



HELPING YOUR STUDENT: A LEAFLET FOR PARTNERS, FAMILY OR FRIENDS OF MASSEY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

If you're a student

Please pass this leaflet onto your partner, family, or friends if you wish. It's designed to help them help you, and to tell them a little about what you will be doing as a Massey student.

If you're a partner, family member, or friend

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read this leaflet. Research shows that a very important factor in students' success is good support from their partners, families and friends.

1. Some basics

University is quite daunting and sometimes you might be wondering what your student is talking about.

Here are a few things that are helpful to know:

- A Semester is usually made up of about 12 teaching weeks plus 2 weeks of examinations.
- If your student is in a 'condensed' course, these run for just six weeks, starting in early November and finishing before Christmas

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- Students are expected to spend about 12 hours a week on each course they are studying. Condensed courses will require 20 –25 hours of study per week.
- Stream is Massey's online learning software, which most students use in their courses

2. What will happen to 'your' student?

The start

Courses officially start at the beginning of the semester; however, your student may start earlier if study materials are available. If there are any jobs that need to be done round the house, it's a good idea to get them done early - including setting up a study space with bookshelves to store all the materials they'll need easy access to. We suggest you encourage your student to begin as soon as they receive their study materials. It is amazing how quickly the time goes by, and how soon their first assignment will be due!

Ongoing Assessments

As well as all of the reading your student will need to do, they'll also need to complete a series of assessments. Assessments are the pieces of work that are marked by the university and contribute towards your student's final grade.

They could include:

- Written assignments (essays, reports, case studies, short answer exercises)
- Online tests
- Participation in discussion forums

These assessments can be the focus of considerable stress - both in doing them and getting them back with the marks and comments. It can be very scary, particularly for first-time students. So, your support and encouragement is essential - especially for that vital first assessment- the biggest hurdle for any student. Check when your student's assessments are due - include these dates on your calendar, be aware of any signs of stress or anxiety, and offer your help where you can.

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Contact courses

Some courses will require your student to come to a campus for a few days of intensive study. They usually run during the semester breaks. There is little time for much socialising. These contact courses can be stressful for both the student and those left behind. Children, house care, jobs - all may have to be organised and students re-entering exhausted from their contact course may find it hard to suddenly readjust to ordinary life. Partners who have been looking after children may be tired too.

Understanding may be needed on all sides. As one partner realised, "I thought he'd just been having an easy time until I did a week myself!"

Examinations

At the end of some courses comes the most stressful activity of all - the final exam. Many new students won't have taken an exam for some years and may need extra T.L.C. over the exam period. There is an exam counselling service for students who find the whole business very stressful. Exam results usually come out a month later – and then there is a short break (household jobs again?) before the whole process begins again!

3. How can you help?

There are various problems that face any student, but the most important are:

Time

A student completing one standard 15 credit course will be studying for 12 to 16 hours a week. Condensed courses require 20 to 25 hours of study per week. These are averages - some students may need more, others less. It is also important to know that the time may increase around key assessments. Some students tell us the routine should be negotiated at the beginning, so partners and family know what is study time and what is family time. You should decide together what is best for everyone concerned.

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Stress

There are various stress points in the course, such as assessments, where your support and encouragement will be essential. You can offer to proofread an assignment (that's not cheating) or make sure the children are out of the house at critical times. One student found that "My husband's best way of helping was to take the kids out when I asked. Actually, it was good for him too."

Seeking help

Some students find it particularly difficult to seek help when they're stuck. Massey has a range of resources and services available for distance students. We let everyone know about them through online orientation and Stream, but your student may need encouragement to seek assistance. Remind them that we are here to help!

Motivation

At some point students may begin to wonder if it's all worth it. Your job will be to talk it through with them and (hopefully) help them find their motivation again, if it is right for them to carry on. Sometimes, the right decision will be to drop out, and that's ok. We don't see dropping out as failure - students are welcome to restart whenever they are ready. If your student is thinking about withdrawing, tell them to give us a call so we can discuss options with them.

Perhaps the best support is to see yourself and your student as a team. Your student may be doing the reading and writing, but your role in the team is just as vital to their success.

4. The pay-off

The final aim is graduation. However, many students report pay-offs well before they get there in terms of their own intellectual development and satisfaction. In fact, more than two thirds of students with career aspirations say that their studies benefited them in vocational and financial terms.

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Graduation is the end goal, though, and it represents more than that too. It is your student's chance and ours to say thank you very much indeed for all the support and encouragement you've given them! We hope to see you at the graduation ceremony - the applause will be as much for you as it is for them.

Questions

If there is anything in this leaflet that raises questions, or if there are any problems that arise during your student's studies you would like to discuss, you are welcome to talk to us about them. Write or phone us and we'll put you in touch with the right people.

Remember too that Massey University actually has many partners enrolled together: wife and husband, mother and daughter, even wife, husband and son. If you'd like more information on study for yourself, just contact us for more information.

Contact Details

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