UNIVERSITÄT PASSAU

Handout for Students

Studying Online –
Let's Get Started!

The digitalisation process is processing very fast. It has shown us the time has come to explore new ways of teaching and learning, away from the lecture theatre. This is where the digital world offers opportunities for knowledge exchange and learning on the World Wide Web – in virtual lecture theatres and seminar rooms, so to speak. Nevertheless, distance learning requires more self-organisation and self-discipline of each individual learner than classroom-based learning. This handout gives you tips and ideas on how to make sure you successfully study at home.

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1 – Log in Early to Make Sure Everything Works

Before your online course starts, you will receive an e-mail with your login details and the access link. Check whether you are able to log in using this information. Take a look around the online course and familiarise yourself with the functionality offered. Find out what other functions are available, how the navigation works in the online course, what applications are needed and more. If you encounter any difficulties during a lecture, please contact the lecturer (preferably using the chat function) and describe your problem. If technical problems occur before the start of the lecture, please contact the ZIM (preferably by e-mail or telephone). Once all the technical hurdles have been cleared, you can get started!

One more tip:

Give logging on a try as early as possible. You can do this even before the official start date.
Why? Think back to your first day at university: everything is new! You don't know exactly how everything works but you still have to start learning right away. It's the same for online learning. Exploring your virtual learning space in advance will help you hit the ground running and keep stress levels low when you are using the system for real.
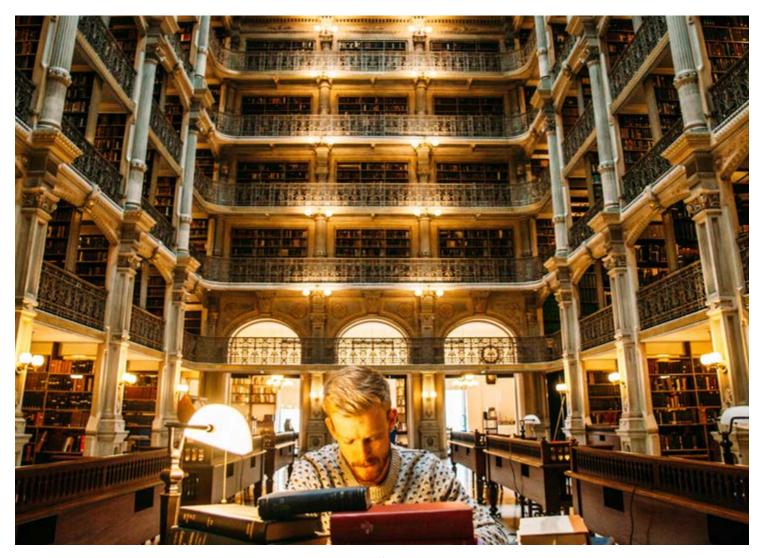
2 – Find a Quiet Place to Learn

We recommend that you think in advance about how you will set up your learning environment during the distance-learning phase. This is one of the great advantages of online learning: you get to choose your best place to study, be it on the patio, balcony or wherever you can truly focus on your work. You should also remove everything that might distract you: only keep things that you really need for learning within your reach. Obviously, this includes your PC, notebook or tablet computer, webcam and headset, but also your notepad, writing pens and so on. Asynchronous online learning offers another advantage: You can study the course when you are most receptive for it. Some people do their best learning in the morning, others in the evening or even at night. With asynchronous learning, what time you study is entirely up to you.

One more tip:

Banish your smartphone from your study area while attending online lectures. Smartphones are extremely likely to distract you at a time when you need to be fully focused on what's going on in the online lecture.

3 – Prepare Enough 'Brain Food'

It is important to keep a snack or drink close to hand during the online learning phases.

Keeping hydrated and eating a healthy snack – fresh fruit, wholegrain products or nuts – to boost your mental abilities (hence 'brain food') ensures that you can see the learning units through to their end.

4 – Plan Ahead: Make a Study Timetable (and Stick to It)

Create a learning timetable in which you set specific milestones for the entire semester. Be very specific as to what you will study when. Nevertheless, you shouldn't forget to include smaller time buffers in to your plan, just in case something takes a bit longer than planned.

The most effective way to learn is to split the seminar contents into small chunks and learn them bit by bit throughout the day (or night). Set yourself a realistic daily time limit and don't forget to take regular breaks.

Important: When researching something online, it is easy to get side-tracked on the web – before you know it, you've spent half an hour surfing the web! It is important always to return to the task in hand. Browser extensions such as 'StayFocusd' can help keep you on track.

5 – Everything is Easier in Teams: Virtual Group Learning

Set up virtual learning groups (or virtual teams) to connect with fellow students. You will quickly find out that you are not alone in your work.
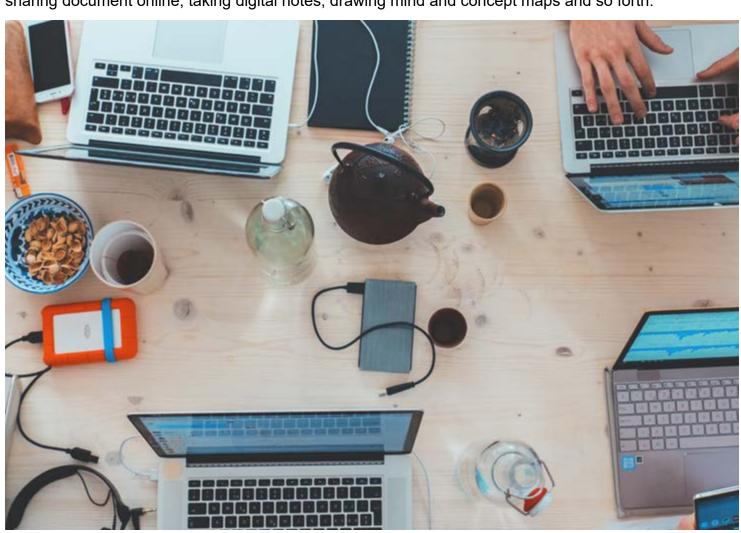
On the one hand, you will receive tips and assistance from your fellow students via the specially set up exchange forums, virtual pin boards, wikis and similar functions on the virtual learning environments Stud.IP and ILIAS. On the other hand, you can impart useful tips and assistance yourself. In addition, as a student at the University of Passau, you will be able to use Zoom, the video and web conferencing service, which allows you to hold online meetings share files, use instant messaging and group messaging in small groups. Please note that a Zoom meeting is limited to 40 minutes on the basic plan if there are more than two participants. These meetings will automatically end after 40 minutes; however, you can simply restart the meeting and continue where you left off. There are no time restrictions for one-on-one Zoom meetings.

One more tip:

As a student, you are not limited to the University's virtual learning environments in your online studies; you can, of course, use alternative digital communication and collaboration tools, e.g. for editing and sharing document online, taking digital notes, drawing mind and concept maps and so forth.
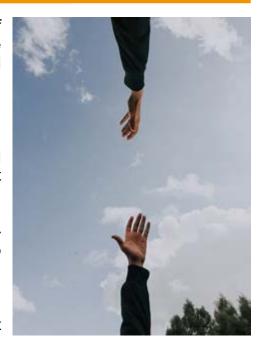
6 – Make Use of Support Offers

Our online courses already offer basic assistance in the way of special step-by-step instructions, FAQs and guides. Naturally, in the online courses your lecturers will be there to give advice and practical assistance.
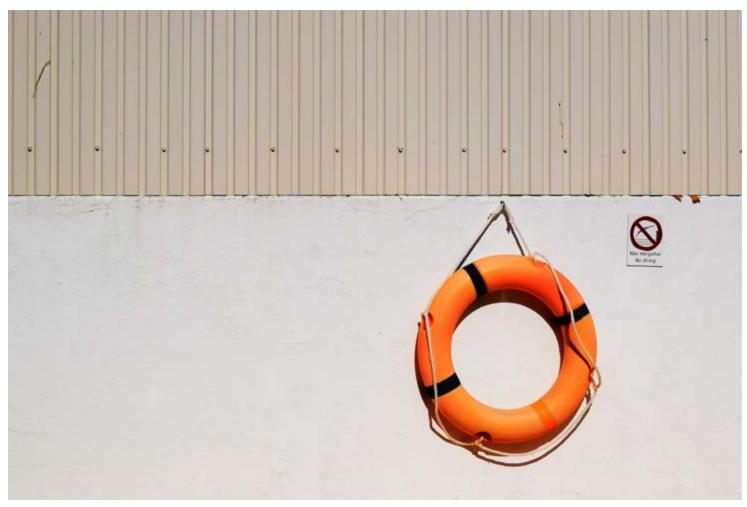
One more tip:

You can contact your lecturer in this virtual space via the forums and chat windows set up in the online courses. Furthermore, do not forget to take advantage of the regular online consultation hours.

This semester, these will be offered as webinars or video conferences, rather than traditional 'office hours'. These webinars and video conferences will be recorded, but only with your express consent.

You will then find these recorded clips directly in your online course. In combination with the other support offers, this provides a perfect opportunity to refresh your knowledge at any time.

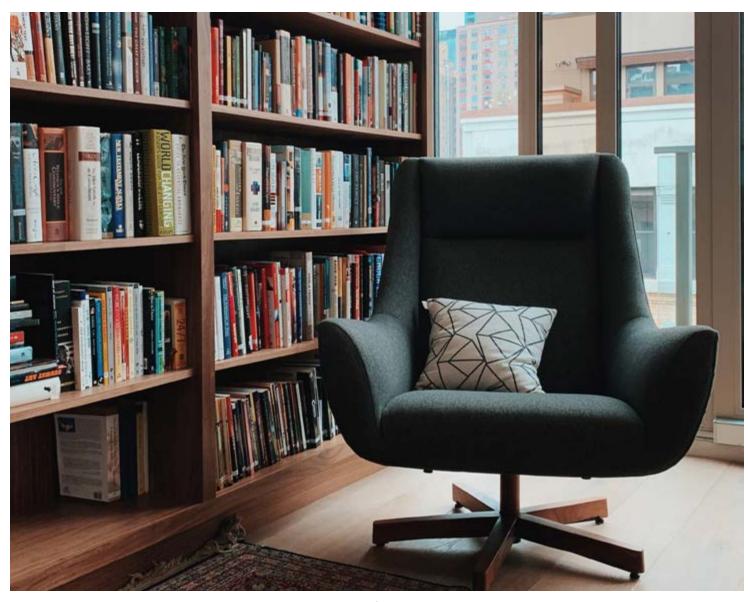# 7 – Use the University Library's Expanded Range of Licensed E-Media

In order to better meet the challenges posed by digitalisation, Passau University Library is making available an expanded range of e-media. You can access these away from the campus by using external access. Most of these media can also be accessed using the Shibboleth login.

The University Library Team can be contacted at ubinfo@uni-passau.de.

To keep abreast of the extended e-media on offer (e-books, e-journals and databases), visit www.ub.uni-passau.de/en/search-find/e-books-in-infoguide/coronavirus-crisis-expanded-e-media-offering).

You are welcome to suggest further e-media to the University Library Team at ubinfo@uni-passau.de.

8 – Exams in times of COVID-19: what you need to know

To keep up to date on information regarding planned, cancelled or postponed exams check the 'FAQs - Questions and answers on the coronavirus' page regularly! You will find a section titled 'Questions regarding examinations' on that page.

**The current situation presents us all with new challenges.
We will overcome them if we pull together!**