at the same time.

True, consider Uni as a full-time job. Give enough time for it. You will need to allow for 35 to 40 hours of self-directed study and contact hours most weeks. However uni is different from work: at work you show up, do your job, go home and you're done. At uni the "contact hours", when you have to be there for a lecture or tutorial, are when teaching staff introduce and explain the work which you then have to do in your own time. There's usually also self-directed study which might be a lot of reading and writing, maybe some viewing of video resources, and there may be "field" research as well. Make a plan that helps you fit uni in with all your other commitments, such as sporting activities, family time and work. Students suggest - plan early and often, and be flexible. The uni website has a page with useful tips and resources for managing your time and tasks:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni/life/time-management>

LMS -what is it?

Managing the technology and online systems, where you find important parts of your courses can be an initial challenge.

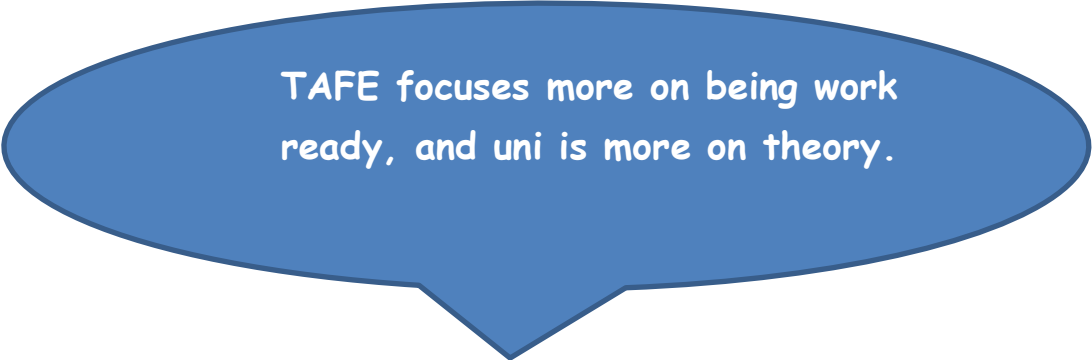


As soon as I rocked up to Week 1 class it was deemed that everyone knew how to use LMS, what it was where it was etc. There I am Day 1... 'What?'

The online “LMS” stands for “Learning Management System” which may also be referred to as ‘MOODLE’. This is where all your subject information, discussions and announcements from your lecturers are held: Your Subject Learning Guides, which set out the whole semester’s work for each subject, are on LMS; also weekly tasks and quizzes; instructions for your assignments, including due dates; and discussions that take place online, which you may be expected to contribute to. You can get in and explore LMS when you have your student password, and there is a brief “overview” that takes some of the mystery out of LMS showing you what it looks like, so have a look at that (now would be a good time ...) <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/it/it-public-downloads/2013-LMS-Moodle-Student-Overview.pdf> . In the first few weeks of semester set aside some time to explore your LMS and ask for help if you are having problems accessing it. You could ask fellow students or mentors, tutors, lecturers, Peer Learning Advisors in the Library or use the Students IT Support link <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/it>

Transition adjustments to a new study environment

It is helpful to approach the new study environment at university as you might approach visiting a new country. When preparing to visit a new country you might buy a guide book and find out what the people in that country value and how they go about their everyday activities. Similarly at University, it is helpful to look at resources to see what is prominent, is valued, and notice how people do things. Often students notice that there is a shift in focus.



TAFE focuses more on being work ready, and uni is more on theory.

Both kinds of knowledge are important, and complementary, indeed having experience of work can be very helpful to learning theory. However, these two kinds of knowledge fulfil different purposes. Uni is where you learn how knowledge is made, and you join in that knowledge making process. It's a vast conversation among academics in each discipline, carried on in the form of publications (books, articles, conference presentations) where they share their latest information and their interpretations of what that information means. Those interpretations are what is meant by "theories": general explanations of why and how things happen in the ways that they do. Sometimes academics agree, and sometimes not, and new knowledge emerges from that process of developing theories and testing them out. Your work at uni involves learning about the current explanations in your field of study, and understanding their uses and their limitations. And in the end, this connects with the world of work: work focusses on *what* you do and *how*, theory focusses on *why* you do it that way.

Finding out what's required

At TAFE just showing you understood the concept was enough, here at uni *how* you write your answer matters too.

- That “*how*” encompasses different things, from the format of your assignment, to the way you express yourself, to the way you indicate what sources you used. And there’s not just one right way – these things differ from one discipline to the next. As in any workplace, or sport, you need to be familiar with what is expected and follow the set requirements. No one expects students to know this kind of thing from the start. Helpful information will be provided on the subject’s website (LMS), and fuller guidance can be found in the “Survival Guides” provided by most Faculties, which are an essential resource for all commencing students:

- Humanities & Social Sciences:
<http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/ehuss/Huss-Survival-Guide.pdf>
- Health Sciences: under “Learning Resources” at
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/health/downloads/survival-guide2013.pdf>
- Business, Economics & Law: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni/faculty/bus-ec-law> (click on “Survival Guide” tab)
- Science, Technology & Engineering: Available in campus bookshops, very reasonably priced.

For lots more resources for all aspects of study, check out the central webpage, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/learning/>

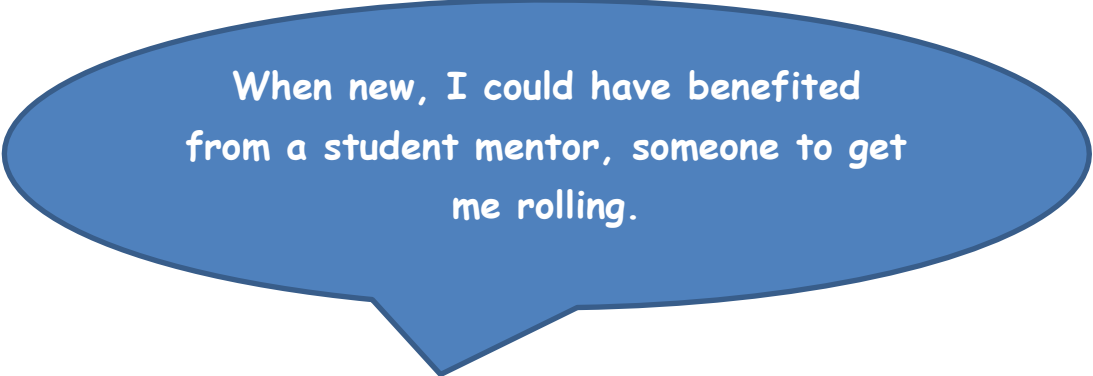
- The Library is your other essential resource, and a good place to start is their page for new students: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni/academic/library> .
 - *The Libguides* on this link will teach you how to find sources of information, how to decide which ones are useful, and how to reference the ones you use: <http://latrobe.libguides.com/libskills>
 - The *Academic referencing tool* at <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/referencing-tool/> has examples of how to reference different kinds of sources, depending on which referencing system your subject requires.

Making the most of what's on offer

The services are all here but there is a disconnect in that the students don't like to ask for help as we appear [as if] we aren't managing. We need to change the culture of not accessing.

- As you've seen in this guide, there are heaps of ideas that can help you and information you can find without moving off the sofa! But don't stop there -- Not everything you need to know is neatly packaged online. Some of it is in the heads of teaching and learning staff and fellow students, and one of the pleasures of study is to meet with other people pursuing similar interests, facing similar challenges, and talk about the issues you share and any aspects of the work that you're unsure about. Remember your lecturer is there to help you succeed and is usually a good person to ask if you are unsure about anything. You won't always know what you need until you need it, and it's good to have somewhere to turn to as your course progresses. We've got some solutions to this, and we hope you'll take advantage of these.
 - Student Learning, La Trobe Teaching and Learning has staff on every campus who can help you get your head around what's wanted in your subjects. Find contact details for each campus at:
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/learning/faculties-and-campuses>.
 - You'll also find details there of the workshops and activities offered at each location.
 - In the campus libraries, there are Student Learning Advisers available to answer questions about any aspect of studying at uni:
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/ready4uni/academic/academic-skills>
 - And the library offers training sessions to help students learn about the research and referencing process. See this link for what is on offer
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/library/help-and-training>

And finally: student mentors are here for you



When new, I could have benefited
from a student mentor, someone to get
me rolling.

Every commencing student can chat to a mentor, to help “get them rolling”:
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/new-students/connect>. You will meet
them at Orientation. If you don’t hear from them soon after you start, email
connect@latrobe.edu.au and let them know you’re here!

**It may be a cliché to say University years are the best days of your life, but it’s
likely to be true. Welcome.**