

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Balancing University and Work

For a lot of students who are studying at university, working a part-time job is important for many different reasons and benefits, including gaining financial security, looking after their loved ones and receiving exposure to different working environments. When doing so, it is important to equip yourself with useful tools and habits that will allow you to navigate through overwhelming times and reach your goals.

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What is a Work-Life Balance?

A work-life balance involves the intersection of work, university study and your personal life. The work-life interface can be bidirectional, meaning that at times work can interfere with your private life and similarly, your private life can also interfere with work. It is important to learn the balance of the two and ensure that you are prioritising your health and wellbeing above all else.

Immersing yourself in your studies along with your work requirements and social life can be an exciting time of your life, giving you confidence and a sense of self. However, the act of balancing these commitments can equally create some challenges for you. You may find yourself feeling pressured and stressed from the load of university assignments and working hours you may be required to fulfil. Perhaps your workload may be heavy and this is having its toll on your ability to sleep well at night, or it could be that you are struggling to balance your personal life with work and university.

Taking the time out to work through balancing your commitments is an empowering move that will help you make the most out of this period of your life.

Strategies to Balance University and Work

There are several elements that can make us achieve a better balance between our work/university lifestyle and personal domains. Consider the below strategies and practice them in your day-to-day life to see what works best for you. Dedicate yourself to being consistent to achieve a positive and healthy work-life balance.

- **Thinking about why you want to study** helps you connect your intrinsic values and motivation with your long-term end goal. Once you have thought about the reasons why you want to commit to your aspiring career, you can focus on what balance may look like for you. Creating a vision board can be helpful to remind yourself of the sacrifices that you are making in this period of your life. Focus on your goals and celebrate the small milestones.
- **Explore support that is available to you in your workplace and university:** Your employer may be more accommodating than you realise, and so having a conversation with them about your study goals and perhaps linking it to how it may enhance your current position at work, can be helpful. There may be a variety of options available to you by your workplace, such as getting approval for annual leave, study leave, job sharing or reduced hours. You can perhaps consider getting leave that covers your assignments and exam dates, to give you more time for achieving your priorities.
- **Prioritise your commitments:** Accepting that activities may need to be re-ordered based on your priorities is an important step that allows you to organise your non-negotiables and other activities around your personal and social life.
- **Manage stress levels and burn out:** To perform at your best it is important to manage your exposure to stressful markers and take action early.
- **Work smarter, not harder:** Many students use their time spent during commutes or lunch to listen to lectures, finish readings set by their lecturers, or review notes for upcoming examinations. You may find that you have periods of breaks during your work depending on the environment you work in. Exploring your daily timetable for instance can be a great start to using your time more efficiently.
- **Maintain a healthy diet:** It is important to eat at regular intervals throughout the day to fuel your body with nutrients.
- **Exercise regularly:** Prioritising your physical health also supports your mental health. It can be useful to engage in 15-30 minutes of exercise daily.
- **Sleep:** Maintaining a regular sleep pattern ensures you are getting enough sleep to manage day-to-day life. A regular and consistent schedule will allow you to combat any challenges and promote productivity within your day.

Work and my studies

Having a balanced life is essential in achieving greatness and maximising your potential. While at university, you may feel overwhelmed trying to manage your studies, personal life inclusive of family and maintaining friendships as well as sustaining employment. It is important to plan ahead and prioritise your tasks to avoid becoming overwhelmed and burnt out. Try out the strategies below to help you achieve a healthy work-life balance.

- **Find your support group.** This could be a group of friends who are going through the same challenges as you are, or your family who can cheer you on and keep you accountable to your commitments.
- **Take breaks for yourself.** Between the rush of work and university ensure you take time out to do the things that you enjoy to relax and recharge your energy.
- **Seek support.** If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed at work, reach out to your manager or supervisor and explain where you are at, and ask if there are support services available at your work.
- **Devise a flexible schedule allowing time for study,** extra-curricular and social activities and any of your other commitments or interests. A good balance will mean you have enough time to study, get a good night's sleep and it may even help you save money.
- **Focus on one thing at a time and prioritise your tasks.** Don't overwhelm yourself by worrying about everything. When you're studying, give all your attention to your work. When you're at work or out having fun, forget about study.

- **Planning.** Using a planner to visualise the commitments you have during the week, and help you plan and schedule studying, finishing off your assignments or your social life commitments. This also allows you to see the pockets of spare time that are available that you can use to do things you enjoy. Many students find it helpful to use a [Weekly Planner](#) and [Daily Planner](#) to assist in structuring their schedule and studies.
- Check out Western Sydney University's **study resources** to help you balance University and work: [Are you coping with study?](#)
- **Rewards.** Having a reward system in place that is best suited for you can keep you on track to achieving the things that you set out to do. For instance, you could have Sunday off if you commit to your lectures and assignments during the week. Having other smaller rewards can keep you motivated between smaller tasks that you need to complete.
- **Journaling.** Take a few minutes from your day and write down the feelings and thoughts you've experienced during the day and allow your mind to decant the things that weigh you down.
- **Exercise.** You may be short on time, however, try incorporating movement into your daily routine. Perhaps taking the longer route walking to class or running to the train station on your way home.
- **Connect with social media groups** who offer personal experiences to help others going through the same challenges.

WSU resources:

You may find additional advice and tools in this WSU [article](#) about time management.

- **[Study, Money and Life Skills](#)**.

The [Counselling Service](#) has developed some useful resources with relation to time management, stress, exam anxiety, perfectionism and maximising memory.

If you are experiencing barriers that may affect your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- **WSU [Counselling Service](#)**.

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30 pm. Alternatively, or email counselling@westernsydney.edu.au

- **WSU [Disability Service](#)**.

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- **WSU [Welfare Service](#)**.

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress

management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

- **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

- **[MATES:](#)**

Mentoring and Transition Equal success is a program that links trained and experienced student mentors with first year students who are looking for support.

- **[PASS:](#)**

Peer Assisted Study sessions is a student-centred learning program which will help you understand content of your subjects and develop study strategies to help improve your academic performance.

- **Disruption to studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious

illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdraw Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- **Leave of Absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community Support

Community resources:

- [Lifeline](#).

If you are really struggling during the night when completing assessments or feel most alone, contact [Lifeline](#) (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14** or,

Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back!

- **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Beyond Blue**

[Be you – beyond blue](#): General information about building resilience and facing adversity.

- **[MyCompass](#)**

This free online treatment program has been developed by the Black Dog Institute to help people better self-manage mild-to-moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress.

Resources

- [Podcasts](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Apps](#)

Podcasts

'3 Myths About Work-Life Balance & 5 Ways to Really Create It.'

This podcast episode explores the reasons behind feelings of stress and anxiety, related to work pressures. The need for a healthy balance between work and ones personal life is highlighted to live a satisfying life.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/71o84ql5PSG4gUQJuUdpyw>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/no/podcast/3-myths-about-work-life-balance-5-ways-to-really-create-it/id1450994021?i=1000560981626>

'Maintaining a Healthy Work-Life Balance'

This podcast episode discusses the need to nurture and prioritise areas of your life to reach great success and optimal health and wellbeing.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0FZVyCFKWrVou1q21hTni8>

Videos

How to make your work-life balance work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdpIKXLLYYM>

3 rules for better work-life balance | The Way We Work, a TED series

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4c_xYLwOx-g

Tips for finding balance as a student

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b71vZBCyxc>

Apps

- **[Talk Campus](#)**: There is a 24/7 support app called TalkCampus, which is free and available to download on iOS devices (App Store) and android devices (Google Play). WSU students can connect and talk with other students about anything.
- **[Headspace](#)** offers resources and services for younger people to better understand and manage their life stresses. Support can be found through teleweb or face-to-face at their centres across the nation.
- **[Google Callendar](#)**: Google Calendar is a time management and scheduling calendar service, that allows you to schedule meetings, events and get reminders about upcoming activities. This can be synced with multiple devices.
- **[Reminders](#)**: Available on *IOS & iPad* Price: FREE. Reminders is an amazing productivity apps that let you create your own personalized to-do list. You can create reminders with subtasks and attachments, and set alerts based on time and location.
- **[Trello](#)**: A visual tool that allows you to organise any projects you are working on through boards. You can have access to lists for tasks, to-do lists and tasks you're currently doing.
- **[Flora](#)**: A productivity app that helps you build positive, life changing habits and clearing your to-do list all while staying away from distractions that come from using your phone.
- **[Calm](#)**: Offers guided meditation app to help reduce stress and anxiety to enhance wellbeing. Several programs are available that help you deal with feelings, listen to calming nature sounds, stories to become more increasingly mindful.

Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

Please find the attached PDF document [here](#).

Resources:

[How to balance a job and study at university](#)

[WSU – Balancing your workload and social life](#)

[It's not just you. Balancing work and studying is getting harder in Australia](#)

[Work-Life Balance: Weighing the Importance of Work-Family and Work-Health Balance](#)

[Striking a Balance between Work and Play: The Effects of Work-Life Interference and Burnout on Faculty](#)

[Turnover Intentions and Career Satisfaction](#)

[Six Tips for Balancing Work and Study](#)