

ACADEMIC HELP PACKAGE



HOW TO GET BACK ON TRACK



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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%.

- 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 grades assessment info in the "Academic Help" section of the First Year Hub on Quercus, or the sheet included in this package.



GRADES ASSESSMENT

*We recommend creating a version of this chart yourself using Excel or Google Sheets so that you can use it from semester to semester.

If you have an appointment with an advisor, please fill this in and bring it with you.

Example:

Course: APS 123			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned
Quiz #1	2/5	4%	1.6%
Quiz #2	4/5	4%	3.2%
Test #1	15/20	10%	7.5%
Total	n/a	18%	12.3%

Course:			
Assignment	Mark Earned	Value (% of Final Mark)	% Earned

GRADES ASSESSMENT

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I can do better, what do I need to do?



I need to manage my time better or learn to study more effectively!

Meet with with a Learning Strategist , peer mentor or attend a workshop:
uofteng.ca/learning,
uofteng.ca/engsuccess

Use resources from the Academic Success Centre:
www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc



I need to find a study group!

Attend GEARS:
uoft.me/gears

Make your own study group with peers in your classes, or join a Study Hub through Academic Success (see above)



I don't have enough time to do everything I need to do!

Scale back on co-curricular commitments, reduce hours for that part-time job - reassess your schedule!



I need help in my courses!

Get help from your TAs and professors. Attend Office Hours and ask questions!

Drop-in to the Math Learning Centre - more details under "Academic Help" in the First Year Hub

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 Winter term: **March 11, 2024**

Reduce course load



You may 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 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. Will you still be eligible? 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



Apply for admission to Arts & Science or another program for September

Marks earned in Engineering will be used for admission. Apply for Internal Transfers to other faculties at www.future.utoronto.ca/apply. Deadlines vary by program and campus, but are usually within January-April.

You may also withdraw from up to 2 courses after the withdrawal deadline. It will appear as a "LWD" on your transcript for all courses dropped using this policy, and the course will not affect your GPA or sessional average.

For more information, see: <https://uofteng.ca/lwd>

ACADEMIC SUPPORT - TIP SHEET FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

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) workshop on Note-Taking (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/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 GEARS sessions (<http://uoft.me/gears>) where you can get help from peers. engSuccess peer academic mentors are also a great resource for advice: <https://uofteng.ca/engsuccess>.

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

Make use of the drop-in hours offered by the math teaching team available through your math course Quercus pages and the First Year Hub. 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>.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT - TIP SHEET FOR 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/departments/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.

You can always visit, email or call us for questions and additional support:

GB 170, firstyear@engineering.utoronto.ca or 416-978-4625.

TOP TEN ENGINEERING STUDY TIPS

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* attend lectures and tutorials live if possible.** It is better to get the information you need first hand. This also gives you the opportunity to ask questions 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 (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>).



TOP TEN ENGINEERING STUDY TIPS

Form or join a study group (such as GEARS (<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.



Use all breaks in your schedule wisely. Have a three hour break? Use this time to study independently, or see if you can connect with your regular study group during those breaks. Remember that the "Study Days" and "Reading Week" during the terms are not holidays - they are meant for studying.



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.

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.



Study "outside the box". As a method of review, solve your problem set and textbook questions out of context. Copy them onto cue cards, shuffle them up, and then try to solve them. On a test or exam, your instructor is not going to tell you what theory or topic a question relates to. You need to learn to identify the questions and solving methods on your own.

