



Making the most of your unit guide

Most courses or units of study will provide students with a course or unit guide during the first week of the course, or perhaps at the first tutorial. Many students make good use of this resource, while some refer to it infrequently. The following points may help you use your unit guide more effectively to improve your academic performance.

What is a Unit Guide and why do I need to use it?

- A unit guide is a handbook which provides you with essential information you will need to successfully participate in and complete a given unit of study.
- It is written and published by your faculty for all students enrolled in each unit of study.
- It covers a range of information both general to the faculty or department and specific to a unit of study.
- Some of the information will reflect Monash University policies on issues such as plagiarism. It is important that you are aware of these policies, as the university takes them very seriously and all students must abide by them.
- Faculties expect all students to be fully aware of the information published in their unit guides.
- It is your responsibility to be well informed of faculty, departmental or university expectations and guidelines.

Unit guide structure

Each course or unit guide will reflect the faculty, department and unit of study for which it is published. Some will be more detailed than others; however, generally you will find some or all of the following topics covered.

- title and contents pages for easy use
- a course calendar or list of lecture /tutorial topics
- administration information giving such details as:
 - the names of relevant staff
 - contact details for staff and the department office
 - policies and procedures for concerns such as absence from classes.
- lecture or tutorial topics and questions for weekly preparation
- lists of readings for the unit topics, both key readings and extended or further readings
- assessment and specific assignment guidelines giving information such as:
 - topics
 - due dates
 - assessment criteria
 - policies concerning overdue assignments.
- examination preparation guidelines
- helpful contact information concerning support services such as the Library Learning Skills Unit, Health, Wellbeing and Development and the Disability Liaison Unit. These services are free to all enrolled students who may be experiencing difficulties with their study at Monash.

How can I use my unit guide effectively?

It is not enough to read your guide once at the beginning of the semester and then only use it for assessment topics and due dates. It is intended to be a useful guide throughout the semester. The following points may help you use your unit guide more effectively.

In the first few weeks:

- to orientate you to the subject and discipline
- to give an overview of the structure of the curriculum
- to highlight key reference materials:
 - What should you buy?
 - What will you be able to borrow from the library?
- to establish key dates in your student diary:
eg assignment due dates
- any special events, lectures or additional learning opportunities.

Throughout the semester

- to prepare for weekly lectures and tutorials by familiarising yourself with the key readings and tutorial questions
- to plan well in advance for both major and minor assessment tasks
- to provide faculty or department contact details if you are absent because of sickness or are experiencing any other problems which are seriously affecting your study
- to provide contact details for support services if you are experiencing personal and/or academic difficulties

During final weeks of the semester:

- to provide the 'big picture' view of the curriculum:
 - eg - to help identify relationships between the different sections of the whole unit of study
 - to highlight the balance between theory and practice or application
- to provide a structure for course revision and exam preparation
- to remind you of the key readings and subject terminology to establish revision notes for exams

Remember, the faculty staff take time to put together information they believe is important, so it is wise to take notice of what it says.