



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

***Adapting Well: how to
manage and make the
most of your student
experience***

***A self- study resource
for all students***



Welcome

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3. My own approaches to studying and learning

My own approaches to studying and learning

Before downloading the word document ‘**my own approaches to studying and learning**’, think through the following statements about studying and academic work:

- (i) The longer you study the better your results**
- (ii) I’m only a student so I’m not expected to critically evaluate yet**
- (iii) Knowledge is certain and fixed**
- (iv) Finding something difficult is a sign you’re not good at it**

Read through the next few slides for an insight into what current research tells us about 4 these statements

**The longer you study the better your
results (?)**

The longer you study the better your results?

Not necessarily

Effective learning depends on **how** you study not *how long* you study for

You **do need to put time into your studies**, and students can often underestimate the time needed for assignments, but length of time alone does not guarantee results*. In a similar way, students can also put **too much** time into their studies and forget about the importance of achieving a work/life balance.

*Chew, 2010



What is effective learning then?

The general principal that underpins all effective learning strategies is moving from passive to **active** behaviour, so for example, instead of just reading, you would use a reading technique such as **SQ3R** (<http://www.studygs.net/texred2.htm>)

Below are two helpful guides on ‘**what works**’ when it comes to studying and learning*:

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/dunlosky.pdf>

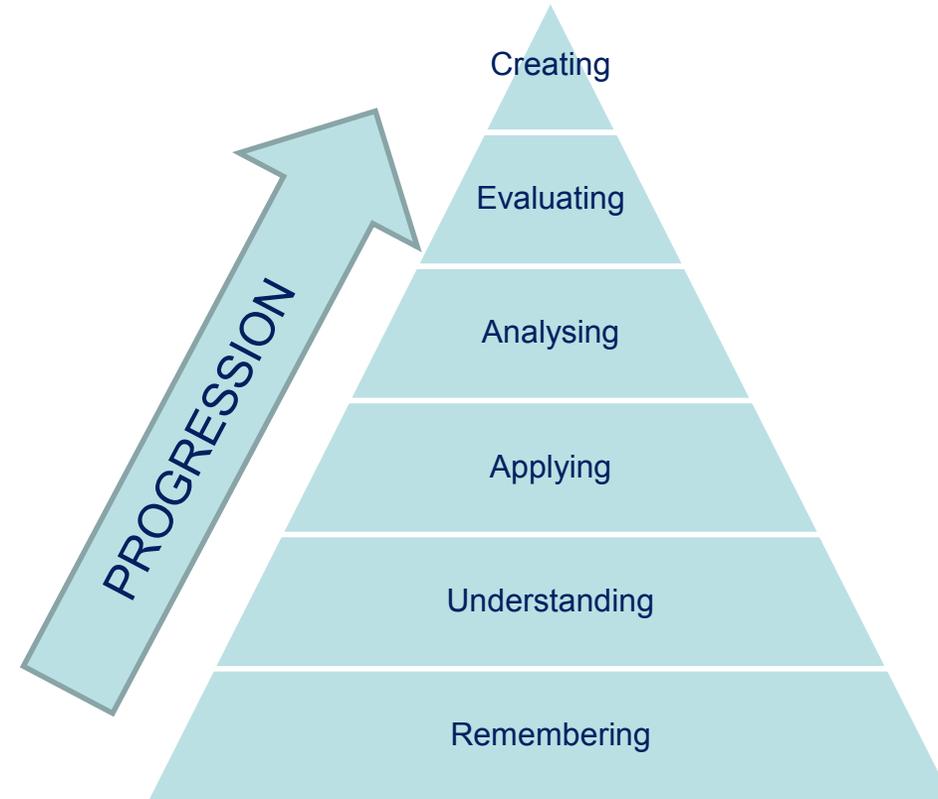
https://info.maths.ed.ac.uk/assets/files/LandT/what_works_what_doesnt.pdf

* (Dunlosky, 2013 and Dunlosky et. al 2013)

**I'm only a student so I'm not expected to
critically evaluate yet (?)**

I'm only a student so I'm not expected to critically evaluate yet (?)

Whilst *'fact'* learning may form an important *first* step in *some* subjects, it does not guarantee the level of learning and higher processing that you need to demonstrate as a university student. Analysing and evaluating are part of your job as a student.



Bloom B, S. (ed.) (1956)

Knowledge is fixed and certain (?)

Knowledge is fixed and certain (?)

Knowledge is **dynamic** i.e. changing.

Think about what we used to believe e.g. that the earth was the centre of the solar system (geocentric model). This was replaced with new knowledge i.e. the heliocentric model.

Knowledge in your own particular field of study is always **developing** and subject to **challenge**. As you progress through your studies you will be expected to play your **own role** in challenging and developing current knowledge.

Knowledge is fixed and certain (?)

Research shows that students who possess a *naïve epistemology* (believing that knowledge is fixed and certain) tend to achieve lower marks in assignments as this type of belief is “associated with a tendency to draw far-reaching conclusions from insufficient information”*

Whereas good academic work provides enough evidence for the knowledge claims it makes. Remember, in some assignments you are not being expected to come up with a definitive answer. Instead you are being asked for your own evaluation of a complex and contested area in which there is often not enough established evidence to ‘prove’ something one way or another.

* Niemen, J., Lindblom-Yanne, S., Lonka, K. (2004)

Knowledge is fixed and certain (?)

Thinking that there is always a 'right' or a 'wrong' answer is known as dualism and very often the complex questions you are asked to explore as a student cannot be answered in this dualistic way. As you progress through your studies you will be encouraged to move from a **reproducing orientation** to a **meaning orientation** as this table* shows.

The **deep approach** to learning on the right hand side has been shown to correlate to “a **high quality of learning outcomes** and the surface approach to qualitatively inferior results”**

Component	Reproducing orientation	Meaning orientation
Approach to learning	Surface approach	Deep approach
Conception of learning	Intake of knowledge	Construction of knowledge
Conceptions of knowledge	Dualism	Relativism
Regulations of learning	External regulation or lack of regulation	Self-regulation

**Finding something difficult is a sign
you're not good at it (?)**

Finding something difficult is a sign you're not good at it (?)

Research* shows that believing this statement can limit your learning and progress.

A **fixed mindset** of 'I'm not good at this *because* I find it difficult' limits your potential for success.

A **growth mindset** views problems and difficulties as an inherent part of learning something and therefore **increases your potential for success** as difficulty is not seen negatively

Learners praised for their effort and approach fare better than learners praised for being 'good at something' as the former group treat difficulty as to be expected and the latter as a sign that they aren't doing well anymore; which is not the case.

For more information on mindsets and learning watch: Carol Dweck's Ted Talk ['The power of yet'](#)

* Dweck, C.S. (2006)

Finding something difficult is a sign you're not good at it (?)

'Mistakes' have the potential to be turned into learning achievements:

“Research has shown that **mistakes are important opportunities for learning** and growth, but students routinely regard mistakes as indicators of their own low ability. When students think about why something is wrong, new synaptic connections are sparked that cause the brain to grow. . . [this] suggests that [we] should **value mistakes** and move from viewing them as learning failures”. *

“. . . in formal education, we may think that fear and mistakes are bad and should be avoided, but I am suggesting that **a 'mistake rich' environment is preferable**. It produces a better education and leads to more insight and more truth. Mistakes are expected and become information. **It is a cause for worry if a student does not make any mistakes**"**

*Boaler, 2013 p. 149

**Zull, 2012, p. 73

My own approaches to studying and learning scale

Download the word document '**my own approaches to studying and learning**' and complete the 10 questions that ask you about types of student behaviour that can be ineffective/stress inducing and potentially unhealthy.

See the guidance document for information on how you can adopt more effective and productive approaches to studying. For more support please log on to the IAD webpages:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development>