

TOP TIPS FOR STUDENTS ENGAGING WITH RESPONSIVE BLENDED LEARNING

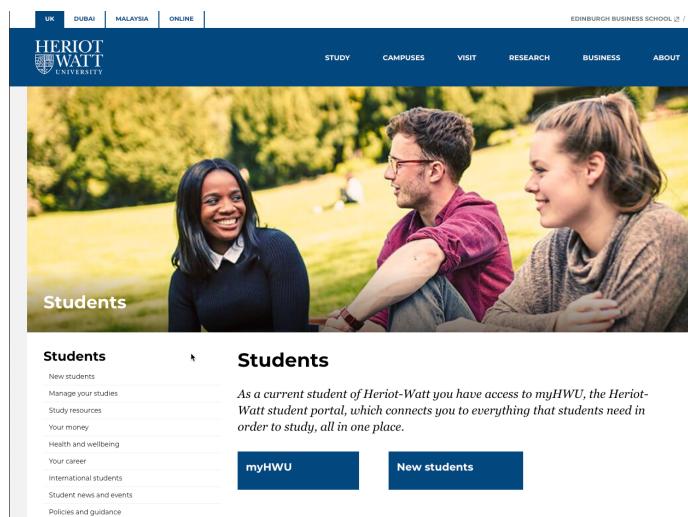
Heriot-Watt's *Responsive Blended Learning* (RBL) approach means that you will be able to learn, interact and collaborate with your classmates, whether you are on campus or studying at a distance. Adapting to this new approach to learning may feel a bit daunting at first. However, there's a wealth of support available to help you succeed in your studies. These Top Tips will help you get started and build your confidence in studying through RBL.

These tips outline some ways to make the most of learning in Responsive Blended Learning mode.

- 1. Be kind to yourself and help one another.** This is an unsettling time for students, and staff. Give yourself time to adapt to a new learning environment and modes of learning. Depending on circumstances you may engage in some learning on-campus and some online. Be proactive with communicating with your course mates and university friends. Set up course communication groups for offline chat and engagement or use shared documents and course discussion boards to share notes and ideas. Form small virtual study or reading groups and work through online materials together. And don't forget to ask questions if you're unsure of anything.
 - 2. Make sure you're 'online ready'.** If there is any reason why you will find it difficult to engage in online learning (e.g. poor WiFi connection, don't have a digital device, don't have the right software, need accessibility support) notify your lecturer in case alternative arrangements can be put in place.
 - 3. Familiarize yourself with the virtual learning environment (VLE).** Our VLE is called Vision. It is accessed through the student portal. You may also receive specific instructions from your course team on where to find course-related information.
 - 4. Find out what is expected of you as a learner** in the online environment and familiarise yourself with any assessment requirements, especially if these have had to change with the move to blended learning. If you're unclear on any of the requirements, check in with your lecturer as soon as you can.
 - 5. Set up a work space that you can use for studying.** This should be a comfortable, quiet space, free of distractions but with good internet connection. A desk or a table can be much more comfortable in the long term than a bed or a sofa. You may wish to have home comforts (water, tea, sweets, fruit, tissues) at arm's length so you're able to settle in and stay motivated. Remember to take regular breaks away from your screen and your studies to rest, relax, eat, exercise and get outdoors if you can.
 - 6. Build a routine.** Don't think of the time at home as time off; see it as a normal day at university. Create a timetable for your day. Remember to include meals, study breaks and any lecture / seminar times or other activities you need to participate in. Remember to check any office-hours or timetabled sessions on your course(s) and any deadlines. You may wish to use Outlook calendar to keep track of your activities. There are many time management techniques, so find one which works for you.
 - 7. Make use of online communication methods such as live chat and discussion boards.** These are an excellent way to immerse yourself in the course and they will make the learning experience more active and more engaging for you and for the lecturer. Ask questions, comment on what others are saying, and develop the conversations. You will communicate in different ways on various online formats (email, discussion boards, social media, online seminars). Be professional and appropriate, but don't be afraid to project your personality and show that you are a real person.
 - 8. Look for online reading material in the library.** Through the online library, you'll have access to e-books, e-journals and other materials to help you complete your course including assignments. You can also have online support from the team of Academic Support Librarians. If you don't know how to access library material online ask your lecturer or contact IHelp@hw.ac.uk
 - 9. Familiarise yourself with what support services are available virtually and on campus (when available).** You can access wellbeing support, disability services, counselling etc. through the student portal.
 - 10. Be patient.** Give yourself (and your lecturers) time to adapt to the new learning environment and get to know your classmates. Over time you will develop deeper knowledge and understanding of your subject, confidence to apply that in the real world and also build connections as part of the Heriot-Watt global learning community.
- Blended learning does not mean learning alone. There is support here for you. Keep in touch with your course and ask for help when you need it. Staff are always happy to hear from you and will continue to support you in your learning.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

The Students section on the HW website includes resources for new students, managing your studies and health and wellbeing. <https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/students>



Watt About Your Wellbeing podcast is a brand new podcast for Heriot-Watt students. Get tips on how to practise mindfulness, manage stress and anxiety, tips for successful studying, and many other topics. Listen on Spotify or Apple podcasts.

Vital communications from the University are sent to your Heriot-Watt email address. It is important that you check this at least once per day.

Your course lecturer is your main point of contact and your course page on the VLE (Vision) provides you with course-related information and support.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Use the right channels to solve your problems. Is it something you can solve yourself, perhaps with a look on Google or YouTube? Or if your reading link is broken, try searching for the journal article yourself by using the library search engine (Discovery). If you can't solve the problem, then use the right channels to access help and support. This will be signposted for you in your course / the student portal. Contacting the correct person will help you get your problem solved more quickly.

If you require IT support, are having difficulty accessing online Library resources or help from the Library or the Effective Learning Service, then contact IHelp@hw.ac.uk

If it is course related, then contact your course leader via the contact details provided on your course site on the VLE (Vision).

FURTHER RESOURCES

Academic Study Skills guide (includes contact details for the Heriot-Watt Effective Learning Advisers) <https://isguides.hw.ac.uk/academicstudyskills>

Free access to Microsoft Office for Heriot-Watt Students <https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/is/it-essentials/office-365.htm>

Getting started with online learning <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/get-started-online-learning/content-section-overview?active-tab=description-tab>

Heriot-Watt Advice Hub <https://www.hwunion.com/advice-hub>

Heriot-Watt Student portal <https://portal.hw.ac.uk>

Heriot-Watt Power Hours <https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/is/skills-development/power-hours.htm>

Preparing to learn online at university <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/preparing-to-learn-online-at-university>

Time management advice <https://isguides.hw.ac.uk/academicstudyskills/timemanagement>

ADAPTED FROM

'10 Points to Remember when Learning Online' by the Union of Students in Ireland, in partnership with the National Forum www.teachingandlearning.ie and Twitter thread by @katesymons2



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