

Study Process

Courses at the University of New England require students to demonstrate learning and application of knowledge in several ways—exams and quizzes, clinical performance reviews, participation in class discussions, papers, and presentations. Some classes emphasize memorization of detailed medical information, some ask students to practice professional decision-making, and some emphasize critical thinking about important topics. All classes expect students to acquire a common core of information and to critically and creatively think about that information. Success requires studying and reflection, in order to have required information available for tests, for reviews, for class discussions or presentations, or for papers.

Successful studying requires three sets of skills:

- A study routine
- Strategies for taking in and processing new information
- Strategies for retaining and recalling information

Develop a study routine

Find a distraction-free study location. Turn off instant messaging, email, and cell phones (let your friends and family know when you will be available for calls). Block out study times in your planner. Spending some time every day on each course (spaced practice) is more effective than marathon study sessions. Study for about 50 minutes, and then take a 10-minute break. Schedule two or three hours of study at a time, beginning with a half hour of review of “old” material, and ending with a half-hour review of “new” material you read during the current study session.

Process new information

Set up a separate notebook for each class and keep the syllabus at the front where you can check it often. Use the PQ4R reading method to preview texts and PowerPoints before class and schedule time in your planner for reading the assigned chapters after class. Remember to build in review time: repetition is key to retention.

Take lecture or lab notes using the Cornell system. Edit and review your notes immediately after each class and spend some time reviewing the previous class notes as well. Review your lecture notes again just before the next class to understand connections between lecture topics. Emphasize comprehension at this stage of your studying.

Retain new information

Within two weeks of the beginning of a course, begin systematic review of earlier reading and notes. Skim lecture notes and assigned reading, one topic at a time. Create condensed study notes for the most important information. Condensed study notes can be flash cards, mind maps, charts and other condensed visual aids which show cause and effect, comparisons, and connections between important parts. This can be part of your half-hour review of “old” material at the start of each study session.

Review material by self-testing rather than rereading. Use the study questions you wrote to test yourself. Carry 10 new flash cards with you each day. Or, cover key labels or facts on diagrams or charts with post-it notes and quiz yourself. Use flash cards to lay out diagrams or maps of important systems. Visit labs often to study anatomy. And use CDs that come with textbooks to review materials, along with other study aids such as web sites to get alternate views of anatomy.

Use study groups and tutors to deepen your understanding, practice application of the information to decision-making situations, and sharpen your recall of details. Know your learning preferences—study strategies vary for different learning styles. Recognize when something is not working for you and meet with a Learning Specialist for new study strategies.