My Academic Student Survival Guide

Starting university for the first time can be a daunting experience; everything is new and a little bit scary. However, you will not be alone in feeling this way and hopefully this Survival Guide will help to put your mind at ease. This guide is separated into 12 sections which each aim to provide you with the basic information needed to establish yourself as an academic student.

Module Information

On your timetable you will be able to see which modules you are taking in the year. Each module will have its own Module Handbook which outlines module schedule, recommended reading and assessment information. You are expected to read this handbook prior to beginning the module. Handbooks can be found on the university intranet site Blackboard.

Blackboard

This is the internal university site used by staff and students alike to access key information about modules and programmes. Make sure you check Blackboard regularly for staff announcements, key dates, module information and reference guides.

Emails

When you start university you will be given a personal student email address which staff will use to contact you if necessary. It is important to keep checking this account for information.

Personal Tutors

Each student will have a Personal Tutor which you will be able to contact if you need pastoral support of any kind.

Lectures

Lectures are formal information sessions which usually last 50 minutes and typically take place in the main lecture theatres (both on Level one of the David Chiddick Building). Lectures normally contain all of the students taking your degree and perhaps even other students taking the same module but for a different degree. Your module lecturer will present to you information about the chosen subject and you are expected to attend, listen and take notes at your discretion. It is important you turn up to lectures on time and with the appropriate resources, i.e. paper, pen, lecture slides (if pre-released). Every lecturer will

have their own lecturing style and expectations of you, make sure you ask questions if there is anything you don't understand.

Seminars

These are more informal sessions which take place in smaller seminar rooms typically within the David Chiddick Building. Seminars on average will have 18-22 students in the class and these sessions maybe 50 minutes in length or longer depending on the module set-up. Seminars are designed to foster discussion and develop learning and understanding of key topics. You will be expected to prepare work for each seminar and give feedback or present information on a certain subject. Preparation varies between readings, research, writing presentations, creating posters to name just a few. You are expected to talk in groups and voice your opinions within seminars; the emphasis is on student contribution. Don't worry if you are shy or don't like talking in big groups, as soon as you make friends and meet the tutors you will feel more comfortable.

Workshops/Demonstrations/Practical Sessions

Lectures and seminars are not the only type of learning experiences you will take part in. Other classes might be within the IT Suites to assist your learning with different computer packages. You may be required to do some field research and leave campus to collect research. Sometimes you may be expected to upload work and participate in virtual learning experiences over the internet. Your tutor will always explain to you what you need to do for different sessions.

Group Work

Group work is a vital part of the student experience and you will have to work with peers on many different projects during your time at university. It is important to listen to others, share ideas and take on a variety of roles within modules. Being able to assist others and progress yourself is an essential part of university life and the real-world after graduation.

Assessment

As part of each module you will be expected to complete an assessment process in order for the staff to check how you are progressing and view your level of understanding for the module. Assessments can come in a variety of forms, see some options below:

- Written assessment – report or essay
- Presentations

- Blogs
- Virtual conferences
- Group work

Referencing

Referencing is a term used to describe the way an academic has to reference certain academic sources they have used in their written work such as books, journal articles, websites and reports. As a student you are expected to use references within your assessments and you must use the Harvard Referencing Style, there is an app you can download from the library website as well as a PDF version available to use.

External Visits

At some point within your time at university you will attend an external visit or field trip. These are organised by staff as a way to show you real-life experiences of different situations. Often field trips are valuable ways to explain complex theory in a more practical manner. External visits are enjoyable parts of the course and will allow you to further your understanding of particular subject areas.

Q & A

Should I prepare work for seminars?

Yes, you will need to follow your tutor's guidance and information within the Module Handbook about what reading or other preparation is necessary.

Am I allowed to contact or come and see a member of staff outside of contact hours?

Yes, staff will be happy for students to come and see them in their offices. It is a good idea to email ahead to book an appointment, the majority of academic staff offices are based on the second and third floor of the David Chiddick Building.

Do I have to let my tutor know if I can't make a lecture/seminar/trip?

It is very important that you email lbsattendance@lincoln.ac.uk and contact your tutor ahead of a seminar or lecture that you cannot attend and explain and provide a reason for non-attendance. If you do not attend without notification you will be marked on the register as absent. Continuous absence will require further investigation and students will be asked to see staff to explain their non-attendance.

What if I am having personal problems and can't make the assignment deadline?

You need to inform your Personal Tutor of these reasons before the assignment deadline and also make your module tutor aware of this if you feel comfortable to do so. Extensions will be granted to students who have genuine reasons for not being able to meet assignment deadlines.

I don't understand referencing, how can I learn how to do it?

If you have already read the Harvard Referencing Guide that the library provides and still do not understand it you can ask the librarian or a member of staff for one-on-one help.

When I email a member of staff when should I expect to get a reply?

Staff are very busy people but will always try and get back to you asap, staff will strive to reply to a student within two working days however this is not always possible so please be patient. If the enquiry is urgent you should seek to find that member of staff or phone them instead.

When will I get assessment feedback and marks back?

Assessment feedback will typically be provided three weeks after the assessment deadline.

Where do I pick up my assessment feedback from?

If you handed in a hard-copy of your work, feedback should be collected from the Reception Desk which is on the ground floor of the David Chiddick Building. However, you may have submitted your work electronically via the software Turnitin and you would need to log back into this programme to view your marks and feedback electronically via the Grade Centre. It is very important to read through both the general comments and in-text notes within your assignment, staff go to great lengths to provide useful feedback for you to learn from and progress.

How do I know what to write in my report/essay?

Each Module Handbook will have a marks criterion within it which typically shows you what topics to investigate and how the marks are awarded. If you are still unclear on this make sure you ask your tutor.

What does it mean when a tutor asks you to 'critically analyse' something?

Critically analyse does not mean to criticise something, it means to research the strengths and weaknesses of the thing in question using academic research to support your claims. When you analyse something you need to understand, explain and investigate it, and to do that in a critical way is all about supporting what you say with theory/academic references.

What if I hand my assignment in late?

You must make every attempt to hand your work in on time; it is your responsibility to ensure work submitted electronically or handed in at the office is received before the deadline is up. If you do submit a piece of work late, for every day it is late a 10 mark penalty deduction will be taken from your overall mark.

I think I have failed a module, what do I need to do now?

If you have attended lecturers and seminars and read the Module Handbook you shouldn't need to worry about this question. But in the case of a failed assessment you will be contacted by your departmental administrator or your tutor with regards to a re-sit. Re-sits usually take place in August and if you pass this your mark will be capped at 40%.

What do the grades mean?

A First grade is the best you can get at university and this is rewarded to pieces of work which achieve 70% or more. An Upper-Class Second (2:1) is a mark when you score 60% or more, a Lower-Class Second (2:2) is for work at 50% or more and a Third Classification is for work at 40% or more. A failed submission is graded at 39% or below. A short summary is listed here:

First	70% + Awesome
Upper Second 2:1	60%-69% Good to very good
Lower Second 2:2	50%-59% Average
Third	40%-49% Shaky
Fail	39% or below - Improvement necessary