Setting goals

How to

Goals only come into fruition when you work on them! The first step is to think of all the goals you have for all domains of life, and then identify a handful that you want to work on. You can identify things that you want to achieve in the short- term (the next few hours or days), and the long-term (the next three months, by the end of this year).

Define

Identifying goals is not as simple as saying 'I want to raise my grade point average', 'I want to read more' or 'I want to get a job after I finish my studies'. To really define a goal, you need to make it SMART:

S	Specific	Think about the 5 *W*s (who, what, where, when and why)
M	Measurable	How will you know you've achieved the goal?
A	Attainable	Is the goal feasible?
R	Realistic	Is the goal stretching you, but not so much that you cannot reach it?
T	Time-bound	What is the exact deadline?

Example

Simple Goal	SMART Goal
I want to read more	By this time next year I will have read one book every month, for a total of twelve books a year.
I want a new job	By December this year I will have completed my Senior First Aid course and have applied for at least five jobs to work in after-school care.
I want to finish my report assignment	By April 21st I will have completed a 3,000 word report assignment, using APA referencing, based on five commercial reports and five government reports.
I want to do better in my tutorials	By next week's tutorial I will have completed my readings, written notes including questions, and had a brief study group with two classmates to discuss and brainstorm the topic before attending the tutorial.

Break it down

After you clearly articulate your goal, make it SMART, and write it down, it's time to chunk it into manageable tasks. Let's take the report assignment example from above:

SMART Goal	Steps to achieve it
By April 21st I will have completed a 3,000-word report assignment, using APA referencing, based on five commercial reports and five government reports.	→ Research (Start around 2-3 months before due date) → Drafting (Start around 21 days before due date) → Editing/Proofreading (Start around ten days before due date) → Submission (Due Date)

Make an action plan

An action plan is a list of all the tasks required to complete the goal. Remember, a list is nothing until you start making your way through it! And as you do, your ideas may change and so, too, your action plan. This is a part of study and work life. What you need to do is learn how to adapt as you go. It's a good idea to refer to your action plan when scheduling study time daily and weekly. This will keep you on track to complete on time.

Here's what an action plan could look like for the assignment example used above:

1. Search commercial business websites for annual reports; locate five recent reports from five companies
2. Search Library databases for five government reports on the topic
3. Read, analyse, and take notes on commercial reports
4. Read, analyse, and take notes on five government reports
5. Brainstorm and mindmap appraisal/assessment key points
6. Prepare report outline with headings
7. Add dot points for content to address each section of the report
8. Allocate time to do draft writing (500 words over six days)
9. Review first draft
10. Complete second draft with APA referencing ten days before deadline then submit to Studiosity for feedback and Turnitin for an originality check (both available via vUWS, although some units may not enable the use of Turnitin for draft submissions)
11. Read through and address Studiosity feedback recommendations
12. Complete final proofread of third draft
13. Submit through Turnitin before deadline

You can also use the Study Smart Assignment Calculator tool to help you prepare an action plan for completing individual assignments. Just enter your assignment due date and the Assignment Calculator will break down your assignment into steps and tell you how much time you should allocate to each step. It will also link you to the Study Smart resources that will help you accomplish each step. You can then use the 'Print' function in your browser to print or save a PDF of your customized assignment plan to keep you on track.