

# Learning at Loughborough University

Loughborough University encourages active student participation in University life, and helps students develop a balance between studying for a degree and managing their social life, financial affairs, and where to live.

This leaflet will help you think about ways to start the learning process *before* your first coursework and assignments are due to be handed in, and offer practical ideas to help you make the most of learning at Loughborough University, from the moment you arrive!

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## Teaching and learning at Loughborough

Teaching and learning at University can be very different from that of schools and colleges. University teachers, usually referred to as tutors, will introduce you to different subject areas, and your knowledge will develop throughout your course.

At each stage of your course you will need to develop various supporting skills. These skills are often practice-based and will help you with your laboratory and field-work, general course-work, assignments, essay writing, and finding information.

Learning at University gives you the chance to:

- Choose subjects areas to study which are directly related to your own interest
- Be responsible for your own work
- Work with other students, draw on their experiences and strengths
- Focus on the projects you have chosen, and work on them in detail
- Participate in a wide variety of teaching approaches
- Acquire *marketable* skills such as an ability to work in teams, develop good personal organisation and communication skills

The most important aspect of studying at Loughborough University is the work that you undertake independently of your tutors, either on your own or with other students. You will need to:

- Learn by doing – make mistakes and practice
- Want to learn – develop motivation and a sense of purpose
- Receive feedback from others
- Reflect on your work – make sense of what has been learned

## University teaching

You are likely to encounter a variety of teaching styles and elements:

### Lectures

The formal lecture is the form which most people consider to be the main element in University teaching, although lectures will only be one part of your course timetable. Lectures are generally the only type of teaching which enable all students on the same, or related, programmes to come together. At lectures you will have to make your own notes, although handouts which detail key areas of the lecture may be provided. Supporting information about your lectures are increasingly available from the University's web-based resource **Learn** (<http://learn.lboro.ac.uk/>)

### Seminars

A seminar group may consist of a number of students, typically 15 – 30 students plus one tutor, which has an emphasis on group discussion. Students may be asked to prepare presentations to show to the rest of the group. Seminars are also held by visiting experts or postgraduate researchers in a particular discipline, to help raise awareness of students and teaching staff to new areas of research and publications.

### Tutorials

Subject-based tutorials allow you to work in small groups with your tutor. The size of the group will vary from a few students to as many as 15. Tutorials often focus on a particular topic or assignment. It is a good way to take part in discussions and to get to know departmental staff.

Personal tutorials are available as one-to-one sessions and can provide individual attention on more general academic or pastoral issues. Personal tutorials can be useful opportunities for personal development planning.

### Practical sessions

Practical sessions can involve experimental or research tasks in a laboratory or a workshop, which give you the chance to work through topics at a practical level. This is a major element on most science, design and engineering courses and they provide the opportunity to learn skills and put theory into practice.

### Self-guided study

Students are asked to work through pre-prepared materials at their own pace, which often involves self-assessment and opportunities for skills practice. The materials can be either paper-based or computer-based, and include audio and visual media. This form of study is sometimes referred to as resourced-based or open-learning.

## University assessment

Assessment is a vital part of your learning. It is a way of maintaining standards and recognising your levels of achievement. Assessment can enhance your performance by:

- Offering the opportunity for feedback and reflection
- Increasing your motivation and focus

As tutors in higher education adopt new ways of teaching, there is more assessment other than just sitting formal exams. New methods can involve students assessing their own work (self-assessment) or that of other students (peer-assessment). At some time during your studies you may have assessments marked automatically by computer, using a sheet which will be read by an optical mark reader (OMR). Marking is quick and accurate and provides immediate feedback on areas needing improvement.

## Learning environments

- **Large lectures** (especially in the first year).  
Formal lectures can be of 300 or more students. The size of the lecture theatre is the only restriction on numbers.
- **Teaching staff.**  
At Loughborough University there are a large number of teaching staff who have specialist knowledge of highly specific subjects and teaching is only one part of their work. Tutors are happy to help you and they are there to answer your questions. During tutorials and practical sessions you may be supervised by teaching assistants or researchers.
- **Group work and independent study.**  
During your degree you will be working principally on your own, but there is often a need for group work with other students. Some assessment may be based on the outcome of group projects.
- **Unstructured time.**  
Many University programmes allow for large blocks of 'free' or non-contact time. This 'free' time allows you to undertake private study. It is important to develop ways to use this time wisely.
- **Motivation.**  
Living away from family and friends for the first time will mean that you may not have someone around to actively encourage you to study. It is important that you are able to find out what you are expected to do and to set yourself appropriate and achievable goals, to keep your motivation going throughout your course.
- **Resources and facilities.**  
The resources and facilities at Loughborough University are some of the best available. You will have access to departmental facilities, a large and comprehensive **Library** (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library>), sophisticated **computer systems** (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/it>) and media facilities as well as **Careers** (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/>) and **Counselling** services (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/counselling/>).

## Developing learning skills

Your study programme and assessments should help you develop transferable, key or core skills which will include:

- Time management
- Teamwork
- Oral presentations
- Note taking
- Reading efficiently
- Using information technology
- Library and information gathering
- Numeric skills
- Assessment
  - Self-assessment
  - Peer-assessment
  - Using feedback
- Written communication
- Writing essays/reports

The University Library provides resources on **Study Skills** (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library/skills/studySkills.html>) which are designed to help you further enhance your study skills, such as working in groups, presentations and writing skills, so that you find studying at Loughborough both rewarding and enjoyable.

You can evaluate your own skills and record them on Loughborough's Personal Development Planning (PDP) tool, called **RAPID** (Recording Academic, Professional and Individual Development). RAPID is available at <http://rapid.lboro.ac.uk> and allows you to provide supporting evidence of your skills for yourself and employers.

All study advice sheets are also available to view and download on the following website:  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library/skills/>



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