

Learning at University

Learning at university requires you to:

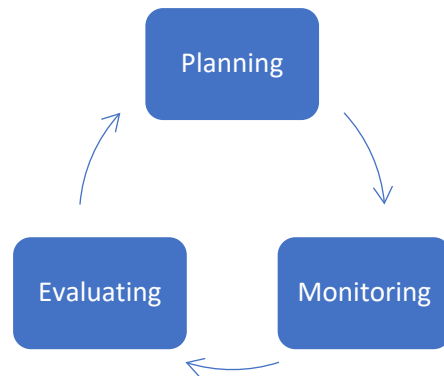
- Be **active** in your own learning and not be passive. This includes your attitude. You will need to take control and manage your goals and learning.
- Be **active** in terms of not just passively receiving information and memorising or reproducing it (e.g. in an exam) but trying to build understanding and meaning; actively engaging with the course material.
- Be an **independent** and **self-directed** learner. Your teacher/lecturer will provide less guidance and direction than in secondary school. It's unlikely anyone will be asking if you've done your homework or kicking you out of bed to attend lectures!
- **Motivate** yourself - not your teacher or your parents or others. There is less feedback on how you're doing which requires more self-motivation.
- **Manage** the workload for yourself – to be able to balance everything including academic, social, sport, work, etc. It's making your own decisions about why, what, when and how to learn. It's making sure you meet deadlines.

Learning at university is complex - requiring you to manage your thoughts, motivation, behaviours and the environment. For example, you will need to:

- set goals for learning
- concentrate and manage distractions
- use effective strategies for organising and revising information
- establish a productive study environment
- manage time and resources effectively
- monitor your performance
- seek assistance when needed
- maintain positive beliefs in your competence
- experience satisfaction with your efforts (from Schunk & Ertmer, 2000)



Self-Regulated Learning is a useful framework for helping to understand how you can manage your own study and learning at university. You become active in this process through the various cyclical stages:



The first stage is **Planning** where you assess the learning task, set goals to accomplish the learning task, choose a suitable strategy (both cognitive and emotional – more on these later) and set your expectations for the potential outcome.

The next stage is **Monitoring** where you use the strategies you selected and monitor how well they are working, what progress you're making on the learning task/goal, and your performance.

The next stage is **Evaluating** where you reflect on your performance, the result and how you went about it. You evaluate how effective the strategies were; attribute a poor outcome to lack of effort or inappropriate strategy and not ability. Also, evaluate how well did you manage your emotions.

Which leads us back to Planning – use your reflection to plan for the next task. How will you alter your planning, strategy, time management and self-monitoring? You constantly and consistently apply this process/steps as you manage your many learning tasks.

It's useful to think of the three main areas of learning activity and strategies that will help you to become a strategic and self-regulated learner:

1. Metacognitive – this involves thinking about how you learn and study. The cyclical process just mentioned is an example.
2. Cognitive – these are information processing and study strategies to help learn material and to problem-solve (see resources on Effective Learning Strategies).
3. Emotional and motivational – this includes management of emotions, attitudes and motivation to aid and enhance learning.

These components are inter-connected. If you find yourself struggling or want to improve your academic performance, take a moment to reflect on why - what's going on or stopping you? For example, it might be that you're not using an effective strategy for learning the material so you might want to work on increasing your use of effective cognitive study strategies. Or it might be that you're feeling overwhelmed or inadequate, so you might want to consider working on emotional or motivational strategies that will help. It's not easy to concentrate and learn difficult



material if you're feeling overwhelmed. Also, you can feel strained if you're wasting time on inappropriate study strategies.