



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

## Helping your Student

A leaflet for partners, family or friends of  
Massey University students

### If you're a student ...

Please pass this leaflet onto your partner, family, or friends if you wish. It's designed to help them help you and to tell them a little about what you will be doing as a Massey student.

### If you're a partner, family member or friend

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Thank you for taking a few minutes to read this little leaflet. Research has shown that a very important factor in the success of distance students is good support from their partners, families and friends.

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## Some basics

University is quite daunting and sometimes you might be wondering what it is that your student is talking about. Here are a few things that are helpful to know:

- Courses are referred to as papers
- Papers usually take one semester to complete
- A semester is made up of about 12 teaching weeks plus 2 weeks of examinations
- Semester 1 starts in February, Semester 2 in July, Semester 3 (or summer school) in November
- Students are expected to spend approximately 12 hours a week on each paper they are studying
- Stream is the online learning software that students may need to use

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## What will happen to 'your' student?

**The start.** Papers officially start at the beginning of the semester, however your student may start earlier if study materials are available. So, if there are any jobs needing to be done round the house, it would be a good idea to get them done now - including setting up a study space with bookshelves to help store all the materials you're going to get and all the books that they'll need to have regular access to.

We would suggest that you encourage your student to begin as soon as they receive their study materials. It is amazing how quickly the time goes by and their first assignment will be due.

**Ongoing Assessments.** As well as all of the reading that your student will need to do, they'll also need to complete a series of assessments.



Assessments are the pieces of work that are marked by the university and contribute towards your student's final grade.

They could include:

- Written assignments (essays, reports, case studies, short answer exercises)
- Online tests
- Participation in discussion forums

These assessments can be the focus of considerable stress - both in doing them and then getting them back with the marks and comments. It can be very scary, particularly for first-time students. So, your support and encouragement is essential - especially for that vital first assessment which is the biggest hurdle for any student. Check when your student's assessments are due - include these dates on your calendar and be aware of any signs of stress or anxiety and offer your help where you can.



**Contact courses.** Some papers will require your student to come to a campus for a few days of intensive study. They usually run during the semester breaks.

There is little time for much socialising. These contact courses can be stressful for both student and those left behind. Children, house care, jobs, all may have to be organised and students re-entering exhausted from their week of academic study may find it hard to suddenly readjust to ordinary life. Partners who have been looking after children may be tired too. Understanding may be needed on all sides. ("I thought he'd just been having an easy time until I did a week myself!" - partner).

**Examinations.** At the end of some papers comes the most stressful activity of all - the final exam. Many new students won't have taken an exam for some years and may need extra T.L.C. over the revision

period. There is an exam counselling service for students who find the whole business too stressful. The results usually come out a month later - and then there is a short break (household jobs again?) until the whole process begins again!

### 3 How can you help?

There are various problems that face any student, but the most important are:



**Time.** A student completing one standard 15 credit paper will be studying for 12 to 16 hours a week. This will be an average - some students may need more, others less. It is also

important to know that the time may increase around key assessments. Some students tell us that the time should be negotiated at the outset, so partners and family know clearly what is study time and what is family time - you should decide together what is best for everyone concerned.

**Stress.** As suggested earlier, there are various stress points in the paper such as assessments where your support and encouragement will be essential. You could offer to proof read an assignment (that's not cheating) or make sure the children are out of the house at critical times. ("My husband's best way of helping was to take the kids out when I asked. Actually it was good for him too" – student).

**Seeking help.** Some students find it particularly difficult to seek help when they're stuck. Massey has a range of resources and services available for distance students. We let everyone know about them during the online orientation course, but your student may need encouragement to seek it. Remind them that we are here to help!

**Motivation.** At some point some students begin to wonder if it's all worth it. Your job will be to talk it through with them and (hopefully) put them in touch with their motivation again if indeed it's right for them to carry on. Sometimes, the right decision will be to drop out and that's fine. We don't see dropping out as failure and students are welcome to restart whenever they are ready. If your student is thinking about withdrawing, tell them to give us a call so we can discuss options with them.

Perhaps your support is best given if you see you and your student as a team. Your student may be doing the reading and writing, but your role in the team is just as vital to their success.

### 4 The pay-off

Students can study from six months to six years or longer if breaks are taken or study spread out.

The final aim is graduation. However, many students report pay-offs well before they get there in terms of their own intellectual development and satisfaction. In fact, more than two thirds of students who have career aspirations say that their studies have benefited them in vocational and financial terms.



In the end though, graduation is the goal and it represents something else too; it is your student's chance and ours to say thank you very much indeed for all the support and encouragement you have given them. We hope to see you at the graduation ceremony - the applause will be as much for you as it is for them.

If there is anything in this leaflet that raises queries in your mind or if there are any problems that arise during your student's studies that you would like to discuss, then you are welcome to talk to us about them. Write or phone us and we'll put you in touch with the right people.

Remember too that Massey University has many partners actually enrolled together: wife and husband, mother and daughter, even wife, husband and son. If you'd like more information on study for yourself, just contact us for more information.

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