



EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION SERVICES & TRAINING



Learner Study Guide



Hints and tips to help you achieve your goal!

Introduction

Congratulations on making the commitment to study. Undertaking learning requires you to prioritise your time, and manage your studies to gain the knowledge and skills in a particular subject area. Studying often requires discipline to do research, reading, identification of important information and note taking for the purpose of increasing your knowledge and skills in the topic.

Committing to study often occurs while we already have a number of priorities in life, both at home and work. It can be difficult to balance commitments, leaving students feeling stressed and often questioning their ability to complete their qualification. Learning how to study effectively is an important skill. With the right study tips and processes in place, you can successfully manage your study requirements, normal work commitments and family routines. You can even have time for the all important recreational activities.

To make the most of studying, it is important to explore learning techniques that have been shown to be effective. Strategies such as boosting your memory, and learning in multiple ways can be helpful. Regularly learning new things and testing yourself often, can also be helpful ways to become a more efficient learner.

Starting any qualification can be daunting. If you are new to flexible distance study – whether you’re returning to study after a break, or you’ve only ever done studies face to face in a classroom setting – you’ll find that studying by distance is not only extremely convenient, but it also requires a different approach.

You may be required to develop different study skills and be more self-directed. It can be challenging if you’re prone to procrastination or distraction, but also incredibly rewarding once you create your study habits and are successfully working your way through your course.

With this in mind, we’ve put together these useful tips to help you identify how you study best, get the most out of your studies, keep motivated and establish processes that will set you up for success.



Effective studying starts with the right attitude—a positive outlook can shift studying from a chore to an opportunity to learn and improve your skills.

Identify how and when you study best

Organisation is key to succeeding when studying, especially when you're also juggling work and family commitments. Setting aside regular study time is much better than trying to cram in huge amounts of work when due dates loom. How do we do this?

- Think about when you are most effective. Are you a morning person or a night owl? Make the most of the time when your brain is really firing.
- Consider how much time you can allocate in one sitting. Do you work best in short, sharp bursts? Do you like to delve into your studies for a few hours at a time? Or, do you prefer a slower pace and like to spread it out over the day?
- Consider the times you start to lose focus? Is there a pattern you can change to avoid this?
- Make sure you allocate regular breaks – 20 minutes used effectively is better than three unproductive hours.

Set Goals

Setting goals is like making a plan for what you want to achieve. As a student, it's important to have clear tasks that you want to accomplish. Think about what you really want, like having a better understanding of a subject or getting a job at the end of your studies. Break those big goals into smaller steps that you can work on little by little.

When you set goals, They should be **SMART**. That is that they are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. Here is an example of a SMART goal:

- **Specific:** "I want to complete my next unit a bit earlier than my training plan - by the end of this month."
- **Measurable:** "I will study for at least two hours every day."
- **Achievable:** "I will break down the study material into smaller topics and focus on one at a time."
- **Relevant:** "Finishing this unit by the end of the month means I can go on my two week holiday and not have to worry about my study during this time."
- **Time-bound:** "I will complete my assessment by Wednesday 29th May, so I have time to review and submit it on Friday 31st."

Putting it all together: "My SMART goal is to study for at least two hours every day, focusing on one topic at a time, to complete and submit my assessment by Friday 31st May."

This goal is specific about what needs to be done, measurable in terms of study hours, achievable with a clear plan, relevant to this students' success, and time-bound with a deadline for completion.

Check on your progress regularly and celebrate when you reach your goals. If things don't go as planned, don't worry! Learn from what happened and keep going. Setting goals helps you take control of your learning journey, stay motivated, and feel like you're making progress toward completion.

Training Plans/ Study Plans

Making use of your Training Plan (for trainees and funded students) or an ECTARC Study Plan (for flexible study students) is the best way to break down the content of your chosen qualification. Sticking to the due dates for each unit is the best way to successfully progress through your studies. These dates are based on realistic time frames and are proven to be achievable for those that have set themselves short term goals and well planned study timetables.

If you require a new or revised plan please speak with your ECTARC Training and Development Officer who can work with you on this.

Create a timetable

Once you have your course schedule planned, you can prepare your full weekly timetable to make sure you get there.

A Study Timetable is essential if you're going to manage your time effectively. A timetable is different to a study plan in that it outlines specific times for study and life commitments on a daily and weekly basis. A good starting point is to assess how you currently spend your time and highlight your priorities. This will help identify how much time is available for study each week. You might also find activities that waste your precious time that can be eliminated from your schedule while you undertake your program.

When you draft your timetable, make sure not to make it too tight! Leave some room for breathing space between commitments and also for unexpected emergencies, that way you are prepared in case something happens.



Traveling by public transport is a great way to fit in study

Social activities are also very important but at times you may need to prioritise your studies if your schedule is tight. Try to make time to meet friends or do the activities you enjoy after you have completed your prioritised tasks.

Be sure to share your study goal with friends and family so they understand your situation and support your efforts.

Lets do this:

1. Prioritise. Start by filling in the commitments that are necessary e.g work, meals, family, chores, sleep etc
2. Schedule in time for your studies based on your understanding of how you study best. Large or small blocks, early or late in the day.
3. Now add in other commitments and activities such as sport and social events – both weekly activities and one-off events. Remember It is important to make time to do the things that make you happy.

e.g. Weekly timetable

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	7-8							
	8-9							
	9-10	WORK	WORK	WORK				
	10-11				Study		Study	
	11-12							
Afternoon	12-1							
	1-2							
	2-3				Gym			
	3-4					Study		Study
	4-5						Fun Time	
	5-6							
Evening	6-7	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Babysitting	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
	7-8		Study					
	8-9							
	9-10							
	10-11							

- PLEASE SEE THE BACK OF THE BOOK FOR A BLANK FORMAT -

You might find it challenging to manage study time at first until a routine is established. While everyone's schedule will look different depending on their family and work commitments, course load and personal preferences, the key is to ensure that your timetable is balanced with study time and free time scheduled around your key commitments.

Once you have finished, place the timetable in a visible position - on your bedroom wall or the fridge door- somewhere that you will see it regularly. Make extra copies if you need to!

Regular reviews can help you remember and refresh the things that you have learned so you won't forget them and will assist you to monitor your progress and keep on track. Determine the best time to do your weekly review, and turn it into a useful habit.

Having difficulties? Don't ditch your timetable if you are having trouble sticking to it. Consider how you can modify it to make it work more effectively for you. Be realistic – some weeks things might not go according to plan, but don't beat yourself up about it. Just get back on the horse and get back on track.

Fact: Did you know study breaks that involve social media or tv can do more harm than good to your study session.

Motivation

Motivation is helpful in our daily lives to achieve positive results in any activity. We see this all the time with sports. Well the same goes for studying. A motivated student finds it easier to go the extra mile and take all the necessary steps that are needed to be successful. Procrastination is a number one enemy!

For some students, studying and staying motivated comes easily, others may have to work a little bit harder. Rewarding yourself for small achievements regularly assist with motivation and support your hard work. You could try:

- Setting up a reward system for your study sessions.
- Celebrating when you achieve a goal or finish a difficult topic.

Helpful study tips

Studying can be hard. The good news is that anybody can develop good study habits to make studying more effective, efficient, and enjoyable. Here are some useful study tips:

- **Use the ECTARC Training Portal** - make the most of the learning resources that have been provided
- **Work in sequential order:** The learning resources have been designed for you to start at the beginning and work your way through to the end. Follow this order rather than jumping around. It will make more sense.
- **Active Engagement:** Actively engage with all of the learning available in the portal. Read through each module, watch the videos and complete the activities. There are some great practical tips to read about and extra information has also been provided to enhance your learning. Interact with the material rather than passively consuming it. Take notes of key points or create summaries as you work through the content. This helps reinforce your understanding and retention.
- **Break It Down:** Break down the material into smaller, manageable chunks. Instead of trying to consume everything at once, focus on one module or section at a time. This prevents you from becoming overwhelmed and enhances comprehension.
- **Utilise Multimedia:** Take advantage of any multimedia resources available in the online portal such as videos, interactive quizzes, or simulations. These can provide alternative perspectives and reinforce understanding through visual and auditory means.
- **Practice regularly:** Practice applying what you've learned through the exercises or quizzes available on the portal. Regular practice not only reinforces your understanding but also helps identify areas that may need further review.

- **Seek Clarification:** If you encounter any concepts or topics that are unclear, don't hesitate to seek clarification.
- **Review and Reflect:** Periodically review the material you've covered and reflect on your learning progress. Identify areas of strength and areas that need improvement, and adjust your study approach accordingly.
- **Stay Motivated:** Lastly, stay motivated by setting realistic goals, celebrating your achievements, and reminding yourself of the reasons why you're pursuing your studies. Find ways to stay engaged and interested in the material, whether it's through group discussions, setting rewards for reaching milestones, or finding real-world applications for what you're learning.

Learning materials

Where you are provided a PDF of your learning materials, use these to your advantage. You may need to work through your learning materials more than once. The first 24 hours of covering fresh information is critical as this is the time where information is held in your short term memory but further review is then needed to assist in memorising the information for the longer term.

Skim - Start by clarifying your purpose when reading learning materials. This will 'set the tone' for your reading and comprehension. Skim the title, summary, and main points. The headings and subheadings will highlight the key ideas in the text.

Read - Budget your time over how long you will devote for working through each section/chapter. For practical skills, visualise a person performing the task or job correctly – what is the person doing to make sure the task is successfully completed.

Highlight or take note of important information that you will need later.

Complete questions and tasks as you work through. This helps solidify your understanding.

Review - Read summary sections of the learning materials where available or refer to your own summaries. Check responses to questions and tasks when reviewing each section to confirm your understanding.

Interpretation skills refers to your ability to analyse and communicate what you have understood. You use your readings, observations and inference skills to make a good interpretation of what you have read. To really understand a subject, you have to know the words that relate to it. **Important terminology or words are often used in learning resources. As you scan the text, you can look them up in the glossary module within each unit. To help you become familiar with the terms, write these words down. Your learning materials also include reflections, tasks or additional information to explore that is relevant to the work environment. This will often assist you in gaining more knowledge and full practical understanding of the subject matter.**

Find your rhythm

It is important to find your rhythm when you study. You will also gain better focus if your body and mind are in unison. It would be hard to concentrate if your body keeps doing other activities (such as checking your mobile phone) as your mind tries to focus on studying. Your body and mind should be doing things that can help you study better.

Note taking

When note taking, write down only the most important points or key words, then summarise these points. Expressing an idea in your own words increases your understanding of a subject and helps your brain hang on to information. However, be careful to keep technical words, jargon or acronyms as you will need to know these.

Condensing your most important notes to one page is an excellent way to keep priority information at your fingertips. The more you look over this sheet and read it aloud, the better that you'll know the material.

- Use headings and diagrams if desired to assist in reviewing the notes at a later date.
- Never crowd your notes.

- Focus on keywords that are important. Unnecessary information will just confuse you.
- Using different colour highlighters can help identify the most important aspects of your notes.
- Review notes within 24 hours of taking them – this will assist in your recall of the information in the future.

Find yourself stuck or unable to understand the explanation provided? Discussing it with your ECTARC TDO or a workplace colleague or supervisor could assist you to work through the issue and provide you with the new explanation you need.

Try improving recall with the following ideas:

- Sing the information to a catchy tune.
- Think of a phrase in which the words start with the same letters as the words that you need to remember. i.e. Cognitive development = Cogs turning in your brain.
- Draw a picture that helps you make a humorous connection between the new information and the things that you already know.
- Envision what it would be like to experience your topic in person. Imagine the sights, sounds, smells and more.
- Think up rhymes or tongue twisters that can help the information stick in your brain.
- Visualise the details with a web-style mind map that illustrates the relationships between concepts.

Do the most difficult task first

Throughout your studies there will be some subjects or tasks that you like more than others. You need to determine which subject or task is most difficult for you and start with that subject first. When studying, your mind works at its best if you are full energy. Make it a point to do the most difficult task first while you still feel at your best.

Test your knowledge

Activities and practice quizzes are useful to help students learn and retain information and check your understanding. Besides revealing gaps in knowledge and reducing assessment anxiety, this also makes us better able to retrieve information from our memory.

There are several ways you can “check” yourself to gain these benefits. You can:

- Create flashcards
- Write your own practice questions
- Have a friend quiz you
- Challenge yourself to consider how you’d teach it to someone else. Reciting your presentation aloud to someone else can help the details stick in your mind.

Study with a partner

Studying doesn’t always have to be an individual activity. Benefits of a study partner include explaining the material to one another, being able to discuss things you don’t understand, and possibly learning the material more quickly than you might on your own.

Sometimes studying with a friend or two, whether or not you’re working on the same material, can help keep you accountable so it’s harder to procrastinate on your work. Make sure you are both in the same mindset about studying and keep one another distraction-free; at least until it’s time to take a break.



The other benefit of studying with a partner is that you will also develop soft skills that will be useful in your career, such as communication, teamwork and problem solving skills. On top of that you can be having fun as you study!

Create a study environment

Finding a good location to study is one of the most important elements of studying well. Look for a quiet place with minimal distractions—somewhere you'll be able to focus, and won't be interrupted by loud sounds or people who constantly want your attention.

A school, public library, coffee shop, or a quiet corner of your house can all be good places to start. If you are studying at home then try and have a space dedicated to your studies, as this will help you to have an organised approach to your studies. By creating yourself a study nook it will help you to get in the 'zone'.

It can be beneficial to find three or four places you like to study and switch locations when you're feeling stuck or need a change of pace. That said, everybody is different. Find what works best for you.

Tips:

- **Be prepared** with the materials you need for the session.
- Have comfortable **seating**.
- **Take breaks** - walk around and stretch. Drink some water or have a light snack.
- **Be mindful** of your phone. Our smartphones can be hugely distracting. Turning off your notifications, keeping your phone out of sight, or giving it to someone else can help you stay focused.
- **Play some music** - Listening to tunes can help you focus. Studies show that the best study music is anything that features a rhythmic beat.

Practice healthy habits

You need to give your mind and body the right sustenance they need to stay fit and healthy. Work on developing the mindset that you are very capable of improving your knowledge and skills. Research suggests that believing in your own capacity for growth is one of the best ways to take advantage of the learning opportunities you pursue.

Tips:

- **Meditate** - It may be hard to imagine adding anything else to your packed schedule, but dedicating time to mindfulness practices can be beneficial.
- **Hit the Gym** - To boost blood flow to your brain, do half an hour of cardio exercise before sitting down to study. Aerobic exercise gives your brain a major dose of oxygen and other important nutrients, which may help you think clearly, remember facts and do your best work.
- **Take Regular Breaks** - Your brain needs some downtime. Breaks are good for your mental health. They also improve your attention span, your creativity and your productivity.
- **Get Some Sleep** - Although studying is important, it can't come at the expense of your rest. Sleep gives your brain a chance to process the information that you've learned that day.



Assessment

Helpful hint: answering assignment questions using examples.

Using examples in your assignment answers helps to show your knowledge. Examples are short stories or accounts of experiences or interactions you've had in the service setting. These are used in assessment answers to highlight your current knowledge and skills. It's important to provide enough detail about what you did, what you said, and how you did it.

A helpful tip to ensure you've included enough detail is to consider the 5 'W's'.



WHO – Who was there? for example, was it a colleague, family member or which children were involved?

WHAT – What happened? What did you say? What did they say? What techniques or strategies did you use?

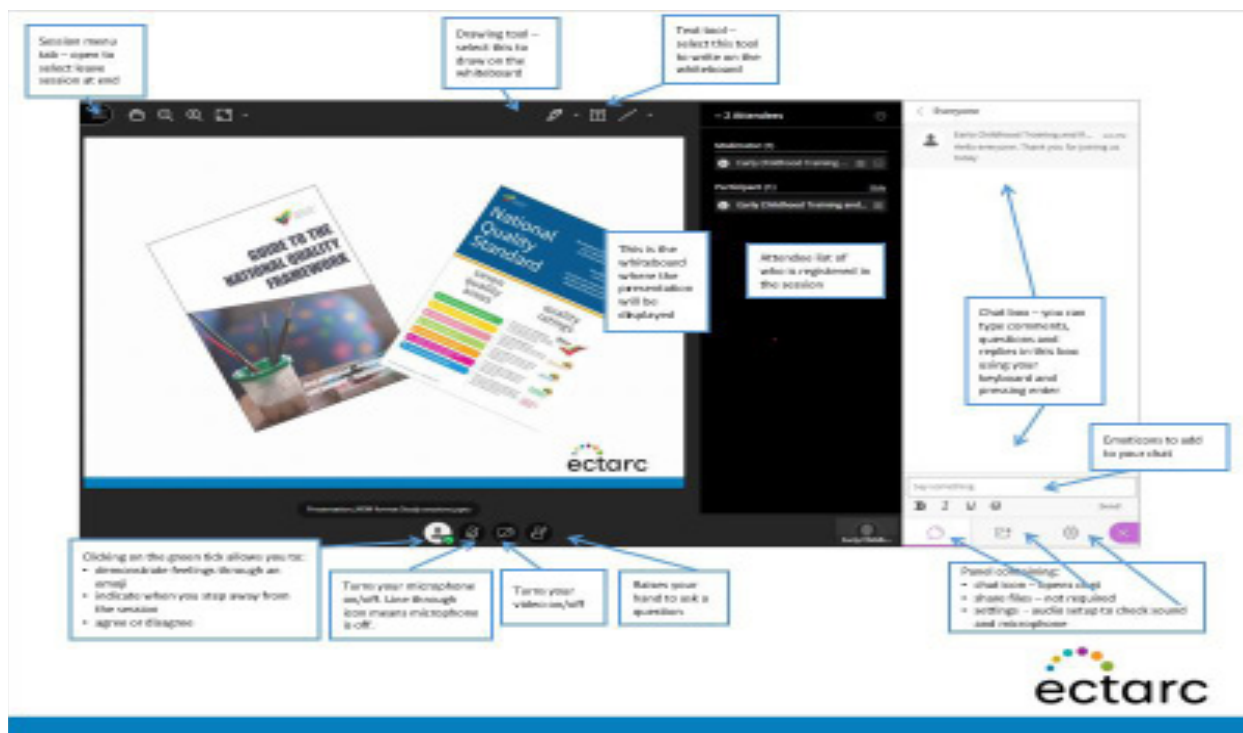
WHEN – An estimate of when this happened if relevant such as last week, today, this morning, this afternoon.

WHY – What were the circumstances around this experience or interaction? What was the objective?

WHERE – Think about the setting. Was it inside, outside or within a particular room or learning environment?

These can be in any order you need to provide a clear picture to the person who is marking your assignment.

Live Webinars and Free Study Sessions



Research has found that everybody is unique in how they learn best. We all have different strengths, talents, challenges, and ways of doing things. Learning is no different. Some people thrive in structured environments, others do best with more flexibility. There are students who learn best from books, from listening, from watching, from doing, or from discovering. You might gain knowledge best when working independently or while working collaboratively in a group.

Participating in live online sessions, can make the difference between a good educational experience and a great one!

It is important that you engage with all the unit learning resources in as many different ways as possible. The more ties you can create between the coursework and yourself, the better chances you have of successfully completing your course as planned.

ECTARC delivers an exciting and diverse variety of professional development webinars and online study sessions.

ECTARC online study sessions are free for all students to join. A calendar is scheduled monthly which includes different units each month so if you are interested speak to your TDO about which sessions are available that month. To participate in an online study session all you will require is a computer or tablet with internet access, a camera and microphone. You may also like to wear a headset, but this is optional. It is a simple process to log on to the study session, to participate use the link provided. Only basic computer skills are required to participate.

Webinars are incredibly popular as you can access professional development from their service or home regardless of your location throughout Australia. To participate in an online session all you will require is a computer or tablet with internet access, and microphone. You may also like to wear a headset, but this is optional. It is a simple process to log on to a webinar session, only basic computer skills are required to participate. Visit the ECTARC website to see upcoming webinars and you can register and pay by simply clicking on your chosen topic.

For further information or support please call ECTARC on 02 4223 1111 or email pd@ectarc.com.au.

When completing your assessment tasks, the question terminology will indicate the type of response that is needed. Understanding the question, will make it easier to provide the correct response.

Acronyms:

There are also many acronyms that you will need to become familiar with while you are learning and may refer to during assessment.

- **ACECQA:** Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
- **A&R:** Assessment and Rating process
- **COE:** Code of Ethics
- **EC:** Education and Care
- **ECA:** Early Childhood Australia
- **ECEC:** Early Childhood Education and Care
- **EYLF:** Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- **MTOP:** My Time Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia
- **NQF:** National Quality Framework
- **NQS:** National Quality Standard
- **OSHC:** Out of School Hours Care
- **QA:** Quality Area
- **QIP:** Quality Improvement Plan
- **SAEC:** School Age Education and Care
- **UNCRC:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Terminology examples include:

- **Analyse:** to examine an issue in detail, while identifying patterns, similarities and differences and discussing these.
- **Comment:** Explain the significance of the statement and give reasons for why you agree or disagree with the comment. Respond in a way that shows you understand the topic and provide your opinion.
- **Compare:** To show both the differences and similarities between things.
- **Define:** To describe exactly, give definition.
- **Describe (in detail):** Requires more detailed information and may sometimes suggest a word count.
- **Discuss:** To present arguments for and against a point of view and reach a conclusion.
- **Evaluate:** To give an opinion, supported by some expert opinions of the truth or importance of a concept.
- **Explain:** Describe and discuss topic in more detail.
- **Identify:** to establish / name who or what.
- **Interpret:** Explain the meaning of information, what has been said or heard.
- **Legislation/Act’s:** if the question asks ‘what ACT guides your actions in.....?’ you MUST write the full title (name and year) of the Act e.g. Further Education and Training Act 2014.
- **List:** Requires a simple list using dot points (more than 3 responses required to make a list).
- **Outline:** To give a general description. Requires a brief response of a sentence or two. (may use dot points).
- **Reflect:** think deeply or carefully about. May include what, why and how you felt including what could be done differently in the future.
- **Research:** additional research is required (library resources, internet, colleagues, etc) Must be referenced.
- **Scenario:** is a setting provided for you to read and answer the questions that follow.
- **State:** describe the main points in precise terms, using brief, clear sentences. No need to include examples.
- **Summarise:** to give a brief, condensed account of the main ideas.

Lets look at some ove these a bit closer.

Describe: provide an example

Examples are short stories or accounts of experiences or interactions you've had in your workplace. These are used in assessment answers to highlight your current knowledge and skills. It's important to provide enough detail about what you did, what you said, and how you did it. A helpful tip to ensure you've included enough detail is to consider the 5 'W's'.

WHO

- Who was there? for example, was it a colleague, family member or which children were involved?

WHAT

- What happened? What did you say? What did they say? What techniques or strategies did you use?

WHEN

- An estimate of when this happened if relevant such as last week, today, this morning, this afternoon.

WHY

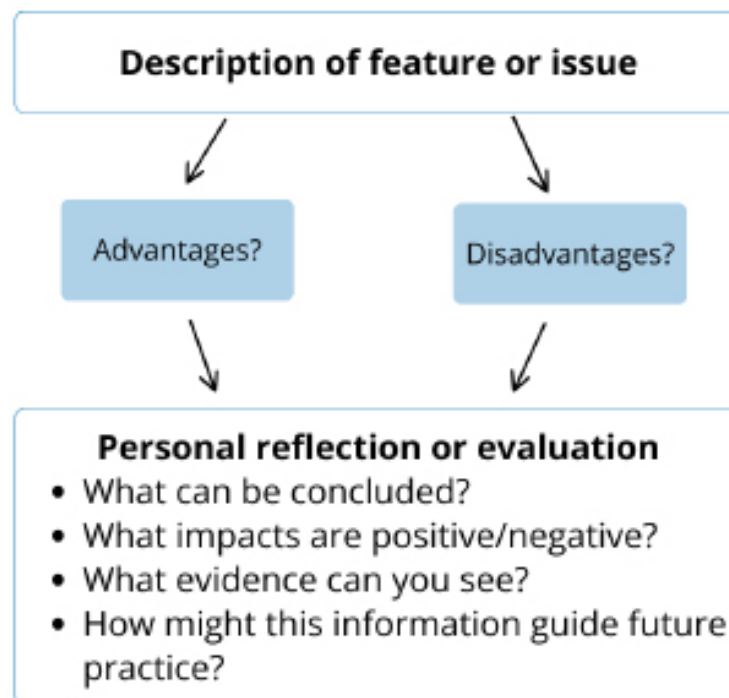
- What were the circumstances around this experience or interaction? What was the objective?

WHERE

- Think about the setting. Was it inside, outside or within a particular room or learning environment?

Evaluate/reflect

This involves explaining key factors or information and adding your evaluation or personal reflection based on your knowledge and skills.



Explain/Outline: Why is?...

When we 'explain' we are demonstrating our knowledge of the cause and effect or the relationship between two topics.



For example: Explain the theory of attachment.

- **What are the reasons behind this?** - *Why is attachment important?*
- **What is significant and why?** - *What does this tell us about development?*
- **What information tells you this?** *i.e. What theorists support knowledge attachment? and where did you locate this information?*

Interpret

This is useful when researching sources of information such as sector documents, legislative requirements or theories regarding learning and development.

**WHAT ARE THE MAIN PARTS/FACTORS/POINTS?
WHAT DOES THIS TELL ME?
IS THE SOURCE CREDIBLE?**



For example:

If you have been asked to identify and interpret something from the Regulations;

What are the parts? Part Number, Titles, Regulations- *i.e. Regulation 168*

What does this tell me? - *i.e. What does this regulation tell me about the policies and procedures required in a service?*

Is the source credible? - Have I sourced my information from the right place. *i.e. ACECQA or NSW government*

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>

Referencing

Referencing is an essential part of any written assessment work you complete. Referencing is a consistent method of acknowledging or citing another person's ideas, which you have used, in your own project or assessment. It has three important purposes:

- To uphold intellectual honesty (avoiding plagiarism)
- To attribute prior or unoriginal work and ideas to the correct persons or sources; and
- To allow the reader of the assessment to determine whether the use of the referenced information demonstrates your knowledge of the topic and supports your answers in the assessment.

There are generally two parts to referencing: the note within the text of your assessment where the information appears and within the reference list provided with your assessment.

A common referencing approach is the 'author-date' system. For notes in the text of the assignment you should use the surname of the author(s) and the year of publication. You should include page or section numbers, preceded by a comma, if you need to be specific.

For example: (AGDE, 2022, pp. 14-19)

And/or

(Hoffman, et al., 2017, p.15)

The full details of the source information should then be provided in a reference list at the end of your assessment. This referencing provides author names and publication details including year, title, edition, location and name of the publisher.

For example: *Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE] (2022). Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0). Australian Government Department of Education for the Ministerial Council.*

And/or

Hoffman, K., Cooper, G., & Powell, B. (2017). Raising a Secure Child. New York: Guildford Publications.

Academic Misconduct

What is Academic Misconduct?

Academic misconduct refers to any behaviour or action used by a learner, or other party that undermines the integrity of the academic process, such as cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of data, or unauthorised collaboration. Cheating and plagiarism are forms of academic misconduct. To understand the difference let's look at these a bit further:

What is cheating?

Cheating refers to any act of fraud or deception in your studies, such as:

- Copying from another student's work, exam or assessment
- Using unauthorised materials or aids during an assessment
- Having someone or something else complete the work for you
- Collaborating with others on assessments without permission
- Submitting work completed by someone or something else as your own, including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Falsifying data or research results.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's words, ideas, or work as your own without proper attribution. It includes:

- Copying text from a source without quotation marks or citation
- Not referencing any work where the ideas do not belong to you
- Paraphrasing ideas from a source without giving credit
- Submitting someone else's work, such as a paper purchased online, as your own.

Consequences for engaging in Academic Misconduct

Consequences for engaging in Academic Misconduct including cheating and plagiarism can be varied and may include:

- having a competency conversation with an ECTARC TDO to determine if you do in fact have the knowledge
- a meeting with your TDO, ECTARC Manager and your employer
- being asked to resubmit the assessment
- being deemed Not Competent in that unit, therefore not being eligible for your qualification
- having your enrolment withdrawn.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) when completing assessments

Understanding the role of AI in your studies is crucial. AI can be a valuable resource, offering efficient ways to gather information, generate ideas, and explore new perspectives. However, it's essential to approach its use with caution and critical thinking. While AI can streamline research processes and provide a lot of information, it's important to remember that AI-generated content may contain errors, biases, or outdated information. It's essential to verify the information from multiple reliable sources before adding it into your assignments.

Most importantly, using AI without proper referencing can lead to plagiarism, or be classed as cheating. Always attribute the information you gather from AI tools to their original sources and follow the referencing guidelines provided by ECTARC. Ultimately, while AI can be a valuable tool, it's not a substitute for your own knowledge. By using AI wisely and ethically, to compliment and extend your own knowledge, you can maximise its benefits and contribute to your success throughout your studies and beyond.

Example: To give you an example, the basis of the above information on Plagiarism, Cheating and AI was written using two different types of AI software. With the written instructions we provided it was able to produce some generic statements about plagiarism, cheating and the use of AI while studying. You will note that it included both positive and negative aspects of using AI, including that the information it provides is not always correct and can be outdated. For the most part however, it provided what we asked of it, and we were able to use this software to gather information about these topics and refer to this as a starting point. These topics are quite generic and basic, and our request did not require a lot of specific, technical information about current best practice, so it was quite an easy task for the AI software.

What you are not seeing in the above information is the different language that it had used that we have altered, the spelling mistakes that it made and we have corrected, and the incorrect context in which it provided the information - all of which we have changed. Essentially, while it helped get us started, it still required us to check if the information was correct, met the requirements of what we wanted to share with you, correct the spelling and alter the context.

We also asked the AI software whether there were any references for the information that it used. For the information provided on AI it said no, meaning it made it all up with no legitimate source of information, and for the information on cheating and plagiarism it provided a list of websites. Most of which are not Australian based, however, for the purpose of this particular subject that was ok.

This means that if we had chosen to share this information to you without also including these references this would be a clear case of plagiarism.

A note on references: Always check any references provided by the AI. If it is not Australian based information, consider very carefully whether it is relevant to our practices in Australia before using this information in your assessments.

So if I use AI, will it be classed as cheating or plagiarism?

If we consider the statements provided above about what cheating and plagiarism are, we can see quite clearly examples of each in the information that the AI software provided.

Cheating - The fact that the information on AI was made up by the AI software means that it is not based on information that someone wrote, or that someone owns. That is why it could not provide references. Therefore, it is NOT plagiarism for ECTARC to use this information. Had this been an assessment situation and we used this information and not told you that we sourced it from AI, it would then be classed as cheating.

Plagiarism – Because the information provided by the AI on cheating and plagiarism had references cited at the bottom this clearly means that the AI gathered the information it provided from someone else's work. The AI has correctly referenced this work:

- <https://academicintegrity.unimelb.edu.au/plagiarism-and-collusion>
- <https://socialwork.uw.edu/students/academic-standards/academic-honesty-cheating-plagiarism>
- <https://academic-englishuk.com/academic-integrity/>
- <https://www.nicole-brown.co.uk/reflections-about-plagiarism/>
- <https://www.123helpme.com/essay/Plagiarism-Essay-387689>

How does ECTARC know if students have used AI or another source to complete my assessments?

ECTARC uses many methods to detect plagiarism, cheating and the use of AI. Our training and assessment is underpinned by the relationships which we form with each of our students. As our TDOs have their own students who they support and visit in the workplace, they become very familiar with each students' strengths, areas where additional support is required, and individual writing styles. When work is submitted that includes different language, or is written at a different level to what is normally received, and there is no referencing to indicate research or assistance has been provided, our TDOs are required to confirm that it is your work to support their assessment of your knowledge and skills. This may be through:

- a Competency Conversation, where they will verbally ask you questions about the topic
- asking you to resubmit the work again to confirm your understanding
- their observations during a practical assessment in your workplace
- a combination of these.

Sourcing information from a variety of sources is a wonderful way to broaden your knowledge and develop critical thinking skills, however it is so important that your assessments include work that reflects your own thoughts, skills and knowledge and that you reference any thoughts or ideas that are not your own.

Having difficulty?

Flexible distance study can be challenging. It requires you to be motivated, disciplined and, most importantly, believe in yourself. Although your studies are important, remember balance is the key. Too much time with your nose in the books can elevate stress levels, which can have a negative effect on you and your personal relationships. Sometimes you might need to take a step back and just breathe. ECTARC is only a phone call or email away.

Recognise when you are procrastinating

Most people put off doing things, especially when a task is challenging and you don't know where to start. The important thing is to recognise when you are procrastinating and identify why. Remember that the more you put something off, the more stressful it will become down the track. Once you make a start on a task you'll immediately reduce your anxiety about it. Begin by breaking the task into bite-sized chunks, rather than tackling too much at once.

Don't put off a task because it's too hard for too long – you'll only make it harder for yourself later.

Access available resources

ECTARC has a number of resources to support you. These can be found on the ECTARC website www.ectarc.com.au, the ECTARC Student Management Portal under 'documents' and the ECTARC Training Portal.

The following resources are examples of what is available:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Certificate of Currency – Insurance required for practicums taken outside of your workplace
- UN rights of the child
- National Quality Standards Summary and information guides
- National Law and Regulations guide
- Early Years Learning Framework
- ECA code of ethics
- Course Guide
- Webinar Calendar
- Student Portal User Guide.

It is important you spend time becoming familiar with the types of resources available and how to access them as this will help you with your studies.

Reach out for support when needed

Tell people what you're doing. You're more likely to stick to a course if your coworkers, friends and family know what you're doing so they can be supportive of your efforts.

Keeping in regular contact with your Training and Development Officer (TDO) is essential to staying motivated on your course. Even if you don't feel like you need any help, keeping in touch can be a good way to stay up to date, pick up extra tips and advice or just make sure that you're on the right track.

We are here to support you during the following times on the contact details below:

- Monday to Friday during office hours 8:30am-5:00pm
- After hours support available by phone Tuesday night's 5-7pm (NSW time).

In addition to this you have access to:

- Personalised training/study plans and timetables
- Pre-recorded study sessions in the ECTARC Training Portal
- Free live online study sessions with an ECTARC TDO
- Online Professional Development Webinars.

CONTACT US:

Website: <https://ectarc.com.au/>

ECTARC Training Portal login: <https://ectarc.instructure.com/login/canvas>

ECTARC Student Management Portal login: <https://ectarc.jobreadyrto.com.au/user/signin>

NSW Office

210 Shellharbour Road, Port Kembla NSW 2505

Phone: 02 4223 1111

Email: info@ectarc.com.au

QLD Office

Unit 10/3460 Pacific Highway, Springwood QLD 4127

Phone: 07 3290 2966

Email: QLDinfo@ectarc.com.au

WEEKLY TIMETABLE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MORNING							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							
AFTERNOON							
12-1							
1-2							
2-3							
3-5							
5-6							
EVENING							
6-7							
7-8							
8-9							
9-10							
BEDTIME							