ACADEMIC HELP PACKAGE

HOW TO GET BACK ON TRACK

Prepared by the University of Toronto Engineering First Year Office
ARE YOU EXPERIENCING ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES?

You're not alone! Here is a flowchart of questions you need to ask yourself. It is important to go over the damage and do an academic risk assessment of your situation.

What effect does it have?

Check the damage by looking through your previous scores. Also consider if this was a quiz, assignment, midterm or project and look at how much it is all worth. Weigh your pros and cons and check to see if that score is a deal breaker. A deal breaker would be if your overall term average will fall below 60% or if your average in this course will fall below 50%. Consider taking a look at the promotion regulations and look at where you stand.

a. Write it all down - your options, the pros and cons etc
b. Assess your grades and perform calculations of the scores you need.

Use the grade assessment worksheet
I can do better, what do I need to do?

1. I need to manage my time better or learn to study more effectively!
   - Set up an appointment with a Learning Strategist: uoft.me/EngAdvisingPortal
   - Visit the Academic Success Centre: www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc

2. I need to find a study group!
   - Attend GEARS: uoft.me/gears

3. I don’t have enough time to do everything I need to do!
   - Scale back on co-curricular commitments, reduce hours for your part-time job

4. I need help in my courses!
   - Get help from your TAs and professors; attend Office Hours and ask questions
   - Get a tutor: tutors.skule.ca (this may be a bit costly)
I don't think I can pass, what are my options?

Deadline to drop a course, transfer to part-time studies, or withdraw from the Fall term: **November 8, 2021**

**Reduce course load**
- You can drop 1 course. You will not get any fees refunded, and will need to also pay for a summer course to catch up.
- Dropping a course is possible with every course this Fall but may not be possible for every course in the Winter semester.

**Transfer to part-time studies**
- In most cases, you will need to complete your first year of studies over two full academic years.
- Consider funding if you are receiving any. If you are an international student, consider the stipulations on your study visa.

**If you've decided engineering may not be for you, transfer to a different campus/faculty at U of T**
- Transfer to Faculty of Arts & Science for admission in January
  - See someone in the First Year Office well before the deadline.
- Transfer to part-time and apply for admission to Arts & Science for September
  - Marks earned in Engineering will be used for admission.
- Apply for admission to Arts & Science or another program for September, and decide in the summer
  - Marks earned in Engineering will be used for admission. Apply for Internal Transfers to other faculties at www.future.utoronto.ca/apply
If you are having difficulty with lecture material....

Be sure to ask your instructor for assistance before or after lecture, if possible. Otherwise, make use of the instructor’s office/drop-in hours to go over any lecture material to receive clarification. You can also use the lecture videos posted on Quercus to go over concepts that you’re struggling with.

If you are having trouble acquiring all the information taught in lecture...

Learn to use good note-taking strategies. Explore the Better note-taking resources from the Academic Success Centre (ASC), including information about the Cornell Note-Taking Method: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/better-note-taking/. Also, consider attending an Academic Success Centre (ASC) Lecture on Note-Taking (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/). You can set up a virtual appointment with a learning skills strategist through the Advising Portal: uoft.me/EngAdvisingPortal

If you are having trouble with your homework or problem sets....

Again, your instructor is a great resource. In addition, you may seek extra help from your TA. Forming a study group is always a good way to work together with your peers to discuss homework and problem sets. The Faculty has arranged Guided Engineering Academic Review Sessions where you can get help from peer mentors, and the schedule is available at http://uoft.me/gears.

If you are having trouble with your homework or problem sets in linear algebra or calculus....

Make use of the drop-in hours offered by the math teaching team available through your math course Quercus pages. These drop-in hours allow you to ask questions and clarify concepts. You can also seek help from peers in a GEARS session, speak to your math TAs for extra help, and read the Math Study Skills pages (created by UTSC) here: https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/mslc/first-year-students.
If you feel you are just not grasping the course material when you study...

You may need a tutor in a particular course. Check out the Engineering Society’s Tutor Exchange at: http://tutors.skule.ca Tutors are upper-year or graduate students that are strong in a particular area. Each tutor will have a list of courses next to their name for which they provide tutoring. The Engineering Society only posts this list, they do not monitor how much each tutor charges. Please be sure to negotiate a fair rate with the tutor, directly.

If you are having difficulty with managing your time for the engineering course load....

Use the time management assignment resources from your APS100 Orientation to Engineering course, and from the Time Management section of the First Year Hub. Also, consider attending a Time Management lecture workshop at ASC https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/, or you can find academic help workshops in the clnx.utoronto.ca events listings.

If you are overwhelmed with your engineering courses and/or your high school study habits are not working for you....

All of the above tips still apply. However, there is a really good book by McGraw-Hill Publishing called The Engineering Student Survival Guide, 3rd edition. This book can be purchased from most major bookstores. It is also available to borrow from the Engineering and Computer Science Library. Additionally, the First Year Hub has great resources on time management and learning strategies.

The First Year Office is Here to Support You!

The list and flowcharts above outline the most common options, but we encourage you to connect with your advisor as soon as possible through the advising portal to talk about what would be best for your unique situation. We’ll figure things out together. Connect with us for questions and additional support: firstyear@engineering.utoronto.ca, 416-978-4625, http://uoft.me/engfirstyear
Always do the following when starting a new course: Read the course syllabus carefully. Find out how to get in touch with your instructor (usually on the course syllabus). Mark important dates and deadlines on your calendar and login to Quercus and familiarize yourself with the course website.

Do your homework as it is assigned. Problem sets are one of the best ways to prepare well for tests and exams. You should always devote the time to learn how to do the problem rather than just getting to the final answer. Knowing how to do the problems effectively as you go along will mean that you only need to review for your tests and exams.

Use your textbook. Read the table of contents and the preface of the book early on. Always skim the assigned reading before and again after lectures. Look for helpful diagrams. Correlate your lecture to the text, and pick out the important points from each section. Find the problems that apply to the concepts focused on in lecture, and work through them.

*Always* go to lectures and tutorials. It is better to get the information you need first hand. This also gives you the opportunity to ask questions right in class, and get your answers right away. You will be able to understand your notes much better than someone else’s. It is always easier to fill in the blanks in your own notes from what you remember, than not realizing that your friends’ notes completely missed an important point.

Learn how to take good notes. If you don’t already know how to take good notes – learn. The poor note taker only writes down 11% of the important information given in lecture. On average, good note takers perform 40% better than their poor note taker counterparts. We like to recommend a modified version of the Cornell Note-taking System. You can talk this method over with someone in the First Year Office, or the Academic Success Centre (www.studentlife.utoront.ca/asc).
**TOP TEN ENGINEERING STUDY TIPS**

Form a study group for each class, and/or attend Guided Engineering Academic Review Sessions (http://uoft.me/gears). Study with classmates. Try to find a group of people with differences. By helping others, you often solidify concepts better in your own mind. And it is always nice to have someone in your group who can help you.

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**Study wisely.** Spending more time studying isn’t always better. You need to make the time you spend studying worthwhile. Spend more time practicing problems than reading through the textbook. Focus on the priorities in the course. If you get stuck on a problem, don’t work backwards from the answer. Ask someone to help you get over your sticky spot. Take breaks, and don’t study when you are too tired. Your brain needs time to recharge and to store the information you feed it.

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**Use all breaks in your schedule wisely.** Have a three hour break? Study in the library, or see if you can get your regular study group together during those breaks. Remember that the "Study Days" and "Reading Week" during the terms are not holidays – they are meant for studying.

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**Cramming is not the best way to prepare for a test.** Your brain is a little like your stomach in that it needs time to digest the information you feed it before your body can use it. Learning things a little at a time and giving yourself the chance to work with concepts and build upon them gradually is the best way to study. All cramming does is leave you feeling full and awkward.