

1. How is Higher Level Study Different?

Higher Education involves study at university level. The experience of being a student at university can be life-changing since you will:

- study interesting subjects;
- feel stretched intellectually;
- explore new ideas;
- engage in a wide range of new activities;
- find out about yourself,
- consider the kind of person that you want to be in the world;
- make friends that will last you for life.

Whilst starting out as a student is exciting, it is also natural to feel some anxieties about what you might be taking on because higher level study is different from study at previous levels. The most noticeably different features are likely to be:

a) Study is different: The feature of most courses at this level is independent study. Typically, this means managing your own learning as you have the maturity and intelligence to “get on with it”.

b) Teaching methods are different: Teaching methods differ from one teacher to another but you can expect at least some of the following: lectures, tutorials, seminars or workshops, group work, laboratory work, distance learning...

c) The role of the 'teacher' is different: Teachers at this level are usually known as lecturers or tutors. In addition to teaching, they are normally expected to engage in research and scholarship, which may feed into their teaching. When they are not involved in teaching-related tasks, they may be preparing research papers for publication and conferences, or applying research in industry, government and elsewhere.

d) A new learning community: Studying at this level is about being part of an adult learning community in which everyone, students and lecturers are active in finding out new things for themselves and sharing them with others. It is assumed that you are intellectually curious, keen to find things out for yourself and to contribute to developing new understandings.

e) Academic work is more difficult and complex: The strong emphasis is on 'understanding' rather than 'information'; it is about learning how knowledge is created and hence time may seem to operate differently.

2. Independent Study: Benefits, Challenges and Risks

Benefits	Challenges	Risks
More control over your study time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To manage time effectively. ● To meet deadlines. 	Losing a sense of time. Wasting time. Underestimating how long study tasks take. Forgetting things that must be done. Missing essential deadlines.
More control over your spare time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To use spare time effectively in building your personal profile. ● To recognise the difference between spare time and independent study time. ● To put time aside to relax, rest and enjoy yourself. 	Using all your spare time for study. Mistaking time not spent in taught sessions as 'spare time'. Missing opportunities to develop a wider personal profile that will benefit you later when applying for jobs.
More choice about when and where to study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To create structures for your day. ● To organise a place to study. ● To work out the best places and times for you for different kinds of study activity. 	Not getting down to study. Not creating a place that allows you to study without interruption.
More choice about how you study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To identify your learning style for different types of tasks. ● To take responsibility for your learning and achieving your goals. 	Not bothering to explore and develop your learning style. Doing what you enjoy most rather than what works best for you, if these are different.
More responsibility for your own successes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To identify barriers to your learning and to address these. ● To identify ways of improving your own performance. ● To make effective use of feedback and to learn from mistakes. 	Failure to understand previous barriers to learning. Not addressing weaknesses in your performance. Giving up too easily. Ignoring feedback. Becoming despondent at early failures rather than using these to guide improvement.
More choice about how much energy you devote to topics that interest you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To find the right balance between a broad set of interests at a superficial level and too much depth in a narrow range of topics. ● To broaden your range of interests. 	Devoting too much time to topics that interest you at the expense of those needed to complete the programme. Becoming specialised in too narrow a range of topics.
There isn't a teacher looking over your shoulder all the time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To keep on target with little guidance. ● To keep yourself motivated. ● To take responsibility for pursuing solutions to problems on your own. ● To recognise when you need help and to ask for it. 	Letting things slip. Falling behind in your work. Losing motivation. Losing a sense of what you are supposed to do. Not asking for help, not finding out what help is available, or not using it. Running for help too soon instead of trying to solve the problem yourself.
More control over choice of topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To create a coherent programme of study that interests you and meets your goals. 	Choosing topics that do not fit together well, or that do not contribute towards your goals.

3. What is expected from you?

It's not like at school where you were stuck in a classroom from 9 till 4 and teachers told you what you needed to do.

– Ade, first-year student

As a student, you are expected to have the following characteristics.

Independence

You must be able to 'stand on your own two feet'. However, there is help available. The Student Union and Student Services will have details.



To cope at this level, you need to be reasonably good at:

- adapting to new people and environments
- surviving in potentially very large groups
- being flexible in your learning style.

Ability to set goals to improve your work



Self-motivation



You have to be able to work on your own a lot.

Ability to organise your time

You need to keep track of time. You must:

- know when and where you should be for scheduled classes, events and exams
- know when work has to be handed in
- keep to deadlines for handing in work.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
9-10	put notes in order	Ecology lecture Rm G10	prepare for botany seminar
10-11	lecture Dr Shah Rm X22		
11-12	do plan (Science Report)		Botany Seminar Rm R21

(See Chapter 5.)

Openness to working with others

You will need to organise study sessions with friends.



Ability to work out when and how you learn best



Ability to work things out for yourself

