



Self-Regulation and Online Learning

Self-regulation is the thinking, emotion and behaviour that a learner uses to achieve their personal goals. It includes strategies such as planning, effort regulation, time management, metacognition, elaboration, critical thinking, help seeking, concentration and reflection ([Burns, 2020](#)). Different self-regulation strategies are used before, during and after each learning event ([Zimmerman, 2002](#)).

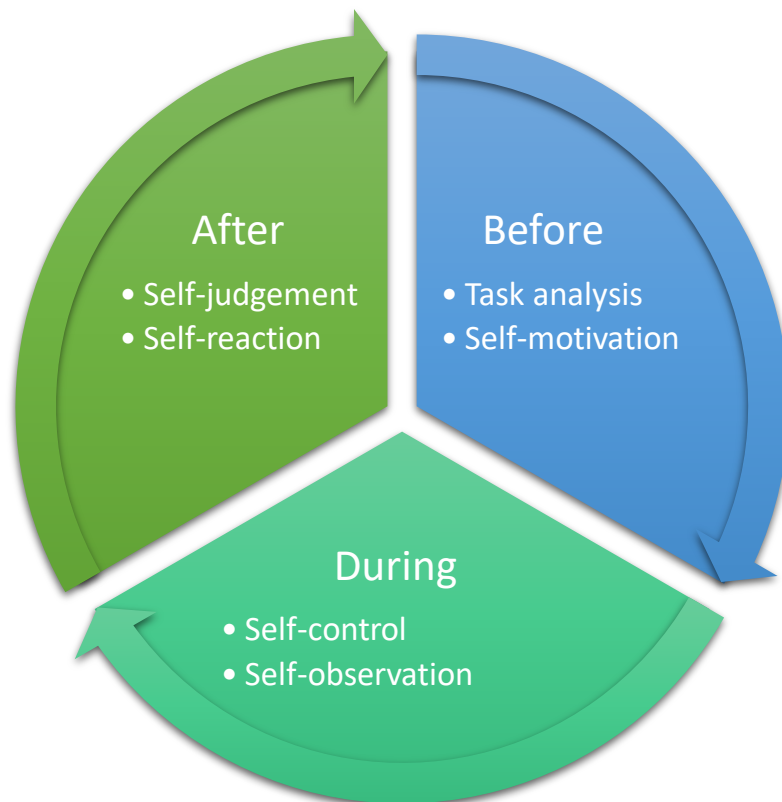


Figure based on [Zimmerman, 2002](#), Figure 1, p67

On campus we have a range of structures that help students to be motivated to self-regulate their learning. For example, we have fixed times for lectures and tutorials etc., when students are expected to front up and engage with the content and with the teaching team. Also, there are peer associations on campus, in and out of the classroom, where students can observe and discuss what others are doing in the course, indirectly helping them to stay on track with their learning.



When learning moves online, several of these self-regulation structures are missing and this may be why students can flounder when studying online. If students can self-regulate when studying online or in blended environments, this improves their achievement and success ([Broadbent 2017](#)).

So, what can we do in course websites to help students self-regulate their learning? There are several design strategies and learnonline tools that can be used to help students develop a mental picture of what is required to be successful in a course and motivate themselves to engage with these within the appropriate timeframes. However, it can sometimes be a challenge for teachers to start thinking about student self-regulation as their headsets are focused on what they need to do as a teacher, rather than what students need to do as learners.

Checklists

Checklists are one of the simplest strategies that can be implemented to support student self-regulation **before, during and after the learning process**. One of the tools available within UniSA Online courses, that is not yet included in learnonline courses, is the **learning planner**, which generates weekly checklists for students of what they need to know and need to do. Each element on these lists is additionally linked to the course objective that is being developed. The 'Need to know' and 'Need to do' checklist example that follows is from Week 3 of the course, *UO Business and Society*. As the students complete each component, they can check it off and the system will remember their progress.

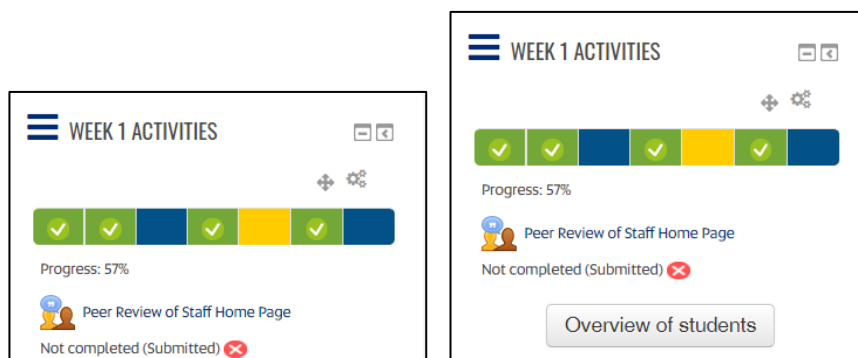
Although the learning planner is not yet in learnonline, you are able to develop something similar using word or excel that students can print and tick off as they complete each activity. A good example of an excel-created checklist, which also includes time predictions, is available in Burns ([2020](#); Figure 3).

Need to know 	Need to do 
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Define ethics, moral principles and values, describe the links between them, and distinguish ethical issues from some others	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch the 'What is ethics?' video
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Explain why many organisations in business and government believe that ethics is an important facet of business	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Bazzerman (2014) pp 116-119
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Identify ethical issues in business, government, not-for-profits and society	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the Bazzerman reading in the forum
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Use the case study method as a way of examining ethical issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch the 'Recognising ethical issues' video
	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch the 'Does ethics pay?' video
	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Freeman (2005)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Examine the Fairtrade case study
	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete the Ethical vs Legal activity
	<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly quiz

Completion Progress Block

A self-regulation tool that is available in learnonline, but not in UniSA Online, is the time-management tool called the **Completion progress block**. This tool visually shows which activities the student needs to engage with and has a colour coding system showing where they are up to, so it supports self-regulation **before, during and after the learning**. As a bonus, there is also an Overview function for teachers that displays the progress of all students on one screen.

This is an example of the student and staff view of the progress block taken from the short course [Engaging Learners Online](#). As you move your mouse over the coloured boxes, the activity associated with each box (e.g. peer review of staff home page), appears, as well as its status with respect to completion.



The image displays two screenshots of the 'WEEK 1 ACTIVITIES' progress block. Both screenshots show a progress bar with 57% completion. The left screenshot is a student view, showing a list of activities with their completion status. The right screenshot is a staff view, showing an 'Overview of students' button.

Activity	Status
Peer Review of Staff Home Page	Not completed (Submitted)

By selecting the Overview button, the teacher can review everyone's progress.



First name / Surname	Last in course	Completion Progress	Progress
[Profile]	Friday, 29 May 2020, 11:37 AM	[Progress bar with 8 green segments]	100%
[Profile]	Sunday, 31 May 2020, 10:19 PM	[Progress bar with 7 green segments and 1 blue segment]	86%
[Profile]	Saturday, 30 May 2020, 8:28 PM	[Progress bar with 7 green segments and 1 blue segment]	86%
[Profile]	Never	[Progress bar with 8 blue segments]	0%
[Profile]	Friday, 29 May 2020, 9:45 PM	[Progress bar with 8 green segments]	100%

To use the Completion progress block, you must first have Activity completion functionality turned on (**Course website > Edit settings > Activity Completion > On**) and then define which activities need to be completed, and to what extent. Once Activity completion is set up, you then need to add the Completion progress block to your website and use the Block settings to select which activities the block will monitor, as shown below:

Activities included * (?) Selected activities

Select activities * (?)

- Teaching Team
- Course Q&A Forum
- Talk to the Teaching Team (June 2020)
- Time Budget
- Part A
- Part A Good Teaching and Presence (20%; Week 2)
- Part B
- Select your team
- Private forum
- Week 1 - Need to Know & Need to Do Checklist
- 1.1 What is Different About Online Teaching?
- 1.1 What is different about online teaching
- Arrival forum
- Self-Assess Your Readiness
- Add an online picture to your post
- 1.2 What is Good Online Teaching?
- 1.2 What is Good Online Teaching?
- Challenges and Opportunities Forum
- 1.3 How Can I Stop Students' Feeling Alone?
- 1.3 How can I stop online students feeling alone
- 1.3 How Can I Stop Online Students Feeling Alone?
- Peer Review of Staff Home Page
- Glossary - Week 1
- ELO May 2020 Glossary
- ELO June 2020 Glossary
- Assessment Progress 1
- Week 1 Reflection
- Muddiest Point - Week 1

- Moodle docs – [Activity completion](#)
- Moodle docs – [Completion Progress Blocks](#)

Assessment exemplars and rubrics

Assessment is often the focus of students' learning behaviour. Assessment exemplars provide models of desired performance **before the learning activity**

while well-developed rubrics with clear criteria and detailed performance levels, promote self-regulation **before, during and after** the learning process.

- TIU – [Assessment](#)
- OT&L guide – [Reduce marking time with online rubrics](#)

Time budget

Another strategy that is used in several programs to support online students' self-regulation is the time budget. Time budgets are a visual map of all the student needs to do, week by week through the study period ([Quinn and Wedding, 2012](#)). Below is an example of a time budget from the OUA course Sustainable Engineering Practice ENR 112.

Time Budget – Sustainable Engineering Practice											
Week	HOURS OF STUDY										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1 2/3	Orientation activities				Self-assess your readiness Quiz 1 st attempt	Chapter 1. What is engineering?	Project 1 – Reflection as a professional skill. Focus Qa	Project 1 forum – Cultural awareness	Cultural Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A	Book work Usually can be done online at a time that suits you during the week.
2 9/3	Chapter 7: Understanding Communication	Project 1: Reforencing, Paraphrasing Cultural Protocols and Engagements	Information Skills Quiz	Project 1 Individual Report Resources	Project 1 Cultural Awareness Forum	Project 2 Explore Resume Requirements	Project 2 Journal 1	Self-assess readiness quiz 2 nd attempt	Helpdesk Q&A	Lectures Suitable for mobile viewing at a time that suits you during the week.	
3 16/3	Culture, Respect and Appropriate Engineering Technology, Communication and skills in professional engineering, Equity and Diversity in the Engineering, Engineers working culturally/diversely			Project 1 forum posts – Cultural Awareness	Project 1 Individual Report Writing			Prepare for Project 1 Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A	Online Activities Various learning activities that are done online at a time that suits you during the week.	
4 23/3	Chapter 3 Sustainable engineering	Project 2: Professional Reflections Project 3: EMW Challenge – Water Management, World Energy	SUBMIT Finalise Project 1 Forum posts (5%)	Project 1 Individual Report Writing SUBMIT for feedback via Dialogue			Project 2 Work on Resume	Sustainability Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A	Virtual Classroom Requires online participation at a set time.	
5 30/3	Chapter 5: Self management	Project 2: Industry Careers Panel Project 3: Sustainability and Population Growth.	Project 1 Individual Report Writing			Project 2 Work on Resume	Project 2 Journal 2	Project 3 Team meeting	Helpdesk Q&A	Computer Work Requires access to special software not available on most computers.	
6 6/4	Chapter 9: Understanding the problem	Project 2: Your engineering career (Global experience, Planning, Good engineer, Matching skills) Project 3: Sustainable development	Project 3 Team work and design and engineering Team work (including online meetings)			SUBMIT Project 1 Individual Report (17%)	Project 1 Feedback	SUBMIT Project 1 Quiz (3%)	Helpdesk Q&A	Online Quiz Requires online participation for assessment purposes.	
7 13/4	Chapter 15: Your engineering future	Project 2: Selling yourself (skills industry wants, resumes and interviews, professional networking)	Project 3 group work (including online meetings)			Project 2 Work on Resume	Project 2 Journal 3	Prepare for Project 2 Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A	Assessment Work on, or SUBMIT larger assessments – Face to Face Examination or on-campus residential	
8 20/4	Chapter 4: Professional responsibility and ethics	Project 2: Electrical engineering careers (Example: Career planning, Disciplines)	Project 3 group work (including online meetings)			Project 3 group work (including online meetings)		Prepare for Project 2 Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A		
9 27/4	Project 2: Structural and Civil engineering (Example, What a consulting engineer does).		SUBMIT Project 3 draft Team project report for feedback			SUBMIT Project 3 first peer review	Project 2 Feedback	SUBMIT Project 2 Quiz (3%)	Helpdesk Q&A		
10 4/5	Project 2: Contributing as an engineer (B-emergency services: How engineers can contribute)		Project 2 Work on Resume		Project 2 Journal 4	Project 3 group work (including online meetings)		Prepare for Project 3 Quiz	Helpdesk Q&A		
11 11/5	Project 3 group work (including online meetings)			Project 2 Finalise Resume			Project 3 Quiz		Helpdesk Q&A		
12 18/5	Project 3 group work (including online meetings)			Project 3 Presentation			Project 3 Quiz		Helpdesk Q&A		
13 25/5	SUBMIT Project 3 Task A: Final Project Report for marking (55%)	SUBMIT Project 3 Task D: Project Presentation (10%)	SUBMIT final Peer Review for Project 3	SUBMIT Project 2 Learning Journal and Resume (22%)		Project 3 Feedback	SUBMIT Project 3 Quiz (5%)	Helpdesk Q&A			

Time budgets are useful for students to self-regulate **before they start** studying to help plan what they need to do, but time budgets are also good **during the learning process**. For example, if students are finding that they are taking more time on an activity than what was allocated in the time budget, they can be advised to change their study approach and switch to **help-seeking behaviours**. In an ideal world, students should be preparing their own time budgets using a study planner, but with the new-found freedom and flexibility of online study, it is good to set clear and high expectations for students of

what is involved in being successful learner in a course using tools such as the time budget.

- Resource – [Time budget template](#)
- Examples – [ENR 112 time budget](#)
- Student resource - [Study planners](#)

Supporting Help-seeking

The next strategy to help students self-regulate when studying online is to ensure that help-seeking behaviours are supported. Help seeking is an important self-regulation behaviour **during the learning process**. In addition to your lecture or tutorial Zoom sessions, you can create a regular **Zoom consultation time** (Drop-in session) where the agenda is open and students can ask any questions they have. You can also add a dedicated Question and Answer **Forum** in your website for this purpose which all students can benefit from, and at a time that suits them. Another strategy is to use the **Dialogue** tool to initiate one-on-one conversations with each student in the course. The bonus of using a tool such as Dialogue (instead of email) is that it keeps communication about the course within the course.

- Learn**online** help - [Forum](#)
- Learn**online** help - [Dialogue](#)

Self-testing

Another strategy that is useful for supporting student self-regulation **during the learning process** is self-testing using formative assessment. If students can test themselves on how well they understand concepts and receive fast feedback, then they are able to adjust their approach to learning as a result. By using Quizzes and feedback-rich H5P interactive content, you can improve the frequency and timeliness of feedback on performance and support students to self-regulate their learning.

- OT&L guide – [Fast feedback for online learners](#)

Teaching strategies

The teaching strategies can have an impact on how students regulate their learning. For example, if you incorporate group work as a part of the student

learning experience, you bring peers back into the learning space which will support students' self-regulation **during the learning process**. There are many tools to support online group work that we have covered in an earlier Guide.

- OT&L Guide – [Supporting Group Work Online](#)

Another teaching strategy that is useful for supporting self-regulation is the use of regular reflection on learning strategies. This can be done in a **forum** or an **individual wiki** can be used as an online journaling tool to support reflection. As a teacher you can visit and review student's journals if you need to.

- Learn**online** help - [Forum](#)
- Learn**online** help - [Wiki](#)

Conclusion

Developing students' self-regulation skills will support their success when studying online. Making the shift to thinking about what the student does to learn something, rather than what the teacher needs to do to teach something, is a key first step in the process. For this reason, creating the checklists or a time budget is a good place to start improving the support you provide students for self-regulation when studying online.

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU](#) or complete the online modules as part of *Introduction to Engaging Learners Online*.

References

Broadbent, J 2017, Comparing online and blended learner's self-regulated learning strategies and academic performance, *The Internet and Higher Education.*, vol. 33, pp. 24–32. <<https://doi-org.access.library.unisa.edu.au/10.1016/j.iheduc.2017.01.004>>

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