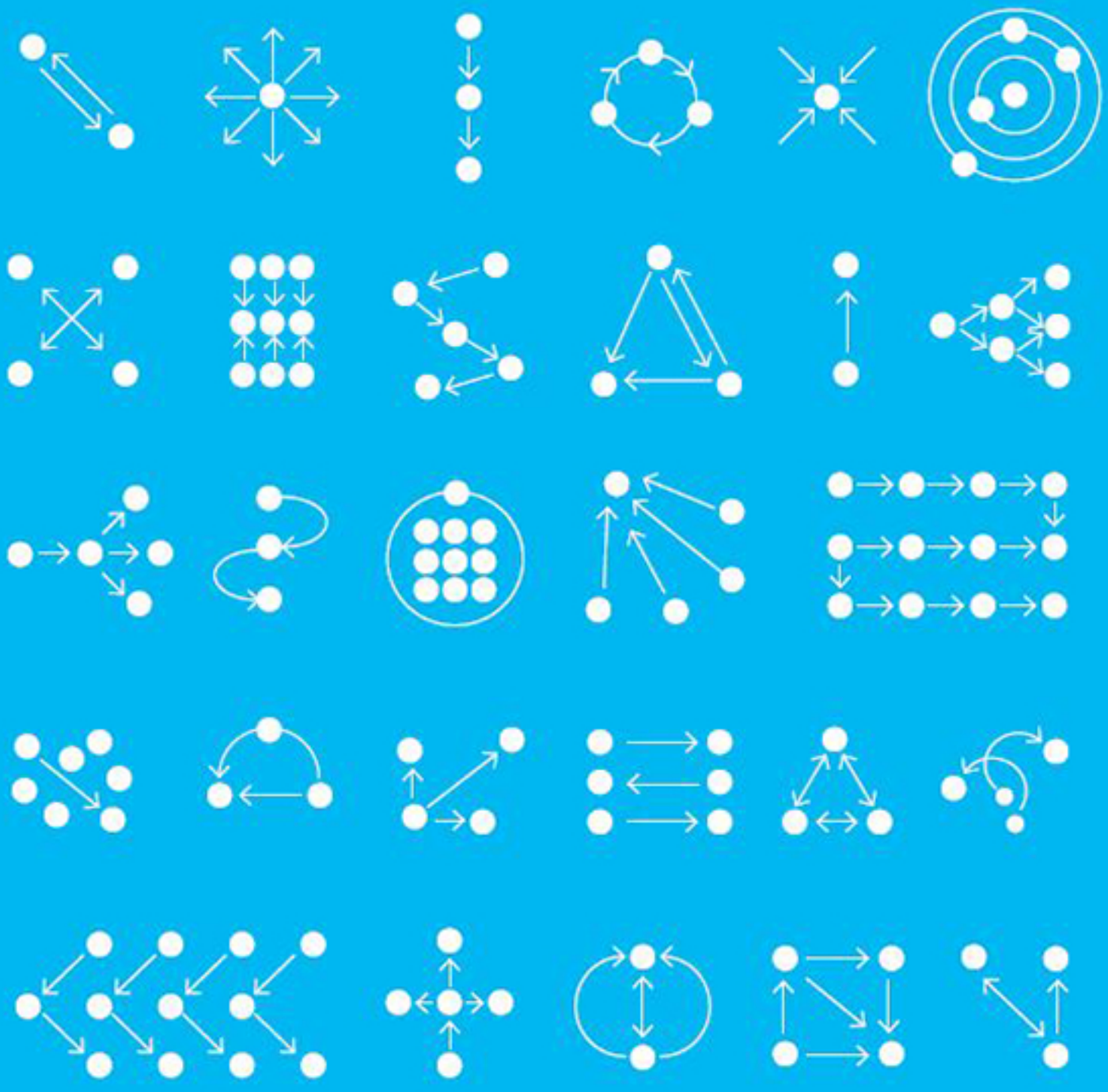
COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT ↘ 5TH ED.

JANE **GRELLIER** VERONICA **GOERKE** KATIE **FIELDING**



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JANE **GRELLIER** VERONICA **GOERKE** KATIE **FIELDING**

CENGAGE

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↘ FOREWORD

In Australia's near universal higher education (HE) system, students enter our institutions with great diversity in academic preparedness, with varying social and cultural capital, and with differing, often ill-formed, expectations of what is involved in tertiary study. In their first weeks and months, students report that they are frequently confounded by a lack of clarity about what is required for learning engagement and success. Many also find our institutional and academic language impenetrable and have difficulty in understanding disparate discipline conventions. For too many commencing students, the transition to their first year in HE is an anxious and unsupported journey, in which they move from the known and familiar to the unknown and indecipherable. And now, in the 2020s, this system vulnerability has been significantly exacerbated by a rapid pivot to emergency remote teaching.

The fifth edition of this important toolkit for learner success publishes in the midst of a global pandemic and at a time when the future of learning and work in a disrupted world is more uncertain than ever before. As COVID-19 swept around the world and into our institutions, HE's capability for flexibility and responsiveness to meet the changing needs of diverse cohorts has been severely stress tested. How do we equip learners with the skills they need to participate and succeed in rapidly changing educational and work environments; learners whose ranks now include a new influx of freshly displaced workers? Particularly, how do we assure the learning and growth mindset necessary for foundational skills' development, and as the basis on which a lifelong commitment to iterative up- and re-skilling can be built?

This is the context to which this book speaks. Students' successful transitions into, through and out of HE have been issues of concern and dedicated research nationally and internationally for decades. It is clear that the cost and impact of student departure are highest in the first year – for government, institutions, individuals, their communities and society at large, across a spectrum of reputational, ethical, personal, economic and legal dimensions. COVID-19 has laid bare long-standing educational inequities, chief amongst which is the compounding impact on participation and attainment of digital disadvantage, financial precarity and fragile mental wellbeing. The sector imperative to be clear about what works for inclusive learning, success and retention, in the context of pervasive student heterogeneity, must be freshly (re)prioritised.

Put simply, online learning is very different from the face-to-face learning experience and the risk of cognitive overload for first-year students is very real. We should consider carefully what the COVID-19 generation of HE learners *need to do* in order to learn. They must: 'learn how to learn' online; wrangle an associated array of tools, technologies, activities, supports and resources presented with more or less coherence; seek to manage their multiple first-year transitions across a myriad of institutional communications; and (eventually) engage with the content and skills of their new discipline. Many will need help and guidance to buttress their mental wellbeing. A number of

commencing HE students will arrive straight from school having suffered learning loss due to disadvantage and challenges experienced over periods of home schooling in the pandemic.[1] As we reflect on the lessons learned from our online upscaling of HE teaching and support in aid of commencing students' online learning, the need to embrace enabling ('transition') pedagogies[2] and their principles of universal design is more critical than ever. The new edition of this book steps through many of the essential elements to which explicit curricular attention should be directed to scaffold early student success and build learning confidence for emerging discipline competence.

Higher education providers cannot claim to have been caught completely unawares by the challenges they faced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of the last decade, as the scale of online teaching for online learning has grown, there has been considerable government and regulatory interest in providers' performance on student attrition, retention and success metrics.[3] In Australia, the national regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), has a mandate under the *Higher Education Standards Framework*[4] to hold providers accountable for assuring successful student transition into, and progress through, courses of study regardless of 'educational background, entry pathway, *mode or place of study*' (Standard 1.3.6, emphasis added). Higher attrition rates in online learning had already been identified as a cause for significant concern: '*external students are around 2½ times more likely to withdraw from higher education than internal students*'.[5] Relatedly, the issue of how to provide transition and learning support for COVID-19 remote learners became problematic when traditional, on-campus, 9 am–5 pm weekday services were forced to close. Equitable support service provision had also attracted specific regulatory attention. In 2017, the Australian Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) warned that '[i]nstitutions should pay particular attention to ensuring their support services are meeting the needs of external students who are not regularly attending campus because these students are identified as at risk of not completing their studies'.[6]

In this context, an important aspect of equitably unpacking for all students the culture of HE and its disciplines is to be explicit in the learning design about the expectations of tertiary study and the criteria for successful engagement with it. Specifically, early and contextualised development of enabling academic skills and literacies, including digital literacy, is critical for learning success. Attention to assuring such supported skills acquisition by way of inclusive curriculum design builds self-efficacy and competence and develops self-regulatory capability. This in turn has been found to support student mental wellbeing.[7] Given the foreseeability of transition

1 For example, Lamb, S., Maire, Q., Doecke, E., Macklin, S., Noble, K., & Pilcher, S. 2020. 'Impact of learning from home on educational outcomes for disadvantaged children: brief assessment.' https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/submission-government-impact-learning-from-home.pdf

2 For example, Kift, S. 2015. 'A decade of Transition Pedagogy: A quantum leap in conceptualising the first-year experience.' *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 2, 51–86.

3 For example, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. 2017. 'Characteristics of Australian Higher Education Providers and Their Relation to First-year Student Attrition.' Melbourne: Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

4 *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2015L01639

5 Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP). 2017. 'Final Report - Improving Retention, Completion and Success in Higher Education' at 14 https://www.dese.gov.au/uncategorised/resources/higher-education-standards-panel-final-report-improving-retention-completion-and-success-higher

6 HESP, note 3, at 9, Recommendation 7.

7 Baik, C., Larcombe, W., Wyn, J., Allen, L., Brett, M., Field, R., James, R. & Brooker, A. 2016. 'A Framework for Promoting Student Mental Wellbeing in Universities'. http://unistudentwellbeing.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MCSHE-Student-Wellbeing-Framework_FINAL.pdf

hurdles, there is an onus on us as educators to articulate, clearly and consistently, the hidden rules, expectations and behaviours fundamental to successful learning engagement, whatever 'the mode or place of study' (as the *HE Standards Framework* mandates). This is especially important in the online environment where there are fewer opportunities for teacher and peer interactions. If we expect first-year students to become independent and self-managing learners, they must be supported in their early development and acquisition of the tools they need to engage productively with the learning and assessment tasks we design for them. Communication and academic study skills are integral to early student achievement in this regard.

But this is a lifelong and life-wide imperative now also. Acquisition of the education staples of basic skills and literacies is essential to realising individualised success in learning journeys across the lifespan. Industry 4.0's automation, in tandem with COVID-19, has created a 'double-disruption scenario'[8] for learners and workers, which has only heightened the consequential nature of mastering essential skills and literacies so that barriers to lifelong learning participation are proactively dismantled. The fourth industrial revolution has focused particular attention on the development of the uniquely human skills that do not lend themselves easily to automation. Amongst this latter category, communication skills are often most frequently mentioned.[9] Learners need to develop these skills – active listening, effective verbal and non-verbal communication, presentation skills, teamwork, intercultural communication and the ability to communicate across genres – as they are integral to lifelong engagement in education and training. Employers expect employees to have these skills, both in their own right and as a subset of other highly valued interpersonal skills; for example, as a basis for negotiation and conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, for inquiry and information management, and for project management.

This book makes clear for all students, whatever their background or prior learning, the substance of the academic skills and literacies in which they must be proficient for workforce entry and then continuing engagement in lifelong learning. It does so comprehensively and accessibly, in a manner that is direct, inclusive, motivational and learner-centric. The practical advice, tips and strategies that are presented provide novice learners with the opportunity to acquire the threshold skills and literacies many degree programs assume already exist. Critically, for the current generation of students, the book also focuses on the scaffolding of online learning and engagement with the digital student experience. In this way, the book makes explicit the rules and expectations of the hidden curriculum, while also surfacing the potential for disciplinary difference. Crucially for first-year success, the authors acknowledge early the importance of the social context

8 World Economic Forum. 2020. 'The Future of Jobs' at 5 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf

9 See, for example, data on the National Skills Commission website https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/resource-centre/latest-data. See also Burning Glass & Business Higher Education Forum. (2018). The New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy. https://www.burning-glass.com/research-project/new-foundational-skills/

of learning and seek to normalise the predictable anxiety many new learners will encounter over the course of their early engagement in the student lifecycle.

But students are only one half of the equation for effective transition pedagogy. Many higher education teachers also require assistance to unpack and scaffold the acquisition of these foundational skills for diverse cohorts; assistance which is not predicated on a deficit view of entering student ability. This is another great value of this book – the ways and means for empowering student learning are made explicit for both students *and* their teachers, whether the mode of delivery is face-to-face, blended or wholly online. To have maximum impact on student success, substantive references to this book should be embedded in core first-year curricula; across all of the planned learning experiences in organised and sequenced design that is contextualised to the discipline and provides support for just-in-time student access. The research in this regard is clear: to be most effective, language and learning skills' development should be integrated into the curriculum and the context of discipline learning – their acquisition cannot be left to chance. I commend the authors on the obvious care, expertise and respect for students and their learning they bring to this task. The book is a valuable contribution to the effective deployment of transition pedagogies and should be harnessed in aid of intentional first-year curriculum design. I recommend this book as an invaluable learning support for diverse first-year student cohorts and for those who seek to engage with them for learning success. Both students and teachers will be grateful for the learning it facilitates, whatever the mode or place of study.

Professor Sally Kift PFHEA FAAL
President, Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows
ALTF Senior Fellow, Discipline Scholar: Law
February 2021

↘ ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Jane Grellier is a coordinator in the first-year Communications Program in the Faculty of Media, Society and Culture at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia. She works with a team of teachers who provide communications units to more than 4000 first-year students each year across various internal faculties, as well as online and offshore. Jane worked initially as a secondary English teacher in Western Australian schools, and then spent 15 years as an educational writer and curriculum developer for a range of secondary and tertiary education sectors. She has a strong commitment to teaching writing, especially to encouraging students to write in clear and concise English, which she sees as essential in the university setting. Jane's own research currently focuses on reflective practice – both in her own writing and in developing reflective thinking among first-year students.

Veronica Goerke (PhD) is a senior lecturer at Curtin University who lives with her husband near her children and their families on Whadjuk Noongar Country in Boorloo (Perth, Western Australia). Her ancestors all come from the Valtellina in northern Italy and her first language was a dialect from that region. Like Jane and Katie, Veronica first worked as a secondary school teacher, before moving into universities, where she taught and coordinated communication skills, as well as holding leadership roles in academic development and curriculum design. She has worked with Australian First Nation colleagues to co-create and deliver reconciliation-related projects including intercultural staff training and on-country subjects for students. She has completed research into the first-year experience, communication skills and students' use of tablets for learning. However, her key research focus is reconciliation in Australian universities. She believes we are all continually learning how to better communicate with each other, so we can be more inclusive and respectful and thus enact real reconciliation and peace across the world.

Katie Fielding is a teacher at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia, where she works predominantly with first-year students in the faculties of Media, Culture and Social Inquiry (MCASI), and Education. She began her teaching career in secondary school English, and later moved into the tertiary education space where her passions for teacher education and language have been indulged. She has a particular interest in the ways that online learning can be harnessed to provide students with opportunities to access education. Katie's own research focuses on the role that digital technologies can play in helping young children develop their capacities for creative thinking, innovation and problem solving.

↘ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many of our colleagues at Curtin University have continued to be supportive and generous with their time and ideas as we have been working on this fifth edition. We acknowledge that our text builds on the work of those who have come before us and those who work beside us, not just at Curtin, but across the higher education sector. In this section, we say thank you to our colleagues and the many students we have taught or encountered over the years who have made us better teachers and communicators.

We start by thanking those involved in the development of the first four editions, whose feedback and contribution are the foundation of this new text: Trish Dooey, Carol Igglesden, Katie Scott, Cathryn Wilkinson, Cathy Cupitt, Lyn Payne, Gabby Barrett, Sue Denham, Katalin Dobos, Deborah Hunn, Richard Liston, Robyn Mayes, Chris Nagel, Hugh Rayner, Nari van Der Zanden, Sue Grey-Smith, Pippa Beetson, Paula Beck, Karen Rickman, Katherine Bathgate, Melanie Griffiths, Michelle Carey, Jeannie Morrison, Geoff Cody, Lyn Komarzynski, Liam Lynch, Joy Scott and Helen Rogers (the Communications Program); Lara Mackintosh (the Department of Architecture); Ann Kosovich, Beatrice Tucker, Kuki Singh, Raelene Tifflin and Allan Goody (Office of Teaching and Learning); Aaron Matthews, Michelle Webb and Brenda Larsen (Centre for Aboriginal Studies); Jim Elliott (Student Transition and Retention Team); Lynne Vautier (the TL Robertson Library); Simon Forrest (Office of the Elder in Residence) and Courtenay Harris (Faculty of Health Sciences). We also thank Anne Harris (Honorary Senior Lecturer, Edith Cowan University).

As with previous editions, this toolkit would be impoverished without the many examples of written work and ideas students have allowed us to include. Delighting in their success as communicators, we thank all these students: Tashia Abeyasinghe, Sanan Al Abbasi, Esther Adeney, John Aldridge, Aidan Ashwin, Geoff Barnes, Sharon Beale, Crystal Beaini, Tammy Beven, Simon Blyth, Jonathon Borrello, Barbara Bozsik, Paul Britton, Cameron Broad, Ben Caracciolo, Alex Cardell-Oliver, Alex (Ping Hei) Chan, Ebony Clare Chang, Rebecca Chang, Justin Colangelo, Mariko Collins, Ebba Collinson, Anna Dewar-Leahy, Aden Dielesen, Sean Dixon, Seamus Dobbs, Hursh Dodhia-Shah, Khush Dodhia-Shah, Marcia Doolan, Sarah Edmiston, Sarah N. Falzon, Naomi Fisher, Daniel Flynn, Kristie Foenander, Daniel Frewer, James Gibson, Alannah Goerke, Megan Goerke, Olivia Hamblin, Samuel Hammond, Fiona Harvey, Jacqui Holub, Annaliese Hunt, Ashley Hunt, Matt Hunter, Stephanie Huynh, Fiona Jones, Joel Kandiah, Sigrid Kautzner, Tim Kenworthy, Mortigou Labunda, Damian Lay, Sarah Lazzaro, Jasmine Lei, Jonathan Lendich, Chris Lodge, Jessica Matthews, Robert McLeod, Amado Mendoza, Alina Morelli, Ashleigh Morris, Khin Myint, Kathleen Nelly, Alan Ng, Lars Nielsen, Alex Ogilvie, Lane O'Refferty, Niamh O'Sullivan, Grant Perkins, Samantha Petri, Ryan Pinto, Lisa Podbereski, Christine Polowyj, Sally Potsch, Abbey Prentice, Ryan Quinn, Zeik Rafferty, Christine Regan, Jason Robards, Carol Rusch, Samia Scott, Melissa Settineri, Kelley Shaughnessy, Lala Sheikh, Kaylene Schutz, Lewis Stewart, Shaun Sullivan, Freyja Taverner, Kristy Taylor, Dawit Tesfaye, Steve Trudgian, Alex VanderPlas, Marelize Venter, Ella Wakeman, Stephanie Walker, Kathleen Ward, Emily Webb, Wei Wei, Lavinia Wehr, Ellie Willoughby, Jennifer Zeven and Alex Zuniga. A special thank you to Courtnee Nichols for her narrative and photograph of group processes in Chapter 15.

Jane would like to thank her husband Warren for his continuing support through this writing process. Their shared passion for teaching and for language lies at the

heart of all her work, and their teaching experiences together over the past years have kept her grounded and enthusiastic. Her current work with online learners of all ages has sparked her enthusiasm for this form of learning – to all those wonderful online students, seeking to change and enrich their lives through studies, she conveys her enormous respect.

Veronica again thanks her beloved husband and sometimes editor, Mark, as well as children, Damien, Alannah and Megan. She enjoys – most of the time – learning from her children, their partners and friends about how to play with new online communication tools. She always enjoys watching her toddler grandchild, Madeline, mimicking her grandmother shouting on the smartphone! Veronica also acknowledges that from working closely with First Nations, she has learned good communication is more about the many ways of listening, rather than the words spoken.

Katie would like to publicly acknowledge the love, patience and understanding of her family, which has given her the space to follow her dreams and achieve her goals. She particularly thanks her husband, Nick, with whom she frequently engages in passionate intellectual arguments about all manner of topics (about which they are often in furious agreement!) and her children, Lucy, Jacqui and Maggie, who daily provide her with the inspiration to be a strong, smart and capable woman: she hopes that she will be always be a positive example for them. Be anything you want to be, girls.

To the staff at Cengage Learning, especially Fiona Hammond, Emily Spurr, Sarah Payne, Natalie Orr and Ronald Chung, who have supported us in this venture 'fifth time around', we say thank you for your patience, helpful encouragement and regular email 'nudges'.

Much of the work in this fifth edition was done during 2020 while people were trying to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a time when many of us were quickly forced to work, study and stay connected with others online, without being in their physical presence. Thus, we had to find online apps that allowed us to continue to communicate in ways that were meaningful to us. Also, many of us had to become proficient with the new apps used in the online learning environments at our study and work places. We realise that some students and teachers had to use communication tools they didn't – and maybe still don't – particularly like! Whatever is happening in our world as you read this, and whether you are a student or a teacher, we hope our text will help you. This text contains the fundamental tools for a student to communicate in an academic environment. Just like our first edition, it is a 'toolkit', so if you are a student, dive in, rummage around and find whatever you need to help you successfully complete your studies!

The authors and Cengage Learning would also like to thank the following reviewers for their incisive and helpful feedback:

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- Carol Crevacore, Edith Cowan University
- Karen Felstead, Federation University Australia
- Shelly Abbott, Flinders University
- Michael Gardiner, University of Southern Queensland
- Tanya Weiler, University of South Australia
- Linda Stirling, Federation University
- Rebecca Gilroy, Southern Cross University.

↘ BEFORE YOU READ THIS BOOK

Students, past and present, are the characters in this book. They come from Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia; Open Universities Australia and Miri, Sarawak; Notre Dame University, Fremantle; Edith Cowan University; and the University of Western Australia. They are enrolled in a wide range of courses, including fine arts, design, social sciences, commerce, health sciences, science, law, engineering, nursing, computer science, geology, spatial sciences, architecture, planning, construction management, cultural studies, Australian Indigenous studies, journalism, screen arts and education courses. Most are first-year students, taking a unit that focuses on the learning processes they will need for university study – in research, academic writing, teamwork and oral presentations. These students have provided models for this book, and stories of effective (and not-so-effective) academic practice.

Our experience teaching and coordinating units for such students has played a major part in shaping this book:

- ↘ We have chosen to write informally throughout the book, addressing you, the current student, directly, and speaking personally about our own experience.
- ↘ We address both individual students and those working in seminar or workshop groups, and provide activities for both types of student throughout the book.
- ↘ We also emphasise some of the language processes you will need in your future professional careers in order to communicate successfully with clients, employers and colleagues. You can't start to develop these processes too soon!
- ↘ The book is applicable to all undergraduate courses at university, particularly to first-year students in these courses. You will be able to apply our advice and models to whatever discipline you are studying.
- ↘ The book will be useful for any student studying at a tertiary or a secondary level. Developing academic communications is a major educational focus in the 21st century, and the book is our contribution to this.

Although the book focuses on language development, we want to emphasise that education, both tertiary and secondary, is about much more than this. We like this quote from Allan Luke, Professor of Education at Queensland University of Technology, from his public address at the Brisbane Ideas Festival on 30 March 2006:

> “Although they always have and will continue to serve the national economic interest, universities must remain seedbeds for basic intellectual work, for speculative theory and experimental practice. They must perpetually strive to become more open environments where students are encouraged to engage with historical, scientific and narrative knowledge, to debate these matters freely and speculatively, and to apply these understandings to the complex worlds of new economies, new technologies and new cultures.”

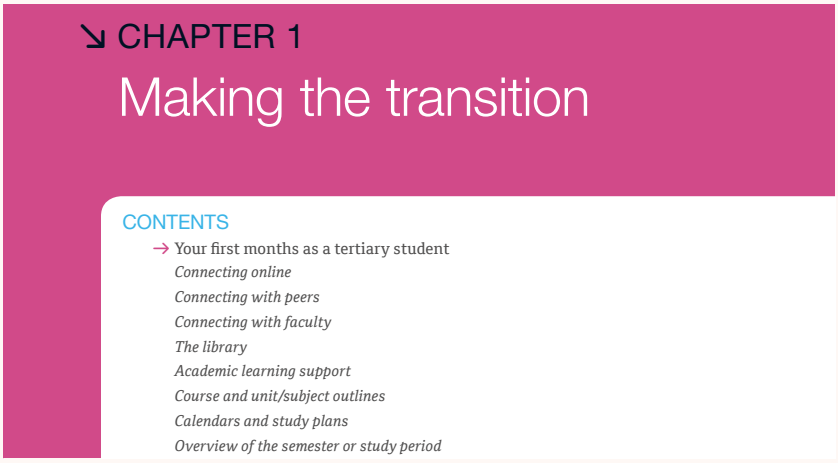
This quote sums up our approach to education. While we focus in this book on helping you develop the processes you will need to be successful students, we believe that these processes are means rather than ends in themselves. If you learn well to think, research, write, reflect, work collaboratively and deliver presentations, then you can benefit from the 'seedbeds' and 'open environments' that are universities, and you can play your part in making them such rich places. We wish you joy in your studies, and hope that this book will enhance them.

Guide to the text

As you read this text you will find a number of features in every chapter to enhance your study of communications and help you understand how the theory is applied in the real world.

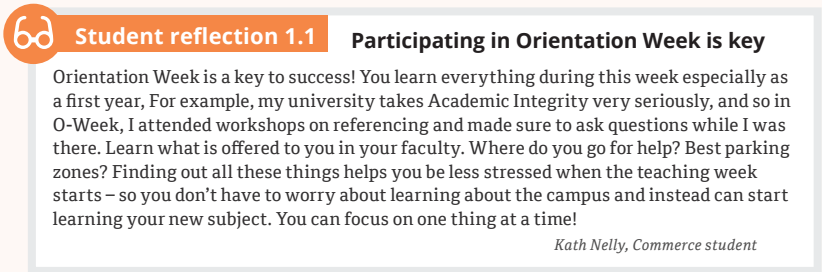
CHAPTER-OPENING FEATURES

Identify the key concepts that the chapter will cover with the **Chapter contents** at the start of each chapter.



FEATURES WITHIN CHAPTERS

Read authentic **Student Reflection** examples of real student communication efforts that illustrate theory in practice. These come from students across a wide range of disciplines.



FEATURES WITHIN CHAPTERS

Explore **Examples** of real communication that highlight good practice as well as **Annotated examples** that provide guidance and advice to help you self-evaluate and improve your own communication.

Example 1.1 An inappropriate formal email

Hey

I just want to know what the physics labs are worth. Coz i missed the last one, coz the car broke down and i came too late to the next one. Just thinking if there's any chance of doing a makeup test or something. Anyhow, why aren't the tests done at the end of the lab rather than at the start. Coz if your late even slightly u'll miss the test. Anyway hope you can assist my query, cheers.

Anthony

Test your understanding as you go via the **Activity boxes** which include questions to help you review, integrate, and comprehend information.

ACTIVITY 2.2 **Make a post to your group discussion board**

If you are already enrolled in an online unit, navigate to your group discussion board (or relevant collaborative area of the LMS) and make a post introducing yourself.

In your post, you might include:

- Where in the world you are located.
- Why you have chosen to study online.
- Something that you are excited about or looking forward to.
- Something that you are nervous about.

These ideas have not been suggested arbitrarily: sharing this kind of information is beneficial for you and your classmates. Noting where you are broadly located (e.g. in regional Western Australia, Dubai or suburban Auckland) can help your tutor understand

Learn How to identify the most common mistakes and errors students make and how to address or improve on them through the **How to spot and fix tables**.

How to spot and how to fix flowery language

How to spot a flowery thesis statement	How to fix it with a clearer, stronger verb-based sentence
There is a role for technology to continue to be adopted, developed and embraced by teachers in primary school classrooms in the pursuit of allowing teaching and learning to experience enhancement, excitement and being relevant to students.	Primary school teachers must continue to use technology in their teaching in order to enhance their students' learning, excitement and sense of relevance in their studies.
It is an indisputable fact that a part in the development, maintenance and promotion of safety on their construction sites should always be played by construction managers. But nowadays, in this day and age, importance and fundamental emphasis is also placed by them on the daily and perpetual promotion of healthy habits, emotional attitudes, good gender relationships, beneficial	While construction managers have always promoted safety on construction sites, in the 21st century these construction managers must now focus on the mental and physical wellbeing of their workers, which will in turn help create a healthy and equitable society.

FEATURES WITHIN CHAPTERS

Hint boxes in each chapter give you simple tips and suggestions for more effective communication

HINT

You get out what you put in!

Your tutors are there to guide and assist you, but they are not mind readers! If you need help with a concept or skills, make sure you ask questions. Put up your (virtual) hand frequently and get involved right from the start. In our experience, students who are active participants on the group discussion boards are usually the ones who are able to achieve their potential. Remember that discussion boards are for interaction between students, too – if you know the answer to a classmate's question, go ahead and reply!

Challenge yourself to:

- be the first to make a post
- respond to at least three other people's posts each week
- share your response to an activity
- give another student feedback, advice, or answer their question.

END-OF-CHAPTER FEATURES

At the end of each chapter you will find several tools to help you to review, practise and extend your knowledge.

- Review your understanding of the key chapter topics with the **Revision Activities**.

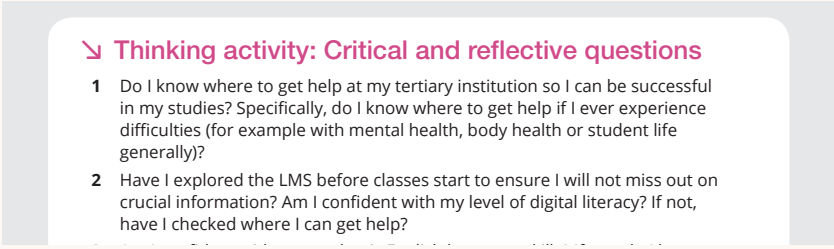
REVISION TOOLS

↘ Revision activity: Revise these ideas

1. The first few months of tertiary studies, whether online or on campus, are likely to be disorienting; students need to allow themselves time to become familiar with their new learning environment. All students need to develop healthy study habits relevant to their life situation.
2. Students should first become familiar with their teachers, fellow students and the faculty or department structure in which they are studying.
3. There are many additional resources available to tertiary students, including resources within the LMS at their institution (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle), the library and academic learning support and counselling services.
4. Students find calendars and study plans useful tools for keeping on top of the demands of different parts of the semester.
5. It is important to start work on assignments early as many assignment tasks are complex and require research. Beginning such assignments the week before they are due is likely to mean they cannot be completed for given deadlines.
6. Communication with teachers, coordinators and fellow students must be semi-formal and always respectful.
7. There may be several reasons why students are not doing as well as they would like. It's important for students to quickly recognise when they need help, and for them to take advantage of the many strategies available to

END-OF-CHAPTER FEATURES

- Process and apply content to current issues or personal experience using the critical and reflective **Thinking activities**



↘ Thinking activity: Critical and reflective questions

1. Do I know where to get help at my tertiary institution so I can be successful in my studies? Specifically, do I know where to get help if I ever experience difficulties (for example with mental health, body health or student life generally)?
2. Have I explored the LMS before classes start to ensure I will not miss out on crucial information? Am I confident with my level of digital literacy? If not, have I checked where I can get help?

- Use the **Useful weblinks** to extend your understanding and explore online resources.

↘ Useful weblinks

The University of Western Sydney has basic, introductory resources about navigating the web, discerning good from bad websites and developing and maintaining a digital identity. See the 'Digital literacy' link: **https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/studysmart/home/digital_literacy**.

The University of Adelaide has a 'Wellbeing Hub' with excellent information for tertiary level students including study tips, mental health and making a successful transition to university. See: **https://www.adelaide.edu.au/student/wellbeing/**

Guide to the online resources

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

Cengage is pleased to provide you with a selection of resources that will help you prepare your lectures and assessments. These teaching tools are accessible via **cengage.com.au/instructors** for Australia or **cengage.co.nz/instructors** for New Zealand.

MINDTAP

NEW

Premium online teaching and learning tools are available on the *MindTap* platform - the personalised eLearning solution.

MindTap is a flexible and easy-to-use platform that helps build student confidence and gives you a clear picture of their progress. We partner with you to ease the transition to digital – we're with you every step of the way.

The *Cengage Mobile App* puts your course directly into students' hands with course materials available on their smartphone or tablet. Students can read on the go, complete practice quizzes or participate in interactive real-time activities.

MindTap for Grellier's *Communication Toolkit 5th edition* is full of innovative resources to support critical thinking, and help your students move from memorisation to mastery! Includes:

- *Communication Toolkit 5th edition* eBook
- Student communication examples
- Communication templates and checklists
- Communication activities

MindTap is a premium purchasable eLearning tool. Contact your Cengage learning consultant to find out how MindTap can transform your course.eLearning tool. Contact your Cengage learning consultant to find out how *MindTap* can transform your course.

CENGAGE | MINDTAP

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

The **Instructor's Guide** is packed with content that helps you set up and administer your class: Chapter essential points, activities and suggested responses and more.

COGNERO® TEST BANK

A bank of questions has been developed in conjunction with the text for creating quizzes, tests and exams for your students. Create multiple test versions in an instant and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want using **Cognero Test Bank**.

POWERPOINT™ PRESENTATIONS

Use the chapter-by-chapter **PowerPoint slides** to enhance your lecture presentations and handouts by reinforcing the key principles of your subject.

ARTWORK FROM THE TEXT

Add the digital files of graphs, tables, pictures and flow charts into your course management system, use them in student handouts, or copy them into your lecture presentations.

FOR THE STUDENT

MINDTAP

NEW

Premium online teaching and learning tools are available on the *MindTap* *MindTap* is the next-level online learning tool that helps you get better grades! *MindTap* gives you the resources you need to study – all in one place and available when you need them. In the *MindTap Reader*, you can make notes, highlight text and even find a definition directly from the page.

If your instructor has chosen *MindTap* for your subject this semester, log in to *MindTap* to:

- Get better grades
- Save time and get organised
- Connect with your instructor and peers
- Study when and where you want, online and mobile
- Complete assessment tasks as set by your instructor

When your instructor creates a course using MindTap, they will let you know your course link so you can access the content. Please purchase MindTap only when directed by your instructor.

Course length is set by your instructor.

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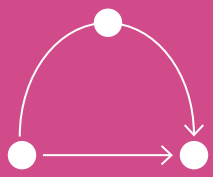
↘ PART ONE

TRANSITIONING TO TERTIARY STUDIES



Kaya! Hello from Jane, Veronica and Katie, who have written this text for you from where we live in Noongar Country. 'Kaya' is a word that means a combination of 'hello' and 'yes'. It is a happy greeting in the language of the Whadjuk Noongar, who are the original custodians of the area that now includes Perth, Western Australia. Wherever you are in the world as you read this, dive into our toolkit and scan the chapters to find what you need to be a successful student.

Over the past few decades, the digital revolution has caused disruption in how tertiary institutions create and deliver education. These institutions have been working hard to transform how they help you learn skills to enhance how innovative, entrepreneurial and collaborative you will be when you graduate. In fact, your university or college is actively a part of this 'profound social and economic transformation that has been catalysed by breathtaking advances in automation and artificial intelligence, and unprecedented access to data and computation' (Jahanian, 2020).

Every tertiary institution is committed to helping you stay and succeed in whatever you have chosen to study with them, and so they make big investments to help you have a smooth transition. They have noted, as Professor Sally Kift stated, 'it is clear that first year students face unique challenges as they make very individual transitions to study; particularly academically and socially, but also culturally, administratively and environmentally' (2015, 53). In Australia, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) monitors the standards of these higher education institutions to ensure you receive a quality learning experience. The first few chapters of our text should help you get off to a good start.

Part 1 will be useful if you are beginning your higher education studies – whether you are a recent school-leaver or are returning to study after doing other things. Many of you will make a smooth transition to tertiary studies, adapting to new expectations and approaches to learning; some of you, however, will experience challenges. You may have difficulties organising yourself, adjusting to the course you have chosen or developing the particular communication skills required for success at this level.

You may be an older student (i.e. who has not come straight from school) who hasn't done extended writing for 20 years and may feel overwhelmed by the apparent expectations around digital literacy. Or you might be a student who is very confident with mathematics, but not so sure of your oral-presentation skills. You may even be the first person in your family to enrol in higher education. Whoever you are, this section contains hints that will be useful for you.

Part 1 has two chapters. The first introduces you to some key aspects of life in higher education, while the second outlines some reading, note-making and exam-preparation skills that you may find beneficial. If you already feel confident in both of these areas, go straight to Part 2.

→ **Chapter 1:** Making the transition

→ **Chapter 2:** Online learning

↘ CHAPTER 1

Making the transition

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→ Your first months as a tertiary student
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Study groups
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Formal emails
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Dissatisfaction with assessment results
Falling behind in your studies
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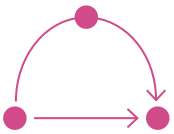

> “Surviving university is actually a great experience! Nearing to the end of my degree, I now realise and value the time and effort I put in since first-year. I got through uni by setting little goals for myself each semester regarding achievement of learning outcomes and assignments. It’s important to remember that you are responsible for your own learning. Draw upon what motivates you to complete tasks – think of your life in a bigger picture.”
>
> *Rebecca Chang, Health Sciences student*

Your first months as a tertiary student

Whether you are a recent school-leaver or someone returning to study after a break of several years, and whether you have chosen to study mostly by attending classes on a physical campus or completely online, it is important that you develop a toolkit of strategies to help you survive – and, indeed, thrive – as a tertiary student. So, before you get into the chapters on communication skills, read through this chapter for some ideas you may find useful during those first months of study.

Connecting online

Your first task is to find your way around your institution's *learning management system* (or LMS), such as Blackboard, Moodle or Canvas. Even if you are someone who is very confident in the online environment, make time to explore the LMS at the institution where you are now studying to see how your lecturers have used it for their subjects. If this way of working is completely new to you, look for help either on campus or online, attend sessions organised by the library and ask other students for help.

Another reason for becoming familiar with, and regularly using, your institution's LMS is that this is likely to be the place where you will submit your assessments. Even if you do not submit all your assessments through the LMS, the assessment marking requirements are likely to be outlined and recorded in the LMS.

We have included some points to help you – especially if you are someone who is studying only online:

- Read the 'welcome packs', introductory information and study guides, and then re-read them. View any introductory videos provided by your lecturers.
- Check all the links in your unit website so that you become familiar with how the unit is set up.
- Search for your unit outline or calendar to find all the due dates for assignments. (Download it, and consider printing a copy for your study desk.)
- If your unit includes a discussion board or other means of communicating with your tutor and fellow students, introduce yourself in that forum as soon as you can. We find that those students who put off doing this task for several weeks often feel awkward 'arriving late', and so have more challenges participating.
- You will know best how to organise yourself. There is plenty of advice online about how to ensure you organise your life appropriately, but only you know what will work for you.

See Chapter 2 for more detailed information, but to start with, here are some helpful websites to guide you as you study online:

- Online Study Australia – 'How to Succeed in Online Courses (18 Tips)': **https://onlinestudyaustralia.com/courses/how-succeed-tips**
- TAFE Queensland – 'Eight Tips to Prepare You for Online Study': **https://tafeqld.edu.au/news-events/news-blogs/2018/eight-tips-for-online-study.html**
- Northeastern University – 'Tips for Taking Online Classes: Eight Strategies for Success': **https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/tips-for-taking-online-classes**

Our last piece of advice should possibly have come at the beginning; but, after thinking through some of the points above, you may now be in a better position to receive it. Think again about your commitment to online study and, more importantly, about how much you will be able to undertake. Studying online is not a method of 'rushing through' a course while applying less effort than in face-to-face learning. In fact, it can sometimes be more time-consuming than on-campus study, and it can be more difficult to maintain your commitment to study when you are working physically alone. Its value is that it usually allows you to be flexible in time and space; but it will still make large demands on your time.

If you are someone who prefers to study on campus and are now studying online only, take care not to overload yourself with many units. Take your time, be patient with yourself and focus on developing good online study habits.

Connecting with peers

Once you have joined a class, whether you are studying online or on a campus, and whether you prefer working alone or with others, the first thing we advise you to do is to connect with people and hopefully make new friends. Connecting with people should be easier in the first few weeks, since your lecturer(s) will set up a number of activities that encourage you to introduce yourself. Take any such opportunities to get to know other students.

Do not rely solely on personal social media spaces, but quickly access the online meeting platforms provided within your courses and become an active participant on them as soon as possible. This will enable you not only to get to know your peers but also to see who you might prefer to work with (i.e. on future group assignments). Whether or not you get involved in extracurricular activities, these online spaces allow you to easily and naturally make links with peers within your course. In your course, you will meet people who have chosen the same subjects as you, and with whom you therefore already have something in common. Also, make use of opportunities to work in groups (see Chapter 15 for specific advice on this),

since this can help you make friends more quickly, and thus you will feel supported as you study. Whatever you do, keep looking for ways to meet and connect with other students. You will note we repeat this advice throughout the text – often using quotes from our student contributors!

Connecting with faculty

Get to know your faculty or discipline area as soon as you can. You will need to know the answers to these questions:

- Who are my lecturers and how do I contact them?
- Where is the main office for my faculty or department?
- Where is the key information about my course located on the website and in the LMS? (This includes the contact details for whomever is responsible for my course if I cannot contact my lecturer, as these may be different people.)
- How do I submit assignments?
- Does my area have a special room or online space for first-year students or students studying my course?

Even if you are a student who has been studying for a while, if you don't yet know the answers to these questions, don't be afraid to go now and find the answers. After all, you're likely to be studying within the same area for at least three years, so this information is still very useful.

The library

More than ever before, higher education libraries – including their websites – are the places to go to learn all you need to know about succeeding in tertiary environments. As a tertiary student, you will need to use more than just general websites for your research; lecturers will generally expect you to use a range of sources, including discipline-specific e-journals, which can often only be accessed via the library. Don't forget to communicate with the librarians themselves, because they are usually at the forefront of digital technology, making them invaluable when you are conducting secondary research at this level. (See Chapter 3 for further details.) Whatever resources are available at your institution's library, access and use them.

Thus, as soon as you are enrolled, whether you're studying on campus or online, you should do a tour of your library's website so that you will know what your library can offer you.

Academic learning support

If you would like some extra support or you are having difficulties with any aspects of your studies, the best place to go for help, in the first instance, is your institution's website. Most, if not all, tertiary institutions have clear

links from their homepage to such support. These websites are 'one-stop shops' for students, and we encourage you to explore them as soon as you can so you know what your institution can offer you.

In addition to online support, every university or college will have places where students can go to get free assistance with their studies. This may include help with essay writing, academic study skills seminars and help with developing English-language proficiency for academic purposes. Explore what is available now so that if you need some help one day, you will know where to get it. As noted, most tertiary institutions house this information 'one click away' from the homepage, such as at Swinburne University (**https://www.swinburne.edu.au/life-at-swinburne/student-support-services/study-learning-support**) and at Queensland University of Technology (see the 'QUT cite/write' link at **https://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au**). If you're having problems, especially in areas such as organising your life or writing your assignments, go and ask for help. It is there!

If you are an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student – and especially if you are from a remote community – you may choose to seek out the areas of your campus that are especially for Indigenous Australian students. Search the website and you will find information such as Nura Gili at the University of New South Wales (see **https://student.unsw.edu.au/additional-support**).

Whoever you are, you should find out what your institution can offer you.

Course and unit/subject outlines

The way in which programs and parts of programs are named differs across tertiary institutions. In this book, we will use the word 'course' to describe a full program lasting three or more years (e.g. Medical Imaging, Psychology) and 'unit' or 'subject' for one subject within that course, lasting a semester or perhaps a year.

Read your course and unit outlines as soon as you receive them. The unit outline contains essential information about the unit, such as learning outcomes, assessment details and the topics for each class. Make time to check every outline carefully – especially before you start assignments – because your success will depend on knowing exactly what you are required to do.

Calendars and study plans

Use an online calendar to organise how and when you will study. Create a study plan as soon as possible, and refer to the official *academic calendar* (available through the website of your place of study) as you do this. You can then make a weekly study plan, as well as a semester study plan.

Set up calendar alerts to remind you of key dates. Place all your deadlines in your calendar, as well as weekly times to prepare for classes and then to review after each class. Set aside time in Week 3 or 4 of semester to reassess your study plan to see if it is realistic, and reorganise if you need to.

Check your study timetable and work commitments, as well as the demands of 'the rest' of your life, and get organised about how you want to live it. If you don't have a plan, you will be more likely to fall behind in your work and get stressed. Making your plan public, at least to the important people in your life, is also a good idea, so that they will support you rather than sabotage your plans.

The key dates in your study plan will be the assessment due dates. It is likely that several assessments will be due around the same time, but you are expected to start working on them well in advance. You won't be able to complete them all in the week they're due. Even if you were a person who could start and finish an assignment in one night at secondary school, you will not be able to do this with tertiary-level studies.

When you prepare your study plan in the first week of semester, indicate the blocks of time that you will spend on each assignment. If the assignments are all due in Week 12, setting aside only Week 11 to work on them is highly risky. Here are some more tips to help you:

- Talk to your peers about how they organise their homework and study time (but ignore people who say they don't do any work and 'wing it' the night before). See the section later in this chapter about the value of study groups.
- If you need to submit a hard copy of your assignment, don't leave the printing until 'the night before'. There may be problems (e.g. a printer breaking down) so organise your printing well in advance of the due date.
- If everything gets too much and you are behind on an assignment, speak to the relevant lecturer (in person, by email or other method of communication they have instructed you to use) as soon as possible. If possible, it's a good idea to indicate what you have completed so far and how much more you plan to do.
- You may need a short extension on the submission date. Remember that you usually need to apply for this *before* the assignment is due. Check your unit outline for the rules about extensions. Some students leave it until it's too late to apply for an extension, and then they might have marks deducted for making a late submission.
- Another option is to use your institution's academic learning support services or visit its counselling service. Counsellors are not just there to assist you when life is difficult; they are there for students who simply get tired, stressed or disorganised. So, don't forget to check out the relevant information on your institution's website.

Whatever you decide to do, *do something*. Your lecturers can't read your mind and, even if you don't believe you have a valid excuse, if you are

not coping and are having difficulty meeting an assessment deadline, speak to someone about it.

Overview of the semester or study period

Though all institutions and courses vary in how and when they conduct their first year, they all follow similar processes. The following sections provide a summary of what is likely to happen during your first semester or study period.

Orientation Week

For most tertiary institutions, Orientation Week (or 'O Week') is the time when students are introduced to their study environment and, more specifically, to their course. You will be introduced to key staff members, receive information about your course and be expected to familiarise yourself with the campus or online environment. You will confirm your class timetable, check course and unit/subject information online, explore on-campus (or online) classrooms and create a study plan.

It's normal to experience information overload during this time. However, you'll soon start to feel familiar and more at ease.

Student reflection 1.1 **Participating in Orientation Week is key**

Orientation Week is a key to success! You learn everything during this week especially as a first year. For example, my university takes Academic Integrity very seriously, and so in O Week, I attended workshops on referencing and made sure to ask questions while I was there. Learn what is offered to you in your faculty. Where do you go for help? Best parking zones? Finding out all these things helps you be less stressed when the teaching week starts – so you don't have to worry about learning about the campus and instead can start learning your new subject. You can focus on one thing at a time!

Kathleen Nelly, Commerce student

Early weeks of semester

The first two to three weeks of a course will often seem easy, since little may be expected of you and you will be given plenty of information (often too much!). This will include information about assessment requirements.

Hint from a recent graduate

HINT

'Completing assignments and fulfilling the obligations of your degree well before the due dates will grant you the gift of ultimate freedom to experience the joys of university, like friends, partying, sports and other events, to their fullest potential.'

Hursh Dodhia-Shah, Bachelor of Commerce graduate