Studying requires you to manage your time well, so that you are able to meet your study commitments, while keeping up other responsibilities in life. When starting their studies at TAFE, a lot of people feel the pressure of juggling family, work and other commitments, especially if they haven’t studied for a long time.

This brochure contains strategies to help you with time management, balancing study with work & family commitments and returning to study.

Managing your time
For each weekly class at TAFE, you may need at least one hour or more for private study to complete assignments, assessments, pre-reading and exam preparation. However, you may have a range of other competing commitments in your life (work, family, relationships, hobbies etc!) ... so, where does study fit in???

Often there is not enough time to do everything you want to do, so you may need to make some decisions about your time, to make sure you do complete the important things. Time management and keeping your goals in mind, will help you to decide the difference between the important and not so important things. Ask yourself:

- what needs doing (what is the important stuff)
- when will you do it by
- what must be left undone (things that aren’t really important)

Are you managing your time effectively now?
- Write out your activities in a diary over a week so that you can review how you are currently spending your time
- Are you spending most of your time on the important stuff (eg. study, family), or do you notice yourself putting off the important things for other distractions (TV, etc?)
- Keeping focused on your longer term goals can help you to get motivated to study (eg. completing my studies will lead to → completing my Diploma → and getting a great job).

See brochure: Goal Setting & Motivation
Do you have many responsibilities?
Again, use the diary (described above) to review how you and where you might make some time savings. For example, can you reduce the time you spend on housework, chores or other responsibilities? Or, how can these tasks be completed more efficiently (eg. shop less often, delegating jobs to family etc.).

Combining time management with goal setting
Setting study goals is important to ensure you are keeping up with your study commitments and can provide you with focus to help you to use your time wisely.

Study goals for the semester
Using a calendar or planner, write down the due date of all projects, assignments and exams. You should also include personal commitments on your calendar.
Break all larger tasks into small goals (research and take notes, write assignment, read over assignment) and set dates to complete each task.
Aim to complete your assignment at least a week before it is due, so you are prepared for unforeseen circumstances (eg. sickness, computer break-down). Also you can re-read it again to check it before you submit it.

Weekly study goals
Use a weekly time-table to list all routine study tasks, such as assignment preparation and studying for exams to ensure you prepare well in advance.

Daily study goals
Write out a daily list of study goals, to keep you focused. Work on your most important or urgent work first and try to stick to a time limit for the study. Keep in mind the specific study goals you want to achieve (eg. write 3 pages for assignment).
Many students find they are spending more time on assignments than they planned, especially if they haven’t studied for a while. Try to keep in mind a limit as to how much time you will give an assignment, and use this time wisely (eg. be focused and goal orientated when studying).

See brochure: Goal Setting & Motivation

Balancing work, family & study
While studying may bring you a sense of achievement and help you meet your career goals, it will also mean a time commitment. This may be a cause of resentment and sense of loss for your children, partners and close friends. Discussing these issues openly and communicating the importance of your studies is one way that a lot of students find helpful to maintain harmonious relationships.
Also, be prepared for changes required ahead of time (eg. organise your child-care well in advance) to ensure that you are happy with the care your children are receiving.
After overcoming a lack of confidence in their study ability, many mature age students find their life experiences and skills can be applied to studying, giving them a great sense of achievement in the learning process and confidence in themselves.

Do you need further help?
Social support is vital in times of added stress. Make sure you allow time to network with other TAFE students, who may be having similar experiences, and take time for other activities and friendships.
If you are struggling with your studies, or adapting to TAFE, be sure to:
• Talk with your teacher or TAFE Counsellors, who are there to help and support you with study or other life issues that are affecting your study.
See over page: “Where can I get further help” for other TAFE services which support students.

Other study tips available
• See brochure: Support Services for Students, which details free TAFE services including; the Adult Basic Education and Individual Learning Centre which provide tutoring, assignment help and classes to improve basic literacy and numeracy.
• The library can help you with research skills and has a Study Skills resource guide. Also, these are some study skills books available at the library:
  • Personal Time Management, by M.E. Haynes (658.4093/HAYN)
  • Manage Your Time, Your Work, Yourself, by M.E. Douglass & D.N. Douglass (650.1/DOUG)
For links to study skills websites and online tutorials to develop research skills, go to: www.illawarra.tafensw.edu.au/library/libindex.htm
Counsellors are also available, offering further support and guidance about study, personal issues and career direction.