



Teaching and learning at St George's with
a blended learning approach:
**Supporting students to develop as effective
lifelong and independent learners**



Overview and Aims

The transition to university studies requires that many students reconsider their learning strategies in relation to the ways they approach and process new information. It is common for students to report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of material to learn and by having to decide for themselves what to leave in and out of their revisions. They also often find that the study techniques they have used in the past, such as re-writing and highlighting notes, are not so effective in their new context. Another important barrier for many first-year students is having to adapt to the constraints and conventions of academic writing, a completely new territory for most of them. Some of the difficulties can be eased by embedding the teaching of these new competencies within the curriculum in ways that directly support subject learning, while helping with students' professional development as lifelong and independent learners.

The Basics

Helping students master new learning strategies and writing practices can be done within the curriculum in different ways. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Provide explicit guidance on how to actively engage with the course and its different resources** (synchronous and asynchronous). For example, do students need to follow a specific order, or can they jump between topics and activities? What would be an efficient method for taking notes during online lectures and seminars? What are the rules of engagement and the expectations during online seminars and workshops? How can they use learning outcomes to prioritise what to study and how to study it? You can find some suggestions on these topics in the ['Effective study and revision section'](#) of the Study + module in Canvas.
2. **Design individual and group activities that mirror what students should do when working independently.** For example, ask students to link new material to content from other sessions and other modules, or to draw tables and diagrams that synthesise the material just delivered.
3. **Plan your curriculum in ways that encourage spaced reviewing and interleaving.** This means, for example, creating a series of formative assessments that require students to do tasks on a mixture of different topics within the module (instead of each formative assessment only assessing one aspect) and that are timed so that reviewing of the same material is spaced out throughout the year (after 1 week; again after 1 month; again after 3 months; etc.). This has been shown to help with long-term memorisation and understanding. The science of spaced reviewing and interleaving is explained in the [R. Bjork and E Bjork, 2019](#) paper and you can find a good summary and examples of these strategies in this [OCR psychology teaching guide](#) PDF resource called Spaced review and interleaving: An introduction.

4. Provide **ample opportunities for self-assessment and learning from feedback**, for example, with the use of online [quizzes](#), but also designing activities that encourage students to create and share their own question banks.
5. **Use exemplars** of past assignments so that current students can learn to identify good practice. It's a good idea to use a range of different exemplars and to avoid giving a single model answer. Also, remember to request permission from students before using their work to teach others. A selection on sample papers for undergraduate exams can be found at the [Past Exam Papers site](#).
6. **Develop metacognition and a growth-mindset** (Dweck, 2006), with activities that encourage students to reflect on their self-efficacy and the identification of their development needs (an example of this type of activity can be found in the KCL resource: [critical incidents questionnaires](#)).

Academic Support

CIDE can work with you to help tailor some of the ideas in this guidance to the specific needs of your programme. You can contact one of the [lecturers in Learning Development](#) to arrange for an initial consultation. We also strongly advise that you make students aware of the [Academic Success Centre](#) at St George's University and the type of support we provide. We offer students a limited number of one-to-one appointments per year to discuss their learning. We also run weekly drop-ins for quicker enquiries and offer a diversity of self-directed learning resources in our Canvas site: [Study +](#).



Free course

You can share the free online course entitled [Academic Writing for Healthcare Students in Higher Education](#), delivered on FutureLearn, with students to complete in their own time. The course guides students through the fundamentals of academic writing including

checking grammar, reflective writing, effective reading, paraphrasing, planning assignments, and referencing, and includes practice exercises to complete. All students registered at St George's gain free access to the course and a certificate on successful completion.

References and Future Resources

Dweck, C.S., 2006. *Mindset: How we can learn to fulfil our potential*. New York, NY: Random

Bjork RA, Bjork EL. Forgetting as the friend of learning: implications for teaching and self-regulated learning. *Adv Physiol Educ*. 2019 Jun 1;43(2):164-167. doi: [10.1152/advan.00001.2019](https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00001.2019). PMID: 30998108.

[The Learn Higher website \(LearnHigher – ALDinHE\)](#) has a bank of useful resources with ideas for different activities and approaches aimed to embed learning development within the curriculum.

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