**Informational - NGO Social Work Study Awards - Study-load Guide**

**Policy Framework**

Part-time students who are working, and who have a range of family commitments often find that balancing their everyday commitments with their study requirements can be quite difficult - it can be challenging to find an acceptable work / life balance.

Whilst MSD recognises the competing demands for part-time students, and the need for students to achieve an acceptable work / life balance, none-the-less, MSD also needs to ensure that students will complete their study within course requirements.

Reducing study-loads is not always an option because most education providers have a specified time within which study must be completed and there is often pressure on students to complete their study. Often education providers give about 6 years to complete a 360 credit programme, and about 8 years to complete a 480 credit programme – on this basis the minimum expected study-load for a student is likely to be around 60 credits per year.

Tertiary-level study requires a significant investment of time and students need to realistically plan their study programme through to completion. The approach that MSD takes is about ensuring that students realistically plan their study-load through to completion, ensuring that they can complete their study within course requirements, without requiring an unreasonable study-load.

**Application**

In an effort to maintain an acceptable work / life / study balance MSD recommends that students undertake a study-load that is loosely based on studying 60 credits per year. The full-time study-load for most programmes is 120 credits per year – and so this recommended study-load is approximately 50 % of the normal full-time study-load for most programmes and modes of study. This will also ensure that most students are capable of completing their programmes within their course regulations.

However, it is recognised that many students do undertake a study-load in excess of 60 credits per year – sometimes this can be supported because of the particular working arrangements of the student, and in other cases this is supported by structure and delivery of the programme itself. In particular, Te Wananga o Aotearoa – TWOA has an approach where 120 credits per year is the norm, and where this is supported by the course structure and the mode of delivery of the programme. In other instances, with other educational providers this study-load could be a very significant challenge for students, and unrealistic.

In planning their study it is important for students to carefully consider how many papers they should take given their other commitments. This is particularly true for students who are working full time, and / or who have significant family responsibilities etc., and for students who are new to tertiary-level study or who are returning after time away from study. For University and Polytechnic students, the recommended study-load of 60 credits per year may well result in a 20 – 25 hour study commitment per week.

Each year students will be required to submit to MSD a detailed study plan for the forthcoming year, and an indicative study plan through to the completion of their study. MSD will consider this study plan and where students are planning a programme of study that is significantly different to the recommended approach, MSD may request additional information (such as why the student chose this study-load, and the student’s ability to undertake the planned study-load) to assist in evaluating the intended study-load.

If the study-load is lower than that recommended MSD may seek information on student’s ability to complete the course of study within the course regulations, and the employer’s ability and willingness to continue to support the student over a longer period of time, and should the student support funding be exhausted.

Once students have good study routines in place and are more confident in their study abilities they may be able to contemplate a heavier study-load if they wish to. As a guide University and Polytechnic students should plan to spend approximately 10 to 12 hours each week for each 15 credit single semester paper, or about 5 to 6 hours per week for each 15 credit double semester paper. Students who are contemplating study-loads in excess of 75 credits per year need to be satisfied that they can cope with this higher study-load.

**Study Planning Guide**

(Reproduced in part from the Massey University website - <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm>)

This guide provides you with an overview of the things you need to take into consideration which include:

* [Ensure you are aware of university requirements](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#ensure)
* [Research the programme requirements and create a study plan](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#research)
* [Review your study workload](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#review)
* [Identify and review the specific requirements for each paper](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#identify)
* [Consider your options for recognition of prior learning](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#prior)
* [Ensure you are aware of the costs](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#costs)
* [Ask one an adviser for assistance](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm#ask)



Ensure you are aware of programme requirements

* You must meet certain entry requirements to enroll - see [entry requirements](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/admission/enrolment/entry-requirements/entry-requirements_home.cfm) for more details.
* Some programmes have selected entry criteria and limited number of places for students enrolling - see [selected entry programmes](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/admission/enrolment/forms/preselection/preselection.cfm) for further details.
* View the [key enrolment dates](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/admission/enrolment/dates/enrolment-dates.cfm) to ensure that you enroll on time.



Research the programme requirements and create a study plan

Each programme has its own structure and requirements and a study plan can help you map out your papers and help you identify:

* How many credits you need to earn and how these credits need to be distributed - most undergraduate degrees are made up of 360 – 480 credits.
* Any compulsory papers - these are papers that you **must** take in order to achieve your qualification.
* The requirements of majors, endorsements or minors (if your programme has them). This may include the number of papers and specific papers that you need to include.
* Papers that must be passed before other papers. These are known as pre-requisites. In general students study 100-level papers in their first year of study and then move on to 200-level papers - this is because a lot of 200-level papers have 100-level papers as prerequisites.
* Papers that must be taken at the same time as other papers, unless you have already passed them. These are known as co-requisites papers.



Review your study workload

Study at university requires a significant time investment and students often comment that balancing their everyday commitments with study requirements can be quite challenging. So it is important to carefully consider how many papers you should take, especially when beginning your study.

* You should be realistic about the number of papers you can take in a semester and consider all your existing commitments. You will need to spend approximately 10 to 12 hours each week for a 15 credit single semester paper, or about 5 to 6 hours per week for a 15 credit double semester paper.
* If you are working full time (or have a young family that you look after full time), we recommend that you take no more than 30 credits (two papers) in a semester.
* If you are new to university study or returning after a long gap, try one or two papers to start with. Once you are confident and have good study routines in place, you might find you can take on a heavier workload.

To help you identify how you could fit study into your regular routine, some education providers have provided tools – as an example Massey has some useful on-line tools that may assist some students - <http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/course/planning/planning_home.cfm>



Identify and review the specific requirements for each paper

As well as the overall programme requirements, you will also need to ensure you understand the requirements for each individual paper that you want to enroll in. In particular, it is very important you understand:

* If the course has an [online component](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/intro/online-learning/online-components.cfm) and specific technology requirements
* If you need to attend an [on-campus course](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/studying/contact/contact_home.cfm). Some of these on-campus courses are compulsory and you will need to ensure that you can travel to the venue on the dates and times specified.
* If the paper has an exam and when the exams are for each of the papers you want to enroll in. You will need to ensure that there are no clashes with other papers you want to enroll in or any existing personal commitments (for example weddings and holidays). Whilst special arrangements may be possible it is your responsibility to ensure that you have planned these out carefully.

All of this information can be found within the paper description information on the [Courses web pages](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/programme-course-paper/programme-course-and-paper-search.cfm).



Consider your options for recognition of prior learning

Education providers recognise prior learning achieved within both formal and informal settings. Credit may be awarded for:

* completed tertiary qualifications,
* incomplete tertiary qualifications, and
* informal learning.

For more information please [contact your Education Provider](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/getting_in_contact.cfm).



Ensure you are aware of the costs

It is important to consider all the costs involved in the study process. As well as the tuition fees you should also take into consideration other costs involved in studying, such as transport and childcare costs, internet and printing costs, and so on.

Please remember that the NGO Social Work Study Award is not a promise to pay all costs - it is anticipated that both the student and the employer will both incur some costs at times as well. Where there is a shortfall between the funding available and actual costs, the student and the employer will need to agree how to fund this shortfall.

Your Education Provider might well have more information on [fees and other costs](http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/distance-learning/fees/fees_home.cfm).



Ask an adviser at you Education Provider for assistance

Most education Providers have a range of assistance available to students.